CHAPTER-VIII

THE BODO ACCORD
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Curtain Rings Down over Six Years Long Bodoland Movement:

Ultimately, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoS) was signed between the Centre, State Government of Assam and the ABSU-BPAC on 20th February, 1993 at the Staye Guest house No.1 situated at Khanapara, Guwahati. Mr. K.S.Rao, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam signed it on behalf of the State Government of Assam and Mr. S.K.Bwiswmuthiary signed on behalf of the ABSU-BPAC. Mr. Rajesh Pilot, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs (internal Security) and Mr. Hiteswar Saikia, Chief Minister of Assam signed it as witness.

With signing of the BODO ACCORD, curtain rang over the six years’ long Bodoland Movement. To be open, the Bodo people became weary of long movement programmes and tired of the expected outcome of the stalled talks. After the MoS was signed, the Bodos could take a sigh of relief and think about development through restoration of peace which for long had flown away from the Bodo areas.

The above MoS signed is named as “BODO ACCORD” and it envisages formation of the “Bodoland Autonomous Council (B.A.C.)” on the northern bank of Brahmaputra comprising a contiguous area from river Sonkosh in the west to river Pachnai in the east. The proposed area shall cover more than 2000 revenue villages to be found out of the list of 4443 numbers of villages submitted by the agitating ABSU-BPAC. Of course, 10 Km. belt along the Indo-Bhutan border shall be excluded out of the purview of the B.A.C. for convenience of maintaining security in the belt. The B.A.C. was given power over 38 Subjects out of State
Subjects. The proposed Bodoland Autonomous Council was to be given effect through an Act to be enacted in the Assam Assembly.

An Interim Bodoland Executive Council (IBEC) was to be constituted with 18 Members to be nominated from among the Bodoland Movement leaders. The interim body was to last for six months within which period boundary of the newly created BAC was to be demarcated and election for General Council of BAC was to be held. Out of 40 Members of the General Council 5 Members were to be nominated by the State Government while rest of the seats would be reserved for Scheduled Tribes. The areas of 40 Constituencies were to be delimitated within that six month period. There would be 9 Executive Members in the Bodoland Executive Council including the Chief Executive Member and Deputy Chief Executive Members and the two and other Executive Members’ rank and status shall be that of the Cabinet and Minister of State respectively. In a nutshell, the B.A.C. shall have control over land, forest and developmental works within the area and shall work for preservation of culture, language and tradition of the Bodos and for their development.

Besides, the Centre assured to give due consideration on the issues of inclusion of Bodo language into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, establishment of a Central University at Kokrajhar, installation of TV All India Radio Station at Kokrajhar, one Medical College, Agricultural College, Forest Training College each in the BAC area and the like.

Rejection of the BODO ACCORD and the B.A.C:

Although, the signing of the BODO ACCORD brought a situation of joy and happiness among the Bodos, not quite a few quarters lagged
behind in rejecting the Accord. They rejected the very concept of the autonomous council terming it as quite inadequate to meet the long-cherished political aspirations of the Bodo people.

The NDFB termed the BODO ACCORD as “a mere piece of paper” and was of the firm opinion that the Accord is “hollow from inside”. It affirmed its belief that without a sovereign Bodoland Bodo people can not hope to enjoy any meaningful freedom. A few non-Bodo quarters expressed fear that peace shall be driven away by the Bodo militants from the BAC area. Particularly, the CPI(ML) feared that rights of non_Bodos hitherto enjoyed by them shall be curtailed down as the consequence of formation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council.

In the floor of Assam Assembly, the opposition took exception to the process of passing the legislation on B.A.C. namely, The Bodoland Autonomous Council Act, 1993. They made a lame excuse on the State Government that they were not taken into confidence while preparing the ground for signing the Accord. On 8th April, 1993 when the above legislation was taken up for voting, the opposition indulged into vandalism by breaking furnitures, microphone, accessories and throwing open the microphone stand towards the Speaker and out of the House. The August House was thus given a dark mark on its long half a Century history.

**Propriety of signing the BODO ACCORD:**

With passing the time, the Bodoland Movement began to lose its original vigour and strength. The leaders became tired of the lingering movement programmes and weary of long negotiations with the Governments in Centre and in the State. Incidentally, when offer for an accord was made, the ABSU-BPAC leadership considered it fit to have
it than getting the opportunity out of hand.

