CHAPTER-V

VARIOUS PHASES OF THE BODOLAND MOVEMENT
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VARIOUS PHASES OF THE ABSU MOVEMENT

The six-yearlong Bodoland Movement under the leadership of ABSU and BPCA was an acute manifestation of the long suppressed agony and anguish of the Bodos. The Bodos – the son of soil of Assam, were stolen of their history, their glorious past and their present Constitutional facilities. They felt that they are being cheated by the mainstream Assamese section of the population who are now seated in a more advantageous position. They felt that they are being exploited economically, neglected socially, dominated politically and deprived of constitutional facilities. This feeling of “Relative Deprivation” turned the Bodos against the mainstream Assamese population and alienated psychologically. These all together gave an express manifestation in the demand of Separate State for them and the six-year long vigorous mass-movement. By the time this movement started in 1980s the psychological alienation of the Bodos from the mainstream Assamese population was complete.

As is the regular feature of any ethnic movement for their identity, the Bodo Movement in search of their identity in the form of a Separate State of their own passed through various phases, beginning with lenient phase of rallies and demonstration passing through a violent phase of armed struggle and ending in a low key negotiation phase. It was primarily because for the long suppressed and socially dormant Bodo population it took many decades to express their anguish and anger against such continued oppression in an organised way. Thus, for the sake of convenience of discussion, the course of the six-year long Bodoland
Movement may be classified into the following three phase.

**THE EARLY NON-VIOLENT PHASE:**

In the Post-Independent period, the Bodos and other Tribal population of North-East felt very much cheated and deprived of in the new Constitutional set-up. They began to feel that they have deliberately been neglected and relegated to a position of nowhere. For this region, in the decades following the Independence, began to search for their identity and adopt ways and means for fulfillment of their aspirations, in their search for identity. They found separate political arrangement in the form of Separate State the best possible way of fulfillment of their cherished goal. With this view in mind, various tribal groups of the region began to urge upon the Union Government of India through submission of Memorandum to consider their case with sympathy.

In the same way, All Assam Bodo Students’ Union, in the beginning, began to submit Memoranda to the State Government of Assam, protesting against land alienation, illegal occupation of tribal land, encroachment in tribal areas, eviction of tribals from forest lands, non-fulfillment of backlogs in reserved quotas, non-provision of teachers in Bodo medium schools, non-publication of Bodo text books, etc. Later, when this all urges and demands fell into ‘deaf ears of State Government, the ABSU began to organise huge rallies, demonstration, padyatras, processions, bandhs, blockades, etc.

The launching of the mass-movement for the separate Union Territory for the Bodos and other Plain Tribals of Assam was declared through a huge mass-rally centrally organised at Kokrajhar. Presided over by Late Upendra Nath Brahma, the then President of the ABSU, the meeting resolved to send an urgent message to the Centre as well as
the State Government informing the launching the mass-movement by the Assam Tribals for a separate Union Territory. Many Tribal leaders of the time spoke at that rally urging upon the Centre to consider on their demand. It was declared in that rally that the movement for the separate Union Territory shall be “democratic, peaceful and non-violent”.

In the next programme, on 23rd March’1987 various District and Anchalik Committees of ABSU organised hunger-strikes in front of D.C., S.D.O. and S.D.C. Offices of the respective jurisdiction. Copies of Memorandum were submitted to the president, Prime Minister, Governor and Chief Minister of Assam. That programme also met with commendable success. This initial success emboldened the newly imbued ABSU to adopt further programme.

On 13th April’1987 the ABSU organised Mass-Rally throughout the State of Assam in its Anchalik Committee levels. This third programme of the movement met with satisfactory success.

The 12th June’1987 mass-rally at Guwahati was a turning point in the history of Bodoland Movement launched by the ABSU. That, very rally organised for the first time by the Bodos in the Capital City of the State could attract about one lakh Bodos who marched throughout the City in a huge procession. While the ABSU was emboldened with this initial success, it terrified the Assam Government and Assamese Population. While returning from the rally, chauvinist Assamese localities attacked a bus carrying the processionists from Kokrajhar at the Tihu Chowk. In that unfortunate incidents, Sujit Narzary, a student of Class-X, from Kokrajhar Govt. H.S. School was hit by a pelted stone on his head and lost his life. Mr. Chabiram Basumatary lost his eyes and another
one met with serious injury on his hands.

This incidents provided an ample scope to ABSU to arouse Anti-Assamese hatred and a nationalistic sentiment among the agitating Bodos and other Plain Tribals. On the following day, the dead-body of Sujit Nazary was brought to Kokrajhar where a huge public gathered to have a glimpse over the face of Bodo inmate to lose life at the hands of the Chauvinist Assamese for the first time.

The next day, on 13th June, a protest rally was taken out through the main roads of Kokrajhar Town against the killing of Sujit Narzary, by the Chauvinist Assamese people the day before. Rally, boycotts of classes, submission of memorandum, wearing black badges were the parts of this programme.

On 14th June’1987 the ABSU organised a public burial of Mr. Sujit Narzary at his village Bhatipara, 3 (Three) Kilometers away from Kokrajhar Town. The dead-body was taken to his home in a huge procession and given a decent burial. Late Upendra Nath Brahma, ahead of the procession, declared Mr. Sujit Narzary to be the “First Martyr” of the Movement for a Separate Bodo-Tribal State.

The above unfortunate aroused a deep suspicion and hatred against the mainstream Assamese population. The same later proved to be fatal for Assam and Assamese population, then fighting hard for its territorial integrity and to preserve its losing identity. By that time, encroachment of linguistic and religious minority people from Bangladesh have already turned out of proportion and many a vocal leader and thinkers of the State did not feel ashamed to be point out the fact that due to this unabated encroachment the original Assamese population turned to minority with just 13 percent. The six-year long AASU led Assam Movement
demanding re-deportation of foreign nationals from Assam and consequent Assamese Government following the historic Assam Accord (1985) had a hard time to put out the newly enflamed fire.

The very unpleasant truth remains that Assamese Chauvinism was in the zenith at that time. The historic Assam Accord came out with many promises to provide for many things so as to preserve and develop Assamese Language and their Culture. The newly found Asom Gana Parishad regional party and its government in the State strived hard to give a moral boosting to the first growing Assamese Chauvinism. For that, it had already adopted the infamous Four Language formula as against the Three Language Formula prevalent in the national level, imposing Assamese as compulsory subject in the schools for the Non-Assamese speaking Plain Tribals and linguistic minorities of the State. With the same goal in mind, knowledge of Assamese language and typing was made compulsory while selecting incumbents for government job. In the period following the 12th June incident, the ABSU intensified its programme of the movement for a Separate State. Then the ABSU began to pursue more vigorous programmes like Rasta Rokho, Rail Rokho, Tribal area Bandh, etc. Along with the intensification of the movement programmes, there were evidence of the growth of extremism on the part of the ABSU activists. It was seen that the violence had quietly penetrated into the body of the ABSU movement and some untoward incidents started to take place. The activists and the supporters alike began to harden their posture towards the people who found it difficult to comply with the movement programme. Assaulting of non-compliant and manhandling of the truckers on highway became almost a regular feature. The Non-Tribal residents in the Tribal dominated areas got
terrified and turned muke.

On 2\textsuperscript{nd} July'1987 the Central ABSU staged a huge mass demonstration in front of Janata Bhawan, Dispur. Thousands of demonstrators took part in that programme ignoring the incessant rain. They raised slogan echoing the sky with “Divide Assam 50:50”. A reminder was submitted to the Chief Minister of the State.

On 21\textsuperscript{st} July'1987 Mass Religious Prayer and Oath-Taking for a Separate State were performed in the district committee level. Dharmajogyas were performed and the ABSU activists and supporters prayed the Almighty and took oath to “Do and Die” for Separate State. The prayers were held through the traditional Bathou, Brahma and Christian Religious methods.

