Chapter III

Nature and Character of the Autonomy Movement

The ethnic consciousness of the plains tribes of Assam grew up during the first three decades of the 20th century. Prior to that the plains tribes of Assam were divided into many small groups and remained scattered all over the Brahmaputra valley. They had no racial or political unity among them. Moreover, a large number of them, in order to move upward in the social ladder, had adopted Hinduism and assimilated with the Assamese society leaving their own language and culture to oblivion. With the introduction of modern education during the British period the number of literate people started to increase both among the caste Hindus as well as among the tribes. By availing of the limited scope that the colonial rule had provided a small stratum of the middle class emerged amongst the literate groups of the tribes. The tribes felt a sense of neglect and humiliation in the midst of caste Hindu society for being treated as "untouchable." This gave birth to a sense of self-assertion and they felt that "they are quite independent from the Hindu community in all respects such as political, social and religion, etc." They became aware of their ethnic identity and began to develop the ethnic consciousness among their brethren.

In this situation of neglect and humiliation the leading members of the tribes started to organise some socio-political organisations, such as the Kichha Sanmilan, the Koch- Rajbonshi Sanmilan, the Chutiya Sanmilan, the Ahomi Association, the Muttock Association, etc during the early decades of the 20th century. These organisations were meant for the regeneration of their
movements first emerged as movements for self-assertion and regeneration.

These movements did not have any political programme and were not actuated by any political aim or demand. Under the Ahoms they had lived with amity and goodwill with the other segments of the caste Hindu society and under the colonial rule they remained satisfied with the same set of rules, i.e., a uniform code of civil laws and regulation. They became almost a part and parcel of the caste Hindu society. Most of the tribal elite of the time identified themselves with the larger Assamese society and some of them even distanced themselves from their own ethnic roots. The memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission in 1928 by the Bodo community of Goalpara, said, among others, that “The habits and customs of the people of this district are more akin to Assamese than to Bengalee. We the Bodos can by no means call us other than Assamese.” Thus the plains tribes of Assam, in the initial stage, did not raise any political demand. They simply wanted to safeguard their socio-cultural identity, to get further scope for appointment in government departments and establishments, to get modern education through mother tongue, to preserve their language and to choose their script, etc.

The plains tribes had felt disillusioned when their hopes and aspirations remained unfulfilled under British colonial rule. Their grievances, both these economic and linguistic-cultural, remained neglected and unresolved giving rise to a sense of political action in the minds of their elite.

The degree of political consciousness of the plains tribes was much different from those of the hill tribes of Assam. There were, therefore, certain differences in the assertive movements of the plains tribes of Assam.
of the hills. The disparate tribes/ethnic groups of Assam were at different stages of evolution and development, and so, their needs and requirements and aspirations were varied in nature. This sort of differences found reflected in the formulation of their ideological framework for political movements, and this naturally had their bearings in the nature and character of their movements.

Some tribes/ethnic groups, like the Koch-Ranbongshis, the Muttocks, the Chutiyas, etc., who were Hinduised but remained in backward condition, had launched their movements to get themselves enlisted as scheduled tribes for special protection. They adopted peaceful and democratic methods and are still struggling to fulfill their aspirations. They did not take any programme for violent mass movements. On the other hand, the Ahoms, who had once ruled the country, had raised the demand for reorganisation of Assam on federal basis, themselves constituting a federal unit within Assam. Their movement remained within the limits of submitting memoranda and participating in the general elections. Only the Bodos launched their movement with definite political goal. They initially raised the demand for an 'Autonomous Region' and later a Union Territory to differentiate them as a separate political entity. They even tried to unify all plains tribes of Mongoloid origin in Assam for launching a violent mass movement, both peaceful and democratic and violent, to achieve their goal.

The Bodos had initially started their assertive movement in a non-political way, but failing to realise their objectives through such movements they finally raised the demand for a separate state to safeguard their ethnic identity in all its manifestations. Ethnic consciousness first grew up among the Bodos through the activities of the Brahma Movement, a socio-religious reform movement, led by
Kali Charan Brahma. This movement, besides bringing a change in the socio-religious aspect, played a pioneering role in spreading education among the Bodo people. Under the impact of this movement a new Bodo intelligentsia grew up for taking the leadership of the Bodo tribes in all aspects of life and activity of the Bodos.

