Chapter IV

POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP
WITH SOCIO-POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

The whole gamut of political scenario of the Bodos, starting from the early decades of the 20th century up to the present day reveals the constant move against the constraints faced by unrest and discontentment. Although the nature of constraints in their upward movement differs between the two periods of pre-independence and post-independence era in terms of various situations and circumstances, the nature of unrest and discontentment of the Bodos remained more or less same in the milieu of political and administrative arrangement of those periods. The whole scenario reflects the lethargic and unsympathetic attitude of the ruling elites on the one hand and on the other hand lack of farsightedness of the leaders of the Bodo community themselves. The inception and growth of socio-political institutions and organizations of the Bodos like Tribal League during the pre-independence period and respective political parties of pre-independence era like Plains Tribal Council of Assam, United Tribal Liberation Front of Assam, Bodoland People's Party and People's Democratic Front which were upholding the Bodo cause is reflection of this fact.

Political parties of the Bodos are only confined to their own community and related issues of Plains' Tribal people of Assam. It has not been able to exert much influence in the national politics except the issues concerning to their own community. Yet the tribal politics is predominating in the North East India which has influence on national politics.

The emergence of political parties among the Bodos is the outcome of the social consciousness. Social consciousness follows the political consciousness.

During the period of 20th century, Bodo society has undergone a sea change due to various socio-cultural forces, and allied factors which brought forth consciousness to them in the economic, social, political and other spheres of life.

G.M. Trevelyan in his book, "English Social History" writes: "Social change moves like an underground river, obeying its own laws or those of economic
change, rather than following the direction of political happenings that move on the surface of life. Politics is the outcome rather than the cause of social change”.

The Tribals were considered primitive segment of Indian society. In early time, they remained secluded, living in forest and hills without having more than casual contact with the civilized and advanced neighbours. There being no population pressure they remained with the self-sustained economy accessible within their surrounding. There was no attempt to penetrate their areas to impose alien values and beliefs on the tribal. But when the British consolidated needs necessitated with 'opening up' of the entire country through an effective communication system. The British introduced the system of land ownership and revenue. Annual tax was traveled which was beyond the capacity of the tribals. The British Government introduced a system of land revenue to be paid in cash. Being always profit conscious the British Government first made revenue assessment in 1843 and then increased the revenue in successive assessment. This not only put the poor peasants unaccustomed to such monetary payments in to a lot of hardship, but also made the system doubly oppressive because of an acute scarcity of coins, which always to be found from Calcutta by the Government from their mint by means of primitive means of transport. Whenever the British Government increased the revenue assessment by 1893, sporadic uprisings by the peasants a local scale took place at several places in lower Assam, Particularly in Nagaon, Kamrup and Darrang districts of Assam.

Under the incessant pressure of such circumstances Bodo people had to search for better way which germinated many socio-political organisations and it gave birth to the political parties among the Bodos.

But the most serious problem of the Bodos and tribal people of Assam was land alienation. Due to large number of immigrant influx into the tribal areas and their settlement in tribal lands were alienated to the non tribals causing more poverty, indebtedness, economic crisis etc. which was the basic cause of their backwardness. Although the British Government adopted Line system in 1921 for the protection of tribal land, it could not safeguard the tribal lands due to certain loopholes in it. Tribal League, a common platform made constant attack on the
Government for this issue but the British Government turned into a deaf ear to the problem. This problem has become irreconcilable task for the Govt. even day. Although the ethnic assertion or identity consciousness of the tribal originated during the colonial era it was not so dominant and there was no development of separatist element among the tribals of Assam. The tribal organisation, like the Tribal League was only common political platform for the tribal which was mainly concentrated into certain issue related mostly with Socio-economic and socio-cultural problems like land alienation, reservation; separate census, separate electorate etc.

Though colonial administration was never expected to provide a people oriented education system with the introduction of modern education the number of literate and educated people started increasing not only in the core Assamese society but also in the non-Assamese indigenous societies of Assam. Number of Government employees also kept increasing over the years with the spread of Christianity, expansion of education and increased scope for jobs of Government establishment, the tradition bound smaller societies, later on named 'tribes' became pregnant of an untraditional segment—the middle class. And this very class of people played a pioneering role in unfolding, consolidating and then spreading an identity consciousness among the members of their own societies.4

On the other hand, social discrimination, superiority complex of caste Hindu Assamese society and the caste based social equations gradually started pushing them away from larger Assamese society. Gradually the unresolved economic apprehensions started getting a political direction.5

Like the hill tribes the plain tribes also gradually became apprehensive about the Assamese speaking people when they started their linguistic chauvinism. Meanwhile, the tribal middle class also gradually consolidating who tried to articulate the grievances of the plains tribes the efforts were institutionalized when the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) was formed. The PTCA geared the politics of the plains tribes with separatist demands what they called 'Udayachal'.
The inception of political consciousness of the Bodos can be traced from the early
decades of the twentieth century just after the reformation movement of Kalicharan
Gurudev and spread of education among the Bodo people. During this period
cultural contact with other advance communities, spread of education, some
welfare measures of Christian Missionaries brought about consciousness among
the Bodo people. The Brahma movement of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma brought
about reformation and self-realisation to their society by which they could realise
about the causes of their backwardness and this led them to turn towards the
upward movement at par with the other advance communities living in and around
them. This realisation brought them political consciousness which inflicted
tremendous change in their social and economic institutions.

This political urge and clamor for self identity of the Bodo clearly reflected in the
memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission on Friday, 24th January 1929 at
Shillong. This memorandum was submitted by the Kochari Youth Association and
Goalpara District Bodo Association under the guidance of Gurudev Kalicharan
Brahma. 'The Simon Commission reached Assam in the late 1928 and sought to
meet representatives' from the primitive and backward tribes of Assam to be
present at shillong on 24th January 1929". The spirit of this memorandum depicts
the important elements for emergence of political party of the Bodos.6

Most of those demands at the memorandum reveal the strong urge for safeguard
and identity of the Bodos in particular and the tribes of Assam in general. One of
the demands of this memorandum was the formation of a separate Bodo regiment
in the British Indian Army. The original extract of the No. 9 demands of the
memorandum states as follows:-

"A large number of Bodo sepoys are included in the Gorkha regiment and are
generally known as Gorkha. To our opinion there should be a separate regiment as
"the Bodo Regiment" for the Bodo people of Assam".

