CHAPTER-IV
FORMATION OF RABHA HASANG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL AND ITS PROVISIONS

Introduction :

The autonomy movement of the Rabhas passed through various phases. The movement has certainly faced a chain of major hurdles. In the first place, the Rabhas are an ethnic group dispersed over a vast expanse of territory. As an ethnic group they are not concentrated in a homogeneous territory of their own. This was due to various historical reasons. Being one of the earliest ruling tribe of the Tibeto-Burman origin in the valley, they moved from one territorial confine to another over the periods of history. They were rather driven out from their original or initial habitat in the Brahmaputra valley by their powerful neighbours. Therefore, their territorial jurisdiction did not remain static from the earliest to the present times.

Moreover, they remained scattered, branching out into several subgroups and have been living in the hills and the plains over the centuries. The mode of capitalist production initiated by the British colonial rulers also contributed to the further distribution of this tribe into different pockets of habitation making it difficult for them to pursue a homogenous community life for themselves. As a matter of fact, they have been living for the past several centuries in disparate
regions making it difficult for them to stand united against the powerful social forces.

But in the prevailing situation of a democratic polity, and with the emergence of an educated elite group of their own, they have attained the stage and quality of leadership necessary for organizing and leading an ethnic movement for their own survival in terms of socio-economic and linguistic-cultural. The movement for a definite homeland exclusively for the Rabhas again may turn out to be counter-productive if not counter-offensive to the other ethnic groups living in the same territory and sharing the same socio-economic benefits in terms of land, agriculture and employment etc.

These hurdles were removed only after the leadership of Rabha autonomy movement eschewed the path of aggressiveness and followed the peaceful democratic means for solving the problems for which the movement has been launched. As the history of Assam has shown, there has been no way out. The history of Assam since medieval times has been a history of federalism based on mutual respect and tolerance for survival of all. Once this lesson has been lost upon, the emergence of counter offensive measures become certain and inevitable. The history of the ethnic movements of the recent times has amply proved this.

Despite these hurdles the Rabha autonomy movement became successful because of the goodwill of the Rabha people behind the movement as well as of the other democratic forces of Assam. The topographical situation of Assam has
been conducive for mutual co-operation and toleration, once this is lost everything is lost. Social life has never been a static one, it moves on towards the better one, and it moves of dialectically.

The Rabha Accord, March 10, 1995 received its legitimacy through the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council Act, 1995. The Act has provided for the establishment of an administrative authority in the name and style of Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council (RHAC) within the state of Assam.

**The Area of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council:**

The Rabha Accord provided for the creation of Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council within Assam comprising the contiguous areas between Joiramkuchi of Goalpara district and Rani of Kamrup (Rural) district. The villages containing 50 percent or more of the tribal people were included in the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council. The reserved forests situated within the RHAC were also included in the said territory whereas it is, expedient to provide for the establishment of a Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council within the state of Assam with maximum autonomy within the framework of the constitution, comprising of the satellite areas of Village Councils formed out of blocks of contiguous revenue villages, each having more than 50 percent population of the Rabha Community, without having an compact area for social, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural advancement of the Rabha community residing therein.
According to the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council Act, 1995, there shall be an Autonomous Council called the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council within the state of Assam comprising of the areas of the Village Councils as may be specified by the Government by notification in the official Gazette. The Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council has maximum autonomy within the framework of the constitution. This Autonomous Council has a general council and an executive council as provided herein after.

1. There is also a provision for a Village Council for each block of villages, each village having 50 percent or more Rabha population.

2. Each Village Council area consists of approximately 6000 to 8000 population.

3. There shall be as many Village Councils as may be specified by the Government by notification in the official Gazette.

**Structure of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council:**

According to clause 6(1), The Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council consists of a General Council, an Executive Council and a Secretariat. The General Council is a corporate body having perpetual succession and a common seal with powers to acquire, hold and dispose of property and to contract and sue or be sued by its corporate name. The General Council Consists of 30 (Thirty) members of which 26 (Twenty-Six) are directly elected and 4 (Four) members are nominated by the Government from amongst the groups or communities residing in the council area and not otherwise represented in the General
Council. Out of the 30 (Thirty) seats, 15 (Fifteen) seats are reserved for Rabha Community and out of 15 (Fifteen) reserved seats, at least 3 (Three) seats are reserved for women.

The Members of Parliament and the members of the Legislative Assembly, Assam belonging to Scheduled Tribes Reserved Constituencies of the Council area are the ex-officio members of the General Council. Every member of the General Council is entitled to such allowances as may be fixed by the General Council and approved by the Government. The elected members of the General Council, generally, at the first meeting after the election, for the purpose of constitution of the Executive Council, elect from amongst themselves, in the manner prescribed-

i. One member to be the Chief Executive Councilor who is also to be the President of the General Council, and

ii. Three Executive Councilors.

The term of office of the General Council is five years from the date of the first meeting as appointed by the Government after the election of the members, unless dissolved earlier under section 68. The Chief Executive Councilor or the Executive Councilors ceases to hold office, as such forthwith, if he for any reason ceases to be a member. The Governor may, if he is satisfied that circumstances so exist which render the holding of the election as provided, impracticable, extend the term for a period not exceeding one year. Any member of the General Council may, at any time, by giving notice in writing addressed to
the Chief Executive Councilor, resign from his office provided that in case of the Chief Executive Councilor, the notice should be addressed to any of the Executive Councilors.

The Chief Executive Councilor, or the Executive Councilors or any one of them or all of them may be removed from office by a resolution carried by a majority of the total number of the elected members at a special meeting of the General Council called for the purpose upon a requisition made in writing by not less than one third of the members of the General Council.