With signing of the BODO ACCORD, the Bodo people, for the first time, could get a political arrangement of their own and they were given autonomous power to manage their own affairs. At least, they could secure an area within the State of Assam which they can claim as their own. Many came to hope the best that the present BAC boundary itself shall constitute the boundary of separate Bodoland State in near future. Thus, through signing of the BODO ACCORD, the Bodos could indirectly delimit the boundary of the future Bodoland which they believed, shall come true one day.

Apart from these, the signing of the BODO ACCORD helped restoration of peace and order in the Bodo areas and they now could pay their attention towards development of the area. The process of education, trade and commerce, communication networks all began to revert back to normalcy after a long gap of more than half a decade.

Besides, during the moment of signing of the BODO ACCORD, the political situation in the country did not favour creation of a separate State for the Bodos. The fluid political situation then prevailing in the country did not permit the Bodo leadership to wait more hoping for the better. The Bodo leadership thought it better to accept whatever possible come at their hands so that the same may be given better shape in times to come. They did the right thing accepting the concept of “Maximum Autonomy” to the Bodo people through the BAC.

Looking from the above angles, it may rightly be said that signing of the BODO ACCORD was a right step on the part of the ABSU-BPAC. “Sooner was the better” was the consideration required in the moment as utter situation of political fluid did not allow them to wait any longer
and lose the opportunity that have come in their hands by doing so. Really, signing of the BODO ACCORD has really contributed towards improvement of the status of the political arrangement meant for the Bodos which is evident from the recently concluded new BODO ACCORD which has provided for constitution of the "Bodoland Territorial Council (B.T.C.)". The new Bodo Accord has facilitated Constitutionalisation of the Bodo political set-up through amendment of the existing Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to suit the conditions of the Bodos living in the Assam plains. Moreover, the kind of autonomy have been converted from ethnic autonomy to territorial autonomy.

Over and above, the signing of the BODO ACCORD facilitated coming back of the armed Bodo youths to the track of national mainstream. The militants were appealed to shun violence and in return, the Government assured for their proper rehabilitation. The same led to surrender of arms by the Bodo militants which helped in restoration of peace in the area. The same facilitated growing harmony among different sections and ethnic groups living within the BAC area. Consequent upon this, the Bodo areas of the State has seen the pace of development that is possible through peaceful atmosphere in the area.

**Remarks on the BODO ACCORD**

A few remarks may be permitted to duly pass on conclusion of the BODO ACCORD and its consequences on the Bodo people who resorted vigorous mass movement for long six years and ultimately had to contend with an autonomous set-up.

True, the BODO ACCORD provided a political setup for millions of Bodos struggling for a separate political arrangement, but constitution of the B.A.C. fell far short of the expectations of the struggling Bodo
people. Though they fought for a separate State, the achievement was only an autonomous council which is much lower than that could be expected. It amounted to an insult to the millions of struggling Bodos who vowed for "do or Die" for a separate State.

Secondly, as the conception of the B.A.C. was made without clear boundary, it became too less of 2570 nos. of revenue villages out of total 4443 villages demanded by the ABSU-BPAC. Though through two subsequent notifications the no. of villages was raised to 2941 in total, it remained far short of the demanded area. The same left enough lacunae for boundary dispute as is the case with the neighbouring States which is continuing till date even after formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council with more comprising more number of revenue villages.

Thirdly, the signing of the BODO ACCORD created undue fear and tension in the minds of the non-Bodos living within the BAC area. Terrified though unduly with the growing political strength of the Bodos, the non-Bodos were looking for ripe moment to ventilate their anguish and anger. Consequently, subsequent negotiation for and signing of the New BODO ACCORD caused intensification of this tension and fear which raised hue and cry among the non-Bodos against the B.T.C. The apprehension among the non-Bodos got intensified which provided ample scope to non-Bodo leaders living outside the autonomous area even to secure political mileage by shedding crocodile's tear.

Last but not the least, the signing of the BODO ACCORD postponed the achievement of the separate Bodoland at least for three decades. The dream for cherished goal of the separate Bodoland State thus remains a far distant dream for the Bodo people who struggled for the same for last two and half a decade.

Besides, the side-effect of the signing of the BODO ACCORD
proved far costly for the Bodo people. By signing the Accord the ABSU-BPAC became irrelevant and redundant. This strengthened the hands of the NDFB who could take advantage out of the discontent arising from improper implementation of the Accord. As a result, the post-Accord period show clashes between the militant outfits one signing the agreement and the other rejecting the same. The consequent NDFB-BLT clash divide the whole Bodo population into two distinct camps.