The Brahma Movement gradually took a turn towards political aims and objectives. This happened in the late-20's of the 20th century. The appointment of the Statutory Commission by the British Home Government on 8 November 1927 exercised the minds of the leaders of the various branches of the Bodo community to work in the direction of achieving their political aims and objectives. To begin with, a representative conference of the Kachari Community was held at Titabor, on 12 August 1928, under the auspices of the Assam Kachari Yubak Sanmilani. The aims and objectives of the conference were to unify all sections of the Bodo-Kachari people and to sort out their differences and work out for solving their grievances and demands. While expressing their deep sense of loyalty 'to the King of England and the Emperor of India', the conference declared themselves as an independent community and not a lower caste of the Hindus or untouchables. They demanded that the disparate groups like the Rabhas, Sonowals, Dimasas, Thengals, Lalungs, etc. be declared as constituting the Kachari Community of Assam. The conference also decided to co-operate with the Commission and submit a memorandum to it despite the call given by the national parties to the contrary.

The Titabor conference marked a new beginning in the history of the political movements of the Bodo-Kachari tribe in Assam. It awakened all sections of the Bodo-Kacharis as an independent community and it marked the
beginning of the pan-Kachari movement in Assam. But despite the efforts made by the Assam Kachari Yubak Sanmilani they could not unify all the sections of the Bodo-Kachari community and they failed to raise a uniform voice before the Statutory Commission when it visited the province in 1928. They submitted four separate memoranda representing four different organisations to the Commission.

The Bodos, for the first time, raised some political demands, like separate electorate for them in the legislative bodies, opposition to transfer the district of Goalpara to Bengal, etc. This marked the beginning of the political movement of the Bodos in Assam. But the leaders soon realised that the disunity in the Bodos was the main hurdle in launching out political movement of any kind. They fully realised that unity was the first step in the direction of achieving their goal. Without unity among the various sections of the Bodo tribe, they could not put much pressure on the government for working for their benefit and wellbeing. Therefore, on the eve of the enactment of the India Act, 1935, Bhimbar Bouri and other plains tribal leaders made an attempt at unifying all the disparate organisations of the plains Tribes of Assam. A convention of the plains tribes of Assam was held at Raha on 17 April 1933. In this convention was formed the All Assam Tribal League (in short Tribal League). In the inaugural session of the League (1933) it resolved to recognise and treat all the plains tribal communities as one ethnic group and to demand at least seven seats for them in the Assam Legislative Assembly. Under the pressure exerted by the League, the Government of India Act 1935 reserved four seats for the tribals in the Assam Legislative Assembly and one nominated seat in the Legislative Council of Assam.
The Tribal League followed a democratic and liberal principle for the achievement of their political demands. Apart from the political demands, the League also worked for the eradication of the opium evils from amongst the tribes, and demanded for the retention and maintenance of the Line System in the face of the increasing hordes of immigration from across the border. The Tribal League, like the other political parties, did not have a definite political ideology. They were ready to give support to any political party irrespective of its ideologies, provided it would give assurance to fulfil their needs and aspirations.

In the general elections of 1937, the Tribal League bagged all the four seats reserved for them in Assam Legislative Assembly. The tribal bloc in the Assembly soon came to be reckoned with as a force in the Assembly. It became a deciding factor in the formation of Ministry. Both the Indian National Congress under Gopinath Bardoloi and the Muslim group under Muhammad Saadullah vied with one another to secure the support of the Tribal League members to form the Ministry. The Tribal League leaders first gave support to the INC under Gopinath Bardoloi to form the Ministry. But after the resignation of the Congress Ministry in the wake of the Second World War, the Tribal League leaders entered into an agreement with the Muslim group to form the Ministry. The Tribal League even joined the Ministry of the Muslim group led by Muhammad Saadullah.

After the end of the War, when Gopinath Bardoloi formed the second Congress Ministry in 1946, the Tribal League again joined the Congress Government. During this period the tribal League leaders achieved a signal victory when the Bardoloi Ministry passed an act (Act XV of 1947) making an amendment to the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation of 1886. This Act
forming a part of that Regulation, created a total of 33 Tribal Belts and Blocks exclusively for the tribes and restricting and prohibiting others, including the immigrants, to possess land within these Belts and Blocks. 9

With the passing of this Act the Tribal League leaders became much dependent on the Congress Party and its leadership. Because of this situation the APCC (of the INC) could now influence and win over a section of the tribal leaders to its line of political thinking and activity. For instance, in the election to the Constituent Assembly, the Congress members in the Assam Legislative Assembly could elect Dharanidhar Basumatari, the APCC nominee against Bhimbar Deuri, the nominee of the Tribal League. Dharanidhar Basumatari appeared to be much loyal to the INC than to the aims and aspirations and interests of the tribes. The defeat of Bhimbar Deuri was treated by the plains tribes as the cause of their being deprived of the constitutional benefits. They alleged that Dharanidhar Basumatari did not raise a single voice in support of the tribal demands in the Constituent Assembly violating the party whip. 10