The Chief Executive Councilor and the Executive Councilors is entitled as a whole-time functionaries and is paid out of the General Council Fund such salaries and allowances as may be prescribed. The other terms and conditions of the service of the Chief Executive Councilor and the Executive Councilors are as such as may be prescribed. If the office of any member falls vacant by reason of his death, resignation, removal or otherwise, the vacancy shall be filled up by election in accordance with the provisions of this Act and the rules framed there under.

Provided that any vacancy in the office of the Chief Executive Councilor or the Executive Councilor arises, this shall be filled up by the General Council by electing a member thereof in the manner prescribed for the election of the chief Executive Councilor or the Executive Councilors.

The Chief Executive Councilor is responsible for the maintenance of the records of the General Council. It is his general responsibility for the financial
and executive administration of the General Council. He also has to exercise administrative supervision and control over the officers and employees of the General Council and the officers and employees whose services may be placed at the disposal of the General Council by the Government. For transaction of business under this Act or for the purpose of making any order under this Act, exercise such powers, performs such functions and discharge such duties as may be exercised, performed or discharged by the General Council under this Act or the rules made there under, provided the chief Executive Councilor shall not exercise such powers, performs such functions or discharge such duties as may be required by the rules made under this Act to be exercised, performed or discharged by the General Council at a meeting. According to Clause 17:

(1) There is a provision for a secretariat for the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council at the headquarter of the General Council headed by a Principal Secretary to be appointed by the Government in consultation with the Chief Executive Councilor.

(2) The Principal Secretary is the Principal Executive Officer of the General Council and all other officers of the General Council are subordinate to him.

(3) The Principal Secretary should be present and take part in the discussion of all the meetings of the General Council or the Executive Council or any committee of the General Council and may, with the consent of the Chief Executive Councilor or any other person presiding
over such meeting for the time being, as the case may be, at any time make a statement or give explanation of the facts and circumstances but shall not be entitled to vote in any such meeting.

(4) The Principal Secretary and the other officers of the secretariat shall be paid out of the General Council Fund.

(5) The term of appointment of the Principal Secretary is three years but may be extended by the Government in consultation with the Chief Executive Councilor.

(6) The Government may appoint such other Secretaries for the General Council on such terms and conditions as the Government may, in consultation with the Chief Executive Councilor, determine.

(7) The Government may, in consultation with the Chief Executive Councilor, depute such other officers or experts, as may be required to assist the General Council on such terms and conditions as may be determined by the Government.

(8) The Government may from time to time post officers of the rank of class-II and above within the council Area in accordance with the exigencies; but while making such postings due regard may be given to the views of the General Council.

(9) All officers and other staff posted in the Council Area are accountable to the General Council for their performance and assessment of their
works recorded by the Executive Council are incorporated in their
Annual Confidential Reports by the Government.

(10) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (5) above, the
Government may at any time in consultation with the Chief Executive
Councilor, withdraw the Principal Secretary or any other officer posted
or appointed by it in the secretariat.

Powers and Functions of the General Council:

Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law or rules for the time
being in force, the General Council shall have executive powers in relation to the
Council Area over the following subjects:

1) Cottage Industry.
2) Animal Husbandry and Veterinary.
3) Forest, other than Reserved Forest.
4) Agriculture.
5) Rural Roads and Bridges.
6) Sericulture.
7) Education.
   a) Adult Education.
   b) Primary Education.
   c) Up to Higher Secondary including Vocational Training.
8) Cultural Affairs.
9) Soil Conservation.
10) Co-operation.

11) Fisheries.

12) Panchayat and Rural Development.

13) Handloom and Textile.


15) Minor Irrigation.

16) Social Welfare.

17) Flood control schemes for protection of villages. (not of highly technical nature)

18) Sports and Youth Welfare.

19) Weights and Measures.

20) Library Services.

21) Museum and Archeology.


23) Tribal Research.

24) Land and Land Revenue.

25) Publicity and Public Relation.

26) Tourism.

27) Transport.

28) Any other matter connected with development.

29) Municipal Board, Improvement Trust, District of Boards and other local-self Government of Village Administration.
30) Tribal Welfare.
31) Market and Fair.
32) Lotteries, Theatres, Dramatic performances and Cinema.
33) Vital Statistics including registration of births and deaths.
34) Food and civil supplies.

According to Clause 19 of the Act, subject to the general policy of the Government, the General Council is empowered to –

(i) formulate integrated development plans for the Council Area;
(ii) Implement schemes and programmes for the development of Council Area.
(iii) Have powers to appoint class-III and class-IV staff within the Council Area.
(iv) Have powers to regulate trade and commerce within the council Area in accordance with the existing laws including issue of permit or licenses to individuals within the Council Area.
(v) Guide customs and traditions and social justice of the Rabha community according to the traditional laws.
(vi) Organise special recruitment drive into Army, Navy and other paramilitary forces, Police Forces and other central Government establishments for appointments of the persons belong to the Rabha Community.
(vii) Allot permits for trade and commerce to the people residing in the Council Area preference being given to the Rabha Community.

**Powers to impose levy and collect Taxes:**

According to clause 20(1), Subject to the provisions of any other law for the time being in force, the General Council shall have the powers to collect within the Council Area such taxes as are payable under the law for the time being in force in the manner as may be prescribed.

Provided that the tax or taxes as aforesaid shall be collected from such date as may be appointed by the Government by notification in this behalf in the official Gazette.