It was immediately after the famous Skean Committee report on suggested
Indianisation of the Indian Army on the line of Punjab regiment and the Maratha
regiment. The British authorities at that time confined the recruitment for the army
mostly to the Punjab, Gorkha, and Maratha etc. and described the people of eastern India as non-martial or unsuitable for Army service in order to remove this uncharitable stigma as well as to find more avenues for employment particularly for the less educated and even, uneducated young men from many communities in North East India were then clamoring for such separate regiment on regional and communal basis.

Another demand is reservation of one seat for the Bodos in the legislature. It is stated in the demands No5 as follows:-

"At present there are certain restrictions which debar many to exercise their right to franchise. This should be removed and more liberty be given for the purpose. There should be four seats in the central legislature- One for Mohammedans and three for non-Mohammedans; and one of the three non-Mohammedan seats should be reserved for the Bodos".

During this time, the British Government created for the first time the principle of communal representation by providing separate electorates for Muslims. This system was vehemently criticized by the Indian National Congress as it was the policy to divide the Indians between Hindus and Muslims. Although this demand appears to be direct support to the communal representation of the British rule which was against the will of the Indian people, it seems to be neutral and just one under the consideration that there was no device or means to safeguard the tribal interest without availing such opportunity under the circumstances of the politico-administrative arrangement of the moment.

The other important demands were separate electorate status, separate category in the census report for the Bodo and other related problems to the tribals. This spirit of the memorandum directly reveals the strong clamour for political power and identity which had far reaching consequences in the political arena of the Bodos and other tribals in future.

During the Pre-independent period ' Assam Plains Tribal League' a Common Platform of the tribals made a significant relationship with the socio- Political
institutions of the Bodos and their tribes concerning to their serious problems and grievances. The problems of land alienation, immigration, poverty and backwardness pushed them towards strain relationship with the ruling elite and administration. In the eve of the independence, the Bodos and other tribes had to fight for the safeguard of their interest and they tried utmost to find out ways and means for fulfilling it, even by making alliances with Muslim League and Congress Party when they were in Power.

Formation of Tribal League in 1933 was a landmark epoch in the socio-political and socio-economic life of the tribal people of Assam.

Problem of land alienation due to large number of immigrant influx into the tribal lands and their down trodden socio-economic condition resulted to the emergence of the Assam Plains Tribal League. It was formed with a view to unite all the tribal people of Assam and to fight for getting fulfilment of their demands and removing the various grievances.

Although it was not a political party in the context of modern term, its relation with the people and various activities, its strong public opinion, participation in political affair and legislation of that time reveals that it played a vital role for the protection and safeguard of the tribal people. It exerted tremendous pressure on the Government and national political parties to accord socio-economic justice to the tribal people of Assam. This organisation was mainly related with the socio-economic and socio-political development and safeguard of the various interests of the tribal people.

National Movement and the Tribal League: During the time of Tribal League Bodo people were imbibed with the spirit of the national freedom movement for fighting against the British for freedom of the nation from the yoke of British Government. Kalicharan Gurudev met Mahatma Gandhi when he visited Assam and addressed a public meeting at Rupshi, the then capital of the Rupshi Estate in 1921. Mahatma Gandhi embraced Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and appreciated his activities of social reforms. Gurudev apprised Mahatma Gandhi about the deplorable economic condition of the Bodo people and discussed the ways and
means for the reformation of the neglected class of people. Thus Gurudev Kalicharan got more encouragement after meeting Mahatma Gandhi. Gurudev Kalicharan joined the Swaraj movement and inspired the Bodo people to fight against the British for the freedom of their motherland. This spirit of freedom movement spread among the socio-political institutions of the Bodos and other tribals of Assam. Tribal League, the only political front and common platform of the tribals of Assam was also imbibed with this spirit of nationalism.

**Tribal League and Provincial Legislature:** The Government of India Act 1935 introduced far reaching changes in the Indian administration which is milestone in the constitutional development in India. It provided to the provinces legislative, administrative and financial powers which they could exercise without interference of the central Govt of India. It also retained the separate electorate for providing special representation to communal and special interest in the federal legislature, under this provision the Govt of India Act of 1935 provided reservation of five seats to the plains tribal in the provincial legislature of Assam. The All Assam Tribal League demanded separate electorate for the plains tribals of Assam which was conceded under this provision and later the Tribal League got the opportunity to send five representatives in the provincial legislature. To safeguard their political interest tribal league interred into agreement with both the congress party and Muslim League.

Tribal League accused the Shadulla Ministry for sheltering the immigrants into the tribal lands causing land alienation and poverty to the tribal which led Shadulla Ministry fall in 1938. Again tribal league entered into the agreement in 1939 with the congress Government headed by Gopinath Bordoloi on certain condition agreed upon for the protection of tribal land and their interest. In 1940, Tribal League came into agreement with the Muslim League Ministry on assurance given by it for the protection and safeguard of vital tribal interest. After this agreement a coalition ministry was formed under the leadership of Shadulla. This party was known as “United Party” Ministry. Rupnath Brahma who was the leader of the Tribal League became minister in that coalition ministry. But Shadulla Ministry fall in the last month of the year 1945. During the time of Shadulla Ministry he adopted 'Development Scheme' which resulted the flow of thousands of
immigrants into the tribal areas of Assam and they settled down there. This policy of Development Scheme was known as "Grow more food" policy which faced severe criticism of the Tribal League. When the congress party formed Ministry headed by Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi Tribal League leaders merged with the congress party.