But despite this fact or betrayal, the Tribal League remained subservient to the Congress. Soon two Tribal League leaders, Bhimbar Deuri and Rupnath Brahma, joined the Congress Parliamentary Party, and a little later Bhimbar Deuri was inducted into the Congress Ministry in September 1946. Samar Brahma Choudhury, the Vice-President of the PTCA commented on the role of the Tribal League leaders thus, “It appears to be strange that the Tribal League eschewed this very apparent conspiracy of the Congress and compromised with it by allowing Bhimbar Deuri to be inducted to Bardoloi Cabinet in the following month of September. This definitely demonstrated the decline of the quality of the leadership of the tribals which succumbed to the Congress bid to create-
alternative leadership amongst the tribals to displace them from the position of
dictating terms in Assam politics."

But the political situation of Assam on the eve of independence became
so grave that it was unwise for the Tribal League leadership to remain separate
from the Congress. It can not be said, as Samar Brahma Choudhury has
observed, that the plains tribal leadership had succumbed to the Congress bid
due to their 'decline of quality of the leadership', rather their decision to join the
Congress was a wise one in view of the fact the All India Muslim League was
vociferously demanding the partition of India. The All India Muslim League
demanded the inclusion of Assam with Muslim dominated Bengal to create the
Eastern wing of Pakistan. The plains tribals of Assam were already on the verge
of extinction due to the incessant flow of the Muslim immigrants from East
Bengal. So, a fear was hunting their minds that they would lose their ethnic
identity if Assam were ceded to Bengal according to the demand of the Muslim
League.

Besides, when the independence of the country became imminent, the
British Home Government sent a three-member Cabinet Mission to India in
March 1946 comprising Pethick Lawrence, Stafford Cripps and A.V. Alexander
with a view to formulating a plan for setting up a constitution making body and to
establish full self-government for India. The Mission declared its plan on 16
May, 1946. While overtly rejecting the demand of Pakistan as well as the
partition of the country, the Cabinet Mission in its plan indirectly accommodated
all the demands of the Muslim League. It was equivalent to creating all the
advantages of a Pakistan for the Muslims without partitioning the country. The
Cabinet Mission devised a plan to set up a three-tier constitution: the Centre,
the Provinces and the Group and an interim government. According to the Mission's proposal, the representatives of the constitution-making body which would be elected by the legislatures of the provinces, would be divided into three sections - A, B, and C. These sections would settle the constitutions of the provinces included in each section. Apart from this, the sections or groups of the representatives so wished, might have legislatures and executives and an intermediate layer of governments between the provinces and the union. At the same time it declared that a province was free to opt out of its allotted section or group only after an initial period of 10 years and at 10 yearly intervals thereafter. Assam was placed in Section C with Bengal to frame the group and provincial constitutions.

Saadullah and the followers of the Muslim League welcomed the scheme. But the APCC under the leadership of Gopinath Bardoloi sharply reacted against the grouping of Assam with Bengal for fear of losing its independent provincial status and identity. The APCC appealed to the Congress Working Committee members not to include Assam in a particular section or group against the意志 of her people and to allow the representatives of Assam to frame the constitution of Assam independently.12

But when the INC and the Muslim League, at one stage, were prepared to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan, the APCC started the anti-grouping agitation in Assam. The Tribal League lent full-hearted support to the anti-grouping movement. The plains tribals of Assam, who had earlier opposed the transfer of Goalpara district to Bengal in 1928, did not support the grouping of Assam with Bengal in 1946. The Tribal League, therefore, joined hands with the Congress Parliamentary Party in 1946 to strengthen the integrity of Assam.
Assam's determined opposition, supported by all sections of people, tribals and non-tribals, that the grouping plan of the Cabinet Mission failed and Assam was saved from being tagged with Bengal.

However, the Tribal League had some weaknesses. First, it was the organisation of the tribal middle class and its activities remained confined with the leaders. They did not intensify the movement through mass mobilisation and the common people remained ignorant about the ideas and activities of the League. Secondly, the Tribal League leaders were not in good terms with other tribal leaders belonging to the Congress and other political parties. Thirdly, the euphoria of freedom also engulfed the Tribal League leaders and many of them joined the Congress in the wake of the independence of the country. They felt that there was no necessity of the Tribal League to pursue a separatist policy and converted it into a socio-cultural organisation, the Tribal Sangha in 1954. Thus the Tribal League surrendered its political programmes and initiatives to non-tribal Assamese leaders of the INC. This action of the League was a great setback in the way of protecting the rights and interests of the plains tribes of Assam.