Clause 20(2), subject to sub-section and such maximum,

a) The General Council can levy tolls on persons, vehicles or animals of any class, for the use of any bridge or road other than kacha road, or ferry constructed or established and managed by it.

b) The General Council can levy the following fees and rates, namely:

i. Fees on the registration of boats or vehicles.

ii. Fees for providing sanitary arrangements at such places of worship, pilgrimage, fairs, melas, other public places within the Council Area, as may be specified by the Government, by notification in the official Gazette.

iii. Fees for licenses.
iv. Water rates, where arrangements for irrigation or drinking water is made by it within the Council Area.

v. Lighting rate where arrangements for lighting of public street or places are made by it within the Council Area.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in the previous subsections, the General Council shall not undertake registration of any vehicle or levy any fee thereof and shall not provide sanitary arrangements at places of worship, pilgrimage, fairs, melas, or other public places within the Council Area or levy any fees in respect thereof if such vehicle has already been registered by any other authority under the law for the time being in force, or if such provisions for sanitary arrangements has already been made by the Government or any other local authority.

(3) The collection of tolls, fees or rates and the terms and conditions for the imposition thereof shall be such as may be prescribed by the bye laws. Such by-laws may inter alia provide for exemption from all or any class of cases.

(4) The General Council may levy fees or taxes on any or all the subjects assigned to the Village Council.

21. Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act the Government may, in consultation with the General Council, entrust, either conditionally or without any condition, to the General Council or their officers any function
in relation to any matter not enumerated in section 18 to which the executive power of the Government extends.

22. The General Council, Subject to the previous approval of the Government and subject to such terms and conditions as may be imposed by the Government, shall have the power to acquire, hold or dispose off any immovable property or movable property, the value of which exceeds to Rupees One Lakh and to enter into any contract or agreement with any party or authority.

23. (1) The General Council may, subject to the provisions of this Act and the rules made there under and subject to the approval of the Government, make bylaws to be applicable within the Council Area with respect to all or any of the matters enumerated in sections 18, 19, 43 and 44 for the regulation, control and administration thereof.

23. (2) All the by-laws made under sub-section (1) above, shall have effect upon their publication in the official Gazette.

The Executive Council

24. (1) The Executive Council shall consist of the Chief Executive Councilor and the three Executive Councilors elected in accordance with the provisions of subsection (4) of section 6.

(2) The Chief Executive Councilor shall be the chairman of Executive Council and shall preside over the meetings there of.
(3) Any casual vacancy among the members of the Executive Council occurring by reasons of death, resignation, and removal or otherwise shall be filled through election by the members of the General Council in the same manner as provided in sub section (4) of section 6.

Provided that no act or proceeding of the Executive Council shall be called in question or shall become invalid merely by reason of any vacancy among its members.

(4) The manner of transaction of business of the Executive Council shall be such as may be determined by the General Council by bye-laws made by it with the approval of the Government.

(5) The Executive Council is collectively responsible to the General Council.

25. A member of the Executive Council Shall hold office until he-

a) Ceases to be a member of General Council, or

b) Resigns his office in writing under his hand addressed to the Chief Executive Councilor in which case the resignation shall take effect from the date of acceptance thereof:

Provided that in case of the Chief Executive Councilor, the resignation shall be addressed to any one of the Executive Councilors.

**Powers and Functions of the Executive Council:**

2. All orders or instructions made or executed by the Executive Council shall be deemed to have been made or executed by or under the authority of the General Council.

3. Every order made or instructions issued or resolution passed by the General Council shall be authenticated by the signature of the Chief Executive Councilor or in his absence by any of the Executive Councilors.

27. (1) The Chief Executive Councilor shall be the Chief of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council and shall exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are conferred on him by or under this Act or the rules made there under.

2. The Chief Executive Councilor shall for the smooth and convenient transaction of business of the Executive Council, allocate among the Executive Councilors such business in such manner as he may deem fit.

28. (1) The Executive Council may, in cases where the Chief Councilor is required to take, in accordance with the provisions of this Act or the rules made there under or any other law for the time being in force, any action subject to the approval of the Executive Council, by a general or special resolution, authorize the Chief Executive Councilor to take such action subject to such condition, if any as may be specified therein, in anticipation of such approval.
Whenever the Chief Executive Councilor takes any action, he shall inform the Executive Council forthwith and shall obtain the approval thereof.

Meeting of the Executive Council

29. (1) The Executive Council shall meet at least once in every three months for transaction of its business at such place and time as the Chief Executive Councilor may direct.

(2) The meeting shall be convened by the Chief Executive Councilor by giving seven clear days notice in writing to each member of the Executive Council.

30. The quorum for transaction of business at a meeting of the Executive Council shall be three members including the Chief Executive Councilor.

The Village Council:

31. The village Council shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal with powers to acquire, hold and dispose of property and shall sue or be sued by its corporate name.

32. (1) The Village Council shall consist of 10 (ten) members of which 5 (five) seats shall be reserved for the Rabha Community out of which at least one shall be a woman.

(2) Every member of the Village Council shall be entitled to such sitting allowances as may be fixed by the Village Council to the approval of the General Council and the Government.

(3) The elected members of the Village Council shall, at the first meeting after the election, elect from among themselves, in the manner prescribed-
I. One member to be the President who shall also be the Chief of the Village Council, and

II. One member to be the Vice-President who shall be the Deputy Chief of the Village Council.

33. (1) The term of office of the Village Council shall be five years from the date of the first meeting as appointed by the Government after the election of the members, unless dissolved earlier under section 68:

Provided that the Government may, if he is satisfied that circumstances exit which render the holding of election, as provided, impracticable, extend the term for a period not exceeding one year.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in subsection (1) above, the President or the Vice-President of a Village Council shall cease to hold office as such forthwith if he, for any reason, ceases to be a member.

(3) Notwithstanding any thing contained in sub section (1) or sub section (2) above the term of the Village Council shall be co-terminus with the General Council.

34. (1) Any member of the Village Council may, at any time, by giving notice in writing, addressed to the President, resign from his office:

Provided that in case of the President the notice shall be addressed to the Vice-President.
2. Such resignation shall take effect from such date as specified in the notice or if no such date is specified, from the date of its receipt by the office bearer addressed.