The merger of Tribal Leaders are criticised for sacrificing the tribal interest at the cost of winning ministership in the Congress Government. Due to merger of League leaders, the Bodos and all the tribals of Brahmaputra valley were to remain under the mercy of the congress Government. League was a factor of gaining majority of the Congress party in the Assembly. After the merger with Congress party it lost its independence and there was no platform to voice public opinion for the protection of the tribal interest and their grievances. Later the tribal problems were generalised with the Assamese mainstream instead of giving special attention to the tribal development.

In the eve and even after the independence Tribal League could participate in enacting constitutional acts, in the process of state’s reorganisation, etc. by its public opinion. But it has lost its entity, after merging with the Congress which marked a dark future for the tribal people

Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA): After independence a political party named and styled “Plains Tribal Council of Assam (P.T.C.A.) was formed on 27th May, 1967; just after the formation of All Bodo Students’ Union on 15th February of the same year. Birochan Doley and Samar Brahma Choudhury became the first President and Secretary. Mr. Charan Narzary was the first General Secretary and, Pratul Kumar Brahma and Ajit Basumatary was its joint secretary. P.T.C.A. is the first and foremost Political party of the Bodos. It demanded a separate Union territory with its name and style ‘Udayachal’ comprising the Bodo dominated areas all along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra river extending from the western Border of Kokrajhar sub-division (now district) up to the eastern border of North Lakhimpur Sub-division. P.T.C.A. submitted its first memorandum to the then President of India, Dr. Zakir Hussain on 20th May 1967 at New Delhi, demanding Union Territory “Udayachal”.
The year 1967 was a turning point in the history of Bodo social movement from two points of view:-

(i) Bodo youths from different parts of the country came under the banner of All Bodo Students' Union;

(ii) The P.T.C.A., a new political party came forward with a promise to bring autonomy for the tribal people of Assam. Now it is obvious that even though the Prime Minister's pronouncement for the re-organization was an immediate factor for the birth of the A.B.S.U. and the P.T.C.A. Yet the ground was being prepared throughout the twenty years of dissatisfaction and deprivation. So, the intention was not to create total disturbance during the subsequent days of Bodo movement. The government's policy to nip the movement in the bud further aggravated the situation.

The year of 1967 marked by three important events in the socio-political scenario of the Bodos: Those were:-

1) Indira Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India announced the policy of Reorganisation of state on the federal basis.

2) Reaction of Goalpara District Bodo Students' Union over the Prime Minister's proposal for reorganisation of state of Assam on federal basis which led the formation of All Bodo Students' Union on 15th February 1967.

3) Formation of a new political party with name and style Plains Tribal Council of Assam.
The P.T.C.A. also submitted a memorandum to the President of India in 1973, where the following demands were raised:-

1. Full autonomy in the predominantly plains tribal areas of the northern tract of Goalpara, Kamrup, Dorrang Lakimpur and Sibsagar Districts including all the Tribal Belts and Blocks of those areas, so that the tribals can -
   (a) Adequately protect their land,
   (b) Given effective check to economic exploitation of tribals by non tribals.
   (c) Conserve their language, culture, customs and what is best in them.
   (d) Prevent political domination by non tribals over tribal and imposition at any thing which would disrupt their tradition and customs; and
(e) Grow accordingly to their own genius and traditions. The Plains Tribals Council of Assam considers that the proposed federal plan is potential enough to fulfil this aspiration of the plains tribals provided a federating unit is carved out for the plain tribals of Assam. Hence, the plain tribals council of Assam decides to welcome the re-organisation of Assam on federal plan with the condition that a federating unit is carved out for the plain tribals also with the areas suggested above.

2. In determining the areas where the plains tribals are pre-dominant, the population that existed in the year 1974 should be the basis.

3. The plains tribal areas, which will not be contagious to the proposed federating unit far the plains tribals and consequently will remain outside that unit should be declared Scheduled areas and the provision of the sixth schedule should be applied to those areas.

4. The PTCA also recommended that the Deputy Commissioner or Collector should have the power to protect tribal’s problem.12

PTCA stands as a vocal institution of Bodos concern in to the development for social, political and economic and other spheres of life of the people. After independence this is the first common political platform of the plains tribes to demand a separate homeland for the tribal people of Assam.

PTCA and Legislature: PTCA sponsored two candidates, Charan Narzary and Prakash Chandra Basumatary to Legislative Assembly election of 1972 on 4th June 1977, PTCA reached an agreement with Janata Party and it contested in nine Constituencies in the Assembly election of 1978 Samar Brahma, Vice -president of the PTCA was returned to the Legislative Assembly and Charan Narzary the general Secretary of the party was returned to the parliament in that election. Again in 1985 election the party sponsored 27 candidates and out of them only three candidates were able to win. In 1991 the party sponsored fifteen candidates, but nobody had returned. 1991 election also signifies the decline of the votes percentage from 3.64 percent of 1985 to 1.07 %.
During Janata Government, Samar Brahma Choudhury became the forest minister in the cabinet Ministry of Assam when Janata Government fell. Samar Brahma Choudhury joined the Kesab Gogi Ministry (Congress) which lasted for only few days. In the year 1985 PTCA leaders made electoral alliance with Asom Gana Parishad and Samar Brahma Choudhury returned to the parliament and Charan Narzary returned to the legislative Assembly.

**Bodo Sahitya Sabha and PTCA:** Bodo Sahitya Sabha was founded more than fifteen years earlier of the birth of the Plains Tribal Council of Assam, i.e. in 1952. During this period Bodo Sahitya Sabha had been able to do substantial improvement for the Bodo language and literature and culture. It is a Pioneering organisation in development of Bodo language literature and culture which is meant to remain outside the purview of the politics Bodo Sahitya Sabha had been trying utmost care to maintain neutrality in respect to the politics of the Bodos but it had to carry out some activities which are of political nature. When Bodo Sahitya Sabha launched agitational programmes for recognition of Bodo language as medium of instruction in the schools it supported and jointly launched the agitation.

