CHAPTER - V

ROLE OF THE STUDENTS OF ASSAM SINCE INDEPENDENCE
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Role of students after independence of India continued to be active. The student community gained lot of experience in course of their struggle in freedom movement of the country.

In independent India, student community of Assam was very active. They played their active role in all the major issues originated since independence. The trend is still continuing.

5.1: Oil Refinery Movement of 1955:

A great mass movement was witnessed in Assam during the period 1955-57 when the central government showed indifferent attitude towards the peoples' due demand for establishment of an Oil Refinery in Assam. The people of the state also felt that Assam was under-developed as compared to the other states of the country due to the non-establishment of industry in the state. On the other hand, the first and second five-years plans had not taken any positive steps in this regard. Hence, the negligent attitude towards Assam added fury to the flames.

The editorial of ‘Asomiya’- an Assamese weekly dated May 25, 1957, stated clearly that the central government had shown keen interest to establish the same in Assam and it had expressed its sympathy towards the foreign oil Company neglecting the genuine demand of the people of Assam, to establish the oil Refinery at Calcutta instead of Assam. The Govt of India also expended lots of money and time constituting several expert committees to review the pros and
cons of the establishment of such an industry in Assam, actually to pretend it from
the scene.

Refinery movement of Assam took a different shape while the student community
of the state took up the case of the movement. The representatives of different
institutions of greater Guwahati assembled on 1st August 1956, and decided to
carry on a vigorous campaign for the establishment of the proposed Refinery at
Assam instead of Calcutta The very next day on August 2,a huge meeting of
students held at Nabin Ch Bordoloi Hall, Guwahati, with Praneswar Das in the
chair, who had just returned from Bandung Hareswar Goswami, the leader of the
PSP, while addressing the huge gathering of 800 criticized the indifferent attitude
of the central Government and inefficiency of the state Government to make the
under-developed state an industrial one contrary to their declared policy 1 Jibon
Bora, Beni Medhab Mahanta, Suren Dutta and also the president of the meeting
appealed the student community of Assam to rise to the occasion and carry on a
strong agitation throughout the state Kanak Sen Deka. On the other hand,
delivered an inflammatory speech where Mr. Deka urged the students to revolt
against the GOI if due justice were denied. Resolution were also adopted strongly
urging the state government to move to the central government to convince it to
establish the proposed Refinery in Assam as an Industrial Enterprise in private
sector The meeting decided to observe 11 August as “All Assam students protest
day” and also constituted an ‘Action Committee’ for the successful observance of
the day.2

Accordingly on 11 August 1956, the students of the educational institutions of
Guwahati boycotted their classes and took out a procession shouting slogans
demanding the location of oil refinery in Assam. A public meeting was held after
the procession at Nabin Ch. Bordoloi Hall. Students like Praneswar Das, Amiya
Saikia, Sarat Patowary, Krishna Das, Ramen Deka and others were present In the
meeting ‘Students Action Committee’ was authorised to form a broad-based

1 Deka, Meeta. Op.cit. p159
committee including leaders of the political parties for fighting for the cause with great effort or effect.\(^3\)

Gradually, the Oil Refinery movement spreaded throughout Assam and the students also with their inflitching and unbending determination participated in this movement to realise the dream of an Oil Refinery of the people of Assam in to reality Hence, meetings were organised in different parts of Assam such as at Nalbari, Borpeta, Kokrajjar, Dhubri, Shillong, Sibsagar, Tezpur, Dibrugar and Nagaon The students of Nagaon showing their bravery one step ahead rather than the others demanded that the Ministers, MLAs and the MPs of Assam should resign and Assam would be declared a separate state if their demand was not fulfilled A council of Action Committee was formed in Shillong\(^4\)

The student of Assam realising the indifferent attitudes of both the central as well the state Government about the issue they fighting for observed a general strike on 28 August, 1956, paralysing completely the normal life in the state. Students picketed at schools, colleges and universities and other government offices resulting the arrest of a huge number of students A procession was taken out by the students of Nagaon led prominently by Uma Saikia, Kamal Bora and Padma Borbora on Sept 4, 1956 and held a meeting in Jubilee Garden after the procession The meeting strongly condemned the arrest of students on 28 August and demanded unconditional release of the same. Similar meetings were also organised at Samaguri, Jamunamukh, Daboka and Kampur\(^5\)

Protesting against the negative attitude of the GOI, a public meeting was held at Guwahati in the aegis of Praja Socialist Party to observe the ‘Oil Refinery Day’ on June 5, 1957. Attending the meeting as chief guest, Late Hem Baruah, former M P. of Assam said in his speech that as the development of India lies on the development of all states, therefore, the demand of the people of Assam should be

\(^3\) Ibid, pi60.  
\(^4\) APAI. 1956.  
\(^5\) Ibid
responded positively by the central Government. Mr. Hareswar Goswami also criticised the central government for its indifferent attitude while he delivered his lecture as guest of honour. In the meeting they lauded that people of Assam must develop a mass movement to get their due justice. The meeting was presided over by Biswa Goswami. The situation turned into a grave one while the P. T. I published a news mentioning clearly that the central Government was interested to establish the refinery at Barawoni in Bihar. Protesting the unauthentic decision of the central Government to establish the proposed refinery at Barawoni, ‘The Assam Tel Sodhnagar Parishad’ had observed ‘Protest Day’ throughout Assam on 22 June, 1957. The Congress, on the other hand, had decided to refrain from the protest in a meeting held on June 19, 1957, as the central government yet to take final decision on the matter.

The role of the students in the oil refinery movement was so active that in July, 1957 the Intelligence Bureau reported “A notable feature of the week under review was the increasing intensive part played by the students in preparations for the oil refinery movement. Separate students Action committee in addition to main local committees had been formed at Dhubri, Guwahati, Shillong, Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur. It is to be noted that a deputation led by the students of ‘Gauhati Students Oil Refinery Action Committee’ visited the office of the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bishnuram Medhi on July 13, 1957, and placed before him the demand of the people of the state regarding the establishment of the oil refinery in Assam. Describing the movement as premature, the Chief Minister requested the students to leave the path of agitation. The delegation asked the Chief Minister to resign if the demand of the people was not fulfilled.

Again, the student Action committees had decided to observe the July 19 as the ‘Protest Day’ and this clarion call of the students’ committees were well

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6 Asomiya. 8 June. 1957.
7 Asomiya. 8 June. 1957
8 Asomiya. 22 June. 1957
10 The Assam Tribune. 13 July, 1957.
responded in several town and villages in the state. Processions were taken out, meetings were held by them where thousands and hundreds of people gathered.  

A student conference was held at Guwahati on 25 July which protested strongly the central Government's plan to establish the proposed refinery at Barawoni of Bihar. The conference also adopted some strong decisions. One of the such decisions was that if neglecting the people's due justice, the central Government would establish the refinery at Barawoni, then the state Government must be resigned before July 28. Student participants from different parts of Assam were attended in the two-day long conference. The students of Assam continuously played their active role in this movement until their demand was not materialised.  

The plan of the all Assam Student convention (except Cachar) to implement the plan and programmes prepared by the All Assam Oil Refinery convention and to coordinate the activities of the students with those of the general Action committees further intensified the role of the students in the oil refinery movement. It is worth mentioning that students were registered themselves as members of the General Action Committees. It could be said that the movement had reached the height when a state-wide hartal was declared by the Oil Refinery Convention on July 29.  

The people of Assam greatly responded to the hartal call given by All Assam Oil Refinery Convention which paralysed the normal life in the state. According to reports except AIR, all the offices of central and state Government were closed, and finally there was not a single passenger in the airport. A huge public meeting was held at Church Field after the hartal programme where several important decisions had been taken. It was decided that the movement would be continued until the central Government cleared its stand on the establishment of the proposed refinery. Appeal was also made to the Assam Cabinet in the meeting to join with the people for the noble cause of Assam resigning from the Ministry.

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11 Ibid
12 Asomiya. 27 July, 1957
13 Asomiya. 3 Aug, 1957
Launching of Satyagraha from 14 August was another major decision taken in the meeting. Employees were requested to refrain from their duties or work on August 15. The All Assam Oil Refinery Convention was also decided not to cooperate in the All India Congress Conference to be held at Guwahati. A 'Flag' for the Oil Refinery movement was also adopted in the meeting.\(^\text{14}\)

It is pertinent to mention that the hartal programme was observed throughout Assam on July 29. At North Guwahati the programme was observed successfully. A public meeting was also held with Kamini Baruah in the chair at Bholi pathar. The programme was also observed at Sonapur, Sarthebari, Govinda Elengi satra, Moderghat, Sarupathar, Kaliabor, Digaru, Silghat, Chamata, Bihpuria, Doboka, and Dhakuakhana. Processions were also taken out in every place with the slogans like 'our demand must be fulfilled,' 'Assam Ministry should resign,' 'conspiracy of central Government must end,' and 'Dictatorship of Nehru must end,' etc in the procession. It is also to be noted that public meetings were an integral part of the programme where students were the soul participants.\(^\text{15}\) A grand procession was also taken out in Digboi by students, Employees of Oil Company and public with slogans like 'Oil is our blood.'\(^\text{16}\)

The fear psychosis of the people of Assam had disappeared a little when the French Oil expert, Mr. Fristch declared on August 4 that the proposed Oil Refinery could be established in Guwahati from economic and technical point of view. Indian Government’s Marine Engineer, J M. Bajaj also had a talk with the student leaders about the matter.\(^\text{17}\)

Gradually, the movement lost the strength it had in the past though it continued for some more time. The student Action committee met on 8 August at Guwahati which decided not to cooperate in the official independence Day programme but to observe it separately. The anniversary of Oil Refinery movement was also

\(^{14}\) Asomiya 3 Aug, 1957.  
\(^{15}\) Asomiya 10 Aug, 1957.  
\(^{17}\) Ibid, p163.
observed throughout the state on August 28 in collaboration with Oil Refinery Action committee.

Feeling tremendous pressure from the people of Assam in general and students in particular, Mr. K.D. Malavya, Union Minister of Mines and Oil, had declared the main points of agreement between the GOI and the Romania government regarding the establishment of oil refinery in Assam on 19 November on the floor of the Lok Sabha. Two refineries will be set up, one at Guwahati to refine 0.75 million tonnes yearly and the other at Barawoni to refine approximately 2 million tonnes of crude oil per year. With this agreement, the establishment of the proposed refinery will be started at the earliest and it will be in a position to produce oil from the month of April 1961. Dedicating India's first public sector oil refinery to the nation on the 1st of January, 1962 at Noonmati (Guwahati), Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, characterized it as 'the symbol of Assam's plenty and prosperity.' Nehru also asked the youth of Assam to prepare themselves to manage big projects and enterprises without the help of others. Deva Kanta Baruah, Chairman of the Indian Refineries Ltd, said that he was grateful to Nehru and the GOI for establishing such a great enterprise in the industrially backward state and hoped that it would open a new chapter of economic prosperity for the state.

