CHAPTER V

TRIBAL POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS:

BIRTH OF THE ALL ASSAM PLAIN'S TRIBAL LEAGUE:
ITS ACTIVITIES.

Tribal politics in Assam is at least half a century old and it emerged due to the tribal people's feeling of being exploited politically and socially.

The Boro-Kacharis of Assam in general and the Boros of Udalguri in particular were not politically conscious even after the coming of the British to Assam.

The tribal communities were concerned with the sole objective of preserving the ethnic identities of the respective groups. Therefore, a number of local organisations like the Kachari Sanmillan, the Koch Rajbanshi Sanmillan etc. grew out. By forming the Tribal League the leaders tried to bring all the Mongoloid tribes and communities to a common political platform.¹

It was Bhimbar Deuri who realised that without unity among the tribal communities, it would be impossible to pressurise the Government and the national political parties for their needs and aspirations.

The basic aim of the organisation was to fight the socio-economic problems of the tribals. They also stressed upon the primary education of the tribal children. Besides, they clamoured for the preservation of the 'Line system', because they realised that without the 'Line system' the economy and culture of the tribal people of Assam would be jeopardized. Therefore, they held Syed Saadulla responsible for all this. Saadulla also did his best to bring the tribals in to his orbit. Even he attended the meeting of the Tribal League held at Kokrajhar in June, 1938. However, Bhimbar Deuri, the president of the session blamed Saadulla for doing nothing for the tribal uplift and appreciated the congress for preserving the interests of the tribal communities.

However, the Tribal League in its working committee held at Shillong on 10 March, 1940, decided to support Saadulla and in accordance with the decision, Rupnath Brahma joined the Saadulla Cabinet.

Saadulla was satisfied with the Tribal League and to consolidate his recent gain he suggested that the tribes should enlist themselves separately from the Hindus in the forthcoming census operations of 1941.

Saadulla also explained that the entistment of a section of the tribals as the "Tribal Hindus in the Census Report of 1931 was primarily responsible for the low tribal representation in the legislature and in other representative institutions.

But some of the tribal leaders did not like Saddulla's conspiracy. It was Jogendra Nath Hazarika, the editor of the Tribal League Mouthpiece 'Noyok' who warned his people not to fall into the trap laid by Saadulla and called upon the tribes to declare Assamese as their Major language and to enlist themselves as 'Hindus during the forthcoming census operation. But Bhimbar Deuri did not move from pro-Saadulla stand. He also blamed the caste Hindus for making a conspiracy in the census.

But Saadulla soon became unpopular even among the tribal leaders for his support in the grouping of Assam with Bengal in accordance with the cabinet Missions' proposals.

It was, Rabi Chandra Kachari, a tribal leader of North Mangaldai, openly criticised Saadulla's land settlement policy in the fifth session of the Tribal League held at Mangaldai on 20 April, 1945.

Again, Sita Nath Brahma Choudhury presided over the thirteenth session of the Kachari Sammilan, a constituent of the Tribal League at Sibsagar on 4 and 5 May, 1945. He said
that the tribals had no sympathy towards Saadulla and at the same time he suggested the inclusion of Cooch-Behar and Jalpaiguri districts of Bengal inhabited by a large number of tribal people of Assam.3

In 1933, the Tribal League was formed and it was the first organisation of the tribal people in Assam. The All Assam Tribal League had been playing the role of the mouth piece of socio-economic conditions of the tribal people from 1933 to 1949.

The Tribal League presented a Charter of demands to the British Government and on the basis of these demands, the British Government made provisions in the India, Act, 1935 to reserve five seats in the Assam Legislative Assembly for the tribal people of Assam.

The Ministry headed by Gopinath Bordoloi was also supported by the Tribal League. But after the Bordoloi Ministry resigned on the eve of the first world war, the Muslim League formed ministry and Sir Syed Saadulla became its Premier (Chief Minister). This ministry was also supported by the Tribal League on certain conditions, but later on, the Tribal League withdrew its support for not fulfilling their demands.

The Tribal League supported the Bordoloi Ministry on the following conditions:

3. Ibid - P.F. 316-316.
1. There should be a separate electorate for the tribal people of Assam.

2. There should be reserved seats for the tribals in the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Councils.

3. All tribals irrespective of creed, culture and religion should be enlisted as tribal.4

In 1945, the Labour Party came to power in England and the new Government announced in August, 1945 that the elections to the Central and Legislative Assemblies in India would be held towards the end of the year. Accordingly, the Muslim League and the congress, the two major parties started election campaign for the ensuing general elections. The Congress Party drew up an election manifesto which among others set forth freedom as the ultimate goal.