The convention of Bodo Sahitya Sabha held at Mahakalguri in 1968 West Bengal, finalized to adopt. Roman script for Bodo language and it started its agitation programme by Submitting a memorandum to the Chief Minister Mohendra Mahon Choudhury in 13th August 1971 for demanding adoption at Roman script for Bodo language in schools where was rejected by the Government later in Roman Script named 'Bithorai' for class in school which was opposed by the government following the stoppage of grant in schools in retaliation.

In the meantime PTCA started the movement of separate autonomy called 'Udayachal' by boycotting the parliamentary election of 1968 where the movement leaders were arrested and detained. After the release of the leaders a conference of the PTCA was held at Tezpur on 14th January in 1969 where the demand for full autonomy was again reiterated. On the December 1973 the PTCA launched a movement demanding a separate union territory of Udayachal bifurcating Assam in its second conference held on 25th April at Boganodi in North Lakhimpur, in
Assam. In September 1973 a PTCA delegation met the Prime Minister and submitted memorandum demanding Udayachal as a separate administrative unit. The demand for Udayachal gained support from the mass because of imposition of the Assamese language on the plains tribals.

Again when the Bodo Sahitya Sabha resumed the Roman script movement after the discussion with the Chief Minister of Assam on September 1974, PTCA supported the movement along with ABSU. When emergency was proclaimed by the Indira Gandhi Government with effect from June 1975 to January 1977 Udayachal movement was suspended and Bodo Sahitya Sabha also retreated from the movement by accreting Devnagari Script in lieu of Roman script.

The PTCA never forwarded any comment on the activities of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. Further its members have contribution the development of Bodo language and literature.

These respective events of Both the PTCA and Bodo Sahitya Sabha shows that they maintained tranquillity in launching the movement although their goals differed from each other. It also created confusion to the mass people of the Bodo as they were unable to decide to whom they were to support because both of them where concerned with serious Bodo cause.

PTCA and ABSU: One of the remarkable events in the life of the Bodos is strain relation between the two organization of A.B.S.U and P.T.C.A. The birth of the two organisations is in the same year, being ABSU a few months earlier P.T.C.A. is completely a political party while ABSU is supposed to be a non-political organization based on learning community i.e. students. A.B.S.U. supported P.T.C.A. because it supported the demand of separate autonomy. When the Bodo Sahitya Sabha launched a successive agitational programmes on various problems of language, introduction of Bodo language in primary and secondary schools, introduction of Roman script for Bodo language etc., both the A.B.S.U. and P.T.C.A. supported it as it was concerning the Bodo society as a whole. But when P.T.C.A. got the power after joining in the Janata party in 1977, its two leaders Samar Brahma Choudhury and Charan Narzary announced on 4th April, 1977 that
they have given up the demand for Udayachal, it crated a strong reaction on the Bodo youths and All Bodo Students Union.

This brought confrontation among the Party men and it resulted into formation of a new political party with name and style “Progressive Plains Tribal Council of Assam” (P.T.C.A.(P)). ABSU persued the P.T.C.A. leaders to revive the demand of separate homeland ‘Udayachal’, but P.T.C.A. retreated to the demand for autonomous region which enraged A.B.S.U.

All Bodo Students’ Union tried utmost to unite both the PTCA and PTCA(P). But it could not succeed in this mission. In a convention held on and from 17<sup>th</sup> April, to 19<sup>th</sup> April 1979; at Harishinga in erstwhile Darrang District of Assam ABSU invited both the parties for unification. But most of the P.T.C.A. leaders did not attend this convention as because their idea was preoccupied by the feeling that it was machination of A.B.S.U. against their party. In that convention the PTCA(P) was dissolved and a new political party with name and style as United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front was formed which become more closer to ABSU in supporting Bodo cause.

Division of PTCA and PTCA (P) brought about political chaos among the Bodos and it created repercussion for a long time in the Bodo society.

P.T.C.A. could not succeed in its mission. But the demands and issues raised by it still remain significant in the political life of the Bodos.

The Government could not readily concede this demand of ‘Udayachal’ in view of the fact that the proposed territory was not a very well defined compact areas with contiguous Bodos or plains tribal habitation and had many pockets of heavy concentration of non-tribals and the latter were vehemently opposed to the creation of any separate tribal areas where they might have to face discrimination by the tribal administration. The Government also cleverly utilized this apprehension of the non-tribals to justify their refusal to concede the Udayachal demand of the P.T.C.A. and A.B.S.U.
All the tribal people of Assam were not equally aware of the demands and activities of the PTCA for which it could not win confidence of mass people. Moreover some Bodo organization like ABSU and Bodo Sahitya Sabha had been able to progress convincingly in their activities which also loosened the significance of PTCA. Wherever, PTCA retreated from the demand of 'Udayachal' (Union Territory) people loss confidence on PTCA Even PTCA remains as a political party.

PTCA and Mass people: Since the time of avoidance of the demand of separate Autonomy the relation between ABSU and PTCA has not remained as per desired by the people. But the ABSU and the PTCA were formed in the same year of 1967 being ABSU a few months earlier. Charan Narzary, the founder leader of the PTCA rejects the claim of ABSU leader that PTCA was formed by the ABSU and only the precedence in the birth does not mean that PTCA was created by ABSU which is a false statement. According to Charan Narzary PTCA never involved the ABSU as an organisation in its political programmes. They were told that the Bodo students, if they think, might participate in any PTCA programmes in their individual capacities but not as an organisation. No doubt, the ABSU as an organisation lent its moral support along to the PTCA movement, and its active participation was completely precluded. The main source of strength of the PTCA was the unstinting support of the masses at grass root level.

United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front of Assam: It was formed in a convention held on and from 17th to 19th April 1984, at Harishinga after dissolving PTCA (P). Binoy Kumar Basumatary was its first chairman, who was also M.L.A. during that time.

