CHAPTER: VI
CONCLUSION

The present study entitled “Autonomy Movement of the Rabhas: A Study on Territorial and Non-territorial Dimensions” is the outcome of a systematic academic investigation of the ethnic identity assertion to the political autonomy demand movement of the Rabha Community in Assam. The present study tries to examine the Rabha autonomy in the context of territorial and non-territorial dimensions. This chapter summarizes the findings of the previous chapters and attempts to draw conclusions and also present recommendations for necessary policy formulation.

This study basically tries to examine the Rabha autonomy in the context of territorial and non-territorial dimensions of autonomy in the ethnically mixed RHAC area. The RHAC area with existing 779 revenue villages, ranging from Rani of South Kamrup to Jairamkuchi of Goalpara district including 3161 sq. kms land of Southern bank of river Brahmaputra and the Northern foothill areas of Meghalaya, is a home of different ethnic communities along with the Rabhas. After an analysis of the key concepts like autonomy and dimensions of autonomy, it is found that territorial dimension of autonomy appears to be unfeasible and complex regarding Rabha autonomy in the ethnically mixed RHAC area because of its inherent contentions results from the counter-mobilization of the non-Rabha communities, while non-territorial dimension of autonomy seems to be adequate, appropriate and feasible regarding Rabha autonomy due to the dispersed and intermingled living pattern of the Rabhas who don’t have a neat territorial base of their own for which they do not form a sizable majority to demand territorial autonomy in the ethnically mixed RHAC area.

After an analysis of the dimensions of autonomy in the context of Rabha autonomy, it appears that for a peaceful settlement of inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts between the Rabhas and the non-Rabhas and comprehensive accommodation of both the Rabhas and non-Rabhas in the ethnically mixed RHAC area, the non-territorial dimension of autonomy may be an alternative autonomy arrangement in contrast to territorial autonomy for the territorially scattered Rabhas in RHAC area and also outside it because there are inherent contentions of Rabha territorial autonomy which clearly
challenge the rationale of granting and applying the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India to the RHAC. The feasibility and rationality of the demand for Rabha autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India seems to be complex and not negotiable unless and until the non-Rabha Garos and non-Rabha non-tribals are ready to accept the demand. As Rabha autonomy under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India appears to be unfeasible and complex, hence, non-territorial dimension of autonomy may be an alternative tool for accommodation in this regard.

After an analysis of the brief profile of the Rabha tribe, the study reveals that the Rabha tribe is a distinct ethnic community having own language, dialects, literature, rich socio-cultural heritage, distinct traditional social administrative institutions, customary laws, religious practices, festivals and traditional ethnic homeland which differentiates it from other ethnic community in North-East India as well as in Assam. The Rabhas are scattered in different districts of Assam, though their main concentration is found in the Southern bank of river Brahmaputra in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup. A few section of the Rabhas is also found in the Northern part of the Hill districts (East and West Garo Hills) of Meghalaya and in North-Bengal. The Rabhas are divided into a number of socio-cultural and linguistic groups and clans such as- Pati, Rangdani, Maitori, Kocha, Dahori, Bitolia, Totla and Hana.