It was observed that the student community of Assam took a leading part or we can say that was the 'soul force' of the Oil Refinery movement which finally compelled the central government to bow before them by allotting the establishment of the refinery at Guwahati - though the government was not at all interested in doing so. According to a report, a total 983 satyagrahis were courted arrest in this movement among them the numbers of the students were remarkable. This was disclosed by Biswa Goswami at the Oil Refinery conference held on 18 and 19 October, 1957, with a two-day long programme at Naharkatia,

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19 Ramdhenu, 11th Year, 8th Issue, 1959, p692.
Dibrugarh 21 On the other hand, Bishnuram Medhi, the then Chief Minister of Assam had announced on November 5, 1957, in the ongoing session of the state Legislative Assembly that all the satygrahis who were courted arrest during the movement would be freed from the jail.22

It was observed that the great involvement of student community and their whole hearted participation in the Oil Refinery movement brought quick result to the first mass movement started by the people of Assam with the motto 'make their underdeveloped state a develop one with the establishment of the proposed Oil Refinery at Assam (Noonmati, Guwahati) foiling all plans of the central government regarding the establishment of the refinery at Barawoni.

5.2 The Official Language Movement of 1960:

Though the Official Language Movement in Assam was started formally in 1960 but it can be said that the movement had began after the very next day of India’s independence. The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha and the Asomiya Sangha took a leading role in this regard. The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha was quite vocal and demanded that Assamese should be recognised as the state language and the medium of Instruction. A memorandum was submitted to Gopinath Bordoloi, the then Chief Minister of Assam by Ambikagiri Roy Choudhary, the president of the Mahasabha, to concede the persistent demands of the Association. ‘Assam for Assamese’ was the soul slogan of their organization.23 Chandra Kanta Phukon, President of Asomiya Sangha, Nagaon, also pleaded for recognition of Assamese as the state language.

After independence, Assamese was recognised as one of the language in the VIIIth Schedule of the constitution. But controversy started over the declaration of Assamese as the state language due to the fact that Assam is a multi-lingual,

21 Asomiya, 26 October, 1957.
22 Asomiya, 9 Nov 1957.
multi-religious and multi-cultural state of North-East India. So, it was very
difficult to declare Assamese as the state official language by the state
Government without considering the consent of the other major communities of
the state. Being the majority in the state the Assamese people and other nationalist
organization of Assam pressurized the Assam Government to declare Assamese as
the state official language This proposal began agitating the people’s mind in the
Brahmaputra valley, in Cachar and the Hill districts for sometime prior to the
outbreak of July 4, 1960.24

Again, it can be said that the Official Language Movement of 1960 was a direct
sequel to the appointment of the state’s Re-organization Committee (S.R C)in
1955 and dates back to the agitation for adoption of Assamese as the official
language in 1950.

The Assam Sahitya Sabha - a non-political literary organisation of Assamese
people, had submitted two resolutions in 1950 and 1959 and demanded that
Assamese must be declared as the official language within 1960 Though this first
demand was placed before the government in 1950 but the government had not
given any importance to it25 Therefore, again in 1959 at Nagaon conference, the
Sabha had resolved that Assamese must be declared as the official language
within 1960. Placing this the Sabha cleared that this demand was a people’s
demand, hence, no harm and injustices will be made to non-Assamese and to the
brothers living in the hill areas of Assam.26 Six months later (Sept. 9,1959) a ‘state
Language Day’ was observed throughout Assam and resolutions were also
adopted at meetings. Processions were also taken out to pressurise the government
to this effect.27 Gradually, the official language movement got momentum in
Assam

24 Chattopadhyaya, Dilp Kumar, History of the Assamese Movement since 1947. Minarva India.
Cal. 1st ed 1990, p56
25 Dr. Saikia, Nagen. (ed), Bhasawali, Jorhat, 1973, pl32
26 Ibid. pl32.
27 Chattopadhyaya, Dilp Kumar,Op.cit, p57
Initially started as an elite movement by Assam Sahitya Sabha, the official Language movement spearheaded by the student community comprising All Assam Students’ Federation (under the banner of the Students’ Association of Guwahati) The All Assam Students Association and the Assam Students’ Federation with ‘Assam for Assamese’, as its ideology, the leadership of the movement demanded that Assamese be made the official language in the state

Therefore, like other previous movements of Assam, whether the freedom struggle of India or after India’s independence, the student community of Assam once again jumped into the official language movement with the same spirit to achieve its goal and was ready to sacrifice everything what it needed

It has already been mentioned that student community of Assam had played a tremendous role in the popularisation of this movement among the people of Assam and like Sahitya Sabha, the newly formed All Assam Students’ Association (Sept 22, 1959) submitted a memorandum to the then Chief Minister of Assam through a deputation led by Bhuban Talukdar and Bhubneswar Bezbaruah on March 22, 1960 demanding declaration of Assamese as the state language.\(^{28}\) Language Movement gradually got intensified in Assam and a series of protest meetings and processions were organised to fulfill the demand of the people. On March 26, the local people and the students organised a public meeting at Borpetta and demanded the recognition and implementation of Assamese as official language by Assam Legislative Assembly within 1960. The students went on a strike and paraded the roads of the main town with slogans in demand of the declaration of Assamese as the state official language. Guwahati Students’ Federation also organised a public meeting on April 2, which criticized bitterly the Chief Minister's stand on the issue and demanded immediate declaration of Assamese as the official language. Resolution was also adopted to form a Student Action Committee consisting representatives of different student organizations of Assam to decide the future course of action, if Assamese was not declared as the state language. It is specially to be mentioned that strong demand was also placed

\(^{28}\) Deka, Meeta. Student Movement in Assam, p166.
before Jawaharlal Nehru, the then P M of India by a student body when he visited Gauhati University on April 17, 1960, to declare Assamese as the state official language immediately.29

As against this, the non-Assamese people of the state, especially the Bengalis were under tremendous pressure and fear psychosis thinking that if Assamese be implemented as the state official language they would be deprived from getting opportunities in the government structure mainly in the appointment in the government jobs. Finally, this fear exposed by community when the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee passed a resolution on April 22 demanding the implementation of Assamese as the official language of the state.

Reacting strongly to the demand of the Assamese community to make Assamese as the state official language, the minorities especially the Bengalis took out a procession in Shillong on May 21, 1960. The processionists shouted in anti-APCC and provocative slogans against the Assamese community. One of the slogans was ‘Assamese is a donkey’s language’ shouted by the processionists 30 The situation of Assam became very tense after the Shillong procession of May 21 when the processionists, mainly the Bengalis hit the heart of the sentiments and emotions of the Assamese community commenting their language as the donkey’s language. At Guwahati and elsewhere in Assam, the Student’s Federation (a leftist organization) and other organizations protested against the Shillong procession and subsequent minority meetings.

A meeting of Dibrugarh Branch of Assam Chatra Sanmilan was held on May 29 and adopted resolution demanding the implementation of Assamese as the official language. On the same day a deputation of local students led by Haren Dev Goswami, (G.U./Law) and Dilip Kakoti, Union Secretary, Cotton College, met the Chief Minister and submitted a memorandum demanding strong action against the

29 Chattopadhyaya, Dilip Kumar, Op cit, p57.
peocessionist who shouted anti-Assamese slogan on May 21. It was observed that the students were the main force who popularised the official language movement in Assam organising meetings and processions throughout the state. Meetings were held at Sibsagar on June 3 and at Darang on June 2. A complete hartal was organised by the students of Nagaon on June 2 and similarly the students of North Lakhimpur went on strike on June 8 in protest against the language issue. Demonstration was organised by students of Golaghat on June 9, with bringing out a procession, hartal, picketing in offices, schools, Railway etc., paralysed the normal life of the people, as a mark of protest against the anti-Assamese propaganda in Assam. This was followed by processions and meetings at Dibrugarh on June 11, Khowang on June 13, Borbarua on June 13, Maran on June 11, Nagaon on June 11. It is important to note that at Dibrugarh and Jorhat, a student rally was taken out consisting more than 10,000 students on June 13, 1960, condemned the slogan shouted at Shillong and demanded that Assamese must be implemented as the official language immediately. The counter-slogan against the Bengalis was followed on June 18 at Mariani. It is worth mentioning that in the month of June a total 30 meetings were held at Sibsagar, 12 in Goalpara, 4 in Darrang, 11 in Nagaon and 30 in Lakhimpur condemning Shillong procession and demanding the making of Assamese as the state official language.

Clashes and conflicts were seen started between the Assamese community and the Bengali speaking people in different parts of Assam during the movement. It has already been mentioned that the Bengalis had feared if Assamese be made the official language they would be deprived from the all government opportunities, including government job etc. And finally, they found that their doubt was going to be true when Mr Chaliha, the then C.M. of Assam declared on June 23 that the government is planning to introduce a Bill in the Assembly on the line of the A.P C C. resolution.

The situation became very tense when assault and counter assault between the two communities took place on 29 and 30 June. It can be said that the Bengali papers were also responsible for creating this situation through their unauthentic writings which provoked the Bengalis against the Assamese terming the movement as the "Bengali Kheda movement" (Drive away Bengalis).  

Hence, at Guwahati the Calcutta based papers were burnt by the agitationists on June 29. Seeing the worse situation, the administration imposed curfew under section 144 criminal procedure code. The Post-Graduate Students Union of Gauhati University had requested the Chief Minister of Assam through a telegram on July 1 requesting him to convene an emergency Assembly session to declare Assamese as the state official language. To protest the demand made by the Assamese people a conference was also organised at Silchar by the Bengali speaking people on July 3 to review the situation.

Clash between the Assamese and non-Assamese speaking people was continued. While Assamese speaking people were pressurized the government to recognise Assamese as the official language of the state, on the other hand, the non-Assamese people were busy with their propaganda to oppose it. On June 21, 1960, the Mizo students led by Lalzar Liana and others carried out a procession showing dissatisfaction with Assam government while the Garo students held a meeting on July 1 at Benefa-Atbla (Tura) expressing their determination to foil the declaration of Assamese as the state language. It was observed that gradually the situation of Assam worsened and the relationship between the Assamese speaking and the non-Assamese people deteriorated and widened. The supporters of the movement, specially the students was aware of that the Bengalis were the main who opposed the implementation of Assamese as the official language. Hence, they had taken some steps to stop the activities of the Bengalis which they thought was against their movement. On July 1, the students of Digboi requested the Manager of Jashoda Talkie, to stop screening a Bengali picture and a Hindi picture was screened in its place, while a batch of students compelled some Bengali

businessman of North Lakhimpur to remove Bengali signboards. On July 2, students damaged some Bengali signboards and burnt some Bengali calendars at Laluk and Bihpuria. The police firing on the Cotton College boarders on July 4, 1960 was the climax of the language movement, in which Ranjit Borpujari was killed and other six were injured. This incident was condemned by all concerns of people. The Secretary of Cotton College Teachers’ Association in a public statement condemned the police action in the following manner, “Never in the history of Cotton College, not even in the days of British rule, was such an unholy outrage committed in the holy name of law and order and liberty of the student community of Assam.”

R.B. Pabbi, the then S.P. was the main culprit who created tension among the people during the period of the movement. He was also the culprit in the murder case of Ranjit Borpujari and was also involved in the Dulal Baurah, General Secretary, PGSU, arrest case on May 22. He produced a paper containing several allegations against Dulal Baruah and suggested that he be expelled from the University. At this Pabbi shouted, “I don’t mind shooting fifty students if necessary to curb the students indiscipline.”

