CHAPTER V

DIMENSIONS OF THE Movement
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(A) Emergence of Middle Class and growth of Political Consciousness:

The middle class has a vital role to play in the transition of a particular society. The rise of the middle class marks the beginning of a new era of enlightenment in the society. The Indian middle class emerged as a result of socio-economic changes brought by the British Administration. The Assamese middle class sprang up in the later half of the 19th century. The British Administration shook the Tribal Society and Missionaries helped in Westernising it and has given the tribals a sense of identity. Consequently, a middle class began to grow among the tribals also in the first decade of this century. Naturally it was weaker than the Assamese Middle Class.

Usually, this newly born elite was from the Bodo Community. Jagot Chandra Mushahari, the Mouzadar of Patakata Mouza had earned 'Roy Saheb' title from the British in the beginning of the 20th century. He spent Rs. six thousand in his conversion to Hinduism at that time. 1 But the first and foremost individual who brought new thinking among the Bodos undoubtedly was Kalicharan Brahma (Gurudev) who
may be regarded as the pioneer in this regard. It was in 1913 he launched a social reform movement - 'Brahma Movement' in the erstwhile Goalpara District to reform the society and to educate the Bodos. He thought that misery and backwardness of the Bodos were due to their lack of education and consciousness. He declared a crusade against illiteracy, social malpractice habit of drinking and backwardness. Gurjij also led political movement to safeguard the rights of the Bodos. When Simon Commission visited Assam in 1926 he led a team of representatives who submitted a memorandum containing various religious, educational demands including reservation of seats for the tribals in the Legislative Council. Thus he was able to arouse a new spate of consciousness and Satish Chandra Basumatary, Rupnath Brahma, Haladhar Brahma, Mada Ram Brahma, Ananda Chandra Brahma, Sitanath Brahma Choudhury etc. are the fruits of the movement. Rupnath Brahma was the first B.A.B.L. among the Bodos. These educated youths worked like harbinger of new ideas among the Bodos. They formed the tribal league in 1933 to fulfil the demands of the tribal people in general and the Bodos in particular. It is noteworthy that Rupnath Brahma was elected several times to Legislative Council and inducted in the sandulla and Bordoloi ministry. Satis Chandra Basumatary, Rupnath Brahma and Mada Ram Brahma were the harbinger of Bodo Literature. They laid the
foundation of written literature in Bodo language by publishing journals like "Bibar" and "Jen Tho Kha". "Bibar" was the magazine of the Bodo Chatra Sanmiloni founded in 1919 at Cotton College. Sobha Ram Brahma Choudhury and Satish Ch. Basumatary were its president and secretary. The first conference of the Sanmiloni was held at Kokrajhar High School, where the decision of publishing 'Bibar' was taken. In 1924, the first printed form of the magazine was published. This magazine ushered in a new awakening among the Bodos. The next magazine published in 1938 was 'Alangbar', edited by Pramod Chandra Brahma. Thus the Bodo middle class has played a decisive role in laying the foundation of Bodo literature. This process was further strengthened and spearheaded with the birth of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952.  

Like in Bodos, in the pre-independence period, Samsonsing Ingti (1910-1948) was the first architect of modernism among the Karbis. He who was the first B.A. from the Karbis, led a crusade against the social malpractices and for education of the Karbis. Samsonsing Ingti, Khorsing Terang, Sarsing Teron and others made a preparation to form an organisation of the Karbis in 1944 resulting in the outcome of 'Karbi-A-Durbar' in 1946. Khorsing Terang and Samsonsing Ingti
were its first president and secretary respectively. It demanded for a separate state. Consequently, United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District was formed in 1951 and subsequently it is bifurcated into two Hills Districts – Karbi Anglong and North Cachar.

The first chairman of the Karbi District Council was Khorsing Terang (1906 – 1955). He was the first MLA from the Karbis. In the subsequent periods many Minister, MLAs like Chatrasing Teron, Dhani Ram Rongti, Jayanta Rongpi, Samsing Hanse, Holiram Terang, Birensing Ingti etc are from the Karbis. At the same there are many literates who write both in Karbi and Assamese like Langkam Teron, Rong Bong Terang, Samsing Hanse, Jayanta Rongpi, Ms. Chang Be, Ms. Sathi Teronpi etc.

Like the Karbis, the Christian Missionaries and the interaction with the people of palins helped in the rise of middle class among the Dimasas also. Joybhadra Hagzer, Sonaram Thousen etc. were the product during the pre-independence period. Joybhadra Hagzer was the first B.A. of the Dimasas. He participated in the '42 movement and imprisoned for a period. He became the executive member when the North Cachar District Council was formed in 1952. He was an independent member of
the Assam Legislative Assembly also in the same year. In 1950 he joined in the Congress and became the Education Minister for sometime, Suratnath Doulagapu was another Dimasa who got a berth in the Assam Govt. Cabinet. Sonaram Thousen and Nirupama Hagzer have devoted to literature.

From the Deuri tribe, the name of Bhumbar Deuri (1903-1947) was worth mentioning. He was a B.A.B.L. and the heralder of 'Tribal League' which was formed in 1933 consisted of various other tribal leaders. He was elected as its secretary and remained upto 1945 in the same capacity. In 1934 he was elected as a member of the Legislative Council from the Tribal League and held forest portfolios minister in the Saadulla Led ministry. Late on he was selected as a minister in the Bordoloi Ministry also.

The names of karka Chandra Doley, Lalit Kr. Doley, Ramesh Mohan Kuli, Tarun Ch. Pamegam, Muhidhar pegu, Dr. Nomal Ch. pegu etc. can be cited from the Mising. karka Ch. Doley was another founder of the Tribal League. Lalit Kr. Doley (1922-1983) was the first minister and M.P. from amongst the Mising. Nomal Ch. Pegu was the Doctor and also the music writer in Mising Language. Tarun Pamegum, Muhidhar Pegu have contributed a lot to Mising Language and culture. The 'Assam Miri Sanmilon' was formed in 1924 due to their effort.
There was no dearth of educated and conscious people from the Tiwa, Rabha and other tribes also. Dhirsing Deuri, from Lalung Tribe, represented the tribals in the then Legislative Council. Baliram Senapati from Lalung and Dandidhar Phatowari from Sonowal Kachari Tribes were once the famous litterateurs.

But the most versatile personality from the tribals undoubtedly, was Bishnu Prasad Rabha (1909-1969). Not only he was the representative of the tribal culture but was the towering figure of greater Assamese culture and society and is known as 'Kalaguru'.

Thus, a middle class has emerged among the tribes during pre and post-independence era. The backwardness of the tribals and the negligence and lack of interest shown to them by the non-tribals has led to the simmering discontent of this class culminating in their struggle for self-protection in subsequent time.

Thus the emerging middle class has played a pivotal role in the growth of political consciousness among the tribals. It is a fact that initially the educated youths paid lukewarm interest to their own society. But when they have to compete in employment, trade and commerce and realise the
negligence of the non-tribals then only a spirit of assertiveness has generated in them. Consequently they began to organise themselves to protect their language and cultural identities and to derive economic benefits. " They are denied of Justice, constitutional rights, equality of status and opportunities as enshrined in the sacred preamble of Indian Constitution. The Bodos and other tribals want nothing but only to survive and all round prosperity and security". Later on, they went to the extent of demanding autonomous district and separate state. They claim that "the present artificial Assamese captured Assam and its administration through the process of silent aggression and engulfment policy. The plains tribal people now want to regain the lost ownership and administration of Assam. That is why Assam and its administration should be divided fifty - fifty between the tribals and the Assamese and the Northern valley of the Brahmaputra should be given to the plains tribals making Brahmaputra River as the natural boundary.