UTNLF was the dissident group of PTCA, the first political party of the tribals in Assam who tried to keep a close relationship with ABSU. In the meantime the split of the party into two brought division among the mass people which again brought split in ABSU too. UTNLF could not do much in bringing mass confidence for demanding separate autonomy as expected by ABSU. Moreover, the influence of PTCA was not completely maligned at that time. Soon after the formation, UTNLF submitted a memorandum to the then prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 2nd May.
1984, in Delhi, demanding separate state of the Bodos with its nomenclature Tribal land on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river in Assam. The first memorandum of this organisation included the evaluation report entitled “The working of Gaon Panchayat Level Co-operative Societies in the Sub-plan Areas” prepared by tribal Research Institute of Assam and another report titled, “The study of the displacement of the tribals due to the Dhansiri project in the District of Darrang an Assam” prepared by the same research institute.

The UTNLF changed its nomenclature as “United Bodo Nationalist Liberation Front” (UBNLF) by amending its constitution in a convention held on and from 25th to 28th February 1988, at Parkhijuli in Nalbari district. The UBNLF submitted its memorandum to the then Union Home Minister Buta Singh on 16th April 1988, demanding separate Homeland with the status of union territory in the North Bank of the Brahmaputra. Although the demand of separate homeland with Union Territory status could gain the support from the ABSU, it loosened its significance due to ABSU’s steering of Bodoland movement along with its revolutionary wing, Bodo people Action committee (BPAC). When ABSU launched Bodoland Movement most of the activists of PTCA and UTNLF joined BPAC for launching the movement. Later ABSU and BPAC supported nine candidates formed an opposition front which was known as Bodoland Legislature Party (BLP). After the BTC accord this party split into two of which the dissident group formed new political party called New Bodoland Legislature party. This split is the result of the difference among the party men over the issue of Bodoland accord. Moreover, some of them supported the Congress Government which was against the stand of ABSU.

Although a substantial number of Bodo legislators represented the state legislature till the election of 1985 under the provision of reservation of Assembly seats, there were only a few Bodo M.L.As who had either joined the ruling party or remained neutral which seldom could exert the Bodo cause. This trend first occurred in 1946 during the eve of independence when the Tribal League joined the Congress party after the entry of their leaders in the cabinet ministry. After independences Samar Brahma Choudhury became the Forest Minister in the cabinet of Assam, during the Janata Government which followed by the announcement (on 4th April 1977) about
the avoiding of the demand of separate homeland under the status of union territory. PTCA could win one seat in the Assembly election of 1972 four seats in 1978, three seats in 1985 and Nil in 1991 showing the decline of the number of the MLA’s in the state legislature. Binoy Khungur Basumatary who was the founder leader of United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front continued to be representative to the state legislature since 1983 to 1991. PTCA could send one representative in each parliamentary election of 1977 and 1985 from Kokrajhar constituency, being Charan Narzary in the former and Samar Brahma Choudhury the latter. But they also followed the same path. It was only during the period of ABSU Movement that ABSU—BPAC supported candidates could win as many as nine representatives during the elation of 1991 to the state Legislative Assembly and one representative in the parliament. It was due to the wave of ABSU movement which was supported by the mass people. This trend continued till the election of 2005.

Bodo People Party and Bodo Accord of 1993: After the B.A.C. accord of 1993, Bodo People’s Action committee a revolutionary wing of All Bodo Students Union was dissolved and a new political party was formed for dealing with the politic-administrative affairs of a new self-governing Autonomous Body, named Bodoland Autonomous Council within the state of Assam. The political party was known as Bodoland People’s party. After the signing of the Bodo accord of 1993 the first signatory of the accord Sansuma Khungur Bwiswmuthiary was appointed the first Chief of the Interim Bodoland Executive Council by the Governor notification dated 30th June 1993. After holding the office for a few months he resigned in protest that state notification was unilateral act which betrayed the Bodo cause. He claimed that the addition of the 515 villages which were not stipulated in the accord was promised by the Government. Some people think that the resignation of Sansuma Kungur Bwiswmuthiary is only a pretention, which is a part of pressurisation of the Government to implement the clauses of Bodo Accord, specially demarcation of Boundary and holding the B.A.C. election. Following his resignation the Interim Bodoland Executive council was formed on 27th December 1993 Shri Premshing Brahma as its chief, who was backed by the congress Government headed by Sansuma Khungur Bwiswmuthiary and the other by Lt. Premshing Brahma who was also surrendered leader. Sansuma Kungur Bwiswmuthiary blamed the Congress Government headed by Hiteswar Saikia,
responsible in bringing split in the B.P.P. Bodoland Legislature party in the state legislature also split and its dissidents formed a new group, called New Bodoland Legislature party. Bodoland legislature Party an opposition front for safeguarding the Bodo cause could not exert remarkable influence on the Government due to rift among the party men. Majority of them supported the congress Government which was against the stand of A.B.S.U. Such split of the Bodos leaders both Interim Bodoland Executive council not only created instability in the political level, but it also brought dissention and chaos among the people. In the meantime Asom Gana Parishad came to power and it reconstituted Interim Bodoland Executive Council in June 1996 with its chief Kankeswar Narzary.

The post-accord scenario of the whole Bodo area appeared unstable. The arrangement of the Bodo accord created disillusionment among the Bodo leaders and it created division among the entire Bodo leaders. Meanwhile the Bd.SF(N.D.F.B) who opposed to the accord also sought for their opportunity. The situation in the whole Bodo area becomes more aggravated due to several violent incidents and inviting police and army action. A major outburst erupted in several villages around Kokrajhar District headquarters in May 1994, leaving 22 dead and thousands homeless and two months later Violence broke out in seven districts on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, claiming over 100 lives. In 1996 a communal riot took place between two friendly communities the Santhals and the Bodos at Gossaigaon Sub-division and later at Kokrajhar Sub-division leaving many people from two communities dead and rendering thousands of villagers homeless.