35. (1) The President or the Vice-President or both of a Village Council may be removed from office by a resolution carried by a majority of the total number of the elected members at a special meeting of the Village Council called for the purpose upon requisition made in writing by not less than one third of the members of the Village Council.

2. The Government, after giving an opportunity to an elected member of the Village Council to show cause against the action proposed to be taken against him and after giving a reasonable opportunity of being heard, may by order remove him from the office if he-

a) After his election, is convicted by a criminal court of an offence involving moral turpitude punishable with imprisonment for any period exceeding six months; or

b) Incurs any of the disqualifications mentioned in section 54 after his election as member of the Village Council; or

c) Is absent from three consecutive meetings of the Village Council.

3. Any member of the Village Council who is removed from the office under sub-section (2) above may, within thirty days from the date of the order, appeal to such Judicial Authority as the Government may prescribe and the authority so prescribed after admitting an appeal may, after
complying with the normal and fundamental principles of judicial
proceedings, pass such order or orders either confirming or modifying or
setting aside the order appealed against and pending the final disposal of
the appeal, may pass such other interlocutory order or orders including
stay of operation of the order appealed against.

4. The order passed by the Judicial Authority referred in subsection(3) above, on
such appeal shall be final.

36. Any vacancy in the office of the President or the Vice-President, by reason
of death, resignation, removal or otherwise, shall be filled up within one month
from the date of occurrence thereof, from amongst the elected members of the
Village Council in the same manner as has been provided in section 32 for the
election of the President or the Vice-President, as the case may be.

37.(1) The President and the Vice-President shall be whole time functionaries
and shall be paid out of the Village Council fund such salaries and allowances as
may be prescribed.

(2) The other terms and conditions of service of the President and the Vice-
President shall be such as may be prescribed.

38.(1) The President of the Village Council shall be responsible for the
maintenance of records of the Village Council, for the administrative control and
supervision of all officers and employees in the Village Council.

4. The President shall exercise such powers, discharge such duties and perform
such functions as may be entrusted by the Village Council.
5. The Vice-President of the Village Council shall exercise such of the powers, perform such of the functions and discharge such of the duties of the President as the President may, from time to time subject to the rules if any made in this behalf by the Government, delegate to him in writing.

6. Notwithstanding anything contained in the foregoing sub-sections, neither the President nor the Vice-President shall exercise such powers, perform such functions or discharge such duties as may be required by the rules made under this Act to be exercised, performed or discharged by the Village Council at a meeting.

39.(1) The Village Council shall meet at least once in every three months for transactions of its business.

(2) The meeting of the Village Council shall be held at the office of the Village Council or at such other convenient place at such time as may be notified by the President.

Provided that the first meeting of the Village Council after the election shall be held on such date and time as may be appointed by the Government.

40. Every member of the Village Council shall, before taking his seat, make and subscribe, before such person as may be appointed by the Governor on his behalf, an oath or affirmation in the manner and form as may be prescribed.
41. The quorum necessary for transaction of business at a meeting of the Village Council shall be 4 (four) members and the decision of the Village Council shall be by a single majority of votes of the members present.

42.(1) There shall be an office of the Village Council at such place as may be determined by the Village Council with the approval of the Government.

(2) The Government shall, in consultation with the President of the Village Council, appoint a secretary to the Village Council.

(3) The Secretary to the Village Council shall be the chief Executive of the Village Council and shall act under the direction and control of the President. All other officers and staff shall be subordinate to him.

(4) The secretary shall be present and take part in the discussion of all the meetings of the Village Council or any committee of the Village Council or may, with the consent of the President or any other person presiding over such meeting for the time being, as the case may be, at any time make a statement or give explanation of the facts and circumstances but shall not be entitled to vote in any such meeting.

(5) The Government may, in consultation with the President, depute such other officers or experts as may be required to assist the Village Council on such terms and conditions as may be determined by the Government.

(6) The Government may from time to time post such other officers or staff as may be required so as to meet the exigencies, but while making such posting due regard may be given to the views of the Village Council.
(7) All officers and staff posted in the Village Council office shall be accountable to the Village Council for their performances and assessment of their works recorded by the Village Council shall be incorporated in their Annual Confidential Reports by the Government.

(8) Notwithstanding anything contained in any of the foregoing sub-sections, the Government may, at any time, in consultation with the President, withdraw the Secretary or any other officer or staff posted or appointed by it in the office of the Village Council.

Powers And Functions of The Village Council:

43. Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law or rules for the time being in force, the Village Council shall have the executive power in relation to the Village Council Area over the following subjects:

1. Agriculture including Agricultural Extension.
3. Fisheries.
4. Social and Farm Forestry/Minor Forest produce, fuel and fodder.
6. Rural Housing.
7. Drinking Water.
8. Road, building, culverts, bridges, tunnels, waterways and other means of communication.
9. Rural Electrification.
11. Poverty alleviation Programmes.
12. Education including Primary Schools.
13. Adult and Non-Formal Education.
15. Cultural Activities.
17. Rural Sanitation.
20. Social welfare including welfare of handicapped and mentally retarded.
21. Welfare of weaker section and in particular the SC/ST.
23. Maintenance of community assets.
24. Construction and maintenance of Dharmasalas and similar institutions.
25. Construction and maintenance of cattle sheds, ponds and cart stands.
26. Maintenance of public parks and play grounds.
27. Construction and maintenance of slaughter houses.
29. Such other functions as may be entrusted by the Government from time to time.
44. Subject to the general policy of the Government and subject to the general control and supervision of the General Council the Village Council shall.

i. Formulate integrated development plans for the Village Council area.

ii. Implement schemes and programmes for the development of the Village Council area.

iii. Have powers to appoint class-III and Class-IV staff of the Village Council.

iv. Have powers to regulate trade and commerce within the Village Council area in accordance with the existing laws including issue of permits or licenses to individuals within the Village Council area.

v. Guide customs and traditions and social justice of the Rabha community according to their traditional laws, and

vi. Allot permits for trade and commerce to the people residing in the Village Council area, with preference being given to the Rabha community.