The growth of political consciousness among the ethnic groups are based on their socio-cultural, political and economic conditions. After independence the tribal life of North-East has been changed which developed political consciousness among them. They have gladly availed of the
better and improved facilities for education, public health, agriculture, communication etc. The Tribals of North East Study by themselves because of its geo-political and historical backward. In developing a sense of larger tribal identity education and emergence of middle class among the tribals have played important roles. The most important factors in any analysis of tribal identity are class nature of the present day tribal society, the underdeveloped tribal economy due to imperialist capital, negligence of non-tribals etc. The rising tribal aspirations are expressed through cultural identity crisis which stimulate tribal movement relying on means ranging from constitutional agitation to insurgency. The growth of administration and administrative centres, the spread of education and christianity offered opportunities for inter-tribal interaction. The establishment of modern social associations and political organisations also have played a significant role. In this respect Ambedkar's apprehension which he expressed in his address to the Constituent Assembly on 25 November, 1947 may well be mentioned - "on January 26, 1950 we will have equality in politics and inequality in social and economic life. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has "laboured well built up"."
B. Organised groups which articulate the problems like Political Parties

The advent of independence as well as the objectives of the Constitution have acted as a stimulating syrup to get due protection for the backward classes. Consequently, various organisations political, social and cultural sprang up to articulate the grievances of the tribal people under the leadership of tribal leaders. They, perhaps thought that their legitimate demands would be meted out and would be free along with other people of the country. But some tribal leaders like parasuram Lagti, Chatrasing Teron, Bishnu Prasad Rabha and many others were not fascinated by the magic of freedom at midnight. They, therefore, launched armed revolution under the leadership of Revolutionary Communist party of India denouncing India's freedom as "Yeh Azadi Zutha Hai".

There is no gainsaying that the spirit of assertiveness generated first within the Bodos among the plains tribals. As we have the occasion to refer earlier, the Brahma Movement led by Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma instilled this spirit within the Bodos. The Hills Tribals were more advanced in this respect due to separate administration and their protection during British rule. Among them the Mikirs (now Karbi) were the forerunners.
Before independence there were socio-cultural organisations like Tribal League, Karbi-A-Durbar, Bodo Chatra Sanmilon which articulated some political demands also. After independence, most of the leaders of the Tribal League joined the Congress and as a result it became almost defunct. However, an attempt was made to resuscitate it and in 1953 an Assam Tribal Sangha was formed in a conference held at Barpuija in Nagaon. But the plains tribals (mostly Bodos) were not satisfied with its activities and consequently a political party - Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) - was formed in a conference presided over by Modaram Brahma at Kokrajhar in 1967. As result, Tribal Sangha was almost dead and it was revived under the presidency of Late Ramesh Mohan Kuli, the then MLA, at Barapukuria, in 1970. Since then the Sangha has been articulating some socio-economic and cultural demands. Of late, it has also demanded autonomy of the tribes. But the Sangha has failed to bring all the ethnic groups under one political umbrella which resulted in the formation of various organisations by each tribe.

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam was predominated by the Bodos though it covered all the Plains Tribals. Its first president, vice-president and secretary were Birochom Koro, Samar Brahma Choudhury and Charan Narzari respectively. In 1967, the Central Government accepted a proposal under the
Federal Plan of Reorganisation of Assam. The PTCA demanded the implementation of this proposal along with Roman script for Bodo Language. It also split in 1979 on the issue of agreement with the Janata Party Govt. of Assam in 1977 on certain conditions. The group which opposed the agreement formed a new political party - PTCA (progressive) and lodged serious allegation against the leadership. They alleged that the leaders had set aside the demand for a separate state and spoke for regional autonomy. The PTCA (progressive) has claimed to be the actual representative of the plains tribals and since 1980 has demanded a separate state which it calls "Mising - Bodo Land".

A convention of the tribal organisations was held at Harisinga, Darrang on 17, 18, 19 April 1984 to unite the plains tribals under one banner resulting in the formation of a new political party - United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF) under the presidency of Binoy Khungur Basumatary which reiterated the demand for a separate homeland 'Bodolnad' by name. But this party failed to exist due to obvious reasons.

Of late, the Bodo Legislature Party (BLP) has been formed as a result of the movement for separate state
separheaded by the All Bodo Students Union and Bodo People's Action Committee. The BLP is also divided due to the Accord which creates BodoLand Autonomous Council - one led by Parameswar Brahma (Pro-Council group) and the other led by Kareendra Basumatary (Anti-Council group). During the general election'96 a fresh and concerted movement under the banner of Bodoland Peoples State Movement Council heairld for a separate Bodo State. Later it is transformed to peoples Democratic Front of fight election.

Both factions had contested the election with the support of ABSU. Under the banner of BSMC, have failed to make any impact and could collect 2 seats only. As against this, the Darrang based United Democratic Front which has changed its nomenclature to the Peoples' Democratic Front has received covered support of the BSF and has fained well in the state election. It is claimed that the PDF is the real representative and therefore, it appeals to all BSMC and BPP(P) members to join the main stream.

It would not be an exaggeration to mention here that during and after 1980 the various tribal organisations like ABSU, BPAC, Mising Action Committee, All Mising Students' Union, Rabha Hasong Demand Committee, autonomous Mising District Demand Committee, All Tiwa Students' Union etc., by and large, have made political demands for creating of autonomous districts for each ethnic group.
As regards the two Hills Districts - Karbi Anglong and North Cachar, there are also organisations for articulating the demands of the Hills Tribes. The oldest organisation which is actively associated with the Karbi people is the Karbi-A-Durbar formed in 1946 at a conference Kathalguri, Nagaon by Khorsing Teron and Samsonsing Ingti who were its first president and secretary respectively. But difference arose among the leaders of this organisation on some issues the out come of which was the creation of a new organisation - Karibi-A-Riso-Durbar in 1964. The leaders of this organisation claimed it as a socio-cultural organisation which opposed the demand for Roman Script and separate state.

Besides, the Karbi People Conference, under the leadership of Samsing Hanche has been articulating the demands of the Karbi people in the 1980s and participated in the election of the District Council.

In 1986, a conference was convened by the karbi Students' Leaders where Karbi Students' Association (KSA) and Autonomous State Demand Council (ASDC) came out to fight for a separate state. Since their inception both the two organisations are agitating for its fulfilment. The District Council election and the general election are being contested and came out with resounding result in the last election.
In North Cachar Hills, the People Union party came to power in the District Council in 1957. But differences arose within the leadership on the issue of separate state as a result of which one group joined the Congress and the other formed North Cachar Peoples Democratic party. Again, there was a conflict within this party also regarding the question of merger with Meghalaya. The majority opposed the merger and as a result the minority formed North Cachar National Front in 1968 with the objective of retaining and developing the identity of Dimasa people.14

A conference of some of the leaders of the two Hills Districts was held in 1978 to demand a separate state. Consequently, a committee known as Separate State Demand Committee was formed in 1981.15

All party Hills Leaders Conference (APHLC) founded in 1960 had also played some part in the two Hills Districts till 1972 when Meghalaya as a separate state was formed. But it was not so strong in these two districts unlike the other erstwhile hills districts.