The Ahom Association and the Tribal League were also ready to fight on the issue of separate electorate and reservation of seats for their communities.

After the elections it was seen that the congress Party emerged as the majority party having a strength of 58. The total strength of the Assam Legislative Assembly was 108.

The Tribal League expressed dissatisfaction for not inducting a tribal in the Bordoloi Ministry inspite of the assurance of the congress party before the election. In protest against this, the All Tribal Party Leaders conference was held at Shillong on 6, 7, 8 July, 1946. In the conference, the leaders unanimously adopted a resolution to forward the following demands to the Government:

1. To send a tribal representative to the constituent Assembly.
2. To induct one minister and a parliamentary Secretary in the Central Ministry.
3. Reservations of posts in Government service for the tribals.

Therefore, Gopinath Bordoloi, the Premier (Chief Minister) inducted Bhimbar Deuri into the seven-member cabinet which was constituted on 11, February, 1946. Again, from the Surma Valley, Abdul Rashid was included. With the two additional incumbents, the strength of Bordoloi's cabinet rose to nine in September, 1946.

Besides, Shri Jogendra Nath Hazarika, the president of All Assam Hills and Plains Tribal Student's Union was inducted in the Nehru Ministry as the Parliamentary Secretary for foreign affairs.
The Tribal League also protested against the grouping of Assam with East Bengal and according to the cabinet Mission Plan, the Muslim section of the Assembly elected Abdul Hamid, Matin Choudhury, Syed Saadulla while the general part elected Gopinath Bordoloi, Rohini Kr. Choudhury, Basanta Kr. Das, J.J.M. Nichol-Roy, Cmeo Kumar Das and Dharamni Dhar Bosumary as the members of the constituent Assembly from Assam. 5

After independence, the Tribal Association was formed in lieu of the Tribal League. This was a social and cultural association and was almost amalgamated with the congress Party.

For the development of the Hill-Districts, the Sixth Schedule of the constitution of India was put in to effect according to the recommendations of the committee headed by Gopinath Bordoloi. After forty years of independence, no remarkable development was made in these districts except the reservation of seats for election for the tribal people and the scheduled caste people. The tribal people of the plains districts were regarded as completely assimilated and assimilated with the general people. During the last three years.....

decades the Government showed negligence and callousness towards the development of tribal people of Assam. As a result, resentment among the tribal began to swell.

But after twenty years from independence, the tribal again felt the necessity of reviving their political identity for various reasons. As a result, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) was formed in 1967.

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA): Its Area, Aim, Objectives:

On 27th February, 1967, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) was formed and it demanded the creation of a separate state known as 'Udayachal' for the plains tribal people of Assam.

Before the general elections to the Parliament in 1977 and the general elections of Assam in 1978, an agreement was signed between the Janata Party and the Plains Tribal Council of Assam. According to the terms of the agreement seat adjustments were made between the two parties in Assam. In the Lok Sabha election, the Janata Party bagged three seats while the PTCA bagged one seat and in the general

elections of the State Legislature of Assam in 1978, the Janata Party got 54 seats while the P.T.C.A. got four seats. In the agreement both the parties took pledge to work for the socio-economic development of the state and the P.T.C.A. also withdrew its demand for a separate state for the tribal people of Assam.

In the first non-congress Government ever formed in Assam after independence, a ministry was formed with 12 Cabinet ministers and 4 ministers of State. Out of these ministers, three Cabinet Ministers were tribal including a P.T.C.A. member and another was inducted as the minister of state. Out of these 4 ministers three won on Janata tickets, and one on the ticket of P.T.C.A. Besides, these ministers chalked out policies regarding the tribal development in consultation with the Chief Minister. At that time, a huge conference of the tribal people of Assam was held at Dispur where the then Prime Minister, Moraraji Desai was also present. The Prime Minister Desai assured the tribal people that the Central Government would extend all possible help to the tribal people of Assam.

On the basis of the recommendations of the conference in order to ensure the recruitment of the people of the scheduled caste and the scheduled tribes of Assam, The Assam scheduled caste and the scheduled tribes (Reservation of services and posts) Act, 1978 was passed in the Assam
Legislative Assembly. The Janata Government during its short tenure strictly followed this act regarding the appointment of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Besides, the tribal people were also satisfied as they got the privilege of sharing powers and functions with the Janata Party. Therefore, the leaders of the Plains Tribal Council of Assam did not raise the question of a separate state again.  

Unfortunately, the Bodos again became very weak when the P.T.C.A. suffered a split. Though the two P.T.C.A. leaders were elected to the Lok Sabha and the Assam Legislative Assembly respectively following the Janata wave, 1977, differences surfaced within the party over the demand of 'Udayachal'.