A circular which was issued by the Education Department of Assam to all Inspector and Deputy Inspectors of Schools directing them to take immediate steps to make Assamese as the compulsory medium of instruction in all the schools of Assam valley also helped widening the rift between the two communities. The circular also added that in places where the spoken language is used as medium for primary education, Assamese would be taught as the effort of the government to replace Bengali in course of time in all those schools where Bengali was the soul medium of instruction. It is to be noted that the Bengali Muslims and the migrant labourers were seen generally admitted in to the Assamese schools. But the Bengali Hindus, on the other hands, tried continuously to have their schools with Bengali medium. Therefore, the Bengalis protested the government decision and placed their voice with an organized effort before the

35 APAI, 1960.
36 Dr. Goswami, Sandhya. Assam Language Question : A Political Analysis for the period 1947 through 1961, 1990. p127
37 The Assam Tribune, 10January, 1962.
Govt. called Cachar District Committee.38 "Assam Bengal Association" was another Association which voiced on the same tone when it declared that Bengalees were the majority in Assam and it would not take long time to have Bengalis as an accepted state language of Assam.39 Going further step ahead the Bengalis had complained it to Sardar Patel and tried to take away the Assam Government to implement such an order in their schools and also requested to provide employment facilities to the employees hailing from Syhlet.40 We have repeatedly been mentioned above that the Bengalis of Assam were under the fear psychosis that the Assamese community had planned to drive them out of Assam, hence, they tried their best to foil the imposition of Assamese as the state official language in Assam. Again, to prove the intensi on of the Assamese people against the Bengalis, they collected some publications namely 'Matikar and Ashirwar' which were the publications of short stories. According to the Bengalis, 'These books and some hand bills had not only prepared ground for driving out the Bengalis but had also laid down the techniques.41 Seeing the increasing clash between the Assamese and the non-Assamese people, mainly the Bengalis and the involvement of the students in the issue largely, the government of Assam issued a circular on August 30, 1960, which curtailed the democratic rights of the students. Involvement of students in procession and meeting were prohibited Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was also against student involvement in the official language movement which was clearly reflected in his speech delivered at Guwahati on July 18. Nehru referred to the role of students in the language agitation and wondered whether they realised the consequences of their actions. He also stated that the country's energies were now geared to step up economic prosperity and Assam's problems had to be always considered in this perspective. As regards the death of Ranjit Borpujari, Nehru said, "He was blameless. It is a matter of sorrow."42 It is worth mentioning that atrocities on students continued after the government order and on Sept. 6, Dulal Baruah, General Secretary, P.G.S.U of Gauhati University

39 Ibid. p94.
40 Ibid. p94.
and the President of Central Steering Committee was arrested under the Prevention Detention Act on the charge of assault and petty robbery. Not only Assamese but eleven Bengali students were also killed in this movement at Hailakandi on June 1961 at police firing.\textsuperscript{43}

It was observed that later the students of Assam mainly concentrated their eyes on the killer of Ranjit Borpujari demanding stern action against Mr. B.R. Pabbi, gradually sidetracked their attention from the movement. An emergency meeting of Gauhati Students Action Committee was held on July 23, 1961 at Cotton College which demanded that the Government of Assam should take the necessary action for the prosecution of B.R. Pabbi by August 7, 1961, failing which the student would start direct action from August 10. Public meetings, strikes, hartals were organised in support of their movement. They were also ready to resort to satyagraha if their demand was not considered. The meeting was also opposed to Shastri’s 8-point formula regarding the language problem. To prevent the students from their declared programme of action the IGP issued a circular to all police officers directing the officer-in-charge of the various circles to ‘particularly keep watch over the students, the movement of students leaders and agitators from Gauhati to place within their jurisdiction.”\textsuperscript{44} It was also observed that the official language movement of Assam created a worse situation in the state which had not been experienced by the people of Assam since Independence. The question about the implementation of Assamese as the official language was placed by Mr. Hareswar Goswmi, the leader of the opposition, on the floor of the Legislative Assembly though the demand had been placed before the government by several renowned organizations of Assam, mainly by Assam Sahitya Sabha. Mr. Bimala Pd. Chaliha, the then C.M. replied to this question on March 6, 1960. Though there was peace in the people and there was no much opposition from organizations if implemented Assamese as the state official language except from All-party Hill Leaders Conference and All Tribal Organizations,\textsuperscript{45} but after

\textsuperscript{43} Deka, Meeta, Op.cit, p176.
\textsuperscript{44} Chakravarty Swaraj, The Upheaval Years in North East India, 1960-83, Srec Swaraswati Press, Cal -1984. p51
\textsuperscript{45} Dr Goswami Sandhiya, Op cit, p117.
listening to the comment made by Mr Chaliha as a leader of liberal mind the situation of Assam changed totally with communal forces rose up to foil the demand of the Assamese people to make Assamese the state official language. Bimala Prasad Chaliha, the then Chief Minister of Assam stated that the government must wait to make Assamese official language till then the demand would not be forwarded by the non-Assamese people of Assam.46 The rift between the Assamese speaking and the Bengalis were widened after the comment passed by the Chief Minister of Assam and they attacked each other when they got chances. Noted writer of Assam Surya Bora had been killed brutally at Siliguri during those days by some unidentified miscreants 47 The life of the opposition leader, Hareswar Goswami also fell in danger but he could not be killed 48

Finally, feeling tremendous pressure from the people of Assam, the Government of Assam passed the Official Language Bill in the Assembly on October 17, 1960. The act provided that 'Assamese shall be used for all or any of the official purposes of the state of Assam.' Further the act provided that the English language so long as the use thereof is permissible and thereafter Hindi in place of English, shall also be used for such official purpose of the Secretariat and the offices of the Heads of the departments of the state Government (the Assam Official Language Act, 1960). The Act again amended on 7 October 1961.

It can be said in the conclusion that though the Official Language Bill was passed to make Assamese the official language but the problem had not been permanently solved. Hence, the students of Assam had to jump again into another movement called Medium of Instruction Movement began in the year 1972 which was the off-spring of the Official Language Movement of Assam.

47 Ibid. p134
48 Ibid. p134
5.3: Food Crisis Movement of 1964-67:

The food crisis situation that was originated in the whole country in the year 1966 turned into a great movement where the student community of India took a leading part in the movement. The students of Assam also involved themselves actively in the movement as their counter-parts in different parts of India.

There was a long and unavoidable history behind the origin of this movement. It was seen that the growth of the food grain production rate was satisfactory in India till 1964-65. In the year 1949-50, the rate of production was 100 percent, it was increased up to 116.8 percent, till the end of first five year Plan, e.g., 16.8 percent, it was increased up to 142.2 or 42.2 percent till the end of second five-year plan. The growth rate was unchanged till the end of the first three years of the third five-year plan. The year 1965-66 can be considered as landmark year in which the growth rate production was increased up to 57.6 percentage which had broken all the previous records of high growth of production. So as compared to 1949-50, the growth of food grain was increased up to 50 percent, increase of paddy was 54 percent and wheat was 79 percent in 1964-65. It is also to be noted that the favorite weather condition was the main reason behind the heavy production in that year.⁴⁹

On the other hand, shortage of food grain was always a common feature of our country. The trend is still continuing. Continuous increase in size of population compels the state to import a large amount of food grains from the foreign country every year. It is worth mentioning that the year 1965-66 can be considered as the worst year in the history of food grain production in India since Independence. Due to the heavy shortage of rainfall in that year the growth of food grain which was 880 lacs ton in 1964-66 reduced to 740 or 760 lacs tonnes in 1965-66.

Therefore, a definite shortage of 120 lacs tonnes of food grain was recorded in the year, which created a tremendous food crisis in India.\textsuperscript{50}

The rate of production of food grain in Assam was 1.3 percentage. In this, the rate of increase of food grain annually was 0.5 percentage. Hence, the rate of production of food grain was low in Assam as compared to the other state of India except Orissa. On the contrary, the growth of population rate was high in Assam than other states of India. The period 1951-61 can be cited as the best example in this regard when the growth of population rate in Assam was 34.45 percent.

It was observed that there was continuously widened the differences between the growth rate of food grain and the increased rate of population in Assam. A statistical analysis had revealed that a total 46 lacs acres of land had been used for food grain production, out of which 80 percent had been used for paddy (rice) production and a total 17 lacs tonnes of rice had been produced from that used land. But due to the fast growth of population this amount of food grain was not sufficient for the state and hence the state had to be brought 21 to 75 thousand tonnes of rice from the government of India. The following Table (Table-5.1) will show the actual percentage.

\textbf{Table : 5.1: Food grains brought from Centre by the State:}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Wheat</th>
<th>Total (thousand tonnes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. p1699-1701.
It is specially to be mentioned that the reason behind the origin of food problem in Assam in 1966 was the wrong report produced by statistical department which stated that a large amount of paddy had been produced by the state in 1964. Therefore, the central Government had stopped the supply of food grain to Assam and sent those to the other states, which created tremendous food crisis in the state. Some other important causes were also found which helped the rapid growth of food crisis in Assam. Lack of proper relation and co-ordination in the Agriculture department, Supply Department and the Co-operative can be regarded as the main cause behind this problem. Lack of proper government policy regarding the public distribution system and the failure of the Co-operative system in Assam were the causes that helped the growth of a serious food crisis in Assam. And finally, the flood problem of Assam is one of the chief causes that have been playing major part for creating food problem in Assam since Independence.

As there was heavy shortages of food grain in the markets compared to its demand, hence, the prices of commodities were hiked, artificial scarcity of commodities were made by the back marketeers with the motive to earn more profits and the duplicating of commodities became a common feature in those days which made the life of the common people miserable. Therefore, to end this system the people of Assam observed demonstrations consecutively three times in the month of August 1966. The situation became so tense that police opened fire and lathi charge ordered many a times on the demonstrators while the government failed completely to bring the demonstrations under control which was observed at Shillong, Sibsagar and Dhubri. On the other hand, the black marketeers had been protected or sheltered by the Congress government for giving donations to the party funds was a matter of great concern and was bitterly criticised by all concern of people.

A complete ‘Bharat Bundh’ was observed on 25 September. The hartal was complete success at Guwahati where the people from all walks of life such as students, Artistes, Teachers, Doctors, Lawyers, Reporters, Poets, Clerks, Political

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51 Editorial, Navayog, Aug, 1966
leaders and also the cultivators and labourers were participated. It is important to note that though the Prime Minister of India and the President of Assam Congress Committee requested to withdrew the programme but people defied their request made the Bandh programme a grand success. A total 74 picketters were arrested on the day and released from jail in the very next day Students of Assam refrained from their classes and protested silently the grave situation that had originated. The students of Assam gradually involved themselves in this movement too Hartals and pickettings were observed peacefully by students at Dibrugrah on August 4 under the leadership of Inter-college Union which influenced other places of Assam. Though the people and the students wanted to observe their programmes peacefully but due to the intentional deeds of some wicked businessmen the situation turned in to a violent one The situation became worsened and tense while some unidentified miscreants had burnt down a vehicle on the day Police fired several rounds, used teargas and imposed section 144 to bring the situation under control. According to a report, police had arrested 70 or 80 students on the day instead of arresting the wicked businessmen. On August 5, defying the section 144 imposed in Dibrugrah a huge number of people and students gheraoed the police station and jail demanding the immediate release of the people and the students arrested on 4 August. The Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of police who were in the jail at that time listening to the grievances of the students agreed to release the arrested students. It was very unfortunate that an incident was again occurred when a huge procession was taken out by the students after releasing their co-mates and the people by the administration. When the procession passed on through Marwari patty than a group of unidentified miscreants attacked the procession led by some wicked businessman of the town. Failed to judge the real cause of the incident lathi charge was again ordered on the innocent students. Curfew was imposed in the city. In

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53 An article written by Jagat Ch. Neog in Navayog, 5 Oct., 1966 entitled 'Situation of Dibrugarh in Food Movement'.
54 Ibid.
the very next day the mission for the arrest of students was began changing the breaking of curfew orders imposed by administration.\(^{55}\)

The Trade Union Co-ordination Committee (TUCC) had also organised a food convention to discuss the grave situation that was prevailing in state. Representatives of 10 (ten) youth organizations and 6 (six) students organizations were attended the convention which was held with a two-day long programme on May 27 and June 2, 1967 and was presided over by Parimal Das. It is to be noted that the convention had decided to form a 21-member committee and was authorized to prepare the plan of action to organise a mass movement in the light of the discussion held in the convention. This committee was named as Samyukta Andolan Parishad (S.A.P) \(^{56}\)

A meeting was also organised jointly by AASU (Ad-hoc) and Assam Student Federation on June 10, 1967 at Bishnuram Baruah Hall with Prof. Nitya Bhattacharya in the chair. The meeting criticised bitterly the inefficient food policy of the government and demanded strongly that government must enact new food policy safeguarding the interest of the cultivators and the common people.