On 10\textsuperscript{th} August'1987 Mass Hunger-Strikes were staged in front of the D.C., S.D.O. and S.D.C. Offices. Thousands of volunteers were arrested particularly at Dhubri.

On 27\textsuperscript{th} August'1987 a 12-Hour Tribal Area Bandh was observed for the first time. The Bandh was spontaneous and met with grand success. The Bandh passed off peacefully throughout the State without any untoward incidents. The ABSU alleged that hundred of volunteers were arrested and tortured by the police during this programme.

On 9\textsuperscript{th} September'1987 a 24-Hour Tribal Area Bandh followed. This Bandh was observed throughout the State with grand success. Police opened fire upon the peaceful ABSU volunteers sitting peacefully to the blockade 52- National Highway at Lailangpara near Rowta Chariali in Darrang district at about 2-30 P.M. In the incident, Kabiram Basumatary (28) and Alendra Basumatary (18) were killed on the spot and Sabin Goyary was injured seriously.
This was the first incident of police firing upon the ABSU volunteers in the mass-movement for a Separate State. Thousands of ABSU volunteers were seriously in the police Lathi Charge that followed in different places. Hundreds of volunteers were arrested and tortured in the days immediately following the Bandh. Since then, heavy police action started to come down upon the ABSU activists and supporters to crack down the mass-movement for a Separate State.

On 15th September 1987 12-Hour Darrang District Bandh was observed in protest against the police firing upon the ABSU volunteers and killings at Laithi Charge during the last 9th September '87 programme.

From 24th to 25th September 1987 36-Hour Tribal Area Bandh was observed throughout the State. For the second time, the police opened fire upon the peaceful ABSU volunteers at 31-National Highway near Serfanguri of Kokrajhar district at about 8-45 A.M. on 25th September. One Obhiran Mwshahary (25) was shot from behind and killed on the spot. One Sahadev Brahma was seriously injured in that incident. Thousands of ABSU volunteers were beaten up heavily in the police Lathi Charge during that bandh. In the following days many movement supporters were arrested and tortured.

On 3rd October 1987 Protest Rallies and Demonstrations were held in front of D.C., S.D.O and S.D.C. officer Anchalik Committee levels against the police firing, arbitrary arrests and killing of ABSU volunteers. The district administrations tried to prohibit rallies by imposing Sec.144 Cr.P.C. but failed.

On 12th October 1987 Mass-Crying of Separate homeland was in village levels. Tens of thousand villagers participated in this programme
spontaneously and cried for Separate Homeland echoing the sky with slogans—"We want Separate Homeland", No Homeland No Rest", "Do for Homeland, Die for Homeland", "Divide Assam 50:50" etc.

On 28th October, 1987 Cultural Rallies and Processions were held successfully throughout the State with pomp and grandeur. Tens of thousands of youths and public participated in an unprecedented way. Bodo culture was displayed and traditional Bodo musical instruments were played and exhibited in the rally. That was a unique feature of the programmes of the ABSU movement for separate State.

On 10th November, 1987 around 1500 ABSU activists, volunteers and supporters staged a colourful Mass-Demonstration at Boat Club, New Delhi. The demonstration took out a procession from India gate to Rafi marg shouting slogans. The demonstration was added with a colourful Bodo cultural dance which was a special attraction of the programme. The demonstrators also carried numerous colourful banners and playcards with different slogans written on them.

Earlier in the morning before the rally started a delegations team met Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and submitted memorandum. A delegation team again met Mr. Bolaram Jakhar, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and submitted a memorandum.

On 24th November, 1987 12-Hour Kokrajhar district Bahdh was observed in protest against the killing of Phanen Sumfrmary, an ABSU supporter of Bengtol due to excessive torture in the police custody. The ABSU demanded judicial inquiry into the incident and for stoppage of police atrocities forthwith. Late sumfrmary was a state from his village Rani-Sundari near Bengtol on 20th November night and subsequently died in hospital due to police torture next morning.
From 26th to 28th November' 1987 48-Hour Rail Rakho programme was lunched successfully. Licemen at different points tried to disperse peaceful ABSU volunteers by heavy lathicharge. They also ransacked ABSU volunteer camps and Bodo houses neighbouring railway line demanding valuables.

From 26th to 11th December' 1987 48-Hours National Highway Bandh was observed successfully. There was heavy police patrol to make the Bandh a failure. Police alleged ABSU of resorting to violence during the Bandh which the ABSU refuted.

In the period following the 12th June incident, the ABSU intensified its programme of the movement for a separate State. Then the ABSU began to pursue more vigorous programmes like Rasta Rokho, Rail Rakho, Tribal area Bandha etc. Alongwith with the intensification of the movements programmes, there were evidence of the growth of extremism on the part of the ABSU activists. It was seen that violence had quietly penetrated into the body of ABSU movement and some untoward incidents started to take place. The activists and the supporters alike began to harden their posture towards the people who found it difficult to comply with the movement programme. Assaulting of non-compliants and manhandling of the truckers on highways became almost a regular feature. The Non-Tribal residents in the tribal dominated areas got terrified and turned muke.

In the above way, the movement for a separate Union Territory got intensified. The whole of the Tribal dominated areas and the State of Assam as a whole turned into a disturbed area. The Bodo people and other Tribal population in large number joined the movement very actively and turned hardcore supporters of the same. The whole Bodo area in
main became the vortex of the movement activities. Every move of the ABSU and its programmes began to receive tremendous support and draw huge gathering. All members of the Bodo community tried to contribute towards the movement in any capacity he or she could. In this way, the whole of Bodo population got involved, directly or indirectly in this movement for a separate State.

The common Assamese people hardened their attitude towards the agitating Bodos either. They began to indulge in false propaganda about the Bodoland movement. Their press began to poison the atmosphere by threatening the Assamese commonfolk of complete extinction of their existence and identity in case of further bifurcation of the State as a result of the creation of a separate Bodoland.

The mishandling of the ABSU movement by the State Government and the anti-Bodo role played by the Assamese people and the administration alike drew nationwide condemnation. On the other hand, the agitating Bodos were able to solicit sympathy from almost all quarters throughout the Country. The reign of terror let loose by the State Government was warned by all responsible individual and organisations as gross violation of human rights. They warned the Assamese people and their sectarian Government of possible worst consequence of this undemocratic and intolerant attitude.

The Assam Government and the Assamese people did not lag behind either. The State Government machinery turned against the agitating Bodo population and began to adopt all the means available for suppression of the movement. The State Government let loose State Terrorism on the revolutionary Bodos through the State Police parties, began to raid Bodo Villages day and night and resorted to arbitrary arrests. The raiding police
parties at the many times used to destroy household properties and poison the edibles in the house and water in the wells. In many occasions the raiding police personnel indulged into molestation of women in the houses and gang-rape. The police atrocities on the agitating Bodos have remained in their hearts as of untold suffering and misery.

The dawn of the year 1988 saw the more intensification of the ABSU movement for a Separate State. The movement programmes of the movement got widened and more widespread. By the passage of time, the course of the movement began to turn violent in its manifestation. The State Authorities began to allege ABSU of indulging into violence so as to make its programmes a success. Side by side, the Government also began to harden its attitude towards the movement for a Separate State. The police force became more and more ferocious and came down heavily so as to crush the ongoing ABSU movement for a Separate State. The administration became more restrictive on the movement programmes and imposed prohibitory orders every time when movement programmes were announced. The police force, during the village raids, began to take advantages of the absence of males in the houses and committed heinous crime like gang-rape of womenfolk. Day and night village raids became a routine occurrence in the Bodo dominated areas.