Mr. Benai Khungur Bosumetry (Udalguri) one of the hardliners and a former navy officer left the P.T.C.A. and formed the progressive P.T.C.A.

The ABCU supported Mr. Bosumetry and both these organisations in 1980 demanded the creation of a union territory to be called 'Mishing Bodo Land'.

The Mishings are also a plains tribe. The P.T.C.A. (P) later assumed the name United Tribal National Liberation Front. After the signing of the Assam Accord the Assam Gana Parishad came to power and the political as well as the socio-economic scenario of Assam changed dramatically.  

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam does not believe in the demand, 'Devide Assam fifty fifty' because many tribal communities are spreading all over Assam. They have their own likes and dislikes. Moreover, they want to continue agitation peacefully and non-violently. Moreover, the Congress-I contested in five constituencies of Kokrajhar in 1985 but the P.T.C.A. won four seats and the Congress-I won only one seat. Therefore, it is believed that the leadership in ABSU is planted by the Congress-I to destroy the P.T.C.A. 9

The proposed 'Udayachal' consists of 5,655 villages and it covers 19,962.35 Sq.kilometres. Its total population is 29,85,132.

1. Total no. of scheduled tribes 8,25,462
2. Other Tribes 7,27,662
3. Hill Tribes 4,99,750
4. Scheduled Caste 1,45,063
5. Others including Assamese 10 7,87,166

The proposed Boro-Mishing Bhumi consists of the following:

1. Total area 17,000 Kms.
2. Total population 17,000
3. Total no. of Boro and Mishing 8,00,000

Besides, the proposed 'Udayachal' would include the following Police Stations: Dhubri, Gosainkund, Kokrajhar, Sidli, Bijni, Gongai, Sorbhog, Barama, Patacharkuchi, Tamolpur, Rangia, Panery, Udalguri, Magoat, Kalaigaon, Dheimajuli, Gohpur, Bihpuria, Dhemaji, Jorai, Uttar Lakhimpur, Dhubri, and Sadia.

A delegation of Boro leaders recently met the Home Minister of India and presented to him a memorandum demanding a separate state for the Boro-people of Assam. The Home Minister is reported to have told the delegation that the proposed area of the 'Udayachtal' is not contiguous and hence a separate state for the Boro-people of Assam is not possible.11

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam received a letter No. 11012/90/83 U.M. on 16 October, 1984 which stated as follows:

"Regarding the demand for a separate Union territory/State, comprising of majority plains tribal areas, it is seen that the areas indicated by the P.T.C.A. for the proposed Stat or Union territory, are not geographically contiguous. It has also not been established that the plains tribal population constitutes a majority in all these areas. It has also not been possible to substantiate the inaccuracies pointed in 1971 census as regards alleged miscounting of tribal population. The demand, therefore, for a separate political unit does not appear to be in the larger interest of the plains tribals or of the North Eastern Region as a whole."\(^{12}\)

The All Bodo Students Union regards the P.T.C.A. as the bitterest enemy because this party has been demanding a separate state for the plains tribals of Assam. The ABSU supported the P.T.C.A. earlier but when the Janata Party came to power in Assam in 1978, the P.T.C.A. was in alliance with the Janata Party. Mr. Sarwar Brahma Choudhury was inducted in the ministry as the minister for forest and tribal affairs. Shri Bonai Khururg Bosomtabary left the P.T.C.A. and formed a new party known as United Tribal National Liberation Front. This party does not want a separate state but a Union territory or an Autonomous District Council. Therefore, the PTCA

\(^{12}\) Das, Parag Mr, - 'Prantik,' Vol. VII. No. 16-30 April, '88, P. 32.
is the common enemy of both these two parties. Like ABSU, the P.T.C.A. also has called 'Bandh's' rail rokos etc., demanding a separate state for the Boro-Kacharis of Assam but its agitation is not violent. Inspite of the bandh called by the ABSU, the party conference was held at Kokrajhar. Therefore, clashes have taken place between the P.T.C.A. workers and ABSU activists.13

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam believes that a 'Bodoland' is not viable and further fragmentation of the State of Assam will not be considered by the party. This position has been expressed by both the Ministry of Home Affairs and Shri Ram Vilash Paswan, Union Minister for welfare, centres' representative dealing with the Assam problems and the ABSU(U) stands by its stated commitment to achieving Bodoland within the framework of Indian constitution.

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam also alleges that the eight member committee constituted after the 4th round of tripartite talks does not exclude members from different tribal communities viz; Mishings, Rabhas, Lalungs, Deoris, Scoonwal-Kacharis etc. and the tribal representatives from all political parties.