Though the Rabhas are considered as a sub-ethnic group of the Greater Indo-Mongoloid Bodo ethnic group and the Tibeto-Burman linguistic group, it represents a distinct and unique ethno-cultural identity which differentiates it from the other ethnic groups in North-East India as well as in Assam. The Rabhas inherited its distinct ethnic identity as well as its autonomous character from the different social and cultural markers of the Rabha community such as distinct language and dialects, literature, distinct traditional ancient administration with distinct traditional administrative social institutions and organizations, distinct religious beliefs and practices, distinct socio-cultural elements, customary laws, customs and traditions, festivals, traditional ethnic homeland etc. which contributed to create and deepen social cohesion and ethnic solidarity among the different clans and groups of the Rabha community under a distinct ethno-cultural identity. This distinct ethno-cultural identity of the Rabha
community inherited from their distinct socio-cultural markers greatly developed and enhanced the sense of autonomy among the Rabha community in its different stages of development. The study reveals that the Rabha community was divided into different clans and sub-groups and used to lead their own ways of life in the past. There was no social cohesion among them in the past. It was only after the emergence and formation of the inter-group traditional administrative social organizations like the Mandal at the village level, Jamad at the middle level and the Sanmilan at the district or the regional level that the different Rabha clans and sub-groups were re-grouped, reorganized, united and integrated as a single ethnic group. These ancient traditional administrative social organizations and institutions of the Rabha community greatly contributed to keep and maintain their distinct ethnic identity and socio-cultural heritage intact and their traditional ethnic homeland. This ethnic unification of the different Rabha clans and sub-groups under the Thal or Khel, Mandal, Jamad and Sanmilan, all the tiers of these traditional administrative social institutions under certain customary laws immensely helped to enhance the distinct ethno-cultural identity and autonomous way of life in the further stages of its development. This ethnic unification and distinct and autonomous way of life of the Rabha community further resulted in the formation of different regional socio-cultural organizations in different Rabha inhabited areas making a strong ethnic solidarity and social cohesion among them. As it has been observed that the Rabhas are one of the aborigines or the earliest known inhabitant in this region and for this, they regard themselves as the “Son of the Soil” that is the indigenous community of this region. This indigenous factor also contributed to develop and enhance the distinct ethnic identity and a sense of autonomy among them. The study also reveals that historically the Rabha community had an ancient Rabha kingdom of their own and which they recognize and claim as their traditional ethnic homeland as “Rabha Hasong-the Land of the Rabhas” till today. Historically, the Rabhas inhabited in their ancient traditional ethnic homeland with many ups and downs in different waves of time. This historical and inhabitant factor of the Rabha community also greatly developed and enhanced a sense of autonomy among them. From the socio-historical point of view, the study indicates that the ancient Rabha King ‘Dodan’ is the first king of the Rabha tribe and he is considered as the founder and leader of the Rabhas. The Rabha King ‘Dodan’ was a contemporary king and a close relative of “Bana” the famous and great King of
ancient Assam (then Pragijotishpur) who ruled in Sonitpur. It has been found that the Rabha King ‘Dodan’ ruled in the Southern bank of the river Brahmaputra with his followers. It is believed that he introduced the “Baikho” the unique traditional festival of the Rabha tribe with his followers. From a historical point of view, the study also reveals evidently from the “Baharistan-i-Ghayabi” that another famous ancient Rabhaking ‘Parasuram’ who ruled over in the South Goalpara in the first decade of 17th Century. His territory extended from the Brahmaputra on the North to the Rongdan river in the Garo Hills border on the South and from Rangiuli on the East to Nalbari in the West, and ‘Sambhul’ or known as ‘Sambhor’ (presently Solmari under the district of Goalpara) was known as his Capital. This is the South Goalpara and the South Kamrup area in which the indigenous Rabha tribe were the master inhabitants till this region was annexed to British India, not only that, the entire foot hill areas which is known as ‘B’ mahal under the present state of Meghalaya are still occupied by the Rabha tribe as majority. From these historical evidences of ancient Rabha Kingdom and Rabha inhabited traditional ethnic homelands, the Rabha community today assert themselves as the “Son of the Soil” of this region and demands this region as their ancient traditional ethnic homeland as “Rabha-Hasong”, that is the ‘Land of the Rabhas’ on the basis of their ancient glory and launched movement to attain and preserve their traditional ethnic territory.

While tracing the roots or socio-historical background of Rabha ethnic assertion as well as Rabha autonomy movement, the study reveals that Rabha ethnic assertion as well as Rabha autonomy movement is historically rooted in the pre-independence period mainly in the beginning of the 20th Century in the line of ethnic identity consciousness and assertion of distinct identity of the Rabha community. The ethnic identity consciousness and ethnic assertion among the Rabhas was found expression during the protest against the process of religious conversion, Sanskritization and Christianization among the Rabha community under the organizational banner of “Asom Rabha Sanmilan” in 1926 led by Gobardhan Sarkar, Dwarikanath Rabha and Rajen Rongkho etc. the prominent socio-cultural reformers and activists of the Rabha community. The pathfinders of Rabha Community and their organizational efforts contributed to develop ethnic identity consciousness and in the assertion of ethnic identity among the Rabhas through modern education, social reforms and cultural revivalism.
The study reveals that the Rabha autonomy movement has its root in the pre-independence period, during the period of the formation of Assam Rabha Sanmilan in 1926. The Assam Rabha Sanmilan (ARS), which became All Rabha National Council (ARNC) in 1976, the first ever father institution of the Rabha ethnic community created ethnic solidarity among the Rabha people, unified all the groups and clans of the Rabhas into a single unified entity, which acts as a common platform among them in the assertion of Rabha ethnic identity at the initial phases, further contributes in the Rabha ethnic assertion for autonomy. The late 19th and early 20th Century, marked a great awakening in socio-cultural development among the Rabha society. During this period, there emerged a number of personalities who sacrificed their lives for the development of the Rabha community. Gobardhan Sarkar, Khirod Mohan Rabha, DwarikaNath Rabha, Bishnuprasad Rabha, Kartik Rabha, Rajen Rabha Rongkho, Jogendra Nath Rabha were the pioneering social activists, social organizers and social reformers whose relentless efforts had far reaching impact in the awakening of distinct Rabha identity consciousness and Rabha ethnic assertion preparing for a Rabha nationalist movement to gain greater Rabha ethnic autonomy. Certain traditional social organizations such as-Mechpara Purbanchal, Madhyanchal etc.- the traditional Jamad system among the Rabhas, and the different sections among the Rabha community, which are called "Thal or Khel" of the community as well as the existence of different types of traditional administrative social units such as the village or clan organization, the Jamad or branch organization and the district, state or regional organization, contributed in ethnic identity consciousness, ethnic identity formation and assertion among the Rabha community.