45.(1) Subject to the provisions of any other laws for the time being in force and subject to the previous approval of the General Council, the Village Council shall have the power to collect within the Village Council area, such taxes as are payable under the law for the time being in force in the manner as may be prescribed:
Provided that the tax or taxes as aforesaid shall be collect from such date as may be appointed by the Government by notification in this behalf in the official Gazette.

1. Subject to sub-section (1) and such maximum rates as the Government may prescribe, the Village Council shall-

a) Levy tolls on persons, vehicles or animals of any class, for the use of any bridge, or road other than kacha road, or ferry constructed or established by it;

b) Levy the following fees and rates namely-

i. Fees on the registration of boats or vehicles;

ii. Fees for providing sanitary arrangements at such places of worship, pilgrimage, fairs, melas or other public places within the Village Council Area as may be specified by the Government by notification in the official Gazette;

iii. Fees for licenses;

iv. Water rates where arrangements for irrigation or drinking water is made by it within the Village Council area;

v. Lighting rate where arrangements for lighting on public streets or places are made by it within the Village Councils area.

7. Notwithstanding anything contained in the foregoing sub sections, the Village Council shall not undertake registration of any vehicle or levy any fee in respect thereof and shall not provide sanitary arrangements at places of
worship, pilgrimage, fairs, melas, or other public places within the Village Council area or levy any fees in respect thereof, if such vehicle has already been registered by any other authority under the law for the time being in force or if such provision for sanitary arrangements has already been made by the Government or any other local authority.

8. The collection of tolls, fees or rates and the terms and conditions for the imposition thereof shall be such as may be prescribed by the bye-laws. Such bye-laws may inter-alia provide for exemption from all or any class of cases.

46. Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, the Government may, in consultation with Village Council, entrust either conditionally or without any condition to the Village Council or its officers any functions in relation to any matter not enumerated in section 43 to which the executive power of the Government extends.

47. Notwithstanding anything contained in Section 3, the Village Council subject to the previous approval of the Government and subject to such terms and conditions as may be imposed by the Government, shall have the power to acquire, hold and dispose of any immovable property or movable property the value of which exceeds rupees fifty thousand and to enter into any agreement or contract with any party or authority.

Election:

48. (1) There shall be 10 (ten) constituencies covering the Council area for electing members to the Village Council. Each such constituency shall be a single member constituency and shall be territorial.
2. There shall be 26 (twenty six) constituencies covering the Council area for electing members to the General Council. Each constituency shall be a single member constituency and territorial.

3. The Government shall, by order published in the Official Gazette, determine the territorial limits of the constituencies into which the Village Council Area or the Council Area shall be delimited for the purpose of election of members to the Village Council and the General Council.

49. Notwithstanding anything contained in section 48 above, the Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, alter or amend the order made under section 48:

Provided that no such order shall be made after the commencement of the election process.

50.(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act and the rules made there under, so much of the electoral roll for the assembly constituency in force on the last date of nomination, as is relatable to a Village Council constituency, as defined in clause (b) of Section 2, shall be the electoral roll for that Village Council Constituency.

2. The electoral rolls of the Village Council constituencies as are relatable to a constituency of the General Council, as defined in clause (b) of section 2, shall be the electoral roll for the constituency of the General Council.
3. Persons whose names are included in the electoral roll as aforesaid in sub-section (1) or (2) above, shall be the electorate for the election of members of the Village Council or the General Council, as the case may be.

4. The Government shall, at the time and in the manner prescribed, cause to be published the electoral roll in respect of a constituency.

51.(1) Save as otherwise provided in this Act every person whose name is entered in the electoral roll for the time being in force, of any constituency shall be entitled to vote in that constituency.

(2) No person shall vote at an election if he is subject to any of the Act, 43 of disqualifications referred to in Section 10 of the Representation of People ACT, 1951.

(3) No person shall vote in more than one constituency.

(4) No person shall vote in the same constituency more than once.

(5) No person shall vote at any election if he is confined in a prison, whether under a sentence of imprisonment or otherwise or in the lawful custody of police:

Provided that nothing in this sub-section shall apply to a person subjected to preventive detention under any law for the time being in force.

52. Election of members shall be held in accordance with the rules made under section 60 and the first election for the purpose of constituting the General Council and the Village Council shall be held on such date or dates as the
Government may direct in consultation with the interim Rabha Hasong Executive Council referred to in section 80.

53. A person shall be qualified to be elected as a member of either the Village Council or the General Council if he is an elector as defined in clause (f) of section 2.

54 (1) A person shall not be qualified for being elected either to the Village Council or the General Council, if-

a) He is not a citizen of India.

b) He is less than 18 years of age on such date as may be fixed by the Government; or

c) He has been elected to any Municipality or Panchayat within the state of Assam; or

d) He is in service of the central or state Government, Municipality or other authority; or

e) He has either directly or indirectly by himself, or by the person or employer or employee, any share or interest in any contract with, by or on behalf of the Village Council, General Council or a Municipality or Panchayat within the Council Area;

Provided that no person shall be deemed to be so disqualified by reason only of his having a share or interest in a public company, as defined in the companies Act, 1956, which contracts with or is employed by a Municipal Authority or Panchayat within the Council Area; or
f) He has been dismissed from the service of the Central or state Government or a local authority or a co-operative society or a Government Company as defined in the Companies Act, 1956 or a corporation owned or controlled by the Central or the State Government for misconduct involving moral turpitude and five years have not elapsed from the date of such dismissal; or

g) He has been adjudged by a competent court to be of unsound mind;

or

h) He has been convicted by a court of an offence involving moral turpitude punishable with imprisonment for a period of more than six months or an offence under chapter IXA of the Indian Penal Code or Chapter –III, part-III or Part –VII of the Representation of Peoples Act, 1951 and five years have not elapsed from the date of expiration of the sentence;

Provided that a person shall not be disqualified under this section, by reason only of his being a member, President or Vice-President of the Village Council or a member, chief Executive Councilor or Executive Councilor of the General Council.