The Plains Tribal Council of Assam further states that the plains tribals are small and poor people and they have ever smaller aspirations and desires. They want to de-

velop according to their genius and 'Udayachal' created within the constitution of India.\(^{14}\)

**THE ALL BODO STUDENTS' UNION: ITS ACTIVITIES:**

The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) was formed on 15th February, 1967. It is a non-political organisation like the All Assam Students' Union (AASU). This organisation is concerned about the economic, social and linguistic development of the Boros of Assam. The aim of this organisation is the solution of the Bodo problems in a peaceful manner. Moreover, the Bodo Students' Union declares that it has no link with any political party.

It was the Plains Tribal council of Assam, a regional party of the Boros of Assam which demanded a separate state for the Boros of Assam.

Originally, the ABSU had a charter of 92 demands of which 89 demands were non-political. The ABSU presented a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam enlisting 92 demands. Out of 92 demands, the last one was for the creation of a separate state for the plains tribal people of Assam on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Other political

\(^{14}\) Source: The Assam Tribune, Thursday, April, 26, 1990 (Three) P. 4.
demands were - (91) the constitution of a district council in the areas pre-dominantly inhabited or the south bank of the Brahmaputra, (90) the constitution of a regional council for the Boros of Karbi-Anglong. The ABSU also registered its protest against the paragraphs No. 6 and 10 of the Assam Accord signed in 1985. The memorandum of the ABSU submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam concluded with the following lines:

"Now under your youthful leadership with new experience away from professional past politics, we hope that the traditional past will not repeat and some new lights and hopes be generated in the minds of the frustrated youths in particular and people in general." 15

The All Bodo Student's Union presented another memorandum to the Prime Minister of India enlisting the following demands only.

1. Establishment of a Central University at Kokrajhar.
2. Separate Hostels for the tribal students.
3. Enhancement of special scholarships for the students belonging to the scheduled tribes.

15. Ras, Parag Kr. - Prantik, Vol. 10. 16-30, April, '88
4. Establishment of an Engineering college and Polytechnique Institute at Kokrajhar.

5. Reservation of scheduled tribes in research work.

6. Relaxation of U.G.C. norms in case of tribal candidates for the appointment of lecturers in college and University.

7. Socio-economic and development demand.

8. Protection of tribal belts and blocks and creation of new ones.

9. Inclusion of Bodo in the 8th schedule of the constitution of India as Bodo Language has been declared Associate official Language of Assam since 1984.


11. Establishment of Radio Station at Kokrajhar.

12. Establishment of a Television Station at Udalguri.

13. Opposition to the revision of reservation list of scheduled tribes in Assam.

14. Opposition to the foreign national's issue.

15. Proper census for Bodo population as ABSU does not support the Census of 1971. 16

The All Boro Students' Union (ABSU) started its agitation from 2nd March, 1987. After one year, the Central Committee of the A.G.P. Government admitted that the fear of the scheduled tribes of Assam was true. Being encouraged by this, the ABSU suspended its agitation for three months in the hope of being invited for talks but it seemed that the Government was not interested in any solution. The Government seemed to have invited the ABSU only to get rid of the blame of the Government. In short the talks held on 27 June, 1987 failed. In the talks the Government gave verbal assurances to the agitation leaders that it would release the ABSU activists, lift 144 Cr.P.R. and withdraw the Assam Disturbed Area Act, 1955. But the hopes of the ABSU were belied as the Government did not keep its promises.

On 21st January, 1986, the Government of Assam appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Purga Das Boro, M.L.A. Panery Constituency for the development of the scheduled tribes and the scheduled castes of Assam. The committee submitted its report on 7th April, 1986. In the Report, it was stated that Chapter X to the Regulation by Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (amendment) Act, 1947 was not strictly followed in the tribal belts and blocks. Secondly, genuine tribal people were not issued pattas (mutation) and the unauthorised settlers were not evicted. Even the Government of Assam appointed nine Sub-Deputy Collectors and
nineteen other officers specially for this purpose but they were not given to perform the works assigned to them.\textsuperscript{17}

During 20 months of its first agitation, there were 29 phases which consisted mainly of demonstrations, symbolic bandhs and road and rokos. The agitation was also confined to Kokrajhar and Udalguri Sub-division of Darrang district both on the north bank and the acknowledge strong holds of the ABSU. The longest duration of the bandh was more than 100 hours.

But after a respite between the end of October, 1988 and the middle of February, 1989, the agitation was suspended to enable the people to attend to harvests. It was resumed with increased vigour and militancy. In this renewed phase both the content and the character of the agitation have undergone important changes.