Of late, a demand for 'Dimeland' comprising N.C. Hills District and the Dimasa populated areas of neighbouring Cachar, Karbi Anglong and Nagaon Districts has been gaining ground under the leadership of Dimasa National Securit...
(Anti-surrender group). The name Dimaland has been chosen to remind the Dimasa people of their historical connection with Dimapur in Nagaland.¹⁶

Thus, it is seen that the leaders of the various tribes were largely inclined to the Congress before 1980 for more reasons than one. Hence there are few organised political parties and that too are vacillating. The Plains Tribes Council of Assam though claims to be the sole banner of the Plains Tribes could not bring all the tribes under it. The All party Hills Leaders Conference failed to bring the Karbis and the Damasa under its banner. It is only after eighty that the Bodo Legislature party and the Autonomous State Demand Committee have come out as a sequel to the prolonged agitation for creation of separate states, for the Bodos and the Karbis respectively. But the notable part of the tribal movement is that a single party is not formed comprising all the tribes till date. Each ethnic group has organised separately to demand autonomy although attempts are made occasionally for their unification. These organisations have become more or less apolitical particularly after 1980.

(C) Other Organisations of the various ethnic groups

Besides, each ethnic group of the tribes has organised itself for the preservation and development of its identity,
culture and heritage. The most prominent among them is the 'Bodo Sahitya Sabha', a literacy organisation of the Bodos was formed in 1950 by the educated section of the Bodos. Though it is primarily an organisation of the Bodos living in plains, attempt has been made to organise other Bodos living in Hills also. As such proposals for introduction of Bodo as additional subject in primary stage, as third language in the secondary stage and as medium of instruction in North Cachar were taken jointly by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the Dimasa Bodos in its initial stage.

A student organisation of the Bodos was formed August 13, 1967, expanding the then Goalpara District Bodo Students' Union on All Assam basis as - All Assam Bodo Students' Union. Baneswar Basumatary and Kanakeswar Narzary were its first president and secretary respectively. It has reached its zenith due to the agitation for 'Bodoland' under the leaderships of Upendranath Brahma and Rabinram Barhma as president and secretary. The All Bodo Students Union (now as they called) is divided on the issue of accord creating Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) - The Upen Brahma Group led by Sansuma Khungur Basumatary having strength in Kokrajhar and Udalguri districts and the other Gangwar Ramchary group having hold in Barpeta and Nalbari districts.
The Bodo People Action Committee is formed to spearhead the movement for 'Bodoland' along with the ABSU, All Bodo Employees' Federation, All Assam Tribal Women's Federation have been formed during the agitation to support it. Even, a militant outfit - Bodo Security Force has come out of the agitation and is adopting terrorist activities even today although a section of it has surrendered after the Accord.

The other ethnic groups have also organisations of their own that sprang up mostly in the seventies. The Misings have organised under the Mising Banc Kcbang for the first time to articulate their socio-economic and cultural demands. Later on this organisation has been ostracised by other Mising organisations alleging it to have relation with the Govt. Besides, Takam Mising Porin Kcbang (All Mising Students' Union), Mising Agom Kcbang (Mising literary society), Takam Mising Mime-Kebang (Mising Women Front) and Mising Dvrbii Kcbang (Mising Cultural Society) have been formed to put various demands and get fulfilled including the demand for creation of autonomous state under article 224(A) of the Indian Constitution. Later on after '90 Mising Mimang Kcbang (Mising Action Committee) is formed to spearhead their movement unitedly. The Mising Autonomous Demand Committee is also formed for the same end in view. But this committee, has
been denounced by the other organisations for signing the accord with the Assam Government for autonomy and its alleged link with the Government.

The Lelungs (Tiwas) are organised for the first time of its own in 1967 when the Lalung Durbar was formed under the Leadership of Abra Molor and Indrasing Deuri. Abra Molor, a hills inhabitant, was its first president. All Assam Tiwa Sanmilon (AATS) is formed for the protection of socio-cultural demands of the Tiwas in 1977. Lalung Durbar, AATS and Lalung youth Front in a convention in 1986 formed the All Lalung District Demand Committee (ALDDC) which is denounced later on alleging it as a stooge of the Government and for signing the accord for autonomy with the Assam Government. Besides the All Tiwa students' Union, Tiwa Womens' Federation are formed to articulate their various demands including creation of autonomous district.

Among the Rabhas, the Rabha National Council, Rabha Students' Union, Rabha Sahitya Sabha are the main organisations which have been articulating various demands for their protection of identity, Language and culture. Of late, the Rabha Hasong demand Committee has been organised fundamentally to demand autonomous district for them.
The Deuris are also not lagging behind in this respect. They have also organisations like Deuri Sanmilan, Deuri Students' Union, Deuri Sahitya Sabha etc. to protect their cultural identity with all round development.

Besides among the Karbis, there are organisations like Karbi Lammol Amei (Karbi Sahitya Sabha) and Karbi Students' Union for the development of Karbi Language and literature and of Karbi people as a whole. But the Karbi people organised with strong political motive under the banners of Karbi Students' Association (KSA) and Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), formed in a convention in 17 May, 1986 convened by the students leaders, to put forward the demand for a separate state under Article 244(A) of the Constitution.

Among the Dimasas, there is no such notable organisation and they are associated more or less with Bodo Sahitya Sabha. Joybhadra Hagzer, a Dimasa became the first president of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. Recently, a militant outfit has come to limelight to demand a 'Dimaland', of which we have referred earlier.

The Plains Tribals living in hills and the Hills Tribals living in plains known as unrepresented communities
have their organisation to redress their grievance of scheduling them like Karbi Students Union (Plains), Amri Karbi district demand committee etc.

Besides, Tribal Solidarity Council, Tribal Protection Action Committee, All Tribal Students' Union, United Revolutionary Movement Council of Assam have emerged during 1980 as a sequel to Assam Movement on foreign notionals to protect and preserve their security and solidarity along with redressal of various grievances of the Tribal People in general and the democratic people of the Greater Assamese Society in particular.

The Advisasi Council consisting of Tea-Tribes who are derecognised as scheduled tribes has been demanding for scheduling them. Besides, the All Assam Tea-Tribals Students' Association (AATSA) and Asom Sangrami Chah Shramik Sangha are also the organisations of the Tea-Tribes. Also, mention may be made of the bulk of Hinduised Bodos, now known as Koch-Rajbanshis and classed as other Backward Class in Assam who are demanding recognition of them as ST under the name of Koch-Rajbanshi Sanmilan and is assured by the Central Govt. to recognise.
Last but not least, it would be proper to mention here that a Joint Action Committee, namely, autonomous Demand Struggle Forum, is formed comprising the five ethnic groups - Bodo, Karbi, Mising, Rabha and Tiwa to expedite their demand for autonomy (real sense) with solidarity and vigour denouncing the so called negotiations on autonomy. These Tribes have fought general election '96 under the banner of this Forum. The Tribal Students' Federation is also another common platform of the ethnic groups which has opposed the recognition of Koch-Rajbanshis as S.T.