55. Where the office of any member becomes vacant by reason of his death, resignation, removal or otherwise, the vacancy shall be filled by election in accordance with the provisions of this Act and the rules mad there under.

56. Where the members elected at an election are restrained from functioning on account of the election as a whole being set aside by order of a court, anything
done or any action taken by such members before they are so restrained or before the election is so set aside, as the case may be, shall be deemed to have been validly done or taken.

57. The names of all persons elected to Village Councils and the General Council shall be published by the Government in the Official Gazette and upon such publication, the Village Council and the General Council shall be deemed to have been duly constituted.

58. If an elected member is chosen to be a Member of Parliament or the State Legislature, and of General Council in case of a member of the Village Council, then at the expiration of fourteen days from the date of publication in the Gazette of India or the official Gazette, as the case may be, of the declaration that he has been so chosen, the seat of such member in the General Council or the Village Council, as the case may be, shall become vacant unless he has previously resigned his seat in the Parliament or the State Legislature or the General Council, as the case may be.

59.(1) No election shall be called in question except by an election petition presented in such manner as may be prescribed and before such authority as may be appointed by the Government, from time to time, by notification in the official Gazette;

Provided that no person below the rank of Assistant District Judge, in case of member of Village Council and District Judge, within the meaning of
Article 236 of the constitution, in case of member of the General Council, shall be appointed for the purpose.

2. No election shall be called into question except on any one or more of the following grounds, namely:

a) That on the date of his election the returned candidate was not qualified or disqualified to be chosen to fill the seat in the Village Council or the General Council, as the case may be;

b) That corrupt practice has been committed by a returned candidate or his election agent or by any other person with the consent of the returned candidate or his election agent.

For this purpose, ‘corrupt practice’ shall mean any of the corrupt practices specified in section 123 of the Representation of Peoples Act, 1951.

c) That any nomination has been improperly rejected;

d) That the result of the election in so far as it concerns the returned candidate has been materially affected—

i. By the improper acceptance of any nomination; or

ii. By any corrupt practice committed in the interest of the returned candidate by an agent other than his election agent;

or

iii. By improper reception, refusal or rejection of any vote; or

iv. By reception of any vote which is void; or
v. By any non-compliance with the provisions of this Act, or of any rules or order made there under.

(3) At the conclusion of trial of any election petition, the authority appointed under sub-section (1) shall make an order-

a) Dismissing the election petition; or

b) Declaring the election of all or any of the returned candidates to be void; or

c) Declaring the election of all or any of the returned candidates to be void and the petitioner or any other candidate to have been duly elected.

(4) If a petitioner, in addition to calling in question the election of a returned candidate, make a declaration that he himself or any other candidate has been duly elected and the authority under sub-section (1) is of the opinion that-

a) In fact, the petitioner or such other candidate has received the majority votes, or

b) But for the votes obtained by the returned candidate by corrupt practice, the petitioner or such other candidate would have obtained the majority of the valid votes, the authority as aforesaid shall, after declaring the election of the returned candidate to be void, declare the petitioner or such other candidate, as the case may be, to have been duly elected.
(60) The Government may, by notification in the official Gazette make rules to regulate all or any of the following matters for the purpose of holding election to the Village Councils and to the General Council under this act-

a) The designation of the officers or authority to whom the power to determine the territorial limits of the constituencies under the sub-section (2) of section 48 may be delegated and maintain the electoral roll under section 50;

b) The appointment of Returning Officers, Presiding Officers and Polling Officers for election;

c) The drawing up of programme for elections;

d) The nomination of candidates and security of such nominations;

e) The deposits to be made by the candidates and the time and manner of making such deposits;

f) The withdrawal of candidature;

g) The appointment of the agents of candidates;

h) The filling up of casual vacancies;

i) The General procedure at the election including the time, place and hours of poll and the methods by which votes shall be cast;

j) The fee to be paid on election petition;

k) Any other matter relating to election or election disputes in respect of which the Government deems it necessary to make rules under this section or in respect of which there is no provision in this Act or the
provision is insufficient and in the opinion of the Government, adequate provision is necessary.

**Funds, Audit and Budget:**

61.(1) There shall be two funds to be called respectively the ‘General Council Fund’, meant for the General Council and the ‘Village Council Fund’ meant for the Village Councils.

2. Each fund as aforesaid shall be under separate Sub-Heads within the state Budget to be held for the purpose of the Act and all moneys realized or realizable under this Act and all moneys otherwise received by the General Council, as the case may be, shall be credited to its respective fund.

3. The Government shall provide funds to the General Council Fund and the Village Council Fund from the Tribal Sub-Plan and other resources in accordance with the appropriate formulas to be worked out keeping in mind the resources of the Government, priorities or development works in other areas including other tribal areas along with other relevant deciding factors.

4. The following shall be deposited to Village Council Fund:-

   a) Contributions and grants received from the Government.

   b) Contributions and grants from the General Council.

   c) All receipts on account of the donation rates, fees, taxes etc.

   d) All other sums received by or on behalf of the Village Council.
e) Land Revenue and local rates, if any, on land including Tea Garden, which falls in the Village Council Area.