While examining the genesis of Rabha ethnic assertion and autonomy movement, the study reveals that certain traditional administrative organizations, the efforts of the socio-cultural reformers and activists and their socio-cultural organizations contributed in ethnic formation, identity consciousness and socio-cultural revivalism among the Rabha community at the initial phase. The All Rabha Cultural Conference (ARCC) formed in 1955 contributed socio-cultural mobilization among the Rabha community. The All Rabha National Council (ARNC) formed in 1976 contributed in ethnic unification of all the clans and groups of Rabha community into a single entity deepening strong social cohesion and ethnic solidarity among them. The All Rabha
Sahitya Sabha (ARSS) formed in 1973 and Rabha Bhasa Parishad formed in 1980 contributed in the assertion of distinct linguistic and cultural identity of the Rabhas. These developments pave way for autonomy demand movement of the Rabha community. The formation All Rabha Students Union (ARSU) in 1980 marked the politically significant phase of Rabha ethnic assertion and autonomy demand movement of the Rabha community. The formation of Rabha Hasong Demand Committee (RHDC) under ARSU formed in 1989 intensified Rabha autonomy movement demanding political autonomy in the form of Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council covering the area of the two districts of lower Assam- South Kamrup and Goalpara from Rani of South Kamrup to Jairamkuchi of Goalpara district including 3161 sq. kms. land of Southern bank of river Brahmaputra and the northern foothill areas of Meghalaya. The All Rabha Women Council (ARWC) under ARSU formed in 1993 organized and mobilized all the Rabha women in active participation in the Rabha autonomy movement. As a result of Rabha autonomy movement under the leadership of ARSU, ARWC and RHDC, Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council came into being on 10th March, 1995 under Rabha Accord, 1995. Due to lack of implementation of the provisions of Rabha Accord and continuation of RHA (interim councils) without democratic elections, without demarcated territory with inclusion of no specified villages and without proper financial and legislative powers, ultimately RHAC failed to exercise its autonomous powers and functions for the greater interest of the marginalized Rabha community in practical sense. The failure of RHAC to discharge its powers and functions as a substantive political autonomy compelled the Rabha leaders to reject it and demanded fresh, greater substantive political autonomy under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Formation of Sixth Schedule Demand Committee (SSDC) in 2003 intensified the Rabha autonomy movement with the slogan “No Sixth Schedule No Rest” demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Formation of Rabha Hasong Joint Movement Committee (RHJMC) in 2012 re-intensified Rabha autonomy movement making prime achievement with first democratically elected RHAC in 2013 after a long awaited 17 years of struggle.

The study shows that certain traditional social organizations like the Khel, Mandal, Jamad and Sanmilan and a number of socio-cultural organizations like the ARS, ARCC, ARNC played a significant role in bringing ethnic solidarity, ethnic
identity consciousness and assertion of ethnic identity among the Rabhas since the pre-independence period. Further the formation and role of the different socio-cultural, political organizations like ARSU, RHDC, ARWC, RHSP, SSDC, etc. has played significant role in Rabha ethnic assertion for political autonomy raising different political demands from time to time through their memorandums since their inception.