(d) Views of other Organisations, Parties and of the successive Governments:

Nazi Rustomzi in his book "Imperilled Frontiers" has concluded that "It was Assamese Chauvinism, ironically enough, that diminished Assam and lost her tribal population! The Assam middle class took its chauvinist ogre when it confronted with the Bengali hegemonism in language, service, trade and commerce and the subsequent Muslim immigration during the British rule. Therefore, it tried its best to dominate other nationalities including the ethnic groups and to establish its superiority which resulted in the simmering under current of discontent and disenchantment among tribals. Obviously, they began to organise themselves to assert their identities since the British period. After independence they
have become more conscious and assertive. The first step was to bring out the Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952 as an alternative literary body to Assam Sahitya Sabha. The Assam Sahitya Sabha has failed to bring the various tribes under its banner to build a greater Assamese society. Its view on the development of various tribal languages and cultures is poor and not acceptable to them. In 1967 the All Bodo Students' Union, and subsequently other students organisations of the tribes have been formed. The All Assam Students' Union for its brotherly syndrome and negligence to the tribals has been taken by them with a large pinch of salt. During the Assam Movement on foreign nationals, particularly in the earlier phases, the leadership of the movement did not specify their role and position vis-a-vis the autochton tribals. At one stage, the ASSU demanded the abolition of constitutional safeguards provided to the tribals20 Clause 10 of Assam Accord, 1985, which provides for eviction of tribal people from forest land and other Government Land has sharpened the separationist outlook and identity consciousness of the ethnic groups. Late Upendranath Brahma, the ex-president, ABSU, in an interview with "India Today" commented that - "The creation of Bodoland is inevitable as Assamese chauvinism has reached its peak." Again in the Booklet published by ABSU "why separate state" it is said - "what is the definition of Assamese? The Assamese
people may define that those indigenous people who live in Assam are Assamese. So the Bodos, the Misings, the Karbis all are Assamese (?). If that be so, it is clear that there are some sub-communities among the Assamese such as, the Bodo, Assameses, Mising Assamese etc. .... Then what will be the exact definition of Assamese ? Will if be there who speak Assamese ? The Bodo speaking people can't be Assamese .. But surprisingly and cleverly this artificial Assamese community has captured Assam, its administration and now dominating the once master ruler of Assam - the Kacharis, the Bodos ....

The Assamese people and the Assam Govt. want to Assamise and assimilate the Non-Assamese through the imposition of Assamese language and culture. The Assamese people and the Assam Govt. have not realised the mistake.

On the other hand, the liberal section of non-tribal middle class is diametrically opposite to this carrot and stick policy. They are infavour of equal status of all the nationalities and assimilation and to accept the tribals as brethren.

The various national and regional political parties existing in Assam fails to get the confidence of the tribal people because they do not have a clear and distinct conception.
of nationalities. Naturally, they fail to come forward to solve the tribal problems and issue only rambling sort of statements when necessary, to mop-up their votes. The role of the Congress is noteworthy particularly in the hills districts and generally over the Plains Tribals. Most of the tribal leaders reposed more reliance on the Congress of their protection and safeguards. Majority of them joined Congress for which they were often rewarded with lucrative leaves and fishes of office for which Congress is blamed by the young tribal leaders for dividing them. The Congress being the ruling party could have settled the tribal problem in the beginning in stead of playing hide and seek, as alleged, to cash capital out of it. The other political parties including the leftists have shown their sympathy to the tribals but with limitations, due to their confinement to parliamentarian method. The CPI (ML) and the URMCA, with only exception, have given consistent support to the tribals. Of course, all of them and also the Assamese people have belatedly realise the grim reality of tribal problem and have accepted willy-milly their demand for autonomy while atoning for much of the alienation and neglect of them in the past.

The Government of Assam has adopted none-too-subtle pressure tactics to the needs and aspirations of the tribal people since independence. The language policy of Bimala Bismad Chaliha Govt/ which made Assamese compulsory brought a feeling
of insecurity among the tribal leaders of Assam. The urge for identity has come sharp conflict with attempt of the Assamese people to impose their language, culture and political domination on others and thus never took place assimilation of different groups of people. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha opposed the move by the Govt. for which the Govt. conceded to introduce Bodo Language in the Primary School level in Bodo populated areas. But the text books were not made available. In 1967 a proposal for federal re-structure of Assam creating autonomous states, districts etc. for the tribes was forwarded by the Central Govt. But guided by the caste Hindu Assam Govt. and leaders of the then ASSU opposed the proposal by observing 12 hours Band in Brahmaputra Valley on 12 February 1967. In 1972 when Assamese was made the medium of instruction, the Bodo People opposed it and demanded Roman Script for their language which was quashed by the then Assam Govt. The Plains Tribal Council of Assam had made a demand of 'Udayachal' as a retaliation.

The Assam Gana Parishad Government's Scheme for constitution of Zila, Anchal and Gram Level Parishad with greater representation of Tribals was rejected by the Tribal Organisations. The All Assam Tribal Students' Union severely criticised the AGP Government for its anti-tribal policies and police repression upon movements. The previous Congress Government, it is alleged, has also played hide and seek with the tribals and the Chief Minister is playing his pet game of divide and rule. Although the Chief Minister stakes
claim that the tribal problem has been solved by granting autonomy to the various ethnic groups.

One needs to recall the shabby manner in which the two district councils (Karbi Anglong & North Cachar Hills) have been treated by Dispur in the matter of dissolution or suspending elections for long periods. The Karbis were feeling ignored since late seventies and their movement for autonomy became articulate and broad based since 1986 which culminated with the signing of agreements among the agitators, the Union Govt. and Assam Govt. in New Delhi on 1st April '95.

Thus, it is seen that the successive Govts. have shown lukewarm sympathy and understanding of the various demands of the tribal people. Had the successive Govts. at Dispur improved the plight of the tribals, the movement would not have acquired the edge it has for which the Govt. has to own up a large share of responsibility. It is the absence of development that has spurred violence and definace.

The present AGP led coalition Govt. has dissolved the Autonomous Councils formed by the previous Congress govt. and reconstitute the Bodoland Autonomous Council. The ABSU accused the Govt. of resorting
to divide and rule politics with regard to Bodos. A 12 hour BAC area Bandh is called by the ABSU in protest against the reconstitution of the BAC undemocratically in violation of the Accord. Discussions are being held to reconstitute the other councils also.

(e) Various demands put forward by these organisations and their fulfilment:

Before independence the tribal people confined their demand mainly to the representation in the legislative bodies. But after independence, the tribal organisations put forward various demands for the protection of their identity and for their all round development for the realisation of which almost all the ethnic groups have gone to the verge of creation of separate state and of late of autonomous districts with administrative, legislative and financial powers. They believe that only such arrangements can protect their identities and achieve their development. Since independence, their demands have been in increasing with the passage of time due to reasons more than one. The antipathy of the successive governments to their problems and the big brotherly syndrom of the Caste Hindu Assamese have made the tribals to be more conscious to get organised and inculcated the spirit of separation, in the form of autonomous district and separate state.
The All Assam Tribal Sangha has been demanding, among other things, the protection of land of the tribals within belts and blocks by implementing the Assam Land Revenue Regulation, implementation of reservation Acts and Rules, filing up the vacant reserved posts by backlog system, eviction of non-tribals from belts and blocks, creation of more belts and blocks in tribal dominated areas, establishment of schools, hospitals and veterinaries in tribal areas and of late creation of autonomous districts and regions, and introduction of all tribal languages up to secondary level.