Students of Nagaon were also not lagging behind in this respect and also organised a 12-hour hartal on June 16 in protest against the food scarcity and hike of prices of essential commodities. Responding to the hartal call given by Nagaon District Students’ Union 12-hour hartal was also observed at Jakhalabondha, Raha and Kampur.\(^{57}\)

Not adhering to the programmes of Samyukta Andolan Parishad, the all Guwahati Students Union started an agitation on 4 August, 1967 in the form of ‘Gherao’ which Nibaran Bora described as, as a direct assault on the administration. Thousands of students were participated in the programme and many were courted

\(^{55}\) Ibid
\(^{56}\) Deka, Meeta, Op.cit. p191
\(^{57}\) Dainik Asom, 16 & 18 June, 1967.
arrest. When on August 6, Sankar Purakayastha was killed in Shillong the agitation became wide-spread and for the first time Shillong was connected to the strains of Assam student agitation. All political leaders including student leaders were arrested.

It was observed that the situation and picture of Dibrugrah was totally different as compared to other places in the food crisis movement of Assam. From 6 October onwards the situation of the town became grave. An about 140 school students including 30 girls started hunger strike at Dibrugrah in protest against the scarcity of rice and inadequate supply of rations from the fair shops. Supporting to the demands of the striking students a procession was taken out by Samynkta Andolan Parishad carrying placards and shouting slogans demanding ration for a week for the individual through the fair price shop. Students also came out to the streets boycotting their classes shouting slogans relating to AASU’s demand for increase quotas of Rice, Atta & Sugar over the present inadequate quantities. Finally, the Chief Minister of Assam intervened to overcome the problem. The number of hunger striker rose up to 160 in the next day. They also changed their place of camp and shifted it and started the hunger strike in front of the residence of R. C. Baruah. The 96-hour long hunger strike came to an end while the hunger strikers received assurances from R. C. Baruah, the then Supply Minister of Assam, to improve the present condition of food crisis of Assam.58

Students of Jorhat and Golaghat worked for the benefit of the poor people by taking some serious steps. Not only the students but also the higher officials of the district such as D.C., S.P, the Deputy Director of Supply and the S.D.O. of Golaghat had played positive role in this regard which was highly appreciated by all concerns of people and also the daily newspaper like The Assam Tribune.59

It was observed that the food movement was followed by the hate campaign initially against the non-Assamese Indian minority communities mainly against

the Bengali communities. Through leaflets, anonymous threatening letters, and posters the movement demanded that these non-Assamese must quit Assam. Leaflets signed by ‘Students Friends’, were addressed to the General Secretaries of Post-Graduate Students Union of Gauhati University, Dibrugrah University, Cotton College, Jorhat J. B. college, Nowgong College and Darrang College. Similar letters had been circulated in 1967. The language in this letters, a continuation of the earlier one, was intended to incite the Assamese against the Marwari trading community. Subsequently, 11 October, 1967 Mahaastami (the eighth day of the Hindu worship of Goddess Durga), was designed as ‘hataw these keyas’ (drive out these Marwaris) Day.

It is seen that the reason behind the hate campaign was that the Marwari community is always controlling the markets of Assam and the people thought that the situation of Assam was worsened due to the selling of all commodities in the black markets prices by them. Thus, popular discontent was prevailing everywhere prior to the January 26 incidents to a hate campaign against the non-Assamese people.

It can be said from the close observation that due to the active participation of the student community in the food crisis movement the Government of Assam had committed to overcome the crisis at the earliest. The government had also enacted new policy and laws to control the black-marketeers to avoid such situation in the future.

5.4 Medium of Instruction Movement of 1972:

Medium of Instruction movement was another big issue which has created a tremendous storm in the educational, social and political scenario of Assam in 1972 where the student community of Assam involved themselves actively to

60 Chattopadhyaya, Dilip Kr., Op.cit, p60
61 Ibid. p60.
achieve the desired goal of the movement as like that of the previous instances of movement. Again, it can said that though the Assam government passed the Official Language Bill in 1960 to make Assamese the official language of the state but the language problem of Assam had not been permanently solved and this movement can be regarded also as the off-spring of the language movement of 1960

It has already been mentioned in our previous sub-chapter on Official Language movement of 1960 that the Constitution of India had recognised Assamese as one of the 14 constitutional languages in the VIIIth Schedule of the constitution. And, after a mass movement on the state official language the Government of Assam had also passed the State Official Language Bill on 1960 Therefore, the people of Assam, specially the students requested the university authority and the government of Assam to introduce Assamese as the medium of instruction in the higher educational institutions on the basic of recommendations made by Radha Krishnanan Committee of 1948 and the Kothari Committee of 1964-66. These committees had recommended that regional languages should replace English as medium of instruction in the universities. Though normalcy was prevailed at first and the opinions of the people was in favour of the demand but after statement given by Chief Minister of Assam on the issue at Cachar Political Conference held at Ramkrishna Nagar, Cachar on June 2, 1972 and also the decision taken by the Academic Council of Gauhati University on June 6, 1972, had changed the situation completely from normal to a terrible one and hopelessly energized the students of Assam again in to action

The statement which created tremendous resentment among the people of Assam after it had commented by Mr Sarat Ch. Singha, the then Chief Minister of Assam was that Bengali would be made one of the medium of instruction in the colleges of Gauhati University. On the other hand, the decision of the Academic Council was that Assamese would be the medium of instruction in the university but students could write their examinations in either Assamese, Bengali, English or Hindi. The student community and the intelligentsia of Assam, mainly in the
Brahmaputra valley expressed their deep dissatisfaction on the comment and the decision. They considered that if Bengali language will get preference, the others be given the same privilege then it will lead to the formulation of multi-lingual process. Thus, according to them, it will bring complexity the process. On the other hand, they criticised the decision of the Academic Council as bring Bengali and Hindi at par with Assamese. So both the statement of Chief Minister and the Council had again brought the student community in the forefront.

A meeting of the students was held at Gauhati University on June 3, 1972 which condemned the statement of the Chief Minister. Another meeting was also held at Gauhati University under the chairmanship of Ananda Bormudoi. The meeting expressed strong resentment over the ‘hasty’ decision of the Academic Council A procession was taken out and the effigy of the Academic Council was burnt down to pressurize the Council to reverse its decision. They also vowed to finish the three-language formula at any cost To achieve their goals, two committees namely ‘The Action Committee and the Disciplinary Action Committee were formed to smoothly conduct of the movement.

Gradually the medium of instruction movement got momentum and on June 8, 1972, seven students were arrested and section 144 was imposed by District Magistrate of Kamrup to bring the tense situation under control. Picketing launched by students had paralyzed totally the administration of Gauhati University. The following day on June 9, all the students boycotted their classes, took out a procession to Church Field and organised a meeting which strongly condemned the decision of the council 63

It is worth mentioning that feeling tremendous pressure from the public specially from the students, the Academic Council finally decided to withdraw its decision and accordingly a meeting was held for the purpose on June 12. The students were gathered outside the meeting hall when the meeting was going on to heard the decision of the meeting which would brought victory for the students power and

for their oneness. They congratulated each other and in the evening there was illumination in the university campus. The meeting had finally withdrawn its decision and made the Assamese as the medium of instruction in the colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University.

But it was also observed that the rift started again between the Assamese community and the Bengali speaking people in this movement as was witnessed in the previous official language movement of 1960. The rift was clearly visible when the Governing Body of Gurucharan College of Silchar (Cachar) along with three other colleges affiliated to Gauhati University petitioned the Supreme Court as the University’s decision restricting the medium only to Assamese violated Article 30 of the Indian Constitution related to the linguistic minorities. Therefore, they appealed that the decision of the Gauhati University should be restored by the Apex Court.

On the other hand, The All Assam Students Union (AASU) appealed to the student of Assam to observe September 15, 1972 as the ‘Demand Day’ to introduce Assamese as the medium of instruction. This clarion call of AASU was responded all over Assam except some Bengali dominated areas such as Hojai, Lanka, Silchar and Karimganj etc.

Further one step ahead the AASU declared a ‘Assam Bandh’ call on October 5 protesting against the decision which was taken by Assam Legislative Assembly to establish a university at Cachar on September 23, 1972. They strongly opposed this move of the Assam Legislative Assembly to attempt to separate Cachar from the jurisdiction of Gauhati University and introduce of Bengali as the medium of instruction which would convert Assam in to a bi-lingual state.

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61 The Assam Tribune, June 13, 1972
66 The Assam Tribune, June 19, 26 & July 4, 1972
Though, the Assam bandh was observed peacefully in most of the places of Assam but tragic incident had also been reported where students had been killed brutally by enraged people in some place in the clash occurred between rival groups in different parts of Assam. Moizamul Hague, a student leader of Darrang district, who visited Kharupetia area near Mangaldoi with some of his colleagues to enquire the cause after receiving the news that the bandh had failed totally in the area. A tragic incident had occurred in the from of a clash between two rival groups on the day where Haque had sustained serious injury and breathed his last at Gauhati Medical College. Another tragic incident took place on October 7, when the Nagaon District Students Union called to observe October 7 as the ‘Condolence Day’. The student body of the district made full preparation to make the programme a success and sent instructions to all its branches regarding their programme on October 6, 1972. Unfortunately, the district committee received information from Hojai that the condolence day could not be observed at Hojai due to the strong opposition of Bengali student. Finally, the district committee had decided to send some of its member to Hojai to successfully observe the day. Though, there was strong protest from the Bengali students but the programme was carried out. Anil Bora, a leader of the student body of the district was reported missing from 7 October to 16 October. A headless body was found by the Dimow river and it was finally confirmed by the inquiry committee headed by Justice M C Pathak of Gauhati High Court that the body was found was the body of Anil Bora.

The situation of Assam became very tense and worsened following the brutal killing of the two students leaders. Finally, the central Government had intervened the matter and sent F.A. Ahmed, a Cabinet rank Minister to Assam on October 14, 1972, to review the grim situation of Assam. Mr. Jagjivan Ram, the Defence Minister of India and Ram Nivas Mirdha also visited Assam to make an on-spot assessment of the situation on the last week of October, 1972. Reviewing the grim situation of Assam, Mr. Mirdha suggested that English should continue for an

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69 Ibid. p37.
indefinite period and also suggested to drop the resolution adopted in the Assam Legislative Assembly. But his suggestion was rejected by the people of Cachar. At the same time the Supreme Court in a verdict rejected the appeal made by the Governing Bodies of some colleges of Silchar and Hojai and declared that the resolution passed by the Academic Council of Guwahati University was constitutionally valid.