This political scenario of the Bodo revealed the fact that Bodo leaders were either pushed or pulled by the political party in power for gaining their selfish interest. Instead of solving the problems they aggravated the situation more to harvest the benefit of it. Moreover, lack of experience and statesmanship of the leaders gave them an ample scope for exploiting the situation.

Meanwhile the central delegate conference of the Bodo people’s party held at Udalguri, Darrang district on 4th and 5th November 1994 on the implementation of Bodo accord and the total failure of the Government in the regard. After having a detailed discussion, the house arrived at the conclusion that the political
arrangement of ‘Bodoland Autonomous Council’ granted to the Bodos with the concept of “Maximum Autonomy” without having constitutionally safeguards which falls far short of statehood can not bring about a permanent and honourable political solution to the burning ethno-political question of the Bodos. The meeting resolved to revive the three original political demands:

(1) Creation of a separate full fledged state of Bodoland;

(2) Creation of two autonomous districts namely “Nilachal” and “Lalung”, and inclusion of the Bodo Kocharis of Karbi Anglong Autonomous district in the S.T.(Hills) list. Basing on this demands the BPP submitted a memorandum to the then Prime Minister Sr. P.V. Narashimha Ram, in New Delhi on 27\textsuperscript{th} January 1995 and again on 26\textsuperscript{th} August 1995\textsuperscript{20}

(3) Bodoland State Movement Council

A National level convention on Bodo organisation, political parties or factions, leaders and social workers was held at Debargaon in Kokrajhar district, on 28\textsuperscript{th} March 1996 to bring all the Bodo political parties or factions in a common platform for achieving the common political goal of a separate state of ‘Bodoland’ In this meeting both the factions of Bodo people’s party were dissolved and a new non-political organisation with the name and style ‘Bodoland State Movement Council’ (BSMC) was formed unanimously.\textsuperscript{21}

When the minority P.J.P. Government headed by Atal Bihari Bajpayee came into power, BSMC urged upon the Government of India through a Fax Massage dated on 20\textsuperscript{th} May 1996 for resolving the burning “Bodoland Question”. However the BJP Government fell after thirteen days and a new government came to power at the centre. BSMC also submitted the telegraphic massage to the new Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on 6\textsuperscript{th} June 1996, in order to arrange political dialogue a fresh on the Bodoland Question.

In the meantime the Prime Minister H.D. Devegowda made a positive gesture in favour of creation of ‘Uttaranchal Pradesh” with immediate effect while meeting a joint delegation team of some BJP leaders effect while meeting a of “Uttaranchal Pradesh Sangharsh Samiti”- Major General B.C. Khundri and led by the former
A six member delegation of the Bodoland State Movement Council led by S.K. Bwiswmuthiary, the former Chief of the Bodoland Autonomous Council and the chairman of BSMC call on the president of India Dr. S.D. Sharma, at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi on 17th July 1996 and submitted a memorandum requesting him to directly intervene the Bodoland issue and to persuade the union front Government headed by Sri H.D. Deve Gowda, the then Prime Minister of India, for creation of a full fledged state of Bodoland. The memorandum included the following demands:-

(1) Creation of the full fledged separate state of Bodoland within the Indian Union on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra.

(2) Creation of the autonomous district namely “Nilachal” and “Lalung” and

(4) Inclusion of Bodo-Kocharis of Karbi Anglong in the Scheduled Tribe Hills list.

The memorandum also included the following points which had not been implemented by the Government as per the spirit of Bodo Accord of 1993 even after the lapse of long three or four years which shattered the hopes and aspiration of the Bodo people:-

1. Demarcation of the territorial boundary of the Bodoland Autonomous Council,
2. Delimitation of 40 territorial constituencies of Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) and holding of General election,
3. Withdrawal of all the pending Bodoland movement cases
4. Granting of ex-gratia grants to the next kinds of the Bodoland movement Martyrs (1135 bereaved families)
5. Relief and Rehabilitation measures to the surrendered militants, compensatory grants to the gang raped victims, wounded persons, movement affected Bodo families;
6. Re-instatement of the movement affected Bodo employees; and
7. Adequate funding both from the central Government of India and the state Government of Assam as well as to the Bodoland Autonomous council.

The president of India had given a patient hearing to the delegation team and assured to have a discussion with the Prime Minister on the issue.

BSMC made a massive drive of mass mobilisation, press release, and lobby etc, both in the central and state level which was a powerful influence on the political parties and other socio-political organisations in solving the Bodo problems. It continued to raise the Bodo issues by keeping close relationship with A.B.S.U. Although it was not a political party it undertook the important role in articulating the Bodo problem in various ways.

BSMC chairman S.K. Bwiswmuthiary responding on a question of the Sentinel, a daily newspaper on the lack of unity between the various Bodo organisations, fighting for a similar goal said, “Perhaps at last stage we will be able to arrive at a common political understanding for our common cause. When a communal clash between the Bodos and the Adivasis occurred in 1996, was conceptualised by the newspapers and other organisations he condemned that it was the handy work of the some vested quarters and reactionary elements to alienate the non-Bodo from the Bodos. B.S.M.C. carried out its works on the Bodos till the signing of Bodo accord in 2003.

**PDF and Bodo Socio-Political Institutions:** In recent days the underground outfit has become important factor in political life of the people, especially in the North East India. Although it is not out of focus, this factor has also played important role in determining the poll, as most of this militant group find stronghold within particular area by mobilising public sentiment on their issues. This trend is visible among the Bodo dominated areas and other place of North East India.

After the Bodo accord most of the Bodo leaders divided following disillusionment over the arrangement of B.A.C. by the Government. Some of the Bodo leaders kept distance from A.B.S.U. and it made the organisational strength weak. Under the
circumstances, the underground outfit N.D.F.B. took opportunity to influence their stronghold on the mass people and to fight for the Bodo cause participating in democratic process, living behind the curtain. Some of the Bodo people think that it was a straight attempt of these underground militants to unite all the political groups or parties and organisations of the Bodos in a common platform. Consequently a new political party named people's Democratic Front (PDF) was formed in 1996 at Udalguri under the present district of Udalguri.