The original charter of 92 demands have been reduced to three political demands:

These are: 1. The creation of a separate full-fledged state of Bodo land for the plains tribals of Assam,

2. the creation of district councils in the tribal compact areas of the south bank of the Brahmaputra.

\textsuperscript{17} Bora, Dulal, Sutradhar, \textit{16-30 March, '89, P.P.22-23.}
3. the inclusion of Boro-Kacharis of Karbi-Anglong district in the sixth schedule of the constitution.

Earlier, the demand was for the constitution of areas of the north bank claimed to be predominantly inhabited by the plains tribals into a Union territory. While now it is for the creation of a state. Moreover, they have identified it as Bodoland as if the agitation is being articulated and led principally by a Bodo leadership.

The resumed agitation programme comprises a series of eight Assam bandhs of longer duration culminating into a 1001 hour bandh from August 15 and it has been equated with the fourth anniversary of the signing of the Assam Accord, an event that directly led to the formation of Assam Gana Parishad, the political party and its electoral victory thereafter.

In the first two bandhs which effectively became 190 hour bandhs, there had been heavy loss of lives and extensive damage to property. Still, the ABSU claims that their agitation is totally non-violent and Gandhian. Strictly speaking these bandhs affect the whole region.

The 120 hour bandh took a toll of 14 lives and twenty people were killed in the violence that preceded the bandh. There were sixty-nine incidents of arson, 44 cases of attacks on security personnel. In all, there were 45 bomb explosions, 16 of them during 120 hour bandh. Damage to public and private property was extensive.
The ABSU derives its legitimacy from the stand that Bodo people have a distinct and separate identity from the caste Hindu Assamese. In contrast, the Asom Gana Parishad Government derives its legitimacy probably from a historical perception of the evolution of the Assamese as a people according to which through a process of assimilation the indigenous tribal communities of the region and the settlers from distant lands formed a uniquely integrated Assamese Society.

The ABSU initially spoke on behalf of all the scheduled tribes of Assam but the recent changes of its demands indicate that they can no longer claim to speak on behalf of other plains tribes of Assam.

They are not even the spokesmen of other Bodos of Assam also as the ABSU (Ramchary group) and P.T.C.A. are also conducting non-violent agitations for the Bodos of Assam. The P.T.C.A. has been dismissed as a stooge organisation of the AGP by the ABSU and there has been clashes between the P.T.C.A. and ABSU supporters. Moreover, it is not established that the territory marked out in maps produced by the ABSU, P.T.C.A. and the UTNLF does not constitute a compact and contiguous area predominantly inhabited by the Bodos or other plains tribals of Assam. The ABSU also holds the Assamese enumerators for manipulating the census figures of 1971 to establish a majority of the Assamese speaking people.
The Bodos are spreading over all the districts of Assam and so mere affirmations of ethnic identity and creation of another separate state cannot be a solution to the genuine problems of under development of the Bodos. Such a state may not even ensure the preservation and enrichment of their ethnic identity, language and culture.

The resumed agitation certainly exhibited intensity and virulence because some members of the armed forces have joined agitationists who have provided them expertise. The Government of Assam has already arrested four of them who have been in long leave for helping the agitationists.

The ABSU agitation is thus simply viewed as yet another conspiracy against the Assamese people. The AGP Government has accused some Central leaders of national political party of investigating the ABSU to start agitation to weaken the AGP Government. Even a top ABSU leader has expressed his confessional statement that the Home Minister advised them to give up its demand for Union territory but instead agitate for separate full fledged state. Instead of defusing tension in the North-east the Government is interested in keeping the agitation alive.16

The ABSU, Darrang District Unit, has published its leaflet that contains its aims and objectives. According to it, they want to continue a non-violent and Gandhian agitation, 'Live and let live' is their principle. As they are ill-treated by the AGP government, they want a separate state in order to get rid of the Assamese people. According to this unit, Assam covers an area of 78,523 Sq. kilometres and the area of the proposed 'Bodo land' is 25,478 Sq. kilometres.

The population of Assam is 2 crores two lakhs and the proposed separate 'Bodo land' would consist of 61,37,94 and the rest would be with Assam. It does not include big cities of Assam like Dhubri, Silapara, Goalpara, Rangia, Guwahati, Margaldai, Tezpur, Jorhat, Sivasagar, Darpeta, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia etc. On the other hand, the thinly populated forest areas will be included in the proposed Bodo land.19

THE ALL BODO CONT'N'T UNION (RANCHIARY GROUP) :
ITS AIMS AND OBJECTIVES :

The ABSU itself was split in two factions (the other faction also calling itself ABSU is led by Gangadhar Ramchiary). Formerly, Mr. Gangadhar Ramchiary was an

19. Source: Resumantary, Deunath, Darrang District Committee, ABSU Leaflet (Total pages - 12) P.P. 1-2(4.4.09)
executive member of the ABCU. In 1987, the ABCU was split in the Rowta conference. The ABCU (R) group submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam enlisting 35 demands.