The Chief Minister of Assam also with positive motive to solve the burning problem invited AASU to talk with the Government on the matter and declared that the resolution adopted by the State Legislative Assembly on the basis of Academic Council's resolution would be implemented. But they rejected the Chief Minister's talk offer which did not satisfy them and the AASU called a satyagraha programme from 6 to 16 November to defy the round of talks with the Congress Preident Shankar Dayal Sarma who arrived in the city on November 2.

The medium of instruction movement finally came to an end on November 12, 1972 when the AASU decided to suspend it after the announcement made by Sarat Ch Sinha, the then Chief Minister of Assam on November 11 that the government of Assam finally accepted the Academic Council's resolution and rejected the Assembly's resolution of September 23 and it would be dropped in the next session of the Assembly.70 This was followed by Cachar Gana Sangram Parishad due to an appeal made by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India on November 7 when she visited Assam to inaugurate the session of the North Eastern Council 71. It is observed that though the objectives of the medium of instruction movement was comparatively narrow to the official language movement of 1960 but this movement had also tremendous effect on the Assamese society, specially the student community of Assam. To love one's own language is a basic instinct and it's related with the identity and emotion of a community. Hence, the Assamese people wanted to see their mother tongue as the medium in the higher educational institutions. On the other hand, the Bengalees

70 Deka, Meeta, Op cit, p207.
71 Chakravorti, Saroj, Op.cit. p86
which is also regarded a large minority community of Assam vehemently opposed it seeing the future to be related to its identity crisis and to fear the loss of language hegemony they enjoyed since long.

It can also be said that the language movement which had started in Assam quickly after independence of India had thought to be finally ended with the medium of instruction movement of Assam in 1972. But it is not true. It's impact was also seen in the famous Assam movement of 1979-85 At present also, definition of 'Assamese' given by various organization of Assam relating to the Sixth Schedule of the constitution is seen mostly influenced by the language movement of 1960 and 1972

Finally we can say that to bring the success to these movements the role played by the student community of Assam was notable and without whose active participation it would be difficult for the people of Assam to see their mother tongue as the state official language and as medium of instruction in the higher educational institutions today

**5.5 The Assam Movement of 1979-85:**

The students of Assam had participated actively in all the major movements that had been originated in Assam since independence The previous sub-chapters of this chapter have proved the truth Considering the aims and the objectives, the student community of Assam never seen lagging behind in this regard if they found that these movements were related with the soul cause of their motherland. History also revealed that most the movements of Assam had started by students themselves. Therefore, the whole world has witnessed a great student movement in Assam variously nomenclatured 'Assam Movement', 'Foreigner’s Movement' etc during the period 1979-85 which had proved and showed real power of the students of Assam as well as the world.
It is to be noted that the activities of the All Assam Students’ Union were chiefly related to academic and economic issues until March, 1978. In the month of August, the students were engaged themselves to boost their powers through capturing college unions. It was also seen that the coup of Nibaran Bora - a leading social activist and nationalist leader of Assam, with AASU led the naxalites to form the United Students’ Organization, (U.S.O ) The new students’ leadership’s first mass Satyagraha programme on October 24-27 against the outsiders before the Deputy Commissioners’ courts was followed in October 28 by a general strike. Both the programmes were succeeded partially with the helps of the students’ participation. By the end of 1978, the AASU as the most effective organization or mobiliser or discontented students and youths, had curbed the heretofore ascendant leftist influence on the latter.\textsuperscript{72} The Assam movement on the foreign national issue was started by All Assam Students’ Union on 8 June, 1979 with a state-wide bandh against the normal rise in the number of voters revealed in the electoral rolls prepared for the Parliamentary by-election in the Mangaldai constituency to held on March, 1979 due to the death of Hiralal Patowary, MP of Janata Party, before the expiry of his term on office People had suspected that out of 6 lacs voters included in the voters’ list more than seventy thousand names would be of illegal migrants. It was a matter of great shocking that finally forty five thousand names of the list were as the names of the list were found as the names of illegal migrants. The AASU discussed the serious matter in its annual session held from 7-10 March, 1979. The organization announced a ‘Assam Bandh’ called on June 8, 1979 demanding the deportation of foreign nationals from Assam People of Assam greatly responded to the Assam Bandh call and made it a grand success. To solve the problem at the earliest the leadership of the organization handed over a memorandum to the Chief Election Commissioner of India at Dispur on 21 June, 1979. The memorandum mentioned that everybody in Assam is expected that the CEC to delete the names of foreigners from the voter list. Unfortunately, contrary to his previous statements, the CEC directed authorities to stop deletion of the foreigners names and said, ‘a person whose name has been included shall be presumed to be citizen of India ... scrutiny of

\textsuperscript{72} Choudhury, S., Genesis of the Assam Movement, Lokayata. Special Issue. June 1980, pp44-45

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electoral rolls can be taken after the election is over’. Hearing the statement by the CEC, the people of Assam felt that to save their identity in their own homeland which was in great danger due to tremendous infiltration from Bangladesh and Nepal, appeal and application would not solve their problem without coming to the street. Hence, the students and the people of Assam got ready for another movement to fight against the injustice of the government with inflicting and unbending determination.

The immigration problem of Assam which created a fear psychosis in the minds of Assamese people of losing their identity in Assam seeing a phenomenal growth of voters up to 13.3 in 8 months (March 1977 to November 1977). But it is also to be noted that the problem of migration is not new to Assam and had continued since India was under the British rule. Britishers were the first to encourage the Bangladeshis to come and to settle in the vacant land of Assam for their economic gain. This trend was also continued till India achieved her independence and could not be stopped due to the fact that East Bengal was an integral part of our country but to limit the conflict that had arose between the indigenous people of Assam and the migrant people the government had enacted ‘Line System’ before independence.

Though India has achieved her independence on the 15th day of August, 1947 but the problem of immigration to Assam continued due to the indifferent attitude of the central government which threats to the very existence of the state of Assam. It is pertinent to mention here that realising such a burning problem of Assam before independence Gandhiji replied a letter written to him by Late Krishanath Sarma on the issue on August 18, 1945 - “if you do not work with positive attitude from now onwards destruction of Assam is certain”.\textsuperscript{73} It is heartrending that though the people of Assam have continuously pointed out to the infiltration problem but the GOI and some Assamese politicians have been consistently

\textsuperscript{73} Dr Gohain, Hiren, Bora, Dilip, (ed), Assam Suktir Pratisruti Aru Phalasruti, p54.
indifferent to the illegal immigration issue. They have also ignored the long-term interests of Assam, the North Eastern region perhaps of India. Power politics have been taking precedence over national security.

Realising the authenticity of the problem lauded by the people of Assam, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then PM of India referred to the infiltration by Pakistan, which have been continuing since 1949 as 'perfectly true,' on June 27, 1962.

He said, “I believe that mass of this infiltration took place in the first five years of independence where the borders was not adequately guarded. Probably it will be difficult now to deal with illegal immigrants who came before 1952. We might, therefore, fix 1952 as the date of enquiry.”

A great awakening was seen among the people of Assam when they found that 10.3% of voters have been increased only in 8 months. This is due to the infiltration in about 1.7 million illegal migrants from across the borders and their inclusion in the voters list by unscrupulous politicians. Golap Borbora became the Chief Minister of Assam of a non-Congress party, for the first time in the history of Assam, after the 1978 election where Janata Party emerged as the single party in the state legislative assembly. The result of the election compelled to think the Assamese people the newly arrived foreigners had gathered considerable strength. Because, in that election CPI (M) captured 11 seats for the first time and the Muslims captured 28 seats in the 126 members of Legislative Assembly. This election can also be regarded as the eye opener for politically sensitive Assamese people, specially the students. The following table (Table-5.2) and Pi-diagram shows a phenomenal growth of voter up to 10.3% in 8 months in Assam.

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74 Dr. Amiya, Kumar. Assam’s Agony. p57
Table: 5.2: Rapid Growth of Voters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>No. of Voters</th>
<th>Increase of Voters</th>
<th>% of Voters between elections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>4,066,940</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>4,496,357</td>
<td>426,417</td>
<td>10.5 (in 6 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>4,942,816</td>
<td>449,459</td>
<td>10.0 (in 5 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>5,585,056</td>
<td>642,240</td>
<td>13.0 (in 4 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>5,701,805</td>
<td>116,749</td>
<td>2.1 (in 4 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>5,296,198</td>
<td>594,393</td>
<td>10.4 (in 1 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>7,229,543</td>
<td>933,345</td>
<td>14.8 (in 6 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Mar’1978 - *Nov.’77</td>
<td>7,924,476</td>
<td>744,933</td>
<td>10.3 (in 8 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 Jan, Sept., 1979*</td>
<td>8,537,497</td>
<td>563,021</td>
<td>7.1 (in 21 months)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ACTA's memorandum to the Home Minister of India. February 23, 1980

* indicates the months in which Voter Lists were prepared.

Pi-diagram 5.1: Rapid growth of voters.

Again, from 1952 to 1979, in 27 years, the number of voters increased by 110%. Whereas normal growth would have been 61%. The number of voters further increased by 59% between 1952-1971 and further by 36% between 1971-1979.
The conference of AASU held at Jorhat in the month of July, 1978 prepared a memorandum which have included 16 top demands including the demand of identification and deportation of illegal foreign nationals from the state. These demands were submitted to the GOI and the state government and to emphasis their demands the AASU had prepared an agitational plan for throughout the month. As a part of it the organization started picketings on August 8, 1978 in front of Deputy Commissioners’ offices throughout Assam, declared Satyagraha from 12-14 August, also declared a hunger strike programme on August 21, Assam Bandh on 22 September, again Satyagraha on 8,9 and 10 October and a 13-hour Assam Bandh was declared on December 11, 1978. The organization going a step ahead declared a “fast unto death” programme which would be executed by its executive members on 23 December. To take away the students from their agitational path and to show sympathy to their demands the government of Assam invited the leaders of AASU for a talk with the government on December 23, 1978 and sought some time to consider the demands which AASU agreed.

Though promised the government of Assam could do nothing in the next few months. Up to this point the movement was confined mostly to the student community. As a result, Atal Behari Bajpayee, the then External Affairs Minister and the CEC of India made some strong statements regarding the problem. The comment made by the then CEC, Shyamlal Shakdhar was very dangerous which actually inspired the people of Assam, specially the student community to jump in to the movement to save their state from foreign nationals.

Shyamlal Shakdhar, the then CEC of India in the conference of Chief Electoral Officers of the states held at Ootacamund from October 24 to 16, 1978 commented as follows -

“...I would like to refer to the alarming situation in some states, specially North-Eastern region where from disturbing reports are coming regarding large scale inclusion of foreign nationals in the electoral rolls. In one case (Assam), the population in 1971 recorded increase as high as 34.98 percent over the 1961..."}

figures and this increase was attributed to the influx of a very large number of persons from the neighbouring countries. This influx has become a regular feature. I think it may not be a wrong assessment to make on the basis of the increase of 34.98 percent between two census, the increase that is likely to be recorded in the 1971 census would be more than 100 percent over the 1961 census. In other words, a stage would be reached when the state may have to reckon with the foreign nationals who may probably constitute a sizable percentage, if not the majority of the population of the state.

