CONCLUSION

Assam agitation was a fine example of procedural skill and cultivated zealous support. It was a movement that emerged to drive away foreigners from Assam, prodded her towards tension and confusion. People were burdened with political, social, and communal problems. It thus provides a good case study in understanding dynamics of a successful and mass upsurge. This study has worked out mainly two factors to be responsible for the origin of the problem.

(i) Easygoing nature of the locals.

(ii) Imperialist policies of British government in pre-Independence era.

Influx in the state of Assam was neither sudden, nor did it catch the people unaware. Not to overlook the government's neglect of Assam's main problem of economic development, it was not impossible for the problem to turn into a Socio-cultural. With more and more steady influx in the state, the peaceful Assamese communal balance was getting shockingly disturbed. It made many intellectuals from Assam to be more particular about their social identity, apart from numerical and cultural identity. Thus the roots of provincialism can be traced back to the influx problem. The leadership was a fine reflection of people's support for a
provincial control of the state. Prafulla Mahanta's leadership was circumstantial and spontaneous. "I will feel happy and rewarded if the attempt could bring to light some of the subtleties of the hydra headed monster of foreigners' influx in to Assam, nay India, and stir up my countrymen to realise the gravity of the problem and enormity of the consequentes," he stated. The lead was almost perfect not only due to the emotional following of the people, but the supportive circumstances ideal for its success. The thesis has shawn that after a certain phase, people's wishes shaped the leaders' behaviour.

The dynamics of the agitation were the outcome of various programmes designed to ensure and encourage mass participation and influence through Gandhian techniques of non-violent methods of persuasion. Besides, hartals, picketing and demonstrations, new programmes like, ticketless travel, in the city buses by the people, sound procession, poster campaign and cycle procession were remarkably successful. Socializing impact was brought about by the observance of certain days like, pledge day, anti-oppression day, solidarity day, protest day etc.

The analysis of various programmes show that the non-violent methods of protest aimed at disrupting the working of authority. Disrupting the working of authority aimed at affecting the economic activity and affecting administration.
In the study, the data show maximum participation in the programmes, at the same time the violent occurrences too, were not absent. The movement failed to evoke response after a certain period, till the Accord. "It is widely assumed that all the social and political behaviour must be clearly either violent or non-violent. The simple dualism leads only to serious distortions to the reality."³

The movement leaders adopted non-violent means for participation and congregations, devoid of self-discipline. Not to forget elite response, the agitational dynamics varied reasonably with its involvement. Power derives from sources in the society and it can be affected by withdrawal of co-operation by the populace. "Indian society gives less scope for a political development because a new stratum of politicians, that underwent a transformation after independence were more professional than intellectual."¹ The highly divided population on "economic class, linguistic and caste communities with little sense of affinity with each other..... and the strength of pre- and anti-constitutional traditions"⁵, make the working of professional politicians much easy.

The negotiations between the AASU and the government of India were carried on for a longer period, were also responsible for violence. It was an unconscious application of Game theory. The central government tried to strengthen the vote-bank. "The government of independent India chose to be the
successor government firmly holding to the territory bequeathed to it by the British government." This may be a little extreme way of describing the government's attitude, but appeasement approach pushed the people of Assam towards deepening their sub-culture, i.e. encouraged them to be provincial.

It gave more and more fear amongst Assamese people about their political future. The attitude of elite, sharpened the communal divisions in the Assamese society. Frequent breakdown of talks, made the Assamese people conscious about their right to participate in forming the government. Emotional charge of the agitation, was instrumental in boycotting the 1983 Assembly polls, which was out of a strong desire to participate in the electoral and political process. It may seem paradoxical, but some Assamese section strongly felt that the dilemma to participate and the requirement to revise the voters rolls, instigated the Assamese to oppose the polls.

Assam problem left open the developmental challenge to the Indian political system, because, "At every step of the development process, creative energies of people would be mobilised, people's participation being of more importance than the prodent or the process itself." In Indian political development, national identity building process had to be dealt first and within a culturally diverse society. The criteria of
participation concerns with securing a place in the system in broader terms. Prof. P. N. Sheth eyed a new style of politics in the agitational activities, referring to the Nav Nirman Movement of Gujarat, stated that, "viewed thus in its whole perspective, what is needed is a framework of national consensus for restoring the rules of game and channels of participation and expression enabling a feedback for the policy correctives to the ruling elite." Starting from the quality of the recruitment, socialization and political communication, Assam agitation strongly came out with the idea of strong provincial autonomy. Assamese elite "...felt the need for both a strong centre as well as a strong provincial government." But, "on balance, .... it emerges that their basic objective was to have the largest measure of provincial autonomy." So, people's direct involvement "... would respect cultural diversity of different communities giving due recognition to each group's cultural identity." Indian political system grows out of stresses and strains in the form of conflicts which occur in the parochial and fragmented civic culture and leads to maximisation of system awareness.

Most important is the place of agitation as a student movement. Ghanshyam Shah has come out with excellent comparison of the two major students movements in Gujarat and Bihar, and Assam agitation also occupies on equal attention as a students protest movement. "The Bihar movement aimed at bringing about total Revolution, i.e. a revolution in social, economic,
political, cultural and all other aspects of life." In this manner, he further calls it against the system.

Ghanshyam Shah evaluates Bihar movement from its survodaya ideology. In the movement, "most of the constituent partners of Bihar movement did not share the ideology of Survodayists." Regarding the programmes that were carried out in the movement, they did not concretize the objectives of the movement.

But he concludes that Bihar movement was a protest movement projecting "dissatisfaction and grievances of large section of society." Navnirman agitation was an urban middle class agitation, according to Ghanshyam Shah. "The programmes were locality based and unorganized." It involved political parties and pressure groups. The agitation was successful in ousting the then CM of Gujarat, Mr. Chiman Patel, but lately people realised that basic issues were unsolved.