According to this group, tribes of Assam are the Boro-Kacharis, Rabha, Karbis, Mech, Brumar, Mishing, Deories, Hojai who belong to Tibeto-Burmans of the Indo-Chinese group. The tribal problems are concerned with the above-mentioned tribes of Assam and not with the Bodos alone. During the last 42 years, the conditions of these tribes have not been improved much. They have not got scope to improve their socio-economic conditions. Even the language policy of the AGP is not free from defects. Moreover, the tribal people along the Assam- Nagaland border have been killed and tortured since 1979 by the Naga people. The Government has failed to give security to the tribal people even in their blocks and belts. Moreover, the recently formed council for the protection of the non-tribals have created tensions in the tribal areas. The ABCU (R) believes in the peaceful solution of the problems through discussion.20

The All Assam Tribal Student's Union is a different kind of organisation because it is not leading any movement for the immediate creation of autonomous region or Union territory or autonomous state within Assam, though it has extended support to most of the movements. It is however active in local issues and has opposed eviction of the tribals from forest reserves and moves to curtail the existing provisions of reservations for the tribals in educational institutions and Government jobs. More recently, it called for a fresh reorganisation of Assam on a federal basis arguing that mere demands for extension for exteriors of the provisions of the sixth schedule or more autonomy to the tribal inhabited areas will not tackle the more basic 'nationality question in Assam.'

The tribal problems of Assam have affected the non-tribals of Assam also. Though their problems emerged before independence, both the Central Government and the State Government did not give much importance to these problems. The demands and the grievances of the tribal people remained a far cry. The present Government has also failed to solve the problems of the tribals of Assam.

Therefore, many non-political student's organisation have emerged viz; ABSU by the Bodo Student's, T.M.F.K. by Mishing Student's, KSA by the Student's of Karbi-Anglong, and URMCA by the student's of backward communities.

As there is no unity among different tribal organisations, therefore, the Assam Tribal Student's Union and the plains Tribal Council of Assam (F.T.C.A.) have arrived at a workable understanding for the redress of the tribal grievances. These two organisations have formed the co-ordination committee of the Tribal organisation of Assam.22

A delegation consisting of the convenor of the organisation Shri Giridhar Pattar, Samar Brahma Choudhury, M.P. and Charan Narzar, M.I.A. of the co-ordination committee of the tribal organisation of Assam (CC to A) recently met the Home Minister and submitted to him a memorandum urging intervention of the central Government for controlling the deteriorating situation arising in the plains tribal areas of Assam.

In the memorandum it is stated that the political problems of the tribal people of Assam will have to be solved politically. It has also criticised the Assam Gana Parishad Government for involving the Assam Disturbed Areas Act,

1955 and Armed forces (Special Powers) Act, 1950 which according to them led to ruthless suppression of political aspirations of the tribal people.

The memorandum has further stressed the fact that there have been distinctive communities in the plains of Assam like Boro-Kacharis, the Mishings, the Lalungs, the Rabhas, the Deoris, besides a sizable number of hill tribal people living in the plains. Referring to the January, 1980, resolution of the co-ordination committee of the plains tribal organisation of Assam, the memorandum stated that the plains tribals should be reorganised in such manner as to consolidate them to form tribal majority Thanas (Police Stations) in sub-divisions and districts. The tribal areas need to be given constitutional recognition and adequate machinery to accord effective right of self-determination to administer their areas and help manage their own affairs.23

MID-LEVEL RESERVATION MOVEMENT COUNCIL OF ASSAM (MRCMA):

It is an organisation of the students of backward communities of Assam. Light students of Dibrugarh University, calling themselves "Reservation protection Demand Committee, Dibrugarh University" issued a leaflet in which they accused the agitation leaders as anti-tribal and anti-backward

23. The Assam Tribune, Sunday, August, 6, 1989 (Three).
classes. Thus the URMCA was born out of the 'Reservation Protection Demand Committee, Gibrugarh University at a founding convention in Guwahati. On February, 23, 1986.