Another disturbing factor in this regard is the demand made by political parties for the inclusion in the electoral rolls the names of such migrants who are not Indian citizen without even questioning and properly determining their citizenship status. This is a serious state of affairs.”

Though the CEC of India had expressed his seriousness about the influx problem of the country, specially the North-Eastern region but his declaration to hold by-election to the Mangaldoi constituency without the deletion of the 45 thousand names of the illegal foreign nationals included in the voter list illegally, was the genesis of the Assam movement of 1979 which has already been mentioned above. On the other hand, the country was prepared for a mid-term election after the ouster of Morarji Desai from the office. Sarat Singha also could not stayed in the office for long. Therefore, it became necessary to hold mid-term election in the month of December, 1979. The people of Assam requested the Election Commission to postpone the election to correct the voter lists prepared full with the names of illegal migrants before the election but the Chief Election Commissioner forgetting all what he commented due to the request made to him by the Congress (I), Congress (U) and CPM ordered as follows which shocked all conscious people of Assam. “The Commission has instructed that no person whose name was included in the electoral rolls shall be eliminated on the grounds

76 Ibid. p62
on citizenship as the process of establishing citizenship is time consuming. The Commission further advised scrutiny of electoral rolls after the election is over.”

Starting the world famous student movement on foreign nationals issue on the ground of the incident cited above, the AASU appealed to all those organizations to in their favour to create a broad base of the movement and a 3-day long convention was organised from 25 to 27th August, 1979 at Kanoi College, Dibrugarh. The convention was attended by AASU, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Assam Juba Samaj and the Purbanchaliya Loka Parishad (PLP) responding to the appeal made by the student organization. A new organization to lead the movement was formed taking the name All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) on 27th of September. To lead the AAGSP for coordination three convenors were choosen. They were Bhrigu Kumar Phukan (AASU), Jatin Goswami (Assam Sahitya Sabha), and Atul Bora (PLP). The Assam Jatiyatabadi Dal, Assam Juba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) and the Assam Juba Samaj also joined the AAGSP later. By the end of December, 1979, the Plain Tribal Council (Progressive), the All Assam Tribal Sangha and the Young Lawyers Forum also joined in the AAGSP. It is seen gradually all the people of Assam involved themselves in the Assam movement led by AASU to save their motherland from the grasp of illegal migrants. Government employees and college teachers were also became an integral part of this movement.

The movement was seen started with some soft programme by AASU and the AAGSP in its first stage. The AAGSP called for a state-wide demonstration and sit-ins in front of the government offices and the offices of Deputy Commissioners and the Sub-Divisional Officers on September 6 and 7, 1979. Though the demonstrations were peaceful but some people were arrested. A mass Satyagraha programme was started on September 10 and there was mass picketing in the government offices from 12 to 14 September, 1979, in the Brahmaputra valley.

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77 Das, O Kr Op cit. p70.
The movement got momentum with the organization of a All Assam mass rally on 6th October, 1979 in the Judges Field of Guwahati by the AASU, AAGSP, PLP, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Assam Jatiyatabadi dal and Assam College Teachers Association. The message of the rally was that if the people of Assam want to live with honour without losing their own identity they must win this battle. Otherwise, the Assamese as a sub-nationality might be dead forever.

A week-long Gana Satyagraha programme which continued from 12 to 27 November was carried on Gandhian principle of non-violence. Responding to the clarion call from all concerns of people such as the Marwari businessmen, Bengali shopkeepers and government employees, the AASU assembled nearly 1,00,000 Satyagrahis on the final day. A 36-hour ‘Assam Bandh’ was also called and was staged on December 3 and 4, 1979 to protest against the government decision to hold the mid-term election and to protest against it, which paralysed the normal life in the whole state. ‘A Gherao programme’ (house arrest) was also observed by the members of the AASU and AAGSP to stop the members of the political parties in filling up their nomination papers on December 3 to 10. The programme was successful at a loss of one life, injuries to many and mass arrests. No nomination papers were filed except Bengali speaking district of Cachar. Election was held only for two constituencies of Cachar.

The tragic incident that took place in the history of Assam movement on the day when the picketers tried to stop Begum Abeda Ahmed, wife of Late F A Ahmed on her way to Barpeta to fill up her nomination paper. She was escorted by a company of CRPF on her 80-miles journey to Borpeta on December 9, picketers resisted their movement and many of them were seriously injured including two ex-Principals of the Cotton College. In the small hours December 10, picketers stopped the police convoy at Bhabanipur. Mrs. Ahmed disguised herself in a police uniform but Khargeswar Talukdar, a student of B H.B College of Sarupeta, identified her. The police immediately lathicharged. In the incident the innocent student Khargeswar Talukdar was killed brutally and injured many others. Police

not only killed him but threw his dead body in a road-side ditch which was found later. It is very unfortunate that the government declared the death of Khargeswar was by drowning to cover up the police brutality.\(^7^9\) Khargeswar Talukdar declared the first martyr of the world famous student movement of Assam. An Assam Bandh call was given by AASU on December 10 and a week-long mourning followed. It is also to be noted that though Mrs. Ahmed filled up her nomination paper taking life of one innocent student but her nomination was found improper and finally cancelled by the Returning Officer. This evidently followed the peoples’ vow for life-long struggle until all the foreigners were removed.\(^8^0\)

Some others lost their lives in the year 1979 while agitation was going on in full swing. Thaneswar Bora, Promod Kalita and Mukunda Bodo who lost their lives in the hands of Bengali immigrants in 1979. A ten-year old school boy also lost his life when a Bengali restaurant owner mercilessly beaten him to death for the pitiful sum of 80 paise.

While the year ended with the observation of a state-wide non-cooperation week, the new year (January 1, 1980) commenced with a fifty eight hour Assam Bandh and two days later on January 3, the movement claimed its second martyr Dilip Hujuri, a tribal student who became victim of a mob violence.\(^8^1\) It is to be noted along with parts of Assam, violence also broke out at Barikadanga village (about 10 miles from Nalbari) on January 3, 1980. A small group of students of Baganpara High School went to Barikadanga that day. According to one version, the student went there to collect money for the movement. The village of Barikadanga has mixed Hindu and Muslim Bengali population, most of whom were non-Indians. They attacked the student Dilip Hujuri, a 16-year old student who was an executive member of the Dhamdhama Regional Students’ Union was speared to death and some of his friends suffered injuries.\(^8^2\)

\(^7^9\) Das, O. K., Op.cit. p75
\(^8^0\) Chattopadhyaya, Dilip, Kr., Op.cit, p82
\(^8^1\) Guha, A. Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist. EPW, Oct. 1980, p1701
\(^8^2\) Das, O. K., op.cit. pp77-78
Atrocities on students by CRPF personnels were also continued along with other ethnic conflicts occurred in different parts of Assam. It is worth mentioning that to pressurize the GOI and to draw the attention of the press towards the movement, the leaders of the movement realised that oil blockade programme would be very powerful. Therefore they had started the oil blockade programme on December 27, 1979. Though they allowed the functioning of Digboi and Guwahati Refineries but they stopped totally the oil flow to Bongaigaon and Bihar Refineries. CRP personnels had killed picketers like Nagen Deka, Kumud Gogoi and Nripen Bora while they were picketing at an oil installation centre at Duliajan on January 18, 1980.

Raid of Cotton College hostels by CRP could be considered as one of the black chapters of the foreigners’ movement of Assam. The CRP personnels on November 28 at 4-15 AM surrounded the Cotton College campus and raided seven hostels of the college without prior permission and prior acknowledge of either the Principal or any of the wardens of the college hostels and beaten up brutally the students of the college. The students, cooks and a warden and his family, numbering 500 loaded into six buses like Sardines and were taken to central police station. About 400 students were released at 4 PM, about 50 were at 6-30 PM and 10 students were released the next day. It is heartening that 5 students were hospitalised for serious injuries Charges were made against 64 students, and the doctors of Red Cross Society and GMC were barred to provide treatment to the students by the CRP 83 It is to be noted that the Cotton College Students’ Association has sent a nine-page summary letter about the incident to the President of India on November 30, 1980.84

Again, Akhendra Talukdar, a college student had been brutally killed by CRP on December 18, 1980

It is also observed that though the Assam movement was based on Gandhian principle on non-violence and Satyagraha but due to the provocation or instigation made by some miscreants among the people of different ethnic community misleading or mis-guiding them regarding the aims and objectives of the movement which resulted serious clashes between the Assamese and the other ethnic groups in Assam. On the other hand, the government of Assam also started atrocities on the agitators to bring the situation under control without considering the demands of the people of Assam. Therefore, the clashes had been taken place between the CRP personnels and the police and in sometimes with other ethnic communities. The outbreak of violence November 8 and 9, 1979 at Naharkatiya, Dumduma and Nagaon can be cited as the best examples in this regard.

It has already been mentioned that the nature of the movement was based on Gandhian principle of non-violence and Satyagraha e.g peaceful. The non-violent nature of the movement was appreciated by some all-India figures. About the character of the movement said Illustrated Weekly of India in a radio interview "I am one of those who believe things can be done constitutionally. But if things had to be done, I would rather say that they were done as here (in Assam) now I see no violence, no busses been burnt. What strikes one most about Assamese people is a certain element of softness and certain element of gentleness. If Gandhiji could not keep his people under control, students leaders are trying to keep everybody under control." 85 K.N. Malik also read in Times of India on the non-violent character of the movement conducted by AASU as follows

"A remarkable feature of the movement launched by the Students' Union and supported by all sections of society is the spontaneity and discipline displayed by the people. Only such sections of people observed a bandh or participate in the non-cooperation movement as are asked to them by the AASU." 86

Some other examples or activities of AASU also prove that the movement was a non-violent one. A poster carried by a student read: "Arrest without rough
handling and stealing of personal belongings.” 87 Again, the Students’ Union distributed “An appeal to the army” the last paragraph of which read, “For the sake of unity and cordial relation between the army and the indigenous people of Assam, AASU appealed to every jawans and the officers of Indian army not to use their arms against the volunteers of the present Assam movement whose objective is to protect Assam and so to protect India’s sovereignty and independence.” 88

It is seen the movement had relaxed for sometime due to the talks began between the central government and the leaders of the movement on February 2, 1980. It is noteworthy that between 2 February, 1980 and January 1983, there were 27 rounds of talks (twenty two rounds of bi-partite and five rounds of tri-partite, including the national opposition parties) to solve the grim situation of Assam. 89 Talks were failed totally. On the very next day, the central government had announced that the election to the Assam Legislative Assembly would be conducted in the month of February, 1983.

The situation of Assam became worsened with the declaration of the election by the GOI. Though, the movement continued for three years and the GOI reiterated its commitment to depart the foreigners from Assam considering 1971 as the cut-off year but also announced that the election would be held in February 1983 on the same voter list prepared in 1979 for which correction and exclusion of the names illegally include in the list the people had been fighting since long. Therefore, due to peoples’ strong protest against the declaration of election termed it as unconstitutional made the situation grim.