On 4th January'1988 great Mass-Rallies were held in the respective district committee headquarters of ABSU. An ever biggest mass-rally and longest ever procession was taken out at Kokrajhar. Around one and half a lakh jubilant demonstration with beautiful banners and placards shouted slogan aloud. The ABSU aimed this to be the biggest ever show of ABSU strength and an exhibition of the mass support in
the history of the movement for Separate State.

On 11th January’1988 12-Hour Kokrajhar District Bandh was observed on demand of transfer of Mr. L.N. Tamuli, ADC of Kokrajhar whom the ABSU alleged to be Anti-Tribal Officer. Police opened fire at Kashikotra of Kokrajhar district and one Swarka Narzary was shot dead. His dead body was taken to Dhubri for post-mortem and allegedly threw out into river Brahmaputra. The mother and sister of the deceased who were waiting for the dead-body for cremation were Lathi-Charged by the police.

On 18th January’1988 as per invitation of the President, ABSU President Upendra Nath Brahma met His Excellence R. Venkatraman at the Rastrapati Bhawan, New Delhi. He had a detailed talk and apprised the Hon’ble President of the ongoing mass-movement for a Separate State. He submitted a Memorandum the demands of the ABSU including the demands for creation of Separate Union Territory on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra.

On 22nd January’1988 a 5-Member ABSU delegation met Union Minister of State for Home, Mr. Chintamoni Panigrahi at his residence and submitted a detailed Memorandum. Mr. Panigrahi offered an Autonomous Council with more autonomy with radical amendment of the Constitution. The ABSU declined to accept the same.

On 25th January’1988 Protest Day was observed against the Police Firing at Kashikotra and killing of Swarka Narzary. Wearing black badges, hoisting of black flags and boycott of classes were parts of the programme.

On 25th & 27th January’1988 night police party raiding No.12 Bhumka village near Bushmuri at Kokrajhar district gang-raped nine Bodo women. This heinous barbaric beastly act was tried to be kept in dark by
the Assam Government but it was highlighted by the National Media though lately and was condemned by all quarters.

In the State Assembly even, during its session Home Minister, Mr. Bhrigu Kumar Phukan tried to defend the above-mentioned beastly act of the Assam Police. Under pressure and consequent upon the visit by a Parliamentarian Team, a high-power judicial inquiry was ordered. The inquiry report vindicated the heinous crime and following a verdict of the Guwahati High Court the criminal police personnel were dismissed from their service.

On 10th & 11th February’1988 2 days Mass-Hunger Strike was was staged in front of D.C, S.D.O. and S.D.C. Offices. Thousands of volunteers participated peacefully and made the programme a success.

From 1st to 5th March’1988 a 100-Hours National Highway Bandh was observed. Police and Official sources accused ABSU of restoring to large-scale violence during the Bandh period. The ABSU refuted the same as the pretext to justify the police atrocities and village raids.

On 18th April’1988 Peace Padyatra was organised in National Highway throughout the State. The ABSU claimed that this established ABSU’s firm belief and commitment to the democratic and non-violent method of movement. But the district administration of Kokrajhar did not provide permission to take out the Peaceful Padyatra and instead imposed Sec. 144 Cr. P.C. The ABSU dubbed it as violation of the fundamental rights and alleged that the police lathicharged upon hundreds of Peaceful Padyatris injuring womenfolk seriously.

On 27th April’1988 Protest Meeting and Shouting in villages throughout the State were held in protest against the Kokrajhar district administration for not giving permission for Peace Padyatra on 18th April
last and lathicharge upon the Peaceful Padyatris curbing the democratic right of the Bodos.

From 27th to 30th April’1988 a 72-Hours Assam Bandh was observed. Gunjer Basumatary (28) was shot dead in police firing near railway line at Rangapara near Gossaigaon in Kokjhar district at around 3-45 P.M. On 27th April, 1 (Two) other ABSU volunteers, Mihimaya Dwimary (19) and Kwisor Dwimary (16) were attacked and killed by tea-garden labourers in Dhanshiri Tea Estate of Darrang district at instigation of the A.G.P. supporters, ABSU alleged. The AGP leaders and supporters were inciting the common people to resist the ABSU movement physically and thus cause communal clash and civil war of which the two ABSU volunteers fell victim.

On 9th May 1988 a police party went to village Sonai Serfang near Udalguri in Darrnag district and raided the village in early hours. They opened fire indiscriminately upon the villagers killing Purna kanta Dwimary (16) and injuring several others seriously. Miss. Praneswari Basumatary (16) was seriously injured and hospitalised in Gauhati Medical College.

On 12th May 1988 a big police party raided the village Soraibil area in Kokrajhar district and arrested 8 (Eight) innocent villagers. Police opened fire upon the womenfolk resisting the police from taking away the innocent people, killing Gaide Basumatary (32) on the spot and Miss. Helena Basumatary (15) later died in the hospital. Gaide was the mother of Seven Children and the youngest Miss. Rombha Basumatary of 3 Months age died following death of her mothers after a few months. It was suspected that the shattered and deformed dead-body was taken to Dhubri for post-mortem and subsequently thrown into Brahmaputra River.
In the incident, 3 (Three) other women were seriously hit by bullets and hospitalised. They were subsequently arrested and put to jail. The ABSU termed the incident as “unprecedented in the political history of Assam” which shows flagrant violation of human life of civilian Bodo men and women. This, as ABSU alleges, is “nothing but only a suppressive policy to genocide the Bodos.”

On 16th May 1988 the ABSU organised Anchalik Level Mass Rallies throughout the State. Lakhs of public and volunteers participated making the programme a success.

On 17th May 1988 a 12-Hours Tribal Area Bandh was observed in protest against unprovoked police firing, killings and atrocities on Bodo people particularly on ABSU activists and supporters. The programme passed off peacefully and was a success, as ABSU claimed.

From 22nd to 26th May 1988 the ABSU observed 100-Hours Rail Rokho programme. It passed off peacefully without any untoward incidents. The ABSU claimed the programme to be a grand success and that is confirmed non-violent method of movement.

From 14th to 18th June 1988 again a 100-Hours Rail Rokho programme was launched. This also, the ABSU claimed, passed off peacefully without any untoward incidents and was a grand success.

On 29th June 1988 once again the ABSU activists and supporters prayed the Almighty God for a Separate Homeland by holding Dharmajogya in the Anchalik Committee Level. The Kokrajhar district administration imposed Sec. 144 Cr. P.C. and tried to frustrate the same. Lakh of people took oath in the name of God to Do or Die until and unless a Separate State is achieved.

From 11th to 15th July 1988 the ABSU organised 100-Hour Assam
On 15\textsuperscript{th} August the ABSU observed “Black Day” and boycotted the Independence Day celebration and gave a call for 12-Hour Assam Bandh in protest against excessive police atrocities, Terrorist and Disruptive activities (Prevention) Act 1987, violation of Human Rights of the Bodos and continued village raids and torture by police.

From 16\textsuperscript{th} to 20\textsuperscript{th} August 1988 the ABSU gave call for 5-days Office Bandh in Tribal Areas as a part of continued movement on demand of a Separate Union Territory in the north bank of Brahmaputra for the Plain Tribals of Assam, creation of District Council in the south bank of the Brahmaputra and inclusion of Bodo-Kacharis of Karbi-anglang into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

On 6\textsuperscript{th}, 8\textsuperscript{th}, 10\textsuperscript{th} & 12\textsuperscript{th} Sept’1988 the ABSU gave call for Alternate 4 days Bandh. Railway was exempted during the Bandh.