All three movements involved students. In Gujarat Navnirman agitation "most of the students who participate in the agitation were rebellious and enjoyed the thrill of revolt and defiance of authority." And most important factor, according to Ghanshyam Shah was, they lacked direction, commitment and sense of purpose.

Whereas Survodaya leaders maintained that "...having no family responsibilities, students can afford to be full time revolutionaries."
In Assam's case, these limitations of student leadership and participation do not find any place. Neither the students were directionless nor lacked the sense of commitment and purpose. The study has established through its dynamics that the students emerged as a pivotal force in the Assam Agitation. As perceptively stated by Dr. Ghanshyam Shah: that "students are not familiar with the intricacies of social problems. They hardly feel that socio-economics and political systems are unjust." In Assam Agitation, students realised their socio-economic needs and culture preservation of Assamese society and presented themselves as a mature and committed stock for carrying out the agitation without involvement of political parties.

Programmes that were carried out were participatory in nature. Cycle procession, sound procession, poster campaign, silent rallies, picketing etc. shook up the administration. More than forty rounds of talks between the government of India and AASU were held, official as well as unofficial. In the agitation for the period of 1979 to 1985 according to police figures, 1,837 died out of mob violence, 215 died out of police firing and, 101 died due to bomb explosion. From August 1979 to December 1982, 343 persons died which included 247 in mob-violence, 53 in police firing, 43 in bomb explosion. From January 1983 to December, 1983, 1,802 died out of which, 1,585 died in mob violence, 162 in police firing and 55 due to bomb explosion. In 1984, only 5 persons were killed in mob violence. In 1985 till 15 August, 3 died due to explosion. Unofficial
figures however, is much higher. Above somewhere around 7,000 lives. As stated earlier, this agitation had suffered a lot of violent injuries, the students remained with the movement’s cause. Assamese students discarded their 'campus' subjects of protest, and came out as a collective force to fight for a regional and to a great extent, national cause. There was a strong desire to arrive at a solution of the issue and perhaps that is why, in midst of stress and strain in the agitation, the movement was carried on for six long years. Assembly polls of 1983 and the accompanying violence in the state disturbed the harmonious communal balance of the state. Again non-involvement of political parties was a remarkable feature. The Accord arrived at was the outcome of two factors, (i) re-establishing leadership credibility. (ii) Power motive.

Yet, it was a creditable success for the student leaders. Though the major achievement seemed to be the electoral victory of the regional party AGP, in 1985 Assembly polls, other issues like cultural and social identity and socio-economic interests also became evident.

Assam agitation was a landmark in the Indian political development. The Assam Agitation began with a bandh call in June 1979 and ended in August 1985, was the largest ever mass agitation in independent India. According to a political observer, Ravindra Nath, “It is the Unknown student worrier of Assam who represents the best that student movements as
seen in India, since the days of Gandhi and his days of
Satyagraha. At a time when student elsewhere in country
were pre-occupied with individual pursuits not all for
scholastic excellence or dissipating their energy in campus
politicking and petty agitations, the students of Assam
were fighting for a larger cause, and with what fervour and
determination, year after year!"20

In the rest of India, students took their cue from
their elders, politicians and particularly from party leaders.
In Assam, it was other way round. It were the politicians who
had to take their cue from the youngsters, the raw, inexperienced
students, hardly initiated into the art and science of politics
of agitation.

"The politicians as in Navnirman movement were
reduced to pathetic irrelevance, while the Assamese men and
women - the common people - rallied behind AASU banner. It
was a striking study in student power, the like of which has
not been seen anywhere else."21 It was also an extension of
regional party development in the North-East. And a
significant phenomenon of balancing India's federal political
system with accommodation of regional diversity and political
pluralism. Nevertheless, by the capture of power by the AGP,
it helps us to know that the Assamese community's fear
regarding the danger of being reduced to minority is
considerably reduced. Now, Assam, as a North-East guard of
India, rests in peace and harmony. The problem of infiltration
from outside and its political explosive significance is not
just confined to Assam but it is the problem of entire North-East, and therefore, it may ruffle the other regions of North-East as well. The presence of hostile foreign power along a sensitive border might one day cause a threatening collision between infiltrators and hostile strategic environment. It is in this context that the Assamese students by their sustained agitation have sensitised the whole of India to be aware of the danger to National Unity.
Social identity: Immigration created two major socio-political problems in Assam.

(i) Provoked the Assamese-Bengali tension on linguo-cultural question.

(ii) Increased the numerical strength of the Muslims in the province threatening the dominant position of Assamese caste-Hindu elite.

Phukon, Dr. Girin, *Assam's Attitude To Federalism*, (Delhi, Sterling, 1984), p-148.

2 Mahanta, Prafulla, *The Tussle Between the citizens and Foreigners in Assam*, (New Delhi, Vikas, 1986) p-XII.


5 Ibid., p-30.

6 "Assam not to be deserted", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. VII, No. 5, 6, 7, February 1972, Annual number.
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8 Sheth, P. N., Political Change in India, (Bombay, Vora & Co. 1977), p-189.


10 Ibid., p-151.


12 Shah, Ghanshyam, Protest Movements In Two Indian States A study of Gujarat and Bihar movements (New Delhi, Ajanta, 1977), p-159.

13 Ibid., p-160.

14 Ibid., p-163.

15 Ibid., p-58.

16 Ibid., p-58.

17 Ibid., p-161.

18 Ibid., p-161.

19 This data was made available through the courtesy of the office of the IGP, Department of Home Government of Assam, 1987.

Ibid.,