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam, the lone political party of the Plains Tribals till its split, as stated earlier, has been demanding a separate state, 'Udayachal' for the plains tribals comprising the compact tribal areas in the northern tract of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sibsagar district along with the foot hills of Bhutan and NEFA. Under the banner of PTCA the Bodo People boycotted the By-election of the Kokrajhar Parliamentary constituency which was held on May 19, 1968 as a protest against not conceding the demand of separate state under the proposal to reorganise Assam on federal structure. The PCTA got one MLA from Kokrajhar west in the Assembly election of 1972 and one MP from Kokrajhar Parliamentary constituency in the election of 1977 for the first time. Since then it is contesting
election with a view to realising the demand for the preservation of ethnic identity.

The Plains Tribal Council (Progressive) on the other hand, demanded a separate union territory named 'Mishing Bodoland'. The proposed state would comprise the northern tracts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts with a population of 8 Lakhs. It also demanded the transfer of all colleges situated in the proposed 'Mishing Bodoland' to some other university to facilitate better educational avenues along with the advantage of English as the medium of instruction.27

It also in a memorandum to the Governor of Assam, on January 10, 1982, reiterated its demand for a separate administrative unit along with the eviction of encroachers and foreign nationals from tribal belts and block.28 Again, in an memorandum to the Prime Minister on April 22, 1983, it gave an ultimatum to the demand of 'Mishing Bodoland' to protect the great Bodo family who has their own language, culture, tradition and a separate mode of Mongolian Civilisation.29

The United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF) has demanded a separate homeland for the Plains tribals. In a memorandum to the Prime Minister of July 10, 1985, it demanded;
"We desire a separate political identity by recognising age old political and geographical areas in the form of a separate state (Union territory Status) to be 'curved' out of the present artificial political arrangement called Assam, within the Union of India." \(^{30}\)

The People's Democratic Front which claims to be the real representative of the Bodo people, of late, has demanded a separate state along with the ABSU and demands the cancellation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council.

Besides, All Assam Tribal Solidarity Council, All Assam Tribal Students' Union, Tribal Protection Action Committee have demanded, inter alia, the creation of autonomous district with provisions included in the 6th Schedule, provision for reservation according to the recommendation of the Mandal Commission, Protection of Land of the tribals, better facilities for education etc. along with the aim and objective of unifying the tribal people (particularly plains) of Assam.

In North Cachar Hills, as stated earlier, there is no such organisation. The Dimasa People are more or less assimilated with the plains tribals and with their organisation like All Assam Tribal Sangha and Bodo Sahitya Sabha for the development of Dimasa Culture in particular and
of the district in general. Of late, a militant outfit has come out to demand a separate 'Dimaland'.

The Karbi-A-Durbar, the oldest organisation of the Karbis, has been demanding the protection and preservation of culture, tradition and identity of the Karbi People and their all round development.

But the organisations which spearheaded the movement for more autonomy even separate state for Karbi Anglong are the Karbi Students' Association (KSA) and the Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC). Although the Karbis were feeling ignored since late seventies, the movement became articulate and broad based since May 1986 under the leadership of the ASDC and the KSA. The ASDC started demanding autonomy within the state under Article 244-A of the Constitution. The movement gained popular support and gathered momentum. Riding on the crest of this popular movement the ASDC succeeded in winning an overwhelming majority in the election to the District Council held in 1989. In the general election of 1991, the ASDC comfortably won all the 4 Assembly seats of the Karbi Anglong and the lone parliamentary seat of the two hills districts.

The Union Govt. started political dialogue and the first round of tripartite talks involving the State Govt. was held on March 27, 1992 in New Delhi. After several rounds of discussion during May - August 1992, the Assam Govt. came-up
with a proposal upgrading the existing autonomous districts to autonomous territories with full powers conferred under Art 224-A. It was finally agreed that the autonomous territory should have direct access to the Planning Commission and should pass its own budget. It was also agreed upon that the Govt. of Assam should be advised by the authority of the autonomous territory and not by the Council of Ministers with regard to all matters pertaining to the hills districts.

However, the Karbi issue took a serious turn on November 12, 1992 when the Assam Government dissolved the Karbi Anglong District Council for alleged misappropriation of public money. However, after long eight months of legal battle, the Gauhati High Court in a landmark judgement on July 9, 1993 quashed the State Govt's. notification and directed the Govt. to restore the District Council Government as it existed before November 9, 1992. The ASDC came back to power and again political dialogue started with the Government. The eight year long Karbi Movement for autonomy has ended on April 1, 1995 with the signing of the agreement between the Karbi Leaders, Union Government and Assam Government in New Delhi by which 40 departments have been transferred to the District Councils.31
One needs to recall the shabby manner in which the two District Councils have been treated by Dispur in the matter of dissolution or suspending election for long periods. Successive District Councils had also been equally responsible for the concerted attempts by all concerned to sabotage the 6th Schedule provisions. Since the inability to operate the 6th schedule was born of the total lack of political will on all sides, one would also have doubts if the mechanism agreed upon would also not meet a similar fate. Another pertinent point that several Non-Karbi Organisations, have, of late, started raising demands against the agreement.

The demand for the introduction of Bodo Language in the lower primary school which was made by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha was realised when the Government of Assam introduced Bodo Language in Lower Primary Schools. Again a demand for recognition of Bodo Language as a medium of instruction in the secondary schools was made a thirteen (13) days mass movement was launched under the joint banner of Kokrajhar District Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the Goalpara Bodo Students' Union in 1968. This demand was also conceded by the Govt. of Assam in 1974, Bodo Sahitya Sabha demanded, Roman Script for the realisation of which vigorous movement with the support of Bodo Students' Union causing humiliation and death to some agitators. They were given Devanagri Script by the Central Government. According to the opinions of some members of the
Bodo Sahitya Sabha, during their stay in Delhi, two members prepared a proposal in favour of Devnagri Script and submitted it to the Central Government. They officially accepted it in the 16th Annual Conference of the BSS held at Dhing without resolution. In 1977, the Gauhati University has recognised Bodo as one of the Modern Indian Languages and it has opened one year certificate course in Bodo Language and upgraded to a diploma course. Recently the Dibrugarh University has also introduced Bodo as MIL. The demand for a separate department is being made.

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha has also demanded the recognition of Bodo Language as one of the official languages of Assam. The Government of Assam has declared that Bodo Language shall be used as an associate official language for all or any of the official purpose in Kokrajhar and Udalguri District. The BSS has expressed its great concern of the apathetic attitude of the present Government over Bodo medium and other tribal education, development of Language and literature and alleged that only a few number of Bodo Medium Lower, Middle and High Schools are recognised and provincialised in 1991. Further, it has demanded in its subsequent Annual Conferences, inter alia, adoption of Roman
Scripts, urgent implementation of the Bodo Accord, constitution of a Bodo Research centre at Athgaon Bathougu in Gauhati in memory of Late Bihuram Boro, setting up of a University campus at Kokrajhar, recognition of Bodo Language by the UPSC, APSC and UGC.36

The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) besides articulating its own demands has supported the demands of the BSS. In a charter of demands submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam on January 2, 1984, it demanded recognition of Bodo as an associate language for entire Assam, establishment of Central University and Agricultural College at Kokrajhar and Udalguri respectively, protection and restoration of tribal land and property including tribal belts and blocks, appointment of Bodo MTL Lecturers in Colleges and adequate number of Bodo Teachers in Bodo Medium Schools, inclusion of Bodo Kachari and the like Indo-Mongoloid tribes in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar into the 6th schedule.37 In another memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam the ABSU submitted 92 demands which besides the above mentioned, contains creation of separate state in the Status of Union Territory, inclusion of Bodo in the 8th schedule, opposition to clause 4 of Assam Accord, opposition to All Assam Students' Union's demand for constitutional amendment not to apply Articles 358 & 347 in case of Assam, creation of District Councils in tribal compact areas of southern valley of Brahmaputra.38 The
ABSU has alleged that the Governments have paid no attention rather they are neglecting the tribal people. In the said Memorandum it is stated that—"it has been long standing grievance of the entire unsophisticated Plains Tribal People of Assam that almost their lands and properties have already been alienated and transferred unceasingly to the hands of unauthorised Non-Tribal outsiders people through the process of illegal occupation, purchase and mortgage by their encroachment and infiltration into Tribal Belts and Blocks. On the other hand, uncountable foreign nationals hailing from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal etc. have settled down within Tribal Belts and Blocks and other predominantly general tribal areas also in contravention to the provisions of the Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Manual 1886."39

The ABSU launched a vigorous agitation to fulfil their demands including the demand for a separate Bodo Land. The then Assam Ganaparishad Government offered a scheme for constitution of Zila, Anchal and Gram Level Tribal cum Non-Tribal Parishad to be elected with greater representation of tribals was rejected by the agitators.