On 29\textsuperscript{th} Sept’1988 the ABSU declared suspension of all movement programme so as to facilitate the governments to think out an amicable solution to the Bodo Movement. This was considered, by many quarters, as a strategy of the ABSU to create a favourable atmosphere for holding its Annual Conference. The Government Media as well as the National Media published it prominently in a welcome way. The Bodo hadot Dafunggra Hanja (Bodo Liberation Front) through a Press Release on 11\textsuperscript{th} December regretted “neither the State Government nor the Central Government has made any positive response to this significant suspension of agitation”. It recalled that the AGP Government in Assam was alleging that ABSU was not giving time and scope to think over the problem, and the ABSU suspended the agitation in response to it, and now it is completely ignored by the State Government itself.”
From 20\textsuperscript{th} to 22\textsuperscript{nd} December 1988 the 20\textsuperscript{th} Annual Conference of ABSU was held at Bashbari in Dhubri District. In this Conference, the ABSU upgraded the demand for a Union Territory to the Full Fledged Separate State and christened the name of the demanded Separate State as "Bodoland". Moreover, the ABSU dropped other 89 Demands of its 92 Point Demand character and retained just the 3 (Three) Political Demands viz., (1) Creation of a Separate State of Bodoland on the north bank of the Brahmaputra for the Bodos and other Plain Tribals, (2) Creation of 2 (Two) Autonomous District Council namely, (a) Nilachal Autonomous District Council comprising Goalpara and South Kamrup and (b) Lalung Autonomous District Council comprising Morigaon District and (3) Inclusion of the Bodo-Kacharis living in the Karbianglang Autonomous District Council into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

The Conference retained Upendra Nath Brahma and Rabiram Brahma as President and General Secretary respectively of ABSU for another term. In this mammoth gathering, Mr. Neena Kadu, Advisor of All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU) emboldened the Bodo common folk by declaring that he will back to them only when Separate Bodoland is materialised. Before the gathering, U.N. Brahma declared, "This is Revolution, Revolution! This will have no end till it is achieved".

The dawn of the year 1989 saw the intensification of the Bodoland Movement. Following the Bashbari Conference, the ABSU kept a low key of its activities. It did not take up any major programme relating to the movement till the end of the January’89. On 8\textsuperscript{th} February the Chief of Bodo Volunteer Force (BVF) Mr. Sonaram Baglary was arrested and put in the District Jail at Kokrajhar. The Assam Government suspected
that the BVF is involved in the violent incidents those occurring in the Tribal Dominated Areas coinciding with the movement programme.

**THE MIDDLE VIOLENT PHASE:**

The initial democratic, peaceful and non-violent Bodoland Movement spearheaded by the ABSU was really peaceful and non-violent in the beginning. But following the historic Bashbari Conference it gradually developed into a violent one. The card was first played by the Assam Government, which let loose its forces on the innocent Bodo People, naturally the Bodos retaliated. Prior to the 120-Hour Bandh, the Bartaman Daily in its 5th February issue reported that reports of violence throughout the time of movement was disturbing. During the last 12-Hour violent activities were resorted by the Bodo extremists in Kokrajhar and Darrang Districts of Assam. And Asstt. Station Master and an Engine Driver of Sesapani Railway Station were killed by the extremists. Besides, the extremists abducted 4 persons from Kokrajhar and supporters smashed 20 buses in Nowgaon. They blew up the Railway Track between the Bijni and Patiladaha by throwing bombs and burnt down a Wooden Bridge at Kajigaon and 2 (Two) Wooden Bridges in Goalpara Sub-Division.

A very disturbing trend was then prevailing among the Bodos at that period. Although the ABSU could snatch away the leadership of the movement for a Separate State from PTCA since 1987, the hold of the PTCA leaders and the organisation over a section of people and a few pockets was still intact. Moreover, the PTCA did not altogether give up the demand of a Separate “Udayachal” and the programme of movement though irregular ones. It still harboured the hope for Bodo leadership and looked for ways and means for regaining the same. With this purpose in mind, the PTCA leaders, seeing a rising of the ABSU leadership,
incited the common Bodo folk to rise against the growing menace of the ABSU. Thus provoked, the committed followers and believers of PTCA fought against ABSU and in their pockets of influence, harassed the ABSU activists. This created a great hurdle in the working and the success of the ABSU programmes. Not many few ABSU activists and supporters fell victim of the wrath of the PTCA supporters. Thus hindered, the ABSU thought about an end to this menace of the PTCA once and for all and took up a relentless programme for destruction of the PTCA bastions.

The ABSU volunteers attacked the villages of PTCA supporters and destroyed it for good. Also, they targeted the PTCA leaders of their life and many PTCA leaders fell prey of their manhunt. The PTCA supporters also retaliated with their all might but could not withstand the growing force of the ABSU. In the intervening period, the ABSU activists attacked Bodo Gendrabil, a village PTCA supporters. This oft-repeated the attack on ABSU activists during 1983 by PTCA supporters.

For the first time in that year, the ABSU called for a 150-Hour Assam Bandh beginning from 22\textsuperscript{nd} January, denouncing the observation Republic Day. The Bodo hadot Dafunggra Hanja (BDH), honouring this programme on the demand of a Separate Bodo State, cancelled its scheduled Flag-Hoisting Programme on 26\textsuperscript{th} January, the Republic day. Of course, the organisation retained the programme of submission of memorandum to the Hon’ble President of India and appeal to the World Community on behalf of the Bodos.

The ABSU, for the second time in the year took up a 120-Hour Assam Bandh from 16\textsuperscript{th} February. The Statesman in its editorial of 15\textsuperscript{th} February issue observed “The ABSU’s claim that the State Government deliberately scuttled the negotiations and is bent on forcibly suppressing
the agitation may be exaggerated, but what is obvious is that the lines of communication that had earlier been established between the two sides has been broken down. This all the more deplorable since the Bodos had even suspended the movement for some time last year to facilitate talks. But with the ABSU now determined to organise a 120-Hour Bandh, the possibility of confrontation between the forces of law and order and the agitationists has increased. The ABSU’s more aggressive methods are clearly modeled on the anti-foreigner campaign that the AASU mounted at the turn of decade. When the latter launched its unabashedly sectarian movement in 1979, it probably did not realise how its violent tactics would be imitated in later years by other student groups. From that standpoint, having first assiduously sown the seeds of parochialism, the AGP is now reaping the whirlwind.

In view of the 120-hour Assam Bandh call given by ABSU from 16th February army troops were moved into the district of Kokrajhar, and Udalguri sub-division of District Five companies of armed forces had already taken position at various places in Kokrajhar district and three companies in Udalguri sub-division of Darrang district. The army would have to be used in case of large-scale violence during the Bandh. Violence continued unabated in Kokrajhar district. A labourer succumbed to his injury when a group of Bodo terrorists fired at a truck in which some labourers were traveling. A number of organisations condemned the killing of innocent people in the bomb blast. The UTNLF however alleged “such bombs are known to be only in the hands of the Assamese-speaking extremists in order to malign the ABSU and UTNLF, which is waging democratic, peaceful and constitutional struggle for a homeland for all ethnic groups.” The Assam unit of Congress (S) and State Youth
Congress (S) have also condemned the bomb blast. While the Congress (S) demanded that the government immediately convene an all-party meeting to discuss the issue as it had failed to provide security to the people (The Statesman, 16th February'1989).

The 120-Hour Assam Bandh called by ABSU ended on the morning of 21st February'1989. Since 11th February'1989 a total of 40 people died due to violence in the State. One woman was killed on 20th February'1989. The Director General of Assam Police Mr. S.V. Subramaniam told the reporters that on 20th February a group of armed Tribal men and women attacked the patrolling police force in Goreswar area of Kamrup district. At first the police tried to disperse the mob. But the mob attacked the police and damaged the police vehicle. At last the police was compelled to open fire at the mob during which women died. Mr. Bhrigu Phukan, Home Minister of Assam invited the Bodo leaders for a discussion on 28th February'1989 so that a peaceful solution is arrived at. He said that any problem can be solved through discussions and not by violence. The Assam Government, in the meantime described the All Bodo Students’ movement for a Separate State as “Anti-National”. The Assam Government alleged that the ABSU movement had the patronage of some very influential members of ruling party in Delhi (The Statesman February 22, 1989).