Hundreds had scarified their lives when fight with government to stop the election. It can also be mentioned here that the situation of Assam worsened due to some other reasons also. Clashes took place between ethnic groups due to the arrest of the top leaders by the government in the month of January and released

87 Cover page, ‘Sunday’, 27 April, 1980.
88 Das, O.Kr. Op cit, p120.
89 Chaitopadhyaya, Dilip K. Op cit, p83.
them after completion of the election for which the movement lost its proper direction and hence clashes occurred. The protest was tremendous with preparation of the election which resulted finally the continuation of atrocities of CRP on the agitators or the innocent people of Assam. Ethnic conflicts were also intensified during the 1983 Assembly Election in Assam though, Assam known to be a peace-loving state but the instigation or provocation made by leaders of various political parties or the narrow interests destroyed the good relation they had among them since time immemorial. Noted and famous journalist of India Kuldip Nayar held Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India and Ganikhan Choudhury, the then Railway Minister of India for provoking people of minority communities against the agitators during election According to Nayar, Ganikhan Choudhury once provoked the minorities saying that, “the water of the river Brahmaputra would be red if one single minority be compelled to leave Assam”.

So the clash between the Assamese community and the minorities had widened. On the other hand, the brutality of the CRP on the innocent people also intensified. Ethnic clashes took place in different parts of Assam such as at Nellie, Gohpur, Chamaria, Malibari, Laletapu (Jamugurihat), Sootea and Mukalmua etc where hundreds of people including students had lost their lives. For example, miscreants had killed - hacked to death Miss Manju Kalita, a student of Chamaria High School and Ganga Kalita, a student of J. N. College of Boko on February 12, 1983 - attacking their homes, burning their properties. Bhupen Deka, a student of Darrang College and also student leader had been killed by unidentified miscreants at Laletapu Char of Jamugurihat of Sonitpur on March 20, 1983. A total seven persons had sacrificed their lives on the same day when attacked by unidentified miscreants. A student named Trailokya Bhuyan of Sootea sacrificed his life on February 2, 1983 in a clash with unidentified miscreants when visited a nearby Tea Estate with his colleagues for organizational works.

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91 Prantik, 1-15 May, 1983, p10
92 Prantik, 1-15 April, 1983.
Nath, a student of class X of Dhing also scarified his life in the movement.94 Another incident of brutal killings of innocent people by CRP at Panka Gaon, a village 25 km away from Golaghat town of the then Sibsagar district is worth mentioning. Seven persons including 4 students and youths had been killed by CRP on the night of April 2, 1983 when they were patrolling in their village. CRP killed them brutally by binding their hands and shot them with their bullets. The students and youths were Jiten Saikia of class X, Maniram Saikia (20), Reba Saikia (23) and Tileswar Saikia (24).95

It is important to note that though the government had tried to protect the officers such as Mr. Mohan Raj, the then SP of Sibsagar, Mr. Ramesh Ch. Tayal, the SDPO of Golaghat and Mr. T. K. Nag, Police Inspector involved in the killings of Panka village but recently on 30 September, 2005 or after long 22 years, the court of Golaghat headed by Judicial Magistrate Sima Das ordered to submit all the documents related to the case before November 16, 2005 on the basis of the case which had been registered by the then AGP government on 1987 at Golaghat Police station bearing No. 87/87. On the same day on September 30, the AASU activists also held a protest programme in the Deputy Commissioner’s office at Golaghat and submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Assam through the Deputy Commissioner demanding rigorous punishment of the officers involved in the brutal killings.96 It is heart-rendering that during the period of election in 1983, the situation of Assam was grave and thousands and hundreds of people had died or lost place due to clashes between ethnic groups. Sankar Gupta, noted journalist of Indian Express while visited the sites (Nellie) of communal clash occurred in Assam during 1983 wrote: “There is no life around, save for the hungry flocks of vultures .. human skeletons totally devoid of flesh”.97

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96 Anmar Asom & Aaji, Oct. 1, 2005
It is also to be noted that to avoid constitutional crisis before the expiry of the term of President's rule in Assam on March 18, 1983, the central government wanted to hold election in Assam in the month of February 1983. On the other hand, the movement's anti-agitational stance posed a serious constitutional crisis. A second proposal to amend the Constitution by extending the President's rule's term was also scotched by the national opposition parties such as the CPM. The holding of election in such circumstances became therefore a constitutional necessity. At Delhi, however, the movement threatened a bloody violence on the event of the election. Prominent opposition parties like the Janata Dal, BJP and the Loka Dal boycotted the election in Assam. The announcement of the election in Assam turned the nature of the movement violent from non-violent one. The tragic event killed 1700 persons from these minority communities. Seeing the grave situation Assam that had been created by the election in Assam in 1983, journalists and intellectuals described it as "Assam is burning, ... it is true."

5.6 Impact of Assam Movement in Outside the Country:

Realising the grave situation of Assam that had been created by the indifferent attitudes of the Government of India towards the justiciable demand of the people of Assam, not only the people of India but also people residing outside India supported to the movement conducted by AASU and demanded that the Government of India should come forward to solve the problem without delay. The residents of America from India, particularly from Assam were also against the atrocities of CRP on the innocent people of Assam and the Indira Gandhi's government act on the issue in front of the office of the Ambassador of India to USA at Washington on 18 February, 1983. People from Michigan, Florida, Kentucky states were joined the same. Along with these people of New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pensilvenia states were gathered at high-tech town and came to Washington in the early morning. People from different

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99 Ibid. p84.
field where students were also involved, demonstrated in front of the office of the Ambassadors taking play cards and festoons and shouted slogans in favour of the movement. The demonstrators also hoisted the flag of Assam movement in the capital of USA. They also submitted a memorandum to the Ambassador of India to USA to be submitted by him to the Government of India demanding quick solution to the problem of Assam. The delegation also submitted a book written by Amiya Kr Das entitled "Assam's Agony" and a report on "Government atrocities in Assam and their fallout" prepared by Dr. Dilip Kr Dutta. It is also specially to be noted that the killing of innocent people in the times of election in 1983 was discussed on the floor of UNO. A report had submitted to the class-inequality reduce committee of UNO by India in this regard. Though the report had been prepared before the brutal killings in Assam but the members of Pakistan and Mishorhad (18 member Committee) raise about the incidents that took place in Assam on the floor of UNO. India had cleared that the incident had occurred when a section of people tried stop an election illegally which was going to held to install a constitutional government in Assam.

Feeling tremendous pressure from all concerned, the Government of India finally decided to solve the problem of Assam with a positive attitude. Between April 8 to August 15, a total five rounds of talks and nearly four months of sustained efforts to break the stalemate and reach a final settlement with the signing of Assam Accord on 15 August, 1985. From the signing of Assam Accord to the election on December 16, 1985, the movement scored a significant victory over the established political power in the state for the first time in India a government by the regional political party - The Asom Gana Parishad. The December 1985 election which marked a sharp contest with the February 1983 election, brought the student government in power probably with a student leader also for the first time in India as the Chief Minister of a state. This also marked a decisive step towards the political solution of the problem. It is also note-worthy that out of the 21 Cabinet rank Ministers, 10 were student leaders.

We may sum up our discussion with the comment that the historic Assam Movement or the Foreigners' issue movement of Assam is one of the world famous student movement. The movement had been continued for 6 years from June 8, 1979 to 15 August, 1985. It is utmost duty of every state to protect its sovereignty from foreign invasion and to secure its borders well so that illegal migrants should not come and settle in its land freely. It is observed that the Government of India had been sincerely carried on its task to protect its sovereignty since India achieved her independence from the foreign yoke. But it could also be said that the central government has not sincerely flooded its eyes on the borders, mainly the borders those are in between India and Bangladesh. Therefore, huge migration from Bangladesh and Nepal had been continued to Assam till date which is creating fear psychosis among the Assamese people that they would lost their identity in their own homeland and would be turned into minority within a short span of time. This can be regarded as the genesis of the 6-years long Assam movement. It was also seen that along with the central and the state government of Assam, the other political parties also observed total silence in this serious matter for their narrow political gain. Hence, the people of Assam had decided finally to come to the streets with inflicting and unbending determination to solve their own problems declaring agitational programmes against the governments based on Gandhian ideals of non-violence.

On the other hand, both the centre as well as the state government had not given any importance to the movement in its first stage. But finally the student power had compelled the Government of India to bow its head before the justiciable demands of the masses of Assam and the result was that central government had come forward to solve the problem by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) popularly known as Assam Accord with the AASU leaders on 15th of August, 1985.

After the successful completion of the movement, a regional political party - "Asom Gana Parishad" was formed as the representative of all sections of people.
of the society. It also captured political power by throwing out the oldest political party, the Cong (I), in the Assembly election held in December 16, 1985. Mr Prafulla Kr. Mahanta, the former President of AASU, was sworn as the Chief Minister of the state. So, Mr Mahanta is the first-ever Chief Minister of the state in the history of India, who captured political powers as a student leader. His political party "Asom Gana Parishad" was also first to rule a state of India being a regional political party.

Though the people of Assam were jubilant after establishing their own government in Assam and hoped that along with the main migration problem, their other problems would be solved. But in reality, the government which came to power with the sacrifice of 855 lives of the martyrs, had failed totally to fulfill the hopes of the people.

It is to be noted that after forming the government, the subject of implementation of Assam Accord was handled by the Chief Minister himself. But realizing the difficulties of implementation, a new ministry had been created as "Assam Accord Implementation Department" after 3 years of the government and Dr Joinath Sarmah had been given the charge of it for the first time. A report had said that the Department had able to deport only 236 illegal migrants from Assam.

Although, the regional political party's government had failed to fulfill certain issues of the state but in certain other sides it has brought enormous success to the state. The AGP was successful in bringing some changes in the centre-state relationship in the federal structure of India. It is also true that the Cong government had granted nothing and had given a step-motherly treatment always to Assam while it was in power for long. But the AGP, joining as the coalition partner with the 'National Front' and the 'NDA', had enjoyed enormous power in the central level and also had brought certain huge projects to the state for its development. The implementation of the Assam Accord also provided for the all-round development of the state.

Needless to say, due to the Assam movement the people of Assam lost many as compared to gain but it is fair to add, however, that student leadership of the Assam movement have made India as a whole conscious of the fact and dangers of unmitigated immigration from East Pakistan/Bangladesh to Assam and other states on the border. That is the achievement of the historic student-led Assam movement.

5.7 Bodoland Movement: 1986-2001

Assam Accord which was the output of 6-years Assam movement was not acceptable to many ethnic groups in Assam. On the contrary, the signing of Assam accord had created suspicion in the minds of tribal people from the beginning. They thought that the contents of this accord were not only against the democratic rights of these people but also against ethnic minorities. The picture was clear when the Assam Tribal Students’ Union explained grounds on which they are opposing to this accord through a press release on September 3, 1985.

Though this trend had continued since long but was clearly reflected in the times of Assam movement. “The Tribes people would not called as Assamese”, ‘Aryan cultures are not our culture’, ‘The mishing people would not observe Bihu’, etc were some of the common slogans that had been reiterated by the tribes people during the time of Assam movement. As a result, some new organizations took shape to protect their language, culture, religion and identity. But it is to be remembered that these tribe people felt themselves as one of the integral part of the Assamese people in the past. It is sensitized from the comment of Bhimbar Deori, the Chief Secretary of Tribal League when he said in 1938. “We should not forget while placing our demands that we are also an integral part of the Assamese society. Our development would only possible through the

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104 'The Tribes Nould Not Be As Assamese’, an article written by Pangi Lakhmuth in Sadinnya Nagarik. April 23, 1981, p3
development of the whole Assamese society. Therefore, our motto should also be the development of the whole Assamese society."105

There was the reality also to break up the prolonged relationship between the Assamese speaking people and the tribal people of Assam. It was seen that the demands to stop the special privileges that had been granted to and enjoyed by the tribal people of Assam was placed in the first among the 22 demands in the memorandum which was handed over Mr. Golap Borborah, the first non-Congress Chief Minister of Assam by a AASU-led delegation in the month of June, 1979. And this could be considered as the region behind the birth of a new tribal students' organization - All Bodo Students’ Organization.106

Creation of a separate state of Bodoland was the main demand of the movement led by ABSU Bodo student leaders like Upendranath Brahma was part of the Assam movement. During Assam accord, these groups was not given much attention, none of these leaders were in the decision making process. They were not happy and there was sense of insecurity. Grievances were there in the minds of the Bodo students. Finally the circular which made Assamese compulsory created commotion amongst the tribal people.