When the three men expert Committee headed by Dr. Bhupinder Singh came to study the problems of the Tribals of Assam, the ABSU and the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC) led by Sansuma Khungar Bwismutiary, President ABSU, submitted a voluminous printed memorandum along with charts and Maps to substantiate their claim for a separate state.
Mr. Binoy Khungur Basumatary, Chairman UTNLF deposed before the Committee that total population of the Bodos and other indigenous plains tribals originated from Bodos would be over one crore. He alleged that census figures were manipulated by 'Assamese enumerators'. He also alleged that Dispur was playing hoax in the name of 6th schedule. Even the Scheduled Tribe Advisory Council which is required to meet once in every month, sits hardly once a year and that too for passing the annual budget. The Tribal Development Authority which was set up by Indira Government also degenerated in course of time leaving the tribals of Assam without any statutory forum to ventilate their grievances. Charging the 'Assamese bureaucracy' of treating the plains tribals as 'Chattels' Mr. Basumatary also had a dig at clause 6 of the Assam Accord which provides for safeguard to 'Assamese Language and culture' only leaving out other plains tribal groups on this clause, the first thing the AGP Government did to issue 'SEBA' circular making Assamese Compulsory Medium of instruction in Assam. He also charged that the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) which does not allow political activity was a direct product of the clause.

The Committee comprised of three experts was represented by Dr. Bhupinder Singh, the chairman, and A.M. Gokhale Member Secretary. The other member Dr K.S. Singh did not come. The Committee visited and met representations from the Tribal Organisations, individuals and other political parties during April Sept. 1991.
He also dealt with the provisions of the Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 as amended in 1950 and said that the bureaucrats at Dispur had wilfully violated the provisions to deprive tribal people of their ancestral lands. He also said that vast sections of the tribals had no land records and the subsequent State Governments have refused to recognise their occupancy rights.

Mr. Medini Mohan Choudhury who was also a signatory to the ABSU - BPAC memorandum told the Committee that in Kokrajhar District the practice is to issue a Khatiyan which is a temporary settlement record unlike in other areas where permanent pattas are issued to land holders.

Mr. Sansuma Khungur Biswmutiary alleged that 1000 bighas of Tribal Land were settled with Bangladeshi nationals. Mr. B.K. Basumatary said that the nationalised banks refused to accept tribal land as security because they cannot trade in tribal land. This is a major handicap for tribal entrepreneurship. Phenomenal rise in population in certain tribal compact areas showed that large scale encroachments in these areas were taking place. It was only by creating a separate state for the Bodos and other Plains Tribals under Articles 2, 3, 4 of the Constitution that the problems of land, employment, culture and language of the ethnic tribes could be protected.
The Congress (I) and the Congress (S) of the Kokrajhar Units submitted before the Committee that they had no objection to Bodoland. The CPI wanted constitutional rights for all communities. The party suggested Autonomous District Council in Kokrajhar, Udalguri, the Rabha dominated areas in Goalpara and Kamrup, Tiwa dominated areas of Nagaon and provisions of 224(A) for Mising Areas in Dhemaji and Majuli. The CPI (ML) submitted that the party supported the grievances of the plains tribals and wanted federal restructuring of Assam.  

The Committee recommended a three tier system - Regional Council, Apex Council and an upper house namely Legislative Council with the stipulation of equal representation to all ethnic groups by increasing the strength of the house. But the recommendations have neither been published nor taken into consideration in the Accords. The ABSP leaders also rejected the recommendations as 'bogus and vague' (It was perhaps due to the suspension of the operation of the notification by the Central Government issued 25 February 1991 purporting to appoint a three member committee by the Gauhati High Court on April 10, 1991 on the writ petition submitted by the Assam Sanghati Raksha Parishad).

It has been known Dr. Dilip Singh Bhuriya, an MP from Maharashtra came to Assam just after the Expert Committee and recommended autonomy with boundary on the basis of 1991 census and economic conditions of the tribes. But this was also not published.
Meanwhile, the process of granting autonomy to the Bodo has started and several rounds of tripartite talks with the centre, the Assam Government and the ABSU - BPAC were held to demarcate the boundary. Apart from this, a militant outfit Bodo Security Force (BSF) had come out which adopted violence sporadically turning the movement violent. The then Assam Government led by Late Hiteswar Saikia held all party meet on Bodoland issue and they all agreed to grant autonomy to the Bodos. Consequently, the ABSU had submitted a list of 44 villages within their Bodoland Area. After prolonged negotiations the ABSU and BPAC agreed to include 3085 villages. However an accord was concluded between the Assam Government and the ABSU BPAC Leaders on 20th Feb'1993 whereby a Bodoland Autonomous Council within the State of Assam comprising contiguous geographical areas between river Sankosh and Mazat/River Pasnoi, for social, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural advancement of the Bodo residing therein. To expedite it, the Bodoland Autonomous Council Act, 1993 has been passed. Originally 2570 villages are included in the BAC Area. But the ABSU - BPAC have demanded the inclusion of 788 villages. On the other hand, three leaders prem-sing Bratya Uttam Brahma and Louis Islari have welcomed the Government's decision. Thus the leaders are divided over the issue and ultimately accepted after negotiation. The BAC area covers 186 square kilometers in the northern bank of Brahmaputra with a total population of 21 Lakhs of which 38% are Plains Tribals.
It excludes a belt of 10 kilometers along the international borders in the North. Later on, the Government has decided to include 22 more revenue villages and 90 forest villages in the BAC.43

The BAC shall have a General Council consisting of 35 elected members of which 30 seats shall be reserved for ST (Plains) having a life of 5 years. The Government will have powers to nominate 5 members from groups which could not otherwise be represented. There shall be an Executive Council consisting of the Chief and Deputy Chief of the General Council as the ex-officio member and 7 other members of the General Council nominated by the chief from amongst the elected members of the General Council. The BAC will have control over 48

The signatories are - S.K. Bisumatary, Rabiram Brahmar, President and Secretary, ABSU respectively, Subhash Basumata, Chairman B.P.A.C., & K.S. Rao, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam in presence of Rajesh Pilot, Minister of State, (Internal Security) Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India & Hiteswar Saikia, Chief Minister of Assam.
departments including cottage industry, Forest, Agriculture, P.W.D., Education up to Higher Secondary Level, land Land Revenue and Revenue, Tribal Welfare etc. Accordingly first interim Executive Council was formed with Prem Singh Brahma as the Chief. Presently the second interim council has been formed with Kanakeswar Narzary as the chief without holding election. Ms Pramila Rani Brahma, MLA of the Bodoland State Movement Council criticised that according to the letter and spirit of the Bodo Accord there was an agreement that until and unless election was held the accord signatories would govern the council. But it was very unfortunate that none of the signatories is included and none of the new members has any contribution of the Bodoland. The ABSU also called for 12 hours BAC area Bandh in protest against the reconstitution of the BAC by the State Government undemocratically in violation of the Accord.