The AGP Government alleged that behind the Bodo Movement there is a hand of Buta Singh, Union Home Minister. This allegation was on the basis of the statement made by Mr. Sonaram Baglary, convener of the ABSU Volunteer Force, who was arrested from Kokrajhar on 8th February’1989. Mr. Baglary said that during ABSU’s discussions with Central Leaders in Delhi, Buta Singh advised them to give up their
89 demands and insist only on the tree political demands (Statesman 22, February 1989). The ABSU called a 12-Hour Assam Bandh on 24th February 1989 demanding unconditional release of the ABSU Volunteer Force Convener, Sonaram Baglary.

During the Parliament Session on 24th February 1989 Dinesh Goswami, AGP M.P. alleged that Santosh Mohan Dev and Home Minister Buta Singh are inciting the Bodos of Assam and that he had definite information on that. Santosh Mohan denied the charges. However, Goswami's remark angered the Congress Members who shouted against the remark (Bartaman 25th February).

It was reported that during the past week, the extremists killed 18 people and burnt to ashes 15 houses in the Serfanguri area of Kokrajhar district. The extremists snatched away 123 Rifles with Ammunition from Assam Forest Protection Force at Jharbari, 40 Kilometers from Kokrajhar (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 16th). The Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Home Minister Bhrigu Kumar Phukan met Union Home Minister Buta Singh and had discussion for more than one hour on the Bodo movement. Buta Singh was reported to have said that the movement was becoming violent and if this continued then overall development of the State and the life of the people would be hampered. Chief Minister Mahanta alleged that some Congress Leaders are supporting the Bodo Movement. But Mr. Singh denied the allegation and said that the Central Government would in no way support the movement. He told Mr. Mahanta that his government should endeavour to safeguard the Culture and Tradition of different language-speaking group of the State. He also said that the Bodo Movement is gradually taking a violent turn and hence if immediate discussion on the issue is not started then the situation would
become dangerous. Therefore, the State should come forward before the situation worsened. He advised the Chief Minister to negotiate with the Bodo agitators for immediate solution. He however assured the Chief Minister that the Centre would help him in every sphere in order to solve the Bodo Problem.

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There was an exchange of fire between the CRPF and Bodo Extremists on 22nd February'1989. The ABSU called for a 24-Hour Assam Bandh on 24th February. The ABSU demanded that the Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta be arrested immediately as he has been spreading “Communal Sentiments”. It said that ABSU would like to attend the 28th February talk in the presence of Central Government only (Bartaman, 25th February).

The home minister of Assam, Mr. Bhrigu Kumar Phukan invited the ABSU leaders for talks scheduled to be held at Guwahati on 18th February 1989. But the ABSU was undecided over attending the talks with the Assam Government. The ABUS leaders were having differences of opinion over sitting in talks with the Assam Government on the question of tactics, though not on principle. All knew well that the will
not produce any result. The moderates felt that the ABSU should adopt the tactics adopted by the AASU during the Assam Agitation and secure release of Ms. Sonaram Baglary by including his name in the list of participants of the talk. They recalled that AASU included the name of Zoinath Sarmah for talks while he was detained under TADA. The AASU said that it would attend the talk only if all the named members could attend it and the Centre had no option but to release Zoinath Sarmah. But the hardliners of ABSU pointed but that as the state Government has set a precondition that movement should be suspended and no talk would be held on the division of Assam. The President of Kokrajher district committee of ABSU, Swmbla Basumatary said that they have specified the demand and if the State Government cannot concede the same it should say so, so that they can negotiate directly with the Centre. {The Statesman, 26Feb.}

The bomb blast during the 12-Hour Assam Bandh was widely condemned. The Congress (S) and Youth Congress (S) of the State condemned the blast while the Congress (S) demanded that an all-party meeting be convened to discuss the issue as it had failed to provide security to the people (The Statesman 16th February). In the meantime, the Assam Branch of CPM in its State Committee meeting favoured regional or local autonomy for the Tribals of Assam. In this meeting, its All-India Leaders, E.M.S. Nambudiripad was also present. In the statement they published it was said that the demand by ABSU for a Separate State was not justified. However, the Assam State Unit condemned the violent method adopted by the ABSU and said that violence is not the right way of solving the socio-political problem. It welcomed the step taken by the State Government for its endeavour to
sit in the discussion and said that both the ABSU and AGP Government should discuss the issue without any precondition (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 26\textsuperscript{th} February).

Meanwhile, Pradip Kumar Daimary, Vice-President and Rabiram Brahma, General Secretary of ABSU were in Calcutta on 26\textsuperscript{th} February. They alleged that the AGP Government in Assam is following a repressive policy against the Bodos and that in fact they are under house arrest. They also alleged that the Assam Government never showed any interest to solve the Bodo Problem. The Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta invited them for a talk but he did not attend the meeting. Because of this indifference shown by the Assam Government the ABSU in its 20\textsuperscript{th} Annual Conference held at Bashbari decided to demand a Separate State for the Bodos.

In the meantime, AGP Government in Assam alleged that GNLF supremo Subhash Ghishing had been helping the Bodo agitators. Subhash Ghishing told on 26\textsuperscript{th} February at Bagdogra Airport that ABSU President Upendra Nath Brahma met him in September 1988 and wanted to know about his opinion on the movement and requested for his help. Ghishing in his reply reportedly said, “I do not want to interfere in the matter of other State. Because I am engaged in the development of Darjeeling Hills Council”.

On the other hand, the Central Committee of AGP alleged that the Congress Leaders of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and New Delhi are patronizing the Bodo extremists. According to it, the Congress Leaders in Shillong, Silchar, Calcutta and Siliguri are offering consultation to the ABSU. The Congress is misleading the young Bodos encouraging them to resort to violence (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 28\textsuperscript{th} February). In
Mr. Puma A. Sangma, Chief Minister of Meghalaya said, "When you are unable to solve any problem by yourself then you pass on the fault to others".

As a last resort, the AGP Government of Assam extended an invitation to the Bodo leaders for talks scheduled on 15th June. The ABSU and the BPCA rejected this invitation "because the AGP Government wants to make the Bodoland issue die down through police solution instead of political negotiation. The Bodo leaders cannot participate the 15th June Talk at the gun-point, which is a flagrant humiliation and threat for the Bodos since the State Government has not yet taken initiative to create a congenial atmosphere and hostile attitude of the State Government is at rampant." It said "The invitation of the AGP Government for 15th June Talk with the movement leaders is nothing but a gimmick and farce." The Bodo leaders alleged that the State Government of Assam is be up and doing to divert the agitating Bodo people from their main issue – "Bodoland" by making a lot of conspiracy and cracked diplomacy in the name of talks.

Instead of acceptance of the invitation for the talk on 15th June’89, the ABSU and BPCA called for a 340-Hour Assam Bandh from 26th June "in demand of Centre’s intervention on Bodoland issue." The BPCA affirmed "the Bodos shall never agree with any arrangement short of a full-fledged Separate Bodoland State and will continue the ongoing the movement until the cherished ultimate goal is achieved.

Purna Narayan Sinha, Chief Editor of "Mahajati", Tezpur in an article titled "Why Bodo Demand is Absurd" tried to argue that the Bodos have been in Assam for the last six hundred years only and they are not ethnically linked to the Kacharis or the Maches. According to him the
Bodos are the Chinese people and their demand for Bodoland is an absurd proposition. He writes, “Since the demand for a Bodoland in the area claimed by the Chinese is an absurd proposition, the local population opposes it tooth and nail because the Tribals may have now crossed 8000,000 mark out of the total of one crore.” (The Statesman, 12th May).