A few days later, Saurabh Bora, one of the members of the Reservation Protection Demand Committee was shot dead while returning to his hostel from the University canteen in the evening. In the URMCA's view, the agitation leaders are playing the anti-tribal and casteist politics which was manifest in the original 21-point charter of demands of the AACU. One of the demands of AACU was the withdrawal of the Reservation for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in educational institutions (or employment) and its replacement by what it called merit-based reservation - a point at issue throughout the Country.

Since the death of Saurabh Bora, the URMCA has been leading struggles going beyond the reservation issue. It is also taking border issues of tribal autonomy and ethnicity in general.

The URMCA draws supporters mainly from the Mising people pre-dominant in Lakhimpur and Dhemaji districts and in the Chapa Khowa (Sadiya) and Majuli sub-divisions of Tinsukia and Jorhat districts. It has also extended its base to other ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities - the garden labourers, Nepalis, Bengali Hindus and Muslims,
a small section of the Ahoms as well as the Sonowal Kacharis.

The aim of the council is to struggle for the oppressed groups of Assam for their political, social and all round development. This organisation feels that the political parties are not concerned for a just solution to the burning problems of the oppressed.

Further, the URMCA will not form any political party because it is of the opinion that participation in the election will not bring any permanent solution to the problems.

The URMCA is spearheading the reservation cause of the minority classes and demanding autonomous administration on federal basis in the areas of the minorities. It is banking upon the votes of these minorities giving in return the hopes of settlement/allotment of land in the belts/blocks with the fulfillment of their demands.


25. The Assam Tribune, Wednesday, August, 9, 1989 (eight).

The Simon Commission or the Indian Statutory Commission which was constituted at St. James London, on Nov. 26, 1927, had visited Assam to facilitate a complete assessment of the problems of Assam.

"An Assam committee was constituted under the commission to help in preparing its report pertaining to Assam. The plains tribals were at that time classified as 'Primitive and Backward tribes'.

A memorandum was drafted on behalf the plains tribals of Assam by Mr. Ghyasuddin Ahmed B.L. Dhubri, for submission to the Indian Statutory Commission.

In the memorandum, it was stated that the Bodos of Assam had distinct civilization of their own. They were the ancestors of the great kings like Bana, Bhuga Dutta and Biswa Singha. Regarding representation, they sought one representative in the central Legislature and special seats in the local Boards.

But Mr. Ghyasuddin Ahmed was not allowed to appear before the commission as he was not a tribal. Instead of him, Shri Jadab Ch. Khaklari and Kali Charar Brahma were
allowed to be witnesses before the Commission. The plains tribals of Assam started their political activities under the leadership of Mr. Jadab Chandra Bhakiali, the Secretary, "Assam Sachari Juhak Samilon ". As Ruprath Brahma, the only literate Sachari Youth was engaged in preparing for the examination.

Mr. Ghyaruddin Ahmed, who had a soft corner for the Boroos of Assam drafted the memorandum. In the memorandum, they demanded that they should be counted and classified as independent of Hindu society and their political rights should be preserved. Moreover, they wished to remain with Assam and not with Bengal. On the basis of the commission's report, a new state like Orissa was reorganised but the plains tribals then known as primitive and backward classes failed to start their own course within the history of Assam.

The system of sending people's representatives began from 1937 in the study area where the first Legislative Assembly was formed in Assam with 106 members as envisaged under the India Act of 1935 - introducing provincial autonomy.

27. Ibid - P.P. 44-47.
One seat was reserved for the tribals in this district.

Darrang district was divided into four general constituencies viz.; Mangaldai (North), Mangaldai (South), Jorpur (East) and Jorpur (West). Apart from this, the entire Darrang district elected one Muslim representative. One seat was reserved for Indian Christians, backward tribes etc.

On 16, August, 1946, seven candidates were elected to the Legislative Assembly from general part and three from Muslim section.

The First General was held in 1952 for electing representatives to the Legislative Assembly of Assam. In Mangaldai, Sub-division, out of three seats, the seat of Panery constituency was reserved for the scheduled tribes. Again, according to enactment of delimitation commission Act, 1967, the number of constituencies of Darrang district was increased to 13. Udalguri (C.T.) was created a constituency this way.

In 1952, the successful candidate of National Congress polled in Panery Constituency (General) 76.10 %. The congress candidate of the Panery reserved seat for scheduled tribes was elected uncontested. In the second General Election of 1957, the congress candidates suffered defeat polling 22.05% of valid votes in the C.T. reserved seat and 16.80% in the general seat in the Panery constituency. In the third General Election, 1962 the congress candidate of Panery (C.T.) won by 65.25%. In the Fourth General Election
the congress candidate was badly defeated by an independent candidate while in Udalguri constituency the congress candidate won.