The Bodo movement with the slogan of separate state of Bodoland was started in its conference held in Darrang district with Upendranath Brahma as its president on May 31, 1986. It is to be noted that Upendranath Brahma submitted a 92-point charter of demand to Mr. Prafulla Kr. Mahanta, the then Chief Minister of Assam on 1st of January, 1987. The charter of demand included the creation of separate state of Bodoland, an autonomous council on the southern part of Brahmaputra and the creation of regional council for the non-Karbi tribals under the District Council. Further, a step ahead, these demands were also placed before Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Buta Singh, the then Home Minister of India and also submitted to the then Honourable President of India, Mr. Gyani

105 Presidential Address, the First Conference of Kamrup District Sanmilan. Boroma, 1938, p11
Jail Singh on February 22, 24 and 28, 1987 respectively at the capital of India.

It is worth-mentioning that organising a mass rally for the first time mainly in the Bodo dominated districts of Assam, message sent to the world that Bodos had launched a political movement for their own safeguard. The movement passed through various programmes such as organization of mass rallies, demonstrations, road-blockade programmes, Assam Bandh - ranging from 12 hours to 1001 hours etc during its six-years long period. A new development was seen in the movement with the origin of Bodo Peoples’ Autonomous Council (BPAC) on November 8, 1988. A later movement was conducted jointly by ABSU and BPAC and it gained momentum after the Bashbari convention held from December 12-22, 1988. A massive movement was launched ending to phrase of prayer, petition and other constitutional and democratic means and it got a violent turn.107

Though the ABSU-led Bodo movement got momentum in 1986 inspired mainly by the success of Assam movement but its history can be traced back to 1967. As the Bodo-Kacharis forms one of the major ethnic group in Assam having inhabitants numbering approximately 52,49,973 as on 2001 and covering an area about 25,478 square kilometres, which is second in respect of size and population. But they are still backward as compared to the other communities of the state. Such feeling had given birth of a separate state in the minds of Bodos in 1967 which was also energized by the announcement made by the then Prime Minister of India Late Indira Gandhi on January 1967 that Assam would be reorganised on the basis of federal structure. Gradually, the ‘Udayachal’ movement got momentum in 1972-73 During the days of ABSU-PTCA cooperation, the ABSU wanted to strengthen the hand of PTCA by submitting a number of memorandums to the Government of India and the state government pleading for a separate state.108 But the strong relationship between ABSU and PTCA had been deteriorating and changed while the leaders of the PTCA had denounced the idea of separate state after the General Election of 1977. The ABSU leaders considered it as a betrayal to them and vowed to fight for the just demand of the Bodo people.

108 Ibid, p166.
on its own shoulder. Therefore, under the strong leadership of Upendranath Brahma, the student organization decided to go ahead on its own with the agitation for a separate state under the name and style -’Bodoland’

The Bodo student community had joined in the movement and own martyrdom in the movement for the sake of the just demand of the Bodo people. Sujit Narzary, a student of class-X was the first martyr of the movement who lost his life on 12 June, 1987. The Bodo people therefore, had been observing the day as Martyr Day till today. Gaide Basumatary and Helena Basumatary were the first woman martyrs of the movement who were killed by the Assam Police. Along with them, many more others had sacrificed their lives and own martyrdom for the cause of a separate state of Bodoland. It is to be noted that Mr. Upendranath Brahma, the president of ABSU, was the backbone of the movement. He led the movement from the forefront as the President of ABSU from its beginning to till his tragic untimely death due to prolonged illness. It could be said that the movement had seen the light of the day due to his proper guidance and direction. The Bodo people also realising his contribution for their future conferred upon him the honour ‘The Father of the Bodos” or “Bodofa”.

Though the ABSU and the people demanded a separate state of Bodoland but several rounds of talks with the Government of India, the miracle took place. The movement leaders climbed down from a full-fledged separate state to Autonomous Bodoland Council and the accord to this effect was signed around 2:30 P.M on February 1994.

But it was very unfortunate that, the ABSU had to start its movement again after 3 years of signing the agreement due to the Government’s negligence and indifferent attitude shown in the matter of demarcation of its boundary. The ABSU in its 28th Conference held at Langhin Liniali, Karbi Anglong, from 3-5

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110 Ibid, pVIII (Intro)
March, 1996 vowed to disobey the agreement that was signed by the Government of India and the ABSU. At the same time two armed outfits BLT (Bodo Liberation Tigers) and NDBF (National Democratic Front of Bodoland) appeared in the scene demanding themselves as the representatives of the Bodo people. NDFB demanded a sovereign state comprising the Bodo areas while BLT demanded a separate state within the territory of India. It is also observed that the NDFB created tensions among the Bodo people killing Sowmbla Basumatary, President of ABSU during his term of office and Mr. Debnath Basumatary, Vice-President of the same organization. Therefore, the outfit did not receive from any Bodo organization. Finally, the central government and the BLT started talks on the issue and reached an agreement to solve the problem on 2001 under the Prime Ministership of A.B Bajpayee and Home Minister Mr. Lalkrishna Advani of BJP.

It has been observed that the ABSU-led movement had also succeeded to achieve its objectives though finally it had relinquished the demand of a separate state of Bodoland from its agenda. Through this movement, the ABSU—the prime student organization of the Bodo people which was born in February 27, 1967 whose aims and objectives was to promote language, literature, culture and to protect the identity of the Bodo people have also achieved. The government has created an autonomous council for Bodos first as ‘BTC’ (Bodoland Territorial Council) and then renamed as ‘BTAD’ (Bodo Territorial Area Districts) with four Bodo dominated districts with Kokrajhar as its Headquarter. Taking some of the important departments such as Finance, Home etc. in the hands of the state government, the others had been handed over to the BTAD to manage their own affairs for their all-round development. Election to the BTAD for the first time has also been conducted recently on May 13, 2005. Mr Hagrama Muhilary, the former Chief of BTC again selected unanimously as the leader and sworn as the Chief of the BTAD on June 3, 2005. It is specially to be that Mr. Muhilary would be the first ever to hold a public office after surrender from a banned militant outfit in the history of India.

The people of Assam hoped that the election to the BTAD would fulfill the hopes and aspirations of the people of Bodoland. And to represent the whole people of Bodoland, a regional party - Bodo Peoples’ progressive Front (BPPF) with Mr. Rabiram Narzary, the former Adviser of ABSU, as its President formed on 12 April, 2005. It is unfortunate that the disagreement between Mr. Narzary and Mr. Muhilary, the Chief of BTC, who is also a member of the party began on the issue of allotting tickets to the candidates after only 24 hours of its formation. This conflict continues till today.

Gradually, the ABSU has been side-tracked by the BTAD Chief and there going an internal conflict between the ABSU and the Chief of BTAD. So it is very confusing whether the Bodo people would get their due justice after the successful completion of the historic Bodo movement or not or has it given only the chance to play dirty politics to fulfill the narrow interests of some self-centred politicians. The time only can speak the truth.

In conclusion we can say that, the students of Assam have been playing active role in all the major movements of Assam that were originated after India’s independence. While the student community felt that the people of Assam have been fighting for a just cause and issue they did not remain aloof of the situation and jumped into the movement to achieve the desired goals without thinking their loss of even their precious life. Therefore, from the beginning to the Assam movement, a good numbers of students have sacrificed their lives and martyrdom for the sake of their own people, their motherland. It was also seen that there had not been found such distinction among the students’ organizations about their ideologies or aims except a very few till the Assam movement was over. Therefore, the AASU enjoyed the supremacy and acted as the prime student organization of Assam till 1985.

But after the Assam movement was over, different students organizations were born due to ethnic bias. These organizations mainly prove their independent existence
through participating and organising various agitational programmes mainly related to the autonomy movement for protection of their culture, literature, language and identity coming out from the shadow of AASU. At present, in Assam, every ethnic group has its own student wing. All Assam Deori Students Union (AADSU), Karbi Student Union (KSU), Karbi Students Association (KSA), All Mishing Students Union (TMPK), All Assam Moran Students Union (AAMSU), All Assam Nepali Students Union (AANSU), All Assam Sarania Kachari Students Union, All Tai-Ahom Students Union, All Assam Thengal Kachari Students Union (AATKSU), Assam Tea Tribes Students Union (ATTSA), All Tiwa Students Organization (ATSO), Assam Koch Rajbongshi Students’ Union (AKRASU), Assam Rabha Students’ Union (ARSU), Assam Minorities Students’ Union (AMSU) are some of the examples in this regard. The process of creation of student organization is going on. Recently on September 11, 2005 another student organization named Chutiya jati Students’ Union was born at Golaghat. It is observed that the affect of Official Language Movement of 1960 and Medium of Instruction Movement of 1972 was tremendous and can be made responsible for this result. The affects are still continues and more clearly visible after the tripartite talks held on All Assam Accord on May 5, 2005 between the government of India, state government and the representatives of AASU after a long period of 16 years. After the talks were over the Assam government sought the views of various ethnic literary groups of Assam about the term ‘Asomiya’ included in the 6th Schedule of the Accord. Rejecting the definition provided by Assam Sahitya Sabha, the largest and oldest literary organization of Assam and the Assamese people, various ethnic literary organization such as Rabah, Dimasha, Bodo, Karbi and Mishing of Assam argued that they are not Assamese, they are the son of the soil. According these groups, as they have their own literature, religion, culture, language and identity, therefore they cannot be themselves as Assamese. Those who speak Assamese language and follow Assamese cultural rituals they are the real Assamese. A committee which

113 Aamar Asom, 13 Sept. 2005, p5
was constituted to define the definition of “Assamese” commented on September 24, 2005 at Kokrajhar.

On the other hand, there are also some student organizations which are directly affiliated to political parties. These organizations are also playing their roles in solving burning problems of the state. Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthee Parishad (ABVP), Students’ Federation of India (SFI), Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), National Students’ Union of India (NSUI), Assam Yuva Parishad (AYP) are some of the examples in this regard. It has also been observed that these student organizations mainly work for their backing their political parties or to make their political parties popular among the people organising various in-campus or off-campus issues. Therefore, these student organizations have not yet enjoyed the same status as enjoyed by AASU and AJYCP. The student organizations which are affiliated to national political parties are busy to prove their existence in the state and looks all the problems on national lines.

Though AASU has been criticised bitterly by the critics sometimes as an integral part of AGP but its non-involvement in any matters of political parties or politics, and finally its involvement in all major problems of the state is the reason to maintain its supremacy than the other organizations till today. Again, when AASU was born, Assam has faced tremendous problems. So to solve these problems the Assamese indigenous people themselves created this organization. Therefore, they still think that AASU is their own organization. This is another reason to maintain its supremacy by AASU.

But finally, we can sum up our discussion with the comment that all the student organizations of Assam have been playing positive role in all concerns, all matters since independence. The students of Assam through participation in all movements have proved that no power whether it is political, economic or use of force is supreme rather than the students’ power.