It is often alleged that signing of the BODO ACCORD only encouraged the NDFB to take up measures of 'ethnic cleansing' as it is oftenly dubbed. The militant outfit attacked upon minority Muslims in Bongaigaon and Barpeta district and lately on Santal Adivasis in Gossaigaon Sub-Division of Kokrajhar district. The same flared communal clashes tension in the BAC area.

**Prospect of Separate Bodoland:**

In the last analysis, it is found that the prospect of a separate Bodoland State is very deem in context of the prevailing fluid political situation of instability and uncertainty. Although it must be admitted that the demand and the proposed Bodoland fulfils all requirements for a separate State, yet the present political situation in the country does not permit conceding of the same.

To be open, the proposed Bodoland has all feasibilities including land area, economic viability and population factor. It is found that many existing States including sovereign States possess less land area and population and also lesser economic viability. Now, it may be said that only the fluid political situation of the country alligned with insensitivity of the problem on the part of the Governments stands as the greatest obstacles in the way of formation of the separate Bodoland State. In the
given situation, the Bodos should have come down a little and accept the offer made for "Maximum Autonomy" within the State of Assam itself under the Indian Union. Just adequate care need to be taken that the offered arrangement does not hurt the self-respect of the struggling Bodos being too less than expected.

**NEW BODO ACCORD:**

The Bodoland Autonomous council (BAC) created as the special political arrangement for the Bodos of Assam as the result of 20th February, 1993 "BODO ACCORD" has lasted full ten years till it met with premature demise consequent to the new "BTC ACCORD" signed on 10th February, 2003. This accord signed between the Centre, State Government of Assam and the Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) has envisaged formation of the "Bodoland Territorial Council" (BTC) in place of hitherto existing BAC.

As regards to the boundary, present BAC boundary with addition of 91 more revenue villages is to constitute the proposed BTC. The hitherto BTC comprised of 2941 revenue villages which has been raised to 3082 villages in the present BTC. Moreover, the issue of inclusion of 91 more villages as demanded by the BLT into the BTC will be decided within three months by a commission to be appointed taking one member each from the Centre, State Government and the BLT.

The whole area of the BTC has been reconstituted into four districts namely, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and Udalguri.

The new autonomous setup of the Bodos is to be reconstituted under the amended provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution meant for the hill areas of the North-East has been amended to suit the condition of Assam plains. For that, adequate measures have been made for the safeguard of the
non-Tribals living within the BTC area. Constitutional rights for protection of land and property have been given to the non-Bodos living within the BTC too, which is the recentmost aberration in our Constitution.

The Bodoland Territorial Council shall comprise a total of 46 Members out of which 6 shall be nominated by the State Government, 5 shall be reserved for the non-Bodos and the rest 5 shall be open for all. For the nominated seats, Members shall be nominated from the communities which could not get representation through elections and among them at least two shall be women.

An Interim Bodoland Territorial Council has been formed with 8 Members from the erstwhile BLT, the organization which signed the Accord and other agitating Bodo organizations and non-Bodo organizations co-operating in the Bodoland Movement. Representations have been given to two non-Bodo communities, one from Santal Adivasi and another from Koch-Rajbongshi. The Interim Council shall not last more than six month within which period elections to the full-fledged Bodoland Territorial Council shall be held.


The BTC shall have Legislative, Administrative and Revenue Powers for the Subjects falling within its jurisdiction. The Council shall enjoy overall power over the developmental works within its area. The total budgetary allocation made for the BTC area based on the population shall be paid in two instalments. The BTC shall have the power to establish own Planning department and the plans prepared by it shall be routed to the Centre through the State Government.

The allocated powers of the BTC on the transferred subjects shall be exercised by the Principal Secretary whose rank and status shall be that of Commissioner and Secretary to the Assam Government. The powers allocated by the Assam Government shall be vested in the hands of the Principal Secretary. The administrative heads of the transferred departments also shall have the power for technical sanctions on the related subjects.

In order to strengthen the Police Administration, an Inspector General of Police shall be appointed covering all the four districts within the BTC. For the purpose, the Deputy Inspector General of Police stationed at Kokrajhar shall be reshaped accordingly.