Rev. Hiracharan Narzinary, an authority on the Bodos take pity on Mr. Sinha of his ignorance about the Bodos. He writes, “I pity on Mr. Sinha for his ignorance of the history of the Bodos. I would advise not to make such a statement in future without having an authority on the subject. Sarat Chandra Sinha was Chief Minister of Assam who is a Rajbangshi from Goalpara District. Rajbangshis in Assam falls under “Other Backward Classes” category and are ethnically akin to the Bodo-Kacharis” (S.K. Chaube, Hill Politics in NE India, 1973).

During the ABSU agitation, the worst violence took place at Gohpur of Sonitpur district. It was a repetition of 1983 when there was an ethnic clash in course of the ABSU Movement. From 9th to 14th August the local Assamese population under instigation by the AGP leaders attacked the Bodo villages in the area. According to the Official Report, 19 (Nineteen) people died due to clashes between Bodos and Non-Bodos at Gohpur in Sonitpur district and at Latekijan and Simaluguri in Lakhimpur district. The unofficial sources put this figure of casualties to hundreds. Enquiries in and around Gohpur revealed that a particular Tribal Community was systematically attacked which was confirmed by the written report of the Assam Police. The ABSU directly blamed the local AGP leaders as inciting the local Assamese people to take on the Bodos who want to bifurcate Assam as Mr. Ganesh Kutum, the local MLA himself masterminded the genocide plan. (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 14th August).
Following the attack of the local Assamese population, to escape their wrath the Bodo people of the areas fled to the Jangles of Arunachal Pradesh. A large number of them crossed the International Border and took shelter in the Jangles of Bhutan. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh and the Royal Government of Bhutan took the pain of providing shelter and relief to the aggrieved Bodos.

The Lakhimpur District Committee of ABSU through a meeting dated 16th August'89 expressed “deep condolence to those who had lost their lives and grief over the lose of properties in the Simulaguri in Lakhimpur district and Gohpur of Sonitpur district communal violence”. In the meeting the Committee “assumes and publicly announce the Massacre of Gohpur and Simulaguri are the handy-work of the Assam Government and Mr. Ganesh Kutum, the panchayat Minister of Assam Government is the instigator of Gohpur Massacre.”

Following the attack of the local Assamese population, the Bodo inmates of the areas fled to the Jangles of Arunachal Pradesh. A large number of them crossed the International Border and took shelter in the Jangles of Bhutan. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh arranged relief camp at Kokila and provided relief materials to the Bodos. The Royal Government of Bhutan took the pain to provide shelter and relief to the fleeing Bodos inmates and arranged a relief camp at Sandrup Jhunkar. The Bodos were grateful enough to both the Governments for their kindness and help. The Lakhimpur District Committee of ABSU on behalf of the Bodos “praised the Governor R.D. Pradhan and Chief Minister Gegong Apong of Arunachal Pradesh for their promptness in sending the news of Simulaguri and Gohpur violence directly to the Central Government and for rendering the shelter and giving relief to the victims
The ABSU Movement reached such a dimension that the entire North-Eastern States were in a state of stalemate. The Assam Bandhs called by the ABSU not only affected the NE States but the Assam Government itself remained in a fix. While the ABSU receded for a time, the PTCA came out with its old demand for “Udayachal”. In support of the demand, a 175-Hour Assam Bandh from 3rd March’1989 was launched (Ananda Bazar Patrika, 28th February). The five Congress (I) led Hills States were also the worst victims of the ABSU’s unending bandhs. This may qualify for the Guiness Book Record but was suicidal for the region during the rainy seasons. The Chief Ministers of these States moved to the Prime Minister and sought the initiative of the Centre to solve the worsening Bodo crisis. Opposition leaders however interpreted the move as the “tightening the nose” around the AGP’s neck and preparing the ground for Presidential Rule in Assam. (The Statesman, 23rd July).

Finding no other way out, the Government in Centre announced on 9th August that it will invite the ABSU for talks in New Delhi within a short time. The ABSU warmly welcomed it. The Press Spokesman of the organisation in New Delhi in a statement said that the announced talk was a long overdue and the Bodo leaders has been making appeals for the same which didn’t get due response till recently. He congratulated Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, Chief Minister of Assam for agreeing to the Union Home Minister for sitting with the ABSU leaders outside Assam for a peaceful solution to the burning Bodoland issue in no time.

Unheeded by the various bandh programme launched till then, the ABSU had a last resort of compelling the Center to get moved. It declared
a 1001-Hour Assam Bandh beginning from the 15th August. This really had desired effect on the Center and it began hectic consultation with Assam Government. The State Government of Assam was virtually forced to agree to invitation to ABSU for talk in the capital.

Finally, the ABSU was invited for talk by the Central Government to be held at Assam Bhawan in New Delhi on 28th August. The ABSU accepted the invitation and a 40-member delegation took part in the Tripartite Talk. The ABSU-BPCA delegation team however refused to accept the hospitality offered by the Assam Government in protest against the long time ill treatment and injustice meted out to them by the Assamese people and their Government.

The ABSU delegation to the first tripartite talk comprised the members from ABSU, BPAC, AATWWF and BPUHRCL and was led by ABSU President Upendra Nath Brahma. No representative or leaders of any political party were included in the team and the delegation in entirety had a fresh appearance before the Governments.

**NEGOTIATION PHASE OF THE MOVEMENT:**

As stated in the previous Chapter, the talks on the Bodo Problem began on 28th August 1989 at New Delhi. The then Congress Government under Late Rajiv Gandhi took a keen interest on finding an amicable solution to the Bodo Problem. It pressurised upon the State Government of Assam to hold talks with the movement leaders so as to help find solution to the Bodo emphase. It was necessitated evidently because then Assam had a Non-Congress Government and lapse in consulting it for initiating a talk for solution of a State Problem would have given an impression that the Congress Government at the Centre was trying find an excuse to topple the Non-Congress Government in
Assam, in collusion to the agitating Bodos. Moreover, the State Government had already concocted a story of RAW help to the agitating Bodos so as to destabilise the Non-Congress Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) Government of Assam. Even when the other Government of North-East States raised the matter of the stop of essential supplies to the region as result of the Bodo Movement the Assam Government as well as the Assamese People in general fabricated these facts as the conspiracy of the Congress Party so as to topple the Non-Congress Government in Assam. Thus in almost every move of the Centre to initiate negotiation with the Bodo agitators the Assam Government and the Assamese People saw a clear ploy to impose Presidential Rule in Assam. Thus the fact that the state government of Assam was a non-congress helped it much to remain indifferent to the Bodo Movement as any sort of initiative would have certainly been interpreted as interference by the central Government. For the same reason, despite having sympathy to the causes of the Bodos and feeling of urgency for the solution of the Bodo problem the centre could not take any substantial initiative towards the solution of the Bodo problem for long.

In the opening of the first round of the tripartite talks, Upendra Nath Brahma, the then president of the ABSU offered an Opening Speech. In his speech he expected that this talk will pave the way for a permanent political solution to the vexed Bodo problem. For that he solicited all help and co-operation from the State Government and the Centre both.

Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, Chief Minister of Assam, in his Opening Remarks, welcomed all representatives participating in the first round of Triparticate Talk. He emphasised on the point “the entire country watching us today with great expectations.” So he expressed the hope
“all of us will be able to rise to the occasion, relegate all our obsession, emotions and sentiments to the background and make a positive effort to evolve a common approach to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the various Tribal Communities of Assam.”

Mrs. Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Union Minister and representative of the Centre “stressed the need for creating a peaceful climate before any possible political solution can be considered.” She stressed that violence must stop.