Thus the political power being at the hands of the Assamese middle class since 1937, the hopes and aspirations of the plains tribes were shattered. The Assamese middle class never seriously thought of sharing political power with the tribals nor did they evolve any effective mechanism to satisfy their needs and requirements. Andrew Clow, the Governor of Assam (1942-46) remarked, "The Assamese both caste Hindus and the Muslims, professed solicitude for the tribes, but neither had troubled to study the question nor had any real sympathy with the tribes."
After the end of the tribal politics pursued under the tutelage of the Tribal League, the Bodo elite concentrated their attention in the direction of cultivating their own language and literature. The year before the conversion of the Tribal League into the Tribal Sangha showed the emergence of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952. The Sabha immediately after its formation decided to give education to their children in Bodo language and soon demanded that Bodo language be made the medium of instruction for the Bodo students in schools. But the Government of Assam did not take necessary steps in this direction. Under this situation the Sabha launched a vigorous mass movement which roused the ethnic sentiment of the Bodos. This resulted in the introduction of Bodo language as the medium of instruction by the Assam Government in the primary level since 1963 and the measure was extended to the secondary level by the year 1973.

The Assam Official Language Act, 1960, alarmed the tribal peoples of Assam, both in the Hills and Plains. On 13 January 1967 the Government of India made an announcement for the reorganisation of Assam on federal basis. All the tribes of Assam, including the Bodos, welcomed the announcement. The plains tribes of Assam immediately formed a new political party under the name and style of the "Plains Tribal Council of Assam" (PTCA) to raise the demand for a separate political unit for them in the proposed federation of Assam. In this way, the PTCA emerged as the only political party of the plains tribes of Assam in 1967, i.e., after a gap of nearly 15 years since the liquidation of the tribal League in 1953.

In a press note, after its formation, the PTCA declared, "The Congress views with great concern the lapses of the State Government of Assam in matter
of implementation of various legislative measures made to safeguard the vital interests of the Plains Tribals of Assam. The Council feels such lapses as lack of sincerity and goodwill towards the plains tribal people of Assam and a consequential result of the policy of assimilation which (sic) tends to impose language and culture and absorption of tribal communities and thus bring extinction in every sphere of life. After full round of discussion the Council decides to move for full autonomy in the plains tribal areas which alone will help the rehabilitation of the tribal people and create favourable conditions to grow according to their own genius…" 14

The PTCA was of the opinion that without political power being given to the tribals through autonomy, there was no salvation for them at all. In a memorandum submitted to the President of India (20 May 1967) it stated, "The plains tribals are disillusioned and do not any more want to eschew political problems and devote themselves only in socio-economic activities. The betrayal of the Assam Government have compelled them to take resolute stand and rise in struggle to defend their birth- right to preserve their land, language, culture and tradition which have by and large been incorporated in the Indian Constitution. Heroic, militant and zealous defender of their identity through ages, the plains tribals today have decided to convert their grievances into political movement and resolved to carry forward unflinchingly till their demands are fulfilled. With this view in end today the plains tribals of Assam have united under the banner of the Plains Tribals' Council of Assam." 15

In the early part of their movement, the PTCA raised the demand for an autonomous region on the North bank of the Brahmaputra. But subsequently they shifted their demand from autonomous region to union territory comprising
the same area with the nomenclature of 'Udayachal' in 1973. But in June 1977, they retraced their steps and repeated their demand for the autonomous region within Assam.

During 1973-77, the leaders of the PTCA had realised the futility of the demand and creation of a separate autonomous union territory for the plains tribes in the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural province of Assam. In the Shillong Talk, held on 20 August 1980, Charan Narzari, the General Secretary of the PTCA, made an appeal to the Government in the following terms, "Without changing the present political map of Assam something is to be given to us."\(^{16}\)

Due to this shifts and turns, the PTCA had to face severe criticism from more militant elements from within the plains tribes of Assam, such as the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) and other leaders. As a matter of fact, the demand for Udayachal had created great impact on the minds of the plains tribes of Assam, even the ABSU leadership welcomed it with heart and soul. But the vacillating nature of the PTCA leadership as to the demand for autonomous union territory of Udayachal created a sense of frustration and misgivings in the minds of their followers. Apart from this, the movement launched by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha for Roman Script for Bodo language in 1973-74 also helped to derail the movement of the PTCA for autonomous union territory. The movement for Roman script was followed by the period of national Emergency in 1975-77. Under the impact of the Emergency rule the movements for autonomy of the PTCA and for the Roman script of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha fizzled out.