The List of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes shall be
amended so as to see that rights and privileges being enjoyed by the Bodos and other peoples living outside the BTC area are noway affected. Keeping tune with it, the Bodo-Kacharies living in the Karbi-Anglong & North Cachar Hills Districts shall be included in the Scheduled Tribe List. In the same spirit, steps shall be taken for inclusion of representation from the Bodos living in the Rabha Hashong Autonomous Council, Mishing Autonomous Council and Tiwa Autonomous council.

For educational development of the area, a Central Institute of Technology (CIT) shall be established at Kokrajhar which in course of time shall be converted into Centrally funded State University covering technical and non-technical subjects.

The Government of India agrees to include the Bodo Language into the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. In the BTC, Bodo shall be the official language wherein Assamese and English also shall continue as the official language.

So as to help bring peace and development in the BTC area, the Centre will provide special economic package of rupees one hundred crores each for five consecutive years. A one-time grant shall be provided for construction of the BTC Secretariat and of the District and Sub-Divisional Headquarters within the newly created BTC area.

Adequate safeguards shall be made within the BTC area so as to ensure the rights of the non-Tribals living within it. To ensure this, the Sixth Schedule of the constitution have been amended suitably for application in the BTC area. The Section 2 (A) and Section 10 of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution shall not be applicable in the BTC area. Non-Bodo's right to acquire and transfer property in the BTC area has been ensured. Moreover, no law passed by the BTC shall be able to affect these rights of the non-Bodos living within the BTC area.
So as to ensure proper and smooth implementation of the provisions of the Accord, a high-level committee comprising of members from the Centre, State Government and erstwhile BLT shall monitor and review the process time to time.

Above is the significant parts of the new BODO ACCORD signed on 10th February, 2003. From the text itself, it is very much evident that adequate protections as regards to the acquiring and transfer of property has been made for the non-Bodos living within the BTC area. It is like the Government of India providing safeguards to the so called religious minorities in the government system. Thus it is evident that the government of Assam had been over sensitive on the demands made by the non-Bodos living within the proposed BTC area. This provision completely alleys the Non-Bodo’s fear for annihilation and completely nullifies some non-Bodo organizations that the BTC Accord had been unilateral one which totally ignored the non-Bodo’s demand for their safeguards within the proposed BTC area.

The period immediately following the BTC Accord had witnessed strong opposition from the non-Bodos living within the BTC area. Their contention was that while carrying out negotiation with the BLT, the Governments both at the Centre and the State have not involved them in the process and thus in signing the Accord has completely ignored interest of majority 80% non-Bodos accepting the whims of minority 20% Bodos. No one knows from which source the non-Bodo organizations got these figures as neither the Census Report and the Voter List support these figures.

Right since the day of signing of the BTC Accord the Lower Assam has witnessed vandalism of the non-Bodo organizations and their activists. Very surprisingly, the protest rallies and the vandalism to express
their resentment over signing the Accord took place outside the BTC boundary. The non-Bodo’s umbrella organization Sanmilita Janagostiya Sangram Samity (SJSS) failed to evoke any express opposition from the non-Bodos living within the BTC area. It is amazing to notice that Bongaigaon is epicenter of the non-Bodo’s protest movement which fall outside the BTC area. Similar protest movements remained confined to few pockets in Patshala, Jalal, Tihu, Rongia, North-Salmara all remained outside the BTC boundary.

From the above, it could be inferred that non-Bodos living within the BTC area had no considerable opposition to the very concept of BTC. Whatever little oppositions were there, did not get expressed in organized form. Instead, through the Co-Ordination Committee on Bodoland Movement (CCBM), the non-Bodos living within the proposed Bodoland area had been extending co-operation in the movement for separate Bodoland State and later towards the parleys for creation of the BTC. Even while the Accord was being signed, non-Bodos within the BTC were found claiming for representation in the Interim BTC. Even if SJSS leaders’ dubbing 19 non-Bodo organizations representing the CCBM as handmake of a few non-Bodo leaders for serving their vested interest is accepted, there could have been expression of opposition to BTC from the end of common non-Bodo folks in one form or another.

Among the sections of society vocal against the BTC are the Koch-Rajbongshis and Adivasis. As already pointed out, the local Adivasi people had been instigated by the inmates recently intruding from Jharkhand area which is evident from the fact that opposition to the concept of separate Bodoland was initiated by the Jharkhand Sangram parishad (JSP). Another fact to be noticed in this regard remains that ethnologists like G.K. Grierson classifies the Rajbongshis as a section of
the greater Bodo group who got Hindunised earlier. Apart from religion and language they use to practice, many similarities beginning with dress, marriage system, food habit, social system, social beliefs etc. are apparent.