The study reveals that though the RHAC was formed in 1995 under the RHAC Act, 1995, it failed to discharge its powers and functions as a substantive political autonomy. The failure of RHAC compelled the Rabha leaders to reject it and demanded greater political autonomy under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and launched mass movement under the active leadership of All Rabha Students Union (ARSU), Rabha Hasong Demand Committee (RHDC), All Rabha Women Council (ARWC), Rabha Hasong Suraksha Parishad (RHSP), Sixth Schedule Demand Committee (SSDC) etc. demanding to implement the provisions of the Rabha Accord and the RHAC Act, 1995 without further lapses, to demarcate the boundary of RHAC including specified revenue villages and to amend the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council Act, 1995, with more financial, administrative and legislative powers, making a real, proper, full-fledged and a substantive political autonomy for the Rabha community. As a result of prolonged constant movement of the leading Rabha organizations, the RHAC Act, 1995 was further amended in 2001 and again in 2005 with certain structural changes basically in Section 4 and Section 6 of the RHAC Act, 1995. Besides, 779 (306 according to 2001 Act + 473 according to 2005 Act- Total-779) revenue villages are included in RHAC from both Goalpara and Kamrup (Rural) districts which fall under the jurisdiction of RHAC area.

The Rabha Hasong autonomy movement has different implications and contentions. The study shows that formation of SSDC in 2003 with the motto “No Sixth Schedule No Rest” demanded inclusion of the RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, exemption of Panchayat election from the RHAC area as per Clause No.5 of Memorandum of settlement (Rabha Accord) of 10th March, 1995 and holding of the council election with immediate effect. The study reveals that the demand for Sixth Schedule status to the RHAC, exemption of Panchayat election from the RHAC area, created discontent among the non-Rabha communities living in RHAC.
area. The non-Rabha communities living in RHAC area, under the organizational banner of Non-Rabha Coordination Forum (NRCF) formed in 2008 and Garo National Council (GNC) expressed their concern over the security of land rights and other democratic rights. They launched a counter-movement demanding to oppose inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, exclusion of non-Rabha population dominated villages from the jurisdiction of the RHAC area and to hold Panchayat election in the non-Rabha dominated revenue villages in Goalpara and Kamrup (R) districts for the proper functioning of grass-root democracy. From the above analysis, the study shows that these developments created a series of mobilization and counter-mobilization between the Rabha and the non-Rabha communities which has generated inter-ethnic tensions, mistrust and clashes in the RHAC area. Inter-ethnic tension and conflict manifested itself for the first time in 2008 when the state government took initiative to conduct Panchayat elections in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup (R) in which most of the village Panchayats fall under the jurisdiction of RHAC area. The Rabha leaders protested it and reacted against the state Government’s action of violating Clause No. 5 of the Rabha Accord, 1995. As a result of massive violence and conflict, the State Government was compelled to postpone the Panchayat polls in the RHAC area. Again, the Government’s initiative to hold Panchayat elections in February, 2013, re-generated conflict and violence, resulting in injury, death and displacement of both Rabhas and non-Rabhas in the RHAC area.

The study also reveals that counter mobilization by the non-Rabhas intensified when the Ministerial Sub-Committee headed by Dr. Bhumidhar Barman, the then Revenue Minister of Government of Assam in 2005 under the RHAC Amendment Act, 2005 notified 779 revenue villages of Goalpara and Kamrup (R) districts as villages under the RHAC. Reacting to this development, NRCF submitted a memorandum to the then Chief Minister of Assam on 10th December, 2013, demanding exclusion of non-Scheduled Tribe dominated villages basically 89 villages from 401 villages of Goalpara and 134 villages from 378 villages of Kamrup (R) districts which fall under the jurisdiction of the RHAC.

The non-Rabha communities under the banner of NRCF also demands the repeal of Section 4 of RHAC (Amendment Act), 2001 for their feeling of insecurity in terms of
democratic rights and Section 6 of RHAC (Amendment Act), 2005 for their feeling of insecurity in terms of land rights. The NRCF also expressed their concern for initiating the system of compact area (including core and contiguous villages) as per provisions laid down in Section 2 and 3 of the Amendment Act, 2005, denying the satellite system of autonomy in violation with the specific provisions laid down in both Rabha Accord and RHAC Act, 1995. It also expressed concern for substitution of the “Rabha” word by “Scheduled Tribes” in Goalpara and Kamrup districts by inserting Section-4 of RHAC (Amendment) Act, 2005.

The study also reveals that inclusion of 779 revenue villages implies the constitution of a purely territorial project of RHAC with core and contiguous areas having more than 50 percent of ST population. Interestingly, along with this development, the Rabha Hasong Joint Movement Committee (RHJMC), an umbrella organization of 34 bodies of 18 ethnic groups launched a mass movement to include the RHAC with these 779 compact villages into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Reacting to this development, NRCF launched a counter-movement and submitted memorandum to the State Government demanding to exclude the revenue villages dominated by having more than 50 percent non-ST population both from Goalpara and Kamrup (R) districts which falls under the jurisdiction of RHAC and also to repeal the RHAC (Amendment) Acts, 2001 & 2005.