5. The allocation made under these Sub-Heads shall be in keeping with the guidelines laid down by the Government of India from time to time in the spirit of the constitution of India.

6. The Government shall not divert the fund allocated under these Sub-Heads except in exigencies, when there is unavoidable budget deficit.

7. All funds, as may be allocated by the central Government or the state Government for the General Council or the Village Council, as the case may be, shall be assigned to it and shall be credited to the General Council Fund or the Village Council Fund, as the case may be.

8. The General Council or the Village Council, as the case may be, subject to the provisions of loans by any law relating to the raising of local authorities, raise with the approval of the Government loans for the purpose of this Act and create a sinking Fund for the repayment of such loan.

9. The money credited to the General Council Fund or the Village Council Fund shall be applied for the payment of all sums, charges and costs necessary for carrying out the purpose of this Act.

10. No payment shall be made out of the General Council Fund or the Village Council Fund unless such expenditure is covered by a current budget grant;
Provided that the General Council or the Village Council as the case may be, may make payments in terms of refund of deposits by contractors or for urgent works undertaken in an emergency or when required by the Government in the interest of the public or under the decree or order of a civil or criminal court against the General Council or the Village Council, as the case may be prescribed.

Provided further that such expenditure shall be reported to the General Council or the Village Council, as the case may be for taking such action under the provisions of the Act as may appear to it to be feasible for covering the amount of such payments.

(11) Surplus moneys standing at the credit of the General Council or the Village Council, as the case may be, at the end of the Financial Year, shall be invested in accordance with such by-laws as may be made by the General Council, in this behalf;

Provided that no funds standing at the credit of the General Council or the Village Council, as the case may be, shall be lapsed, but shall be carried over to the budget of the next Financial Year.

(12) The General Council shall make by-laws for the management of the General Council Fund and the Village Council Fund and for the procedure to be followed in respect of payment of money into the said funds, withdrawal of moneys there from, the custody of the moneys therein and any other matter incidental there to or connected therewith.
(13) The accounts of the General Council and the Village Council shall be kept in such form and manner as may be prescribed in consultation with the Accountant General of Assam.

62. Subject to the provisions of the comptroller and Auditor General’s (Duties, Power and conditions of Service) Act 1971 (Central Act 56, 1971) and the rules and the orders made there under, the audit of the accounts of the General Council and Village Council shall be entrusted by the Government to the Comptroller and Audit General of India who may submit to Governor such report there on as it may deem fit. The Government shall transmit the report to the General Council and the Village Councils for discussions and consideration. The General Council and the Village Councils shall return the report to the Government with comments, if any. The Government can lay such report along with the comments of the General Council and the Village Councils before the State Legislature.

63.(1) The General Council shall such time and in such manner as may be prescribed, prepare in each financial year a budget of its estimated receipts and disbursements for the following financial year and submit it to the Government by 1\textsuperscript{st} November of the current financial year. The Village Councils also shall prepare its budget in the like manner and shall submit the same to the General Council for consideration and onward transmission to the Government on or before the 1\textsuperscript{st} October of the current financial year.
(2) The Government may within such time as may be prescribed, either approve
the budget or return it to the General Council or the Village Council
concerned, as the case may be, for reconsideration on the observations of the
Government, if any. The General Council or the Village Councils concerned
as the case may be, shall thereupon resubmit the budget along with its
comments on the observation and if the approval of the Government upon
such submission or resubmission as the case may be, is not received by the
General Council or the Village Councils as the case may be, the budget shall
be deemed to have been approved by the Government.

(3) No expenditure shall be incurred unless the budget of the General Council as
well as the budget of the Village Councils are either approved or deemed to
have been approved by the Government.

Miscellaneous/Others:

All the by-laws, regulations made, orders passed and notification issued
under this Act by the General Council or the Executive Council or the Village
Councils as the case may be shall be subject to maintenance of the security and
safety of the state of Assam and the Government shall have the powers to take
such steps as may be deemed necessary for the purpose.

65. The Government shall have the general power to issue instructions from time
to time for the purpose of the implementation of this Act.

66. All rights and interests of the non-tribal citizens and other ethnic groups
other than the Rabha Community within the Council Area, as exist at the
commencement of this Act, in matters pertaining to their language, literature, culture, religion, customs and traditions & trade and commerce, industry, land etc, shall be protected.

67 (1) Subject to such restriction as the Government may impose all properties specified below and situated in the Council Area shall vest in and belong to General Council namely -

a) All public buildings constructed or maintained out of the General Council Fund.

b) All the public roads which have been constructed and maintained out of the General Council Fund and stones and other materials thereof and also trees, erections, material implements and things provided for such roads;

c) All land and other properties movables or immovable transferred to the General Council by the Government;

d) Such properties owned and controlled by the Municipality or the Panchayat as may be assigned, to the General Council by the Government.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in subsection (1) above all the properties in sub-section (1) and construction and maintenance of which has been done out of the Village Council Fund shall vest in and belong to the Village Council within the area in which the property is situated.
The properties vested under sub-section (1) or (2) above and all other properties which may become vested in the General Council, as the case may be, shall be under the management, direction and control of the General Council concerned as the case may be.

68.(1) The Governor may, if he is satisfied, on receipt of a report or otherwise and in consultation with the Judicial Department of the Government that a situation has arisen in which the administration of the Council Area can not be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the law for the time being in force or the general or the special instructions issued by the Government from time to time, by notification in the official Gazette, dissolve the General Council, the Executive Council and the Village Council before the expiry of the term and assume to himself all or any of the powers and functions of the General Council, the Executive Council and the Village Councils and declare that such powers and functions shall be exercised by such persons or authority as he may specify in this behalf for a period not exceeding six months at a time.