The history of the region reveals that the Koch-Rajbongshis are the descendents of the Koch King Nānarayana. It has been mentioned, after the death of Chilaraya, there was a rivalry between Nānarayana and Raghudeva, son of generalissimo Chilaraya. The later demanded a part of the great Koch Kingdom and rose against the regality. When refused, he left the kingdom. Remembering love and intimacy between him and Chilaraya, the king conceded the demand and ceded eastern part of his kingdom comprising former Darrang district of Assam.

But looking at the dead rivalry of the Rajbongshis against the Bodos, not quite a few came to opine that if the Rajbongshis are not proper section of the Bodo group, they happen to be “Bad Bodos” in the sense the Bodos were referred before the Simon Commission as the “Bad Hindus”. It is contended that Nānarayana’s grandfather Ha(u)riya Mandal was a Bodo and hence Nānarayana and Chilaraya were Bodo really. But the present Rajbongshis are not real descendents of Nānarayana-Chilaraya duo, instead they were the little people accompanying Sankardeva as his attendants to the court of Nānarayana. Later these people became intermixed people having no distinct caste affiliation. Very interestingly, the Rajbongshi people do not claim themselves as the descendents of Nānarayana–Chilaraya, combine, but of Chilaraya only whose son Raghudeva ruled the eastern part of the erstwhile Koch Kingdom. On the other hand, Rajbongshis living in North Bengal claim themselves as the descendents of Nānarayana, who till the last remained at CoochBehar and his son Lakshminarayana retained the rule of the western part of the kingdom with CoochBehar as the seat of power.
With regard to the Adivasi people living in the BTC area in particular and the State of Assam in general it may be mentioned that they were imported from the Chotnagpur region of Bihar in large scale by British tea planters for execution of plantation work in Assam, towards the last part of the Eighteenth Century. Towards the first half of the Twentieth Century, their number swelled to a great extent. Towards the last part of the last Century, taking scope of the turbulent Bodoland Movement, new batches of Adivasi people began to intrude into the Bodo areas. With a motive of establishing political hold in the Bodo areas. The new batches began to instigate the old Adivasi section to rise against the local Bodos so as to help materialize their ulterior motive. Finding no effective response from the old section, they tried to enthuse the old section with a dream of a separate Adivasi Land comprising the Bodo areas. The young group of the old section fell prey to this unjustified dream and began to respond to the call for immediate struggle against the Bodos. * The stage for Adivasi struggle against the Bodos was set in 1996 by three teenage Bodo women being killed and left open in the jungle of Kschugaon area of Kokrajhar district.

Very soon the came to the forefront of political arena and did not hesitate even to import one Theodore Kisku Rapaz from Bihar to contest in the No. 5 Kokrajhar HPC (ST) seat with an the motive of securing political suzerainty over the Bodo locals. They did not even deterred to requisition service of the new batches of Adivasi army who could easily be distinguished as they used to wear on their ears which is uncommon among the local Adivasis.

For other non-Bodos, opposition to the creation of BTC is not so much strong one. It seems that they have not been extending even moral support to the demand for scrapping of the BTC. The Bengalis, Nepalis,
Jogis, Religious Minorities are backing the Bodoland Movement by joining the Co-Ordination Committee for Bodoland Movement (CCBM). Even now, after creation of the BTC the non-Bodo organisations within the BTC area have been extending help and co-operation to the ABSU by becoming consituents of the Co-Ordination Committee of Bodoland Peoples' Organisations (CCBPO). Now when the Rajbongshi and Adivasi leaders are opposing the very concept of BTC, organizations of these people within the BTC area like All BAC Koch-Rajbongshi Sanmilani and Adivasi Sewa Samity are parts of the CCBM and have representatives in the Interim BTC. Other component organizations although have expressed grievances on constitution of the Interim BTC, the grievance expressed is not against the BTC but is against being not given representation in the Interim set up. To be frank, these component organizations of CCBM are the actually representing the non-Bodos living within the BTC area while non-Bodo leaders outside the BTC are crying foul against the BTC. It is evident that that they are doing it to earn cheap popularity among the non-Bodos in general so as to help gain political hold among own people.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. WHY SEPARATE STATE: A Booklet Published by the ABSU, 1987.
2. Testimony given by B. Kgr. Karjie, a local boy before the student.