During the talk, the representatives of the Bodos took an aggressive posture and heavily attacked on the Assam Government for letting loose: “State Terrorism” upon the agitating Bodos. The State Government tried to defend it but proved helpless on the face of the fierce attack from the side of the Bodos. Very feebly it tried to nullify the allegations of the Bodos but subsequently had to accept the claims of the Bodos. Over and above, the Bodo representatives demanded that the ongoing Bodo Movement be recognised as political problem and not merely a Law and Order problem. On the face of the gesture the State Government of Assam had to recognise the Bodo Problem as political problem. In principle, it was agreed that the causes of the Bodo Movement was just one and demand urgent solution. As anticipated, the first round of the Triplicate Talks paved the way for further negotiations on the Bodo problem with conclusive outcome.

In the talk, the ABSU President agreed, “Violence can not lead to any political solution” of the Bodo Problem. He stressed, “all forms of violence and atrocity must stop and climate be created for a meaningful dialogue for a political solution.” He agreed to facilitate creation of such an atmosphere but stresses on the point “to enable the ABSU to participate
in efforts in this direction, indiscriminate violence against the Bodos should be put an end ant that all prohibitory and special Laws and Measures must be suspended.” The Chief Minister and Home Minister of Assam assured, “if ABSU gives a firm commitment that it would refrain from all forms of violence, the State Government would suspend various special Laws and Measures after observing the situation.”

Now as the first round of talks have already been started, there are no more hurdle for the Centre in taking steps for further talks. Thus the second round of the talks was held on 5th October'1989. Then the ABSU led a smaller delegation team of 20 Members. The State Government of Assam also had a smaller representation; Mrs. Rajendra Kumari Bajpai again represented the Centre in the talks. Then the talks could proceed more on many substantial issues without much hindrance from either sides.

In the second round, the Bodo team “reiterated their demand for a separate Bodoland and stressed that further discussion should be held on this deman.” Dr. Rajendra Kumari Bajpai, Central Representative stated “the Policy of the Government of India was against any further division of States.” The Chief Minister of Assam stated that the Government would be prepared to examine an appropriate legal, political and administrative arrangement acceptable to all sections of the people of the State.”

It was noted with satisfaction that the agreement arrived at during the last discussion had by and large achieved the primary objectives of curbing violence, despite violent incidents immediately after the discussion on 28-8-1989. The positive gesture of the Government of Assam in withdrawing some of the special Laws like the Disturbed Areas
Act and the Armed Forces Special Power Act was noted. The ABSU assured to reciprocate by taking further positive steps aimed at stopping all types of violence and to create the atmosphere required to evolve a political solution to problem acceptable to sections of the people. There was a general agreement that the positive gains achieved during the process of discussions should be consolidated, by continuing efforts to find solution to the problem.

Despite the above satisfactory note, a few shortcomings were visible. It was seen that the ABSU requested the Assam Government to release all those arrested persons. Government of Assam agreed to consider this request except in respect of heinous offences. The ABSU and BPAC also demanded that TADA, 144 Cr. P.C. and Police pickets be withdrawn from the affected areas. The Government of Assam stated that in view of the prevailing Law and Order situation in the State a blanket withdrawal not be possible. On the question of rehabilitation of Bodos in the relief camps in Assam it was agreed that joint visit of representatives of the Government of Assam and ABSU will be organised to persuade such Bodo inmates in these camps to return to their home. On the behalf of the Government of Assam, the Chief Minister and the Home Minister offered all security and protection in all affected areas. In the mean time the State Government Officials would continue to make efforts to persuade the Bodo inmates in the relief camps to return to their homes as early as possible. Also, it was decided that future discussion should be held with smaller delegation to evolve a political, administrative and legal solutions to the problem acceptable to all sections of the people of the State.

It pressed hard for getting a concrete offer from the State
Government for the Bodos. But the State Government did not show any enthusiasm for that. Rather it offered for implementation of Panchayati Raj in the Bodo areas. The Bodo leaders could not take it easily and dubbed it to be an insult on the self-respect of the Bodos. They found the offer meaningless as it is much lower to the demand and expectations of the Bodos and alleged that the Assam Government had no real interest in finding out an amicable and meaningful solution to the Bodo Problem.

In the meantime, the general election was announced and the National front under the leadership of Mr. V.P. Singh inflicted a crushing defeat on the Congress. New National Front Government under the leadership of Mr. V.P. Singh came to power in the Centre. It showed no much interest in continuing the talks with the Bodo leaders in the beginning. For the ABSU leaders also, it took a long time to test the nerve of the New Government in the Centre. It had to hold patients for long two months to get a call for next round of talk.

On the 3rd January 1990 the third round of Triplicate Talks began at New Delhi. The fact that at that times both the State and Center had Non-Congress Governments facilitated much in close coordinator between the two in respect of Bodo Problem. Then the Center had deputed Mr. Subodh Kant Sahay, Minister of State for Home as its representative. The Bodo leaders and the Assam Government also deputed smaller teams to the talk. Only a few preliminary things could be worked out in this talk as the Government in the Centre was new one.

In his Introductory Speech, ABSU President Upendra Nath Brahma congratulated the National front Government newly installed at the Centre headed by V.P. Singh and appreciated the initiative to continue the ongoing triplicate talks after coming to power newly. He drew the attention of
Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, Union Minister and Representative of the Centre as he has come to the talk newly with the change of the Government at the Centre. He made it clear that the ABSU and BPAC do not believe in violent agitation but belief in Democratic System and Solution. He stressed that a just political solution is to be found out to the Bodo Problem. But he observed that the State Government as well as Centre have least seriousness and sincerity in this direction. He hopped that the Centre and the State Government would come forward with an open mind and agree to creation of separate Bodoland State, which is the only way out for the permanent peace in Assam. Otherwise, he warned, that the ethnic conflict will last long and the struggle of Bodoland will continue.

The fourth round of Triplicate Talks was held on 9th March’1990. As Upendra Nath Brahma, President of ABSU could not turn up in that talk, General Secretary Mr. Rabiram Brahma led the Bodo delegation. In his Introductory Speech Mr. Brahma, on behalf of the ABSU President congratulated the National Front Government for arranging the fourth round of the Triplicate Talks. He expressed the gravest concern over the postponement of the 23rd February’90 talk due to negligence of the Assam Chief Minister and dubbed it as a matter of great humiliation to Bodos. He appraised anew to the central Representative of the adamant attitude of the present AGP Government of Assam in matter of taking initiative to solve the burning Bodoland issue within the framework of the Indian Constitution through peaceful political negotiation even after the lapse of three years he alleged that rather the AGP Government in Assam is taking Bodoland issue as mere law and order problem. He also noted that Assam Government also have failed to keep its commitment
made in earlier talks specially in the matter of releasing all ABSU activist detenues unconditionally, withdrawing TADA and 144 Cr. P.C. and to stop all repressive measures. Under this circumstances, he urged upon the Central Representative to take up the Bodoland issue with the Union Government of India so that the proposed Bodoland State can be created through the passage of a Bill in the forthcoming Budget Session of Parliament. He did not forget to remind the concerned governments that talks should bear fruit. He made a straightforward warning that failure to turn the talks meaningful, the ethnic unrest will last long and the struggle for Bodoland will continue in a more and more vigorous way. In this talk, the Centre though expected a concrete formula for solution of the Bodo problem from the Assam Government, it did not produce anything of the sort. The Bodo leaders also aired much displeasure on inability of the State Government to make a concrete offer.

The fifth round of the Tripartite talks was held on 18th April, 1990. In this round too, the parties to the talk could not agree to a common formula for solving the Bodo problem. To examine the varies proposal put forward by the parties to the talks, a "Committee on Bodo Issues (COBI) was formed with four members each from ABSU-BPAC and Government of Assam and two members from the Central Government. It was decided that the committee will place its report on 2nd July next when the next round of the talk will be held.

