PREFACE

The concept of ‘Autonomy’ occupies a significant place in modern democratic theory and practice. The modern pluralist democratic states on the basis of the principles of collective minority rights, indigenous rights and right to self-determination has invented and adopted the device of autonomy as sub-state institutions and decentralized mechanisms under constitutional law in order to resolve ethno-political conflicts and to protect and accommodate ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity within their borders. Autonomy is granted basically on two dimensions-territorial and non-territorial dimension of autonomy.

This study is guided by non-territorial dimension of autonomy.

Within the Indian multicultural liberal democracy, North-east India, the homeland of cultural diversity is inhabited by more than two hundred culturally distinct ethnic groups of various sizes at various stages of development. The politics of Northeast India has been increasingly shaped by the autonomy movements of various ethnic communities for safe-guarding and maintaining their distinct ethnic identities, their traditional ethnic homeland with a substantive political autonomy. The autonomy movements of different ethnic communities in North-East India as well as in Assam have witnessed a series of ethnic mobilization and counter mobilization creating inter-ethnic tensions, mistrust and generating inter-ethnic rivalry in this region. The Rabha community is a small Scheduled Tribe (Plain) in Assam having distinct ethno-cultural identity, socio-cultural heritage and traditional ethnic homeland of their own. The autonomy movement of the Rabha community popularly known as “Rabha Hasong movement” has also witnessed a series of ethnic mobilization and counter-mobilization resulting inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts between the Rabhas and the non-Rabhas which has posed a serious threat to inter-ethnic harmony, peace and democratic order in the RHAC area in Assam. In this context, this study tries to examine the Rabha autonomy movement in the context of territorial and non-territorial dimensions.

The study has been divided into six chapters. The First Chapter deals with introduction and conceptual analysis of the autonomy movement, dimensions of autonomy,
statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, review of literature, database, methodology, significance and limitation of the study.

The Second Chapter deals with a brief profile of the Rabha community, the inherited autonomy character of the Rabhas, ancient Rabha kingdom and traditional ethnic homeland of the Rabhas. This chapter also attempts to analyse the genesis of Rabha autonomy movement.

The Third Chapter deals with the formation and development of Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council.

The Fourth Chapter deals with the implications and contentions of Rabha ethnic assertion for territorial autonomy under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. This chapter also highlights the new dynamics of Rabha autonomy movement and Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council.

The Fifth Chapter attempts to examine and understand the feasibility of granting territorial autonomy under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, to the Rabhas vs. non-territorial cultural autonomy to the territorially dispersed Rabha community in the ethnically mixed RHAC area. This chapter is based on statistical analysis of the data gathered through field-survey.

The Sixth Chapter is the conclusion chapter which explores the findings and draws general conclusions and makes recommendations based on the findings.

The study is a systematic academic investigation to find out a peaceful settlement and comprehensive democratic solution and accommodation of both the rights of the Rabhas and the non-Rabhas residing in RHAC area in order to promote inter-ethnic harmony, peace and to ensure true autonomy in a democratic framework in the ethnically mixed RHAC area in Assam.

Date:

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