An observation of the demographic profile of the RHAC area, clarifies that it is an ethnically mixed area and home of different communities. The presence of a considerable percentage of non-Rabha communities living in RHAC area express their dissatisfaction and concern that distribution of seats in General Council of RHAC and Village Councils are inadequate in terms of accommodating the political aspirations of a large section of existing non-Rabha communities as their political representation is not proportional to the size of their population in RHAC area. The Population Census Report, 2001 shows that the percentage of Scheduled Tribe (ST) population in the RHAC is 59.49 percent including the Rabhas, Bodo-Kacharis, Garos and Hajongs. It has been observed the non-Rabha ST Garo population comprises more than one lakh in RHAC area. This considerable size of Garo population has already been opposing and countering the Rabha territorial autonomy. They have already mobilized under the
banner of Garo National Council (GNC) and demanded a separate Garo Autonomous Council carving out more than 45 Garo dominated villages from the RHAC area. Hence, Garo population, which is an integral part of the RHAC have opposed the Rabha territorial autonomy and demanding separate Autonomous Council for them. On the other hand, the Rabhas have opposed the formation of Garo Autonomous Council within the RHAC area which indicates the inherent contentions interrogating viability of the Rabha territorial autonomy. These developments have made Rabha territorial autonomy a contested one.

The study reveals that the Rabha autonomy movement has different implications and these implications manifested itself in a series of inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts among the Rabhas and the non-Rabhas in the RHAC area basically from 2001. There was no opposition to Rabha movement from the non-Rabha communities before the formation of the RHAC. Perhaps, the Rabha Hasong autonomy movement did not pose any major hindrance to the political rights and interests of the non-Rabha communities before the formation of the RHAC. It was only after the formation of the RHAC that tensions generated among the Rabhas and non-Rabhas on different contentious political issues. Therefore, the genesis of their inter-ethnic rivalry may be traced back to 2001 over the issue of the RHAC Amendment Act, 2001. It was found that these inter-ethnic tensions and rivalries emerged due to their rivalries over different contentious issues of concern such as demand for repeal of Sections 4 and 6 of the RHAC Amendment Act, of 2001 and 2005, demand for holding and deferment of Panchayat election from the RHAC area, demand for conducting and suspension of election to the RHAC, demand for inclusion and exclusion of revenue villages within and from the council area, demand for and protest against the Sixth Schedule status to the RHAC and demand for and protest against the formation of Garo Autonomous Council carving out some Garo population dominated villages of Assam-Meghalaya border areas which falls under the jurisdiction of the RHAC area. It has been observed that the Rabha autonomy movement has serious implications regarding the frequent inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts among the Rabhas and the non-Rabhas around different contentious issues regarding autonomy rights of the Rabhas and the democratic rights and peaceful accommodation of the non-Rabhas within the RHAC area.
While tracing the growth and development of Rabha autonomy movement, we find two significant phases of Rabha autonomy movement, one is from 1980s, that is politically significant phase of Rabha autonomy movement leaded by ARSU, ARWC, RHDC, ARNC etc. to 1995, that is the formation of Rabha Hasong (interim) Autonomous Council under RHAC Act, 1995 as a prime achievement of Rabha autonomy movement and another is from 1995, that is lack of implementation of the Rabha Accord and failure of RHAC to discharge its powers and functions as a substantive political autonomy without demarcated territory with inclusion of no specified villages and without proper financial and legislative powers which compelled the leading Rabha organizations to assert more political autonomy, to 2013, that is, the conduction of democratic elections to RHAC for the first time in 2013 which resulted in the formation of democratically elected RHAC for the first time in 2013 under RHJMC (Rabha Hasong Joint Movement Committee) an umbrella organization of 34 bodies of 18 ethnic groups of Goalpara and South Kamrup. It has been observed that after a long 17 years, RHAC becomes a democratically elected council which was earlier in the form of interim councils with nominated members till 2010. The study reveals that during the period from 1995 to 2013, a series of mass movements were launched by ARSU, RHDC, ARWC, ARNC, SSDC, RHJMC etc. the leading Rabha organizations witnessed a series of conflicts over different contentious political issues which have been mentioned earlier, between the Rabhas and the non-Rabha communities in RHAC area. However, it has been observed that formation of democratically elected RHAC for the first time in 2013 under RHJMC with the leadership of Mr. Tankeswar Rabha, as its Chief Executive Member, is considered as a remarkable achievement as well as a positive development and direction in the development of Rabha autonomy movement.