During the Assembly election of 1996 PDF won as many as six seats in the legislature and one seat in the parliament. Its nearest rival ABSU supported candidates only won two seats. During the election of 1996 PDF made alliance with Assam Gana Parishad and Interim Bodoland Executive Council was reconstituted with nomination of Kankeswar Narzary its chief from the P.D.F. After the election the rivalry between ABSU activists and NDFB broke out in the Bodo dominated areas. NDFB, the underground outfit finding its favour with some legislators tried to malign ABSU activist and establish its stronghold over the mass people. Thus confrontation between ABSU and NDFB started creating a crucial situation for the innocent Bodo people. Both of the groups raised accusing finger and blamed each other of being responsible for such situation.

On 8th December, 1997 an attempt was made for understanding over the situation between PDF and ABSU allied groups with an informal discussion in a quarter of M.L.A hostel here the president of PDF and other members were represented. In that discussion ABSU proposed to fight unitedly for Bodo because avoiding rivalry between two groups.

In the meantime rivalry became more acute between ABSU activists and NDFB militants which caused fratricidal killing within the same communities. As a result the situation became more deteriorating distorting normal life which invited police action in Bodo dominated areas. This incident paralysed the normalcy and it affected more to the innocent people who did not know about the cause of such happenings.

After the election the rivalry between ABSU activists and NDFB broke out in the Bodo dominated areas. NDFB, the underground outfit finding its favour with some
registers tried to malign ABSU activist and establish its stronghold over the mass people. Thus confrontation between ABSU and NDFB started creating a crucial situation for the innocent Bodo people. Thus confrontation between A.B.S.U and NDFB started creating a crucible situation for the innocent Bodo people. Both of the groups raised accusing finger and blamed each other of being responsible for such situation.

On 8th December, 1997 an attempt was made for understanding over the situation between PDF and ABSU allied groups with an informed discussion in a quarter of MLA hostel where the president of PDF and other members were represented. In that discussion ABSU proposed to fight unitedly for Bodo because avoiding rivalry between two groups.

In the meantime rivalry became more acute between ABSU activists and NDFB militants which caused fratricidal killing within the same communities. As a result the situation became more deteriorating distorting normal life which invited police action in Bodo dominated areas. This incident paralysed the normalcy and it affected more to the innocent people who did not know about the cause of such happenings.

Under the initiative of ABSU, a meeting was convened on 27th June, 1998, at Jaybhadra Hagjer Bhawan, Gauhati, Where members of the different Bodo organisation and political parties were invited to discuss and find out ways and means to stop the patricidal Killings and restore peace and normalcy. But no any members of P.D.F. attended the meeting.26

Again a meeting was organised under the initiative of ABSU on 12th December, 1998 at Bodoland Rest house, Gauhati for unification and to revive the to peace and normalcy in strife torn Bodo areas, where four PDF, MLA’s were present there. But not any fruitful result came out of it.

Again another meeting was held on 8th February, 1999 at Kokrajhar circuit house, Kokrajhar, between PDF and ABSU allies for uniting together for the common goal of the Bodos. But the proposal of ABSU did not get positive response from PDF
Thus rivalry between ABSU activists and NDFB continued to be standing issue in the political life of the Bodo still now.

Some Bodo people think that PDF could not keep the commitment given to the underground outfit, as desired. After coming into alliance with AGP it slipped into the trap of the party interest which loosened its entity. Moreover mass people never feel easy to support the militant groups. In the meantime ABSU denounced the Bodo accord of 1993 in 1996 and revived the Bodoland movement in that moment. Whenever ‘Bodo Liberation Tigers’ (BLT) an underground militants group, resorted to arm struggle in support of ABSU’s Bodoland movement, PDF lost its significance and BLT and ABSU supported candidates returned to the Assembly defeating all the P.F candidates, during the Assembly election of 2001.

During the Assembly election of 2001, ABSU sponsored candidates numbering eleven returned to the Legislative Assembly defeating all its nearest rival candidates. During the campaign of that election ABSU formed a political organisation for sponsoring their candidates and this organisation was nomenclated as “Bodoland Demand Legislature Party” (BDLP). During this time Bodo problem was already in the knowledge of the Government as Bodo legislators and ABSU had been carrying out the activities concerned to their problems. Important event of this period is signing of Bodo accord of 2003 for which this party exerted pressure on the Government.

Bodoland Demand Legislature Party: During the Assembly election of 2001, ABSU sponsored candidates numbering eleven members returned to the Assembly defeating all the nearest rivals People’s Democratic front. During the time of election campaign All Bodo Students’ Union entitled this organisation as Bodoland Demand Legislature party (BDLP). During this time Bodoland movement could gain the notice of the Government due to the negotiation of A.B.S.U. and Bodo Liberation Tigers and later it resulted signing of Bodo Accord on 10th February, 2003 for creation of self-governing autonomous body with nomenclature “Bodoland territorial council”.
Bodoland Demand Legislature Party remains as opposite’ party in the legislature and it remained close to A.B.S.U’s demands for separate state of Bodoland.

**Bodoland people’s progressive Front (BPPF):** After the Bodo accord of 2003 and creation of Bodoland Territorial Council (B.T.C.) a new political party with name and style Bodoland People’s Progressive Front was formed in 13th April 2005, with Rabiram Narzary as president and Hemendra Nath Brahma as General Secretary. The BPPF is primarily concentrated in the four districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Barka and Udalguri under the Bodoland Territorial Administrative Areud District. BPPF is a common platform of different Bodo organisation.

The formation of BPPF was the repetition of similar incident as it was in case of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). The BPPF was formed just before the election of the Bodoland Territorial council for a common political forum for the leaders of the Bodo movement.