Significantly, the Accord has brought rift within the leadership and fratricidal incidents have occurred among the Bodos. Apart from this, communal violence has also occurred within the BAC area whereby many adivasis (Santhals) have to leave their hearths and homes. Not only that, the ABSU and BAC have lost confidence in the BAC and resume their demand for separate Bodo Land. The ABSU has submitted a 33 page memorandum to the Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on his visit to Guwahati. Led by Mr. Urkhaogwra Brahma, the President. In the memorandum, they demand for the creation of separate Bolo Land State in the
North Bank from river Sankosh to Sadiya along the foot hills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. It is stated that the BAC has failed to fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the Bodo Community. The memo has called for a fresh tripartite political talks on Bodo issue and demands the establishment of a Central University, a Medical College, Engineering College, College of Veterinary Science, a Government Ayurvedic College and an IIT at Kokrajhar and an Agricultural University at Udalguri, inclusion of the Bodo Language in the 8th Schedule and recognition and implementation of the Bodo as one of the regional languages in UPSC and other competitive examinations. The ABSU threatens drastic agitation if its demand of separate state is not conceded and described Prime minster's announcement of ruling out a separate state as unfortunate, unacceptable and discriminatory.

Meanwhile a discussion is held on October 30, 1996 among the representatives of the State of Government and members after PDF and BAC whereby the Government agreed to include 23 additional villages into BAC.

The Lalung Durbar which was formed in 1967 demanded the creation of Lalung Hills Autonomous District taking the Tiwa dominated areas of Mikir hills, Nagaon and Kamrup Districts and Lalung dominated areas of Jaintia Hills. The All Assam Tiwa
Sanmilan consisting mainly of the Tiwa Students and youths under the leadership of Budhiman Bordoloi was formed in 1979. The main demands of this organisation are - protection of land and eviction of unauthorised non-tribals from the belts and blocks, due reservation of services, development of communication, formation of autonomous administrative unit by extending the provisions of the 6th Schedule, preservation of identity, development of Tiwa Language and culture.  

Another organisation, Autonomous Lalung District Demand Committee (ALDDC) which was formed in 1986, has been demanding an autonomous district for the Tiwas. The Tiwa Students’ Union (ATSU) which was formed in 1989, the most significant organisation of the Tiwas, has been spearheading the movement for autonomous district. Of late, both the ALDDC and the ATSU have come to the forefront and made a strong demand for autonomy. Several rounds of talks are held between the Assam Government and the leaders of these organisations.

When the three men Expert Committee visited Assam, the ALDDC made a representation before it and alleged that the Lalungs, in spite of being a powerful tribe, did not have any representation in the State Assembly. They are being continually deprived and looked down upon by the Assamese People.
Lalungs lived in 600 village with a total population of 6 lakhs and from 1967 they have been raising the demand for an autonomous district.48

The Government of Assam has agreed finally to grant autonomy to the Tiwas also. For that matter negotiations are held between the leaders of the ALDDC and ATSU and the State Government. The Government has a committee appointed headed by the then Revenue Minister Mr. Mukut Sarma to chalk out the process of granting autonomy. Significantly a rift has occurred between the ALDDC and the ATSU. The ALDDC has agreed to accept the Government proposal while the ATSU has criticised it as the puppet of the Government for its acceptance without demarcating the area.

A representative team of the ATSU met Chief Minister Mr. Saikia to discuss the proposal for autonomy and submitted a memorandum containing fresh suggestions wherein it is stated that all revenue areas covered by tribal sub-plan and falling under the tribal belts and blocks be included in the proposed map of the autonomous district; the constitutional, financial and administrative powers should be similar to those enjoyed by the Bodoland Autonomous Council, the present panchayat system be abolished in the autonomous areas; provisions and benefits should be equally extended to all other tribal and non-tribal communities.49
But in a significant move, the Government of Assam has invited the leaders of the ALDDC to negotiate and a memorandum of settlement was signed on April 13, 1995 by which autonomous district has been created. The Lalung Autonomous Council (The Apex Council) will consist of 30 members out of which 4 will be nominated by the Government. It will have power to make bye-laws, rules and orders and shall have powers on 44 subjects. In the satellite areas there shall be Village Councils entrusted with executive power in respect of development schemes on 29 subjects. The district will have an area consisting of 144 villages and 28 blocks of Kamrup, Marigaon and Nagaon Districts. An Interim Council has been constituted with Narayan Ladu Kakati as its Chief.

However, the accord has been outrightly rejected by the ATSU, Tiwa Womens' organisation and Lalung Durbar. The ATSU has reiterated its demand for demarcation of boundary and launching its movement to that end.

Among the Rabhas, organisations like Rabha Sahitya Sabha, Rabha Sanmilan, Rabha Students' Union are aiming at the development of Rabha Language and culture, ensuring the safeguards by the Constitution, implementation of reservation policy and introduction of Rabha language in Primary Schools.

But after 80's the Rabhas are also well organised and organisations like Rabha Hasong Demand Committee, All Rabha
National Council are set up to meet their demands. These organisations have demanded mainly an autonomous council with 823 Rabha dominated villages of South Kamrup and Goalpara Districts. They also demand autonomous Rabha District in the Rabha dominated areas of Darrang and Dhuburi Districts. Mr. Sabya Sachi Rabha, President, Rabha Hasong Demand Committee said if the areas overlap into BAC areas even in such situation autonomy must be given. However, he added that the Rabha Organisations would hold discussion with the BAC leaders and there might be a separate understanding with Bodos regarding the status of the Rabhas. Mr. Dwijen Rabha, the President of the All Rabha National Council and other leaders demand that all foreigners in the Rabha Hasong area must be deported.\(^{52}\)

However, an accord between the Government of Assam and the representatives of Rabha Hasong Demand Committee and Rabha Students' Union was signed on 10 March 1995 with a view to giving autonomy to different tribal groups on the basis of Dr. Bhupinder Singh Committees (Three men Expert Committee) recommendation, the Government of Assam has constituted a committee under the Chairmanship Mr. Mukut Sarma, the Revenue Minister, Government of Assam, to initiate discussions with the tribal groups. The Committee has finalised the recommendation and on that basis the Accord has been signed. Accordingly, a two-tier administrative system has been speculated - the Rabha
Nasong Autonomous Council and the village council. The RHAC consists of 30 elected members out of which 4 will be nominated by the Government. The village council consists of 10 elected members of which 5 will be from the Rabha Community. The village council shall have executive powers in respect of execution of development schemes on 29 subjects and the Apex Council shall have on 34 subjects. The State Government shall provide funds from TSP (Tribal Sub-Plan) and other resources to the Apex Council. The Council consists of Rani area of Kamrup and Joyram Kuchi of Goalpara with a total population of 6 Lakhs. The Government of Assam shall constitute interim council till of the election is held. The Government and the Council shall ensure protection to the rights and interests of the non-tribals and tribals other than Rabhas living in the Council Area.