(2) Every order made under sub-section (1) above shall be laid before the State Legislature for approval and unless cease to operate on the expiry of thirty days from the date on which the Assam Legislative Assembly first sits after the issue of the orders.

69. When an order of dissolution is made under section 68, with effect from the date of the orders-
a) All the members of the General Council, the Executive Council and the Village Councils shall vacate their offices; and

b) All powers, duties, functions of the General Council, the Executive Council and the Village Councils shall be exercised, discharge and performed by such authorities or as may be appointed by the Governor in this behalf.

70. The Government shall consult and give due regard to the views of the General Council before any law is made and implemented in Council area on the following subjects, namely

i) The religious and social practice of the Rabha community;

ii) The customary laws and procedures of the Rabha Community.

iii) Ownership and transfer of land within the Council Area.

71. Subjects to the provisions of the law for the time being in force the General Council shall have the power to reserve jobs for the Scheduled Tribes within its jurisdiction.

72. The Chief Executive Councilor, the Executive Councilors, the President and the Vice-President of the Village Councils shall be deemed to be public servants within the meaning of section 21 of the Indian Penal Code.

73. No Act or proceedings of the General Council or the Executive Council or the Village Council, as the case may be, shall be deemed to be invalid merely by reason of existence of any vacancy therein or any defect or irregularity in the constitution thereof.
74. No suit or other legal proceedings shall lie against the General Council or the Executive Council or the Village Council or any member, or officer or employee thereof for anything done in good faith or intended to be done in pursuance of this Act, or any rules or by-law made there under.

75. If any question arises as to the interpretation of this Act or the rules made there under the same shall be referred to the Government whose decision there on shall be final.

76. If any difficulty arises in giving effect to any provision of this Act, the Government may, by order, do anything not consistent with the provisions of this Act as may appear necessary or expedient for the purpose of removing the difficulty.

77. The General Council shall, within the laws for the time being in force, take steps to protect the demographic complexion of the areas falling within its jurisdiction.

78. If any provision of the bye-law made by the General Council is repugnant to any provision of the law made by the Legislature of the State of Assam, with respect to that matter than the bye-law so made, whether before or after the laws made by the Legislature of the State of Assam, shall to the extent of repugnancy be void and the law made by the Legislature shall prevail.

79.(1) The Government may make rules providing for any matter which with any provision of this Act is required to be prescribed or to be provided for by rules.
2. Every rule made under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made before the State Legislature, while it is in session for a total period of fourteen days which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions and if before the expiry of the sessions immediately following the session or the successive sessions aforesaid, the State Legislature agrees in making any modification in the rule or the State Legislature agrees that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be;

Provided however that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under the rule.

80. The Government shall, as soon as possible, take steps for the constitution of an Interim Rabha Hasong Executive Council by nomination until the General Council is constituted under this Act. The Interim Executive Council shall, in addition, look after the duties of the Village Councils till the same are constituted under this Act.

Nothing in this Act shall affect the application of any law, whether made before or after this Act, to the Council Area unless such law specifically provides for exclusion of the Council Area of such application.

For the purpose of this section ‘Law’ shall, include any enactment, ordinance, regulation, order, bye-laws, rule scheme, notification or other instrument having the force of law.
Like the Bodo Movement in North Bank of Brahmaputra, Rabha movement also spreading up in south Bank of Brahmaputra including South Kamrup and Goalpara district since 1980’s. Agriculture is the main occupation of the Rabha people and hundreds of thousand problems are faced by them since independence. Although a huge amount of budgetary allotment was made for the plain Tribes of the State, they were not able to develop. There for some conscious Rabha leaders discuss their problems and started to demand a separate Autonomous Council to solve their problems. Though the concept of Tribal Blocks and Belts came into existence in 1946 under the leadership of Gopinath Bordoloi, the interest of the tribal people were not properly protected. As a result, the demand for a separate Autonomous Council came into existence.

The Rabha movement started after the formation of All Rabha Student Union (ARSU). ARSU was formed on 12th February, 1980 at Goalpara college campus. This was attended by a huge number of delegates from Assam, Meghalaya, West-Bengal and Nepal. Dr. Kanta Rabha was the first President and Sri Sabya Sashi Rabha was the first General Secretary. From the very beginning the Bodo Movement has a great influence upon the ARSU. This also helps to create a consciousness among the Rabha People.

After the historical Bodo Accord signed on 20th Feb, 1993, the Rabha people deeply feel the need to protect their socio-cultural tradition. Subsequently, ARSU submitted a fresh memorandum to the State Government to justify their problems and started to demand a separate Autonomous Council
like the Bodo Territorial Council (BTC). In the year 1992, All Rabha conference was held at Salpara and delegates from Assam, Meghalaya, West-Bengal and Nepal participated in this conference. They discussed their problems and consequently formed a “Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council” Demand Committee. Sri Sarat Ch. Rabha (Ex. M.L.A.) was the first President and Sri Sulochan Rabha was the first General Secretary. They prepared a memorandum in this regard to submit to the State & Central Government.

After several agitations and programmes like the Assam Bandhs, the State Government initiated the discussion process to solve the problem. But the then Hiteswar Saikia Government was not able to provide the separate boundary and financial power to the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council. Ultimately, the matter was sent to the Bhupinder Singh Committee and the committee submitted its report to the State Government. The historical Rabha Accord was signed on 10th March 1995, in presence of Chief minister Sri Hiteswar Saikia, Sri A. Bhattacharjya, Chief Secretary, Government of Assam, and members from various Rabha organizations viz. All Rabha students Union, Rabha Hasong Demand Committee etc. On 16th June 1995, an Interim Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council was formed and Dudhnoi was made its headquarter. Mr. Sabyashashi Rabha was appointed as Chief Executive Member and Sri Sulochan Rabha was appointed as the Chief Councilor of Interim Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council.