In the Fifth General Election (1972), the Paneria Constituency was won by the congress (R) candidate who defeated the independent rival, a sitting member of the Assam Legislative Assembly by a clear margin of 7,773 votes. Out of 35,183 total valid votes polled, the congress candidate secured 21,432 whereas his only rival, the independent candidate secured only 13,699.

In 1978, in Paneria Constituency the independent candidate late Ramesh Ch. Sahariah, defeated the Janata Party candidate by a margin of 2521 votes. The independent candidate secured 10,521 votes.

In the controversial 'Election' of 1983, in Darrang district, there were 15 constituencies, 7 in Margaldai Sub-division and 8 in Darrang Sub-division. Out of 15, in 6 constituencies there was partial poll and in one constituency the poll was countermanded and there was no contest in one constituency. This left only 6 contested constituencies for which the polling results were as follows:

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It may be mentioned here that in seven constituencies out of 15 of this district, the poll could not be fully taken due to stiff resistance of the people. It should be further mentioned that in 2 constituencies of this district namely Balgaon and Udalguri, the percentage of polling was sufficiently high i.e., 66.55%.

In Balgaon Constituency, the percentage of polling was high because in 1979 about 45 thousand illegal voters who were foreigners were actually detected in Mangaldai constituency. So far as Udalguri constituency is concerned the high percentage of voting is likely to be on account of P.T.C.A. propaganda about ' Udayachal ' state amongst the Boro-Kacharis.

In the General Election to the Assam Legislative Assembly of 1985, a new regional political party known as Asom Gana Parishad participated in the election. In the Subdivision of Udalguri of Darrang district, the candidates from the regional parties such as Asom Gana Parishad, Plains Tribal Council of Assam, United Tribal National Liberation Front of Assam participated in the election.

The results of the candidates of the regional parties along with the national parties in the sub-division of Udalguri are mentioned below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Candidate</th>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Votes received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Akbal Ali</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Badal Saha</td>
<td>U.M.F.</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chajan Patwary</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dina Nath Das</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Durga Boro Das</td>
<td>A.G.P.</td>
<td>13,236 (elected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ferdinand Kujur</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>4084</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Jitendra Boro  
9. Josheph Mallick  
10. Keshab Hazarika  
11. Kul Chapa Gai  
12. Mrs. M. Sahariah  
13. Pran Krishna Das  
14. Padum Bahadur Chouhan  
15. Ranjit Boro  

Out of 67,500 Votes, 49,004 Votes polled and 5,197 Votes were rejected.

**UTALBORI CONSTITUENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the candidate</th>
<th>Name of the party</th>
<th>Votes received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benai Khugnur Bosumatary</td>
<td>UTILF</td>
<td>18899 (elected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahadur Bosumatary</td>
<td>Congress-S</td>
<td>1014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangal Chandi Brahma</td>
<td>Janata</td>
<td>1919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhab Narzari</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>2099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proloki Kr. Bosumatary</td>
<td>P.T.C.A.</td>
<td>13763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of the candidate</td>
<td>Name of the Party</td>
<td>Votes received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Rohit Brahma</td>
<td>Congress-I</td>
<td>13,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. R. Boro</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>5213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. S. Gayari</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MAJBAT CONSTITUENCY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the candidate</th>
<th>Name of the Party</th>
<th>Votes received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chirajul Haque</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jiga Charan Brahma</td>
<td>P.T.C.A.</td>
<td>10112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Silvious Kandapan</td>
<td>Congress-I</td>
<td>20503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Khagen Bosumatary</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>1203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Philimal Baskey</td>
<td>U.T.N.L.P.</td>
<td>2634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Faban Hazwari</td>
<td>C.P.I. (M)</td>
<td>1344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Rebati Upadhyaya</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>2488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Am Chandra Sing</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>7735</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Boro-Kacharis of Assam have been taking interest in political affairs since 1935. They had no political parties of their own till 1967.

In 1967, they had formed a political party known as the Plains Tribal Council of Assam for the socio-economic development of the Boro-Kacharis of Assam.

But this political party was split into two due to the question of the Udayachal, a separate state for the Boro-Kacharis of Assam.

At present there is no unity among the Boro-Kacharis of Assam. Some of them support the Plains Tribal Council of Assam, some support other political parties while a large number of the Boros of Assam support Congress-I.

The All Boro Student's Union has been agitating for a separate state for the Boros of Assam. As many as fifth rounds of trilateral talks have been held but the question of a separate state is not yet resolved. Both the Central Government and the State Government have already announced that a separate state is not possible.

As the Boro-Kacharis of Assam are not developed in comparison to others, Autonomous District Councils may be accorded to the Boros for the convenience of their development.