Interestingly, there was no opposition to the Accord. The Present Government holds discussions to reconstitute the council with the members.

The Misings who are the mildest of the tribes, have mainly four organisations to articulate their demands. The Mising Agom Kcbang was born in 1972 with the objective of the development of Mising language and literature. The Mising Mising Kcbang born in 1938 is a socio-cultural organisation actively association with the development of the Mising people. The All Mising Student's Union (TMPK) FORMED in
1980 articulates the needs of the Mising Students in particular and the Mising People in general. In 1981 Dirbi Kcbang is formed to develop Mising Culture mainly folk songs.

The main demands of these organisations are provision of administrative autonomy for the tribals and Mising in particular extending 6th Schedule, introduction of Roman script and Mising as a subject language in II and III classes for three years on experimental basis, proper implementation of the constitutional rights and safeguards provided to the Mising People as tribals.\(^5^4\)

The Government of Assam has agreed to introduce Mising as a Language Subject in 100 selected Primary Schools in Dhemaji, Jonai and North Lakhimpur Sub-divisions with effect from the academic session 1985-86.

During 90's other organisations like Mising Mimaru Kcbang, Mising Autonomous Demand Committee have been organised to articulate the demand for autonomy with more vigour. The leaders of the MMK and TMPK represented before the Three men Expert Committee and submitted that the Misings Population is about 20 Lakhs and the Bordoloi Committee wilfully showed the Misings to be a tiny group. They also stated that the status of the Misings was equal to the Karbis they also being originally a hill tribe and demanded an autonomous state under Article 244(A) of the Constitution.\(^5^5\)
A convention of the intellectuals, teachers, employees was held on January 1 and 2, 1995 at Disangmukh in Sibsagar District under the auspices of the MMK and TMPK to discuss the proposal for giving autonomy by the State Government. The convention stated that the traditional house land of the Misings stretches from Sadiya to Jiabharoli along the course of the river Brahmaputra and from the foothills of Arunachal upto Brahmaputra along the course of subansiri. This compact and contiguous area is unbreakable and shall have to be declared as Mising Autonomous Council Area. The TMPK and the MMK are the two organisations which have the authority to jointly issue statements, talk with the Government or to adopt agitational programme on the question of Mising Autonomy. The convention also ostracised the Mising Banc Kcbang.

Mising Mimang Kcbang – The Mising Action Committee.

Taken Mising Porin Kcbang – All Mising Students' Union.
The TMPK and the MMK have rejected the Government proposals giving only executive powers to the proposed autonomous council, inclusion of revenue villages with 50 P.C. ST population and exclusion of forest villages, char areas and all other non-revenue villages in the negotiating table. The Mising Organisations demanded the creation of autonomous state comprising 1800 villages.\(^\text{56}\)

After much discussions and deliberations, the Government of Assam signed an accord with the Mising Autonomous Demand Committee for the creation of a two tier council in June, 1995. The council consists of villages from North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat and Golaghat Districts. However, the villages are yet to be identified. It would cover 3.5 Lakhs Mising Population.

The Mising Autonomous Council (Apex Council) would consist of 30 members of which 4 would be Government nominee. The MPs and MLAs belonging to reserved constituencies of the areas would be ex-officio members of the council. The village council would consist of 10 members and shall have executive powers on 29 subjects and the Apex Council on 34 subjects.\(^\text{57}\)

The Accord was signed in presence of Chief Minister Mr. Saikia. The MADC was represented by its president L. Pangging, Secretaries Dilip Pegu & Raj Kumar Kutum, Mising Banc Kcbang's President Dhaneswar Mudi, MADC Adviser R.K. Patir while the Chief Secretary Arunodoi Bhattacharya signed on behalf of the State Government.
The Accord was opposed by TMPK, MMK and TMMK. TMPK General Secretary Purusuttam Doley termed the accord as anti people and said that the self styled MADC has no right to represent the Mising People. Necessarily, these organisations reiterate their demand for separate state.

The Deuri Community has four main organisations articulating the needs and aspirations of the people. The Deuri Sanmilan and the Deuri Pujari Sammilan are socio-cultural organisations which aim at making the people conscious about social, economic and cultural problems and reforming the society. The demands of these two organisations are the development of communications, establishment of schools and of hospitals etc. The Deuri Sahitya Sabha and the All Assam Deuri Students' Union have demanded the recognition of Deuri Language as medium of instruction and introduction of it as a subject language from Lower Primary to Middle Schools in Deuri Populated areas, circulation of and broadcasting of Deuri Songs other cultural programmes in All India Radio and Television and economic and political protection. These demands remained in existence though with subdued vigour due to the fact that this tribe has assimilated to a large extent.

The other ethnic groups of the Plains Tribals are small in population and they are more or less assimilated with Assamese Culture. Therefore they have no separate organisation of their own. However,
attempts have been made by some to preserve their identities. The Sonowal Kachari Students Union, the All Assam Sonowal Kachari Kalyan Sangha represent such a venture. The Barman Cachar are by and large associated with All Assam Tribal Sangha.

The Hills Tribes Living in plains and the Plains Tribes living in Hills have been demanding scheduling them as Scheduled Tribes. The Government of Assam by an order on 4 December, 1982 declared that these tribes would get economic benefits enjoyed by the Scheduled Tribes.59

Thus, it is seen that most of the ethnic groups have become restive for autonomy. The movement for autonomy has gradually achieved mass participation. The Bodo movement has turned violent although the others continue to be non-violent. However, the demand for autonomy has been meted out at last. Barring the Bodoland Autonomous council which has a boundary, the others do not have a specific boundary. The Autonomous Councils have not been given Legislative and financial powers. The way by which settlements are made is also not acceptable to large sections of the agitators because they have not been invited to the negotiating tables. They therefore, vehemently opposed the constitution of autonomous districts. Of course, the Chief Minister, Late Saikia stakes claim that the Government has succeeded in saving the state from disintegration for a second time by granting autonomy to the
various tribes. However, he refuted the feasibility of autonomy to Deuris, Hajongs and Barmans etc. due to their lesser population. He also suggested that a Legislative Council could be constituted with representatives of all ethnic groups.

But the point is if the councils have to look for financial grants then its so-called autonomy is fragile. Only that entity is truly autonomous which has the productive potential to ensure its fiscal autonomy. Autonomy is misconceived in the milieu of a highly centralised central authority. This misconceived move will inevitably have the pernicious effect of accentuating and perpetuating the casteist and communal divisions. What is really called for is greater political representation to all ethnic groups so that separatist urges would have no reasons to get consolidated.
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39. Ibid ............

40. The Sentinel, April, 1991.


42. Related by Mr. Arun Manta, an ATSU Leader.


   The North-East Sun -- Bodoland Day February 20, Vol. XVI.


45. The Sentinel ------ June 17, 1996.
46. Ibid ------- October 25, 1996.
47. Related by Mr. Maneswar Deuri, Ex-General Secretary, All Assam Tiwa Sanmilan.
49. Related by Mr. Bhupen Kholar, President ATSU.
51. Related by Mr. Heramba Rabha, Ex-Secretary, Rabha Sahitya Sabha.
52. Related by Mr. Sabyasachi Rabha, President, Rabha Hasong Demand Committee.
54. Related by Mr. Lakshminath Pangging, Ex-Vice President, Mising Banc Kcang.
58. Related by Kishore Kumar Deuri, Ex-President Deuri Sahitya Sabha.

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