In the general election held in Assam in the wake of the Emergency, the PTCA, after making an alliance with the Janata Party, participated and were four...
seats to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1978. The PTCA also participated in
the Golap Borbara Ministry. Samar Brahma Choudhury being made a Cabinet
Minister. During the Assam Movement (1979-85), launched by the A\SU and the
AAGSP against foreign nationals, the PTCA could do nothing except submitting
memoranda, from time to time, to the government. 

Though PTCA appeared to be the political organisation of the plains tribes
of Assam, it was mainly led and dominated by the Bodos and their leaders. In
the meantime, the Bodo leadership attained a militant character and they estab-
lished their hegemony in the organisation disregarding the rights and interests of
other ethnic/tribal groups. In this emerging situation, other tribal groups left the
party, i.e., PTCA, and the latter was soon split in 1979. The militant
young group organised a new party under the name of PTCA (Progressive). But
this too was dissolved under the pressure of the ABSU, giving birth to another
political party in the name of United Tribal Nationalists’ Liberation Front (UTNL)
under the leadership of Binoy Kumar (Khungur) Basumatary as chairman. Within
a very short period of time this outfit too suffered a split into two, the UTNL and
the United Bodo Nationalists’ Liberation Front (UBNL).

The formation of the UBNLF clearly shows that the autonomy movement
of the plains tribes of Assam has been gradually transformed into the autonomy
movement of the Bodos. Till the formation of the UBNLF, the Bodo leadership
had been working under the veil of the ‘tribals’, and with the formation of UBNLF
they openly came out for a separate state only for the Bodos.

The failure of the PTCA to fulfil the autonomy aspirations of the plains
tribes of Assam may be said to have led to the rise and growth of Bodo militancy in
Assam. The Bodo militancy or nationalism appeared in the stage under the
leadership of the ABSU. Since its inception on 15 February 1967, ABSU has been supporting the political movements of the PTCA for the creation of a separate union territory or state. The ABSU came to take the leadership of the movement for a separate union territory or state for the Bodos only in 1987. While taking the leadership, the ABSU defined the term Bodos thus, "Here the difference between the terms Boro and Bodo is obvious. Boro includes only purely Boro speaking people although some sections of them might have forgotten their Boro language. But the term Bodo refers to all Kochari or Bodo groups of people such as Boro, Rabha, Koch, Garo, Sonowal, Lalung, Deori, Dimasa, Saraniya, Barman, Hojai, Hajong, Tripuri (Tipperah), Chutiya and Moran whose languages are very close to Boro or Bara. That is why languages of those kochari clans are known as Bodo group language and those tribes are known as Bodos as a whole."18 This definition did not include the Rajbongshis though they belonged to the same Bodo stock as they were Assamised and speak the Assamese language.19

The ABSU started the movement with a mass rally at Judge’s Field in Guwahati on 12 June 1987 raising the slogan ‘Divide Assam Fifty Fifty.’ It demanded the creation of a separate state under the name of ‘Bodoland’ with union territory status in the north bank and District Councils in the south bank of the Brahmaputra for the Bodos. This created a rift in the rank and file of the Bodo community comprising different groups, like Rabhas, the Tiwas (Lalungs), etc. and they came out of the ABSU to launch separate movements to have their own homeland.

The ABSU, since its inception, underwent some changes in its style of functioning as well in organisational sphere. Under the guidance and leadership
of Upendranath Brahma ABSU took the AASU as its role model. It may be mentioned here that Upendranath Brahma had been a member of the AASU Executive Committee spearheading the Assam Movement during 1979-85. He lost no time in applying his experiences in revitalising the ABSU. He initiated the process for the organisation of the Bodo People’s Action Committee (BPAC) like the AAGSP and the Bodo Volunteer Force like the AASU Volunteer Force (Chatra Santha Swechchasevak Bahini). The ABSU even took and applied the methods of the AASU in the course of its movement for a separate state for the Bodos.