The findings of the field-study reveals that among the surveyed respondents belonging to different communities inhabiting in RHAC area, 54% of the respondents extend support towards the Rabha autonomy movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, whereas 25% of the respondents don’t extend support towards the movement and 21% of the respondents do not know whether they support or not. The study reveals that among the respondents, who support the movement, the percentage of the Rabha community is highest, while the Garos, the Muslims and a considerable percent of the non-Rabha non-tribals do not extend support
towards the Rabha autonomy movement demanding the inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and totally oppose it.

The surveyed respondents who extend support towards the movement have different reasons. Among the reasons, the percentage is highest among the supporter respondents in terms of protection of indigenous land, identity and for political power and representation. The study shows that among the different reasons, protection of indigenous land, identity and for political rights, power and representation occupies significant position and major concerns among the respondents who extend support towards the movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

Among the surveyed respondents, who have expressed their dissatisfaction towards the movement and do not support the movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India have different reasons and perceptions. Among the reasons, which are expressed by the non-supporter respondents, are feeling of insecurity in terms of land rights and property, fear of inter-ethnic conflicts and lack of provision of proportional representation of the people other than the Rabhas in RHAC in terms of population, occupies significant position and major concerns among the respondents who do not support the movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The study reveals that the respondents belonging to different communities who have expressed dissatisfaction towards the movement and hence do not support it for their different perceptions towards the movement and they have expressed their opinion that the Rabha autonomy movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, will create problems in terms of their entitlement and rights over their land and property, the movement will also create inter-ethnic tensions and generate conflicts between the Rabhas and the non-Rabhas which will definitely harm inter-ethnic harmony, peace, security among the people in RHAC area and it will disturb democratic order and normal life of the people of the area. They also have expressed dissatisfaction towards the provision of the RHAC that it has failed to accommodate the political aspirations of the people other than the Rabhas in RHAC due to lack of the provision of proportional representation of the people other than the Rabhas in RHAC.
in terms of population. Hence, they argue that Rabha autonomy under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India seems to be contested and defective in nature.

Among the surveyed respondents belonging to different communities inhabiting in RHAC area, 53% of the respondents extend support in the continuation of the Rabha autonomy movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, whereas 27% of the respondents don’t extend support in the continuation of the movement and 20% of the respondents do not know whether they support in the continuation of the movement or not. The study shows that among the respondents, who extend support in the continuation of the movement, the percentage of the Rabha community is highest, while the Garos, the Muslims and a considerable percent of the non-Rabha non-tribals do not extend support in the continuation of the Rabha autonomy movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and totally oppose it. They totally oppose the continuation of Rabha autonomy movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and express their view point that it will curtail their democratic rights within the entity and will have chance to foster inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts which will affect inter-ethnic harmony, peace, security and true democracy in the council area.

To overcome the problems and inherent contentions of the Rabha autonomy movement demanding inclusion of RHAC into the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, some recommendations are enlisted below-

1. For a peaceful settlement of inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts between the Rabhas and the non-Rabhas and comprehensive accommodation of both the Rabhas and non-Rabhas in RHAC area, the non-territorial dimension of autonomy may be an alternative autonomy arrangement in contrast to territorial autonomy for the territorially scattered Rabhas in RHAC area and also outside it because of the total opposition of non-Rabha tribal Garos, Muslims and a considerable number of non-Rabha non-tribals towards the Rabha autonomy under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India and there are inherent contentions of Rabha territorial autonomy which clearly challenge
the rationale of granting and applying the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India to the RHAC.

2. The feasibility and rationality of the demand for Rabha autonomy under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India seems to be complex and not negotiable unless and until the non-Rabha Garos and non-Rabha non-tribals are ready to accept the demand.

3. As Rabha autonomy under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India appears to be unfeasible and complex, hence, non-territorial dimension of autonomy may be an alternative tool for accommodation in this regard.

4. Non-territorial dimension autonomy may be adequate and appropriate for the Rabhas who live dispersed and intermingled with other groups in RHAC areas and outside it and do not constitute a sizeable majority on a neat territorial basis. The non-territorial dimension of autonomy for the Rabhas will secure rights of both Rabhas and non-Rabhas with a peaceful comprehensive ethnic accommodation mitigating their conflicts over land, territory and democratic rights which will help to restore inter-ethnic harmony, peace, security and true democratic order in RHAC area.