The organisation of the BPPF comprised of three committees which are composed of its members. They are as follows:-

1. Rabiram Narzary (President)
2. Chandan Brahma (Vice President)
3. Baktar Ali Ahmed (Vice President)
4. Hemendra Nath Brahma (General Secretary)
5. Emanual Mushary (Secretary)
6. Sabharam Brahma
7. Jagdish Sarkar
8. Lwmshrao Daimary
9. Niren Roy
10. Badan Hasda
11. Rihan Daimary

Its policy making body comprises the following members: Hagrama Mahilary, S.K. Bwiswumthiary and U.G. Brahma, Convenor of the policy making Body were Hemendra Nath Brahma, Rajendra Nath Brahma, S.K. Bwiswumthiry, Hagrama
Mahilary and Pramila Rani Brahma. There is the provision for the presentation of ten members from each district to the Executive Committee.

The formation of a new political party BPPF is a new expectation for all sections of the Bodo people as the present arrangement of the Bodo accord (2003) has provided an ample scope to articulate their various problems and aspirations by their own political party. But just after the formation, the party has witnessed some internal clashes regarding the selection of the candidates for the first time election of BTC in 2005. The contention started when Urkhao Gora, an M.P. (Rajya Sabha), and Rabiram Narzary, the then president of A.B.S.U. intended to submit their nomination paper. Knowing the intention Hagrama Mohilary the then chief of the Interim Bodoland Territorial Council supported the independent candidate against the official BPPF candidates. Later Urkhao Gora refrained from submission of nomination paper while Rabiram Narzarya confirmed his nomination.

It was not desired by Hagrama Mahilary that Rabiram Narzary would stand for the election being the president of the ABSU, as the organisation was expected to maintain neutrality in politics of the moment and on the other hand, Urkhao Gora would come forward for the same being an M.P. (of the Rajya Sabha). Meanwhile All Assam Tribal Women Welfare Federation and woman organisation has been deprived of getting party tickets despite their claim for only three seats, even being an important party of Bodoland Movement. This brought not only breakage of the party policy, but also resulted in split of the party into two: one headed by Hagrama Mohilary. (H) and the other by Rabiram Narzary BPPF(R). BPPF headed by Hagrama Mohilary got overwhelming victory inflicting defeat over all the candidates of ABSU supported BPPF(R) in its first election of Bodoland Territorial Council, Held in 2005. BPPF headed by Hagrama Mahilary formed the B.T.C. Government in 2005 without any opposition in the council. After the BTC election both the dissident groups reconstituted their organizational frameworks by forming primary, district and state or central committees to strengthen their own parties.

Common people were not satisfied with the split in the party as all of them were supposed to be the man of the same spirit of Bodoland movement. They were confused over the political leadership among the Bodos in newly created Bodoland.
Territorial Area District. Enlightened Bodo people are also not satisfied with this trend of division in the party as they feel that this conflict of the two dissident groups of the party would be the far reaching negative impact in the political scenario of the Bodos in coming days. Moreover, many Bodo people thought that political party in power might get opportunity to exploit the situation which was seen repeatedly in the political life of the Bodos in the recent past.

After the BTC election of 2005, Assembly election was held in 2006 where the BPPF headed by Hagrama Mohilary won in nine constituencies defeating almost in all the Assembly constituencies of nearest rival candidates of BPPF (Rabiram). BPPF (H) has deputed as many as three Cabinet Ministers in the Congress Ministry headed by Tarun Gogoi.

Most of the people think that the victory of BPPF (H) is due to wave to wave of success in the election. Moreover enlightened people think that B.T.C is a new experience for its people and so the new aspirants' youths who are running the interim council should be given an ample scope for articulating their problems in their own architect and genius. Further most of the mass people including non Bodo communities were perturbed by the long day strife torn situation and the people rejected partisan feeling for the preservation of peace.

Political parties of the Bodos are mainly concentrated on the grievances and problems of their own community which has been deeply rooted since the free Independent era. Originality their deeply rooted problems land alienation poverty, economic crisis etc. which is socio, cultural and socio-economic in its character. Submission of memorandums by ‘Kochari Yuba Association’, Goalpara District Bodo Association’ and Tribal League during the British rule reveal that the tribal people have been searching for the safeguard of their interest and political right under the respect politico administrative arrangement of that time. After Independent the political parties like P.T.C.A., UTNLF, UBNLF, BPP, PDF etc. also continued to demand separate autonomy for the progress of the Bodos and other tribes in economy, social, political and all spheres of life.
Whenever they found that political party in power is indifferent in their attitude in solving their problems they found no way out of launching the movement for fulfilling their interest.

Political parties of the Bodos are only concerned with the progress of their community at par with other advanced communities.

In search of the progress, the political parties of the Bodos have to become sometime easy prey for fulfilling selfish interest of the political parties in power. They were pushed or pulled by those political parties in the recent political scene of the Bodos. Lack of experience and statesmanship is also responsible in this respect. Even the political parties of the Bodos occupies important place both in the regional and national political parties.

The creation of Bodoland Territorial council is a new experience for the leaders and the people living there. The political parties must not forget that their main responsibility is to serve the people and the nation through devotion and sincerity. They must be capable to keep distance from the selfish interest which is the basic cause of their internal clash. A political party must follow its own principle and zeal by which it can contribute for the progress of all the communities, societies and nation as a whole.
Notes and References:-

5. Ibid: P.16.
7. Brahma Sekhar : Religion of the boros and their Socio-cultural transition , 2006 ; P.133.
8. Bhattacharjee Chandana : Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement, Case studies of Boro Kocharis of Assam , New Delhi ,1996 ; P.78.
11. Ibid: P.137.
17. Narzary Charan: The Emergence of the Bodo Students’ Union, Published in Souvenir, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, 2006; P.33.
20. A Memorandum submitted to the President of India by the Bodoland State Movement Council (BSMC) on 17th July/1996, New Delhi; P.6
21. Ibid: P. 7
26. “Mugani Sakhi”: Mouthpiece of All Bodo Students’ Union, 2000, 4th Issue; P. VII.
27. Ibid: P.XIII.