Thus the undemocratic and chauvinistic tendencies demonstrated earlier by the AASU have been applied by the ABSU during the course of their movement. As a consequence, the ABSU volunteers and supporters of the Bodo movement concentrated their attack on public leaders and people with liberal, democratic and communists as did the AASU in the past. Eminent public figures like Samar Brahma Choudhury, the Vice-President of the PTCA and Bihu Ram Boro, were done away with by the Bodo extremist group. Samar Brahma Choudhury was dubbed as ‘the most treacherous, opportunist and crooked (with devil mastermind) PTCA leader.’

The ABSU movement passed through three distinct phases. The first phase, which was peaceful and democratic, covered the period from 2 March 1987 to December 1988. The movement, more or less, was non-violent during this period. During this period they resorted to submitting a memorandum containing 92 demands to the Governor and the chief Minister of Assam. They held mass meetings and rallies, demonstrations, processions, and religious prayer meetings for the realisation of their demand.
The Government of Assam, instead of conceding their demand let loose a reign of terror. The Government clamped the 144 IPC, applied the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958, and the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955, etc. to crush the movement. These repressive acts were applied in the Bodo dominated areas. In consequence, the Bodo people suffered a lot. Innocent women and grown up girls were even gang-raped by Assam Police, as for instance in Bhumka in Kokrajhar district. The unabated Government repression pushed the otherwise peaceful movement to go underground and to develop violent tendencies and assume extremist character.

The second phase of the movement covered the period from 19-20 December 1988 to August 1989. This period was marked by violent methods and extremist activities resorted to by the leaders and activists of the movement. During this period of the movement, the ABSU leaders took an aggressive stance. It was also marked by high level political discussions held between the leaders and the Government. The ABSU and BPAC leadership demanded Bodoland exclusively for the Bodos as a union territory.22

This time they resorted to long term Assam bandh, rail and road blockade, in a phased manner each for several days together. As the road and rail links passed through the kokrajhar district connecting the North-East with the rest of the country, the people nay the entire economy of the region suffered heavy losses as the movement was successful in that Bodo dominated district. Looting, arson, bomb-blasting, kidnapping, burning of wooden bridges on public roads, removal of fish-plates from railways, wanton killings, attacks on people having allegiance to the AGP and the PTCA, became the order of the day during this
phase of the movement. These activities were said to have been the handiwork of the 'Boro Security Force' and the 'Bodo Liberation Army'. The ABSU leadership disowned these activities through press statements claiming their movement peaceful and democratic and the sabotage activities the handiwork of the anti-social elements.

That the Bodo extremists were behind these sabotage activities became clear when Prem Singh Brahma, the Chairman of the Bodo Militant Force, along with eleven others, surrendered with their arms and ammunitions to the Chief Minister of Assam, Hiteswar Saikia and Rajesh Pilot, the Union Minister of State for Home, at a mass rally held at Debargaon (Kokrajhar) in 1993.

The third and last phase of the movement was somewhat peaceful and it was marked by a series of Tripartite Talks ultimately leading to the signing of the Bodo Accord on 20 February 1993. The Bodo Accord goes down in history for granting Autonomous Council to the Bodos within Assam. A section of the militant group amongst the Bodos remained dissatisfied with the signing of the Bodo Accord. They appeared to have a firm conviction to establish and realise a separate state for the Bodos.

From the above discussion it follows that the autonomy movement of the plains tribes of Assam has three different trends, (a) the regional tribal nationalist trend, (b) the ethno-centric trend, and, (c) the separatist trend. But it is difficult at this moment, to differentiate these trends as all these trends developed under the cover of a broad term 'tribalism'. Despite this inherent difficulty, the regional tribal nationalist trend emerged with the demand for regional tribal autonomy raised by the PTCA, the PTCA (P) and the UTNLF. This category includes the demand for Udayachal, Tribal Land, Mishing- Bodoland, etc. The ethno-centric
trend emerged with the demand of the Ahoms, the Koch-Rajbongshis, the ABSU-BPAC, the Rabhas, the Tiwas, and the Mishings, etc. The separatist trend emerged with the demand of the Bodo security Force (Br.SF). This outfit thought that the Bodo problem could only be solved with the creation of a separate and sovereign Bodoland from within the province of Assam.

Notes and References

3. Basumatari, p. 6
4. Ibid., p. 12
7. Infra, chapter iv
9. Ibid., p.1
11. Ibid., p. 110.
15. Ibid., p.137
16. ABSU's Leaflet, 21st September 1985
18. Datta, 1993, p.268
19. Ibid., p. 269
20. Kalita, R.C., 2001, p. 25


22. ABSU-BPAC Memorandum, 8th April, 1991