After that round of talks, within a fortnight, Upendra Nath Brahma. President of the ABSU met with a sudden demise at the Tata Memorial Hospital at Bombay, on the 1st May, 1990. This had broken the spirit of the ABSU and the Bodos as a whole for a while plunging the Bodos to leaderless. But the ABSU and the Bodos in general were conscious
enough to select a new leader. Mr. Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary, former General Secretary of ABSU and present Chief Convenor of BPAC was elected as the new President of ABSU.

The sixth round of the Tripartite talks was held on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} July, 1990. In this talk, the COBI tabled its report. Mr. P.S. Krishnan, Secretary of the Union Minister of Social welfare and convenor of the COBI presented the salient feature of the report. It was found that the report did not mention any consensus or concrete solution about the political demand. While a number of problems pertaining to land employment, language etc. had been identified and solutions recommended it remained mum on the political demands.

The ABSU representatives reiterated the demand for a separate Bodoland State, Autonomous Districts and Inclusion of the Boro-Kacharies of Karbi Anglong in the Sixth Schedule of the constitution. The president of ABSU suggested that a solution could be evolved if Government of India goes through the report within a short time and apply its mind. The Central Representative pointed out that the State Government and the Central Government would have to go through the report and formulate their views so that in the next round of talks concrete views could be considered. In reply, the ABSU-BPAC representatives opined that as the responsibility for finding out a solution lies with the Government of India, it should do the same directly.

It was decided that all the parties to the talk put forward their respective views on the report submitted by the COBI in the next round of talks.

The seventh round of the talks was held on 18\textsuperscript{th} August, 1990. By then the Union Government entrusted Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, Union
Minister of Labour and Social Welfare as the Central Representative to
the talks on Bodo issues. It seemed that he had met an earnest effort so
as to help find an immediate and amicable solution to the Bodo problem.
Under his initiative, the State Government of Assam for the first time
submitted a draft proposal towards the solutions of the Bodo problem.
In that, the State Government advanced the proposal for implementation
of Panchayati Raj in the Bodo dominated areas of Assam. Chief Minister
of Assam divulged the fact that the National Conference of Chief
Ministers under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister held in July,
1990 emphasised Panchayati Raj as the national approach and it was
also highlighted by the National Development Council meeting held in
June, 1990. He stated that “New Panchayati Raj might be considered in
all plain districts of the State of Assam with a view to decentralisation
and devolution of powers with special provision for the Scheduled castes
giving them full scope to deal with the respective developmental matters
despite their small number in the Panchayati raj bodies.”

Union Minister of Social Welfare stated that “a positive advance
had been made towards finding a solution of the problem in as much as,
the State Government has taken many decision with regard to various
issues raised before the committee on Bodo Issues and for the first time,
the State Government had made specific proposal with regard to the
devolution of powers “ The Union Minister of State (Home) stated that
the State Government has taken many decisions on various issues for
the welfare and development of Bodos and other plain Tribals of Assam.
It was for the first time that the State Government has given a concrete
proposal relating to the political aspect of matter.” He requested the ABU-
BPAC representatives to give thought to the same and said that the matter
could be further discussed. He stated that the Central Government was keen that there should be a solution to the problem.

The ABSU-BPAC representatives expressed their resentment over the proposal of the Assam Government and outrightly rejected the same. They stated that they were not interested to sit with the Assam Government since it had no sincerity to solve the issues politically and the Central Government should deal with the matter. There was hardly any point in continuing the discussions. They recalled the earlier discussion and state that they expected that a solution would be found out within the framework of the constitution.

Law Minister, Assam stated that the new Panchayati Raj proposal of the State Government was very much within the Article 40 of the constitution of India. Minister of Education, Assam stated that the state government had advanced its proposal as the basis for discussion and had open mind on the issue. And the Government of Assam stated that while dealing with the matter, the population aspect had to be kept in view.

ABSU-BPAC representatives strongly contradicted the statements. The President, ABSU requested the Union minister of Welfare for stating the proposal of the Central government regarding the political solution of the problem. In response, the Union Minister stated that the creation of a separate State was not possible the Government of India was keen for early solution of the problem. He appreciated that the Government of Assam have taken many decisions regarding the economic development and welfare of the Bodos and others plain Tribals in the state also stated that, for the first time, the State Government had presented a concrete proposal on the political solution of the problem based on Panchayati
Raj System. Since it was not the final decision of the State Government the matter could be discussed again. He further stated that the autonomy proposed by the Government of Assam for the plains tribals was not adequate and there was need for considering granting greater autonomy and this will be discussed in the next meeting.

The eight round of talks was held on 13th & 14th September, 1990. A Resolution was passed in the meeting between the Government of Assam and ABSU/BPAC in the presence of the Union Welfare Minister held on 13.9.1990. The Resolution read as follows: -

"The Government of India is deeply concerned about the problem of Bodos and others plains tribals of Assam and is committed to their economic development and others rights. On serious consideration of the Bodo problem, the Government of India proposes that a three member committee of experts may be set up to determine the area of Bodos and others plains tribes to the north of river Brahmaputra and make recommendations as to the autonomy, legislative, administrative and financial powers that may be given to them. This committee will consult all groups concerned and submit its report within a period of forty five days to the Government of India."

Consequent upon this talk, a three Member Expert committee was formed with Dr. Bhupindra Singh as the chairman. Mr. A.K. Goklay, Secretary to the Government of India and Mr. S.N. Srivastav, Director General of Anthropological Survey of India were the other two Members.

The Bhupinder Singh Committee submitted its report very lately after a gape of two years only. Its report recommended for creation of two autonomous councils, One for the Bodos in the western part of the demanded area for the Bodos and another in its eastern part for the Mishings.
The ABSU and BPAC directly rejected the recommendation of the 3-Member Expert Committee on 11th July, 1991. The two spearheading organisation resented the recommendations saying that these are quite inadequate to meet the political aspirations of the Bodo for self-determination and is a direct insult to the Bodos. The committee also recommended for 2-tire councils, one at the village level and another at the top as the apex body for both of the proposed autonomous councils. It also recommended for inclusion of the villages having 50% or more Bodo population in the proposed Bodo autonomous area.

Following this the process of talks on Bodo problem met with a deadlock. Both the agitating bodies and the governments in the State as well as the Centre maintained a studied silence over the issue. The movement as well as the process of talks both was virtually dead in the intervening period.

The 10th and last Tripartite Talks prior to the signing of the Bodo Accord was held on 10th January, 1992. By then there were changes in the governments in the Centre and State both. The Congress Party was then at the helm of affairs in both. The P.V. Narsimha Rao government at the Centre engaged Rajesh Pilot, the Union Minister of States for Home (Internal Security) for sorting out the Bodo issue. Late Hiteswar Saikia, the then Chief Minister of Assam also had shown a keen interest in the solution of the Bodo issue. Yet, there were more informal talks than formal one on the Bodo problem.

Ultimately, the last laugh arrived in the beginning of the year 1993 when Rajesh Pilot began to expedite the process of finding out an amicable solution to the Bodo Problem. But, by then late Hiteswar Saikia, as the Chief Minister of Assam who had shown keen interest to holding
parleys with the Bodo issues began to sidetrack it and avoid the issue. Despite this, on the pressure form Rajesh Pilot he had to agree for a negotiated settlement of the Bodo issue. The parleys began from the beginning of February’1993. Lastly, a hasty settlement was worked out and an accord was signed with the Bodo leaders on 20th February’1993 at the State Guest House No.1 situated at Khanapara, Guawahati. Mr Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary, President of ABSU and Mr. S.K. Rao, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam signed the accord. Union Minister Rajesh Pilot and Chief Minister Hiteswar Sasikia signed the accord as witnesses. The signing of this accord rang the curtain over the six-year long Bodoland Movement spearheaded by the ABSU and BPAC since 1987.

NOTES AND REFERENCES: