CHAPTER-III

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Assam commands a unique place in the North Eastern region of India. The cartographic location of Assam lies between 24 and 28 degree of east longitude. This state encompasses two valleys, viz; the Brahmaputra Valley and the Barak Valley along with large central and north eastern hill tracks. The total geographical area of Assam is 78, 438 sq. km which is 2.4 percent of the country’s total area. The total population of Assam is 2, 66, 38,407 which is 69.27 percent of the total population of North East India and 2.59 percent of total population of India as per 2001 Census. There are wide topographic, climatic, economic, social, demographic and cultural adversities in Assam. It is rich in natural resources, particularly petroleum. The mountains contain mines of coal, limestone and iron-ores, the rivers abundance in gold dust. Apart from rice, Assam produces silk, cotton, sugar, tea and coffee.

The Assamese is a heterogeneous society in character with diverse groups having distinct language and culture. Among these diverse groups, the Nepalese constitute as one of the groups having their own socio-cultural and linguistic identity. Like any other groups, they also have their distinct socio-cultural, economic, political and cultural background. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to show and analyse the political activities of the Nepalese of Sonitpur District of Assam.

Pre-colonial period

The Indian Freedom Struggle is accounted to have started from the Sepoy Mutiny or the First War of Independence (1857) and ended with the attainment of freedom (1947) from the British rule. The glorious history of the involvement of the
Nepali in this freedom movement started with Gandhiji’s first visit to the state in 1921. The Assam Association established in 1903 merged with the Indian National Congress Party that had emerged in 1885.

Since the early part of the twentieth century, Indian people started politically organize to overthrow the British rule under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Like any other communities, the Nepalese of Assam too came out spontaneously to participate in the struggle to free India from the imperialist rule. In various phases of national freedom struggle, they had to face physical torture and imprisonment. Chhabilal Upadhya, (1882-1980) a resident of Behali of the then Darrang district (now Sonitpur) contributed a lot in the struggle for freedom. An active member of Assam Association Chhabilal Upashhyaya presided over the historic meeting held at Jorhat when Assam Association was substituted by Assam Pradeshik Congress Committee. In this context, Amalendu Guha wrote, “the Assam Association which has changed its name and had virtually turned into a congress platform in its Tezpur session had a special and its last meeting at Jorhat with Chhabilal Upadhya in the chair in April, 1921.” Realizing his ability to impress other, on patriotic ideals, the British Police Officer tried to keep him away from the congress and made lucrative offers like Government job and financial assistance. But a born patriot, Upadhya refused all these offers and continued his support to the freedom movement.

Inspired by patriotic ideals, Hem Baruah, former President of Asom Sahitya Sabha had recognized Chhabulal Upashyaya as a ‘living symbol of Assamese nationalism’. Chhabulal Upashyaya took the leadership of the Nepali community in the Non-Co-operation Movement in Assam who had already proved his leadership capability during Kaziranga incident in 1904 on eviction cases of the Nepalese of Assam. They joined whole heartedly through out the freedom struggle. The aim of
such organization was to hoisttri colour flag at various police stations which were the symbol of British power. Inspired of the ideals of free India the Nepalese of the district had joined in various Santi Sena Bahini and Mrittu Bahini camps at Teligaon (near Dhekiajuli) Jamuguri, Sootea, Behali, Batiamari (near Bedeti), Gomiri, and Gohpur. In many of these camps, Nepali volunteers took the leadership to impart training and were able to inspire their people to join in the mission. On September 10, 1942, processions had marched towards police station of Dhekiajuli, Tezpur, Sootea, Behali and Gohpur among whom a large number of Nepali Sevadal Volunteers took part with tricolor flags. A procession marched from Santi Sena Camp Teligaon to Dhekiajuli on 29th September and many were arrested by police among whom Kashinath Luitel and Homnath Guragain were from Nepali community. Similarly, a large number of Nepali volunteers of Burachapari led by Prasad Singh Subba camp to Tezpur to hoist the flag. Two volunteers groups of Santi Sena led by Debi Prasad Sarmah and Tileswari Mahanta came out with procession from Gangmouthan to Behali Thana written in their badges ‘Death or Freedom.’

Female participants from Gangmouthan of Behali (Sonitpur district) were Bhogmaya Devi, Tileswari Devi, Gueswari Devi, Tilarupa Devi, Annapurna Devi, Manomaya Devi and many others. Crossing all the barriers of British police, the volunteers were successful in their mission. Like other places, a procession of about 150 Nepali Santi Sena from Batiamari (near Bedeti) led by Kokheswar Bania proceeded towards Gohpur Thana from Gomiri, Dipora, Teleni and Barangabari. A large number of Nepali volunteers participated in the processions. In the mission Kanaklata Baruah and Mukunda Kakoti had to sacrifice their lives in front of Gohpur Thana in police firing. Two volunteers belonging to the Nepali community, Dambar
Bhandari and Pravakar Adhikari were severely injured due to police lathi charge on them.

_The Assam Association_, which had changed its name and virtually turned itself into a Congress Platform in its Tezpur Session, had its last meeting at Jorhat with Chhabilal Upadhyaya in the chair in April, 1921. Besides, condemning the recent evictions of Nepali graziers from the Kaziranga Forest Reserve and police atrocities on them, the meeting also discussed the Non-Co-operation programm and organizational matters.¹

In 1921, Chhabilal Upadhyaya was imprisoned in the Tezpur Jail for 6 months on the pretend of forming _Swayam Sevak_ as (Volunteers Party) in Tezpur Town Hall under his presidentship. His Younger brother Hari Prashad Upadhyaya was also arrested and imprisoned in Tezpur Jail for a period of 3 months.²

During the _Non-Co-operation, Movement_, Chhabilal Upadhyaya along with Ram Lal Upadhyaya, Hari Prashad Upadhyaya, Tikaram Upadhyaya, Brihaspati Upadhyaya and others had shown a glaring example by throwing all valuable foreign goods into fire. The contribution of Chhabilal Upadhyaya in connection with the collection of donations for _Tilak Swaraj Fund_ is worth mentioning here. Deucharan Upadhyaya and her freedom-fighter of the hard core batch that whole heartedly participated in the _Non-Co-operation Movement_ and was imprisoned in the Guwahati Jail. He was later shifted to the Jorhat Jail. He died in 1922 at the Jorhat jail by resorting to fast into death against the British rule in India.

¹ Amalendu Guha, _Planter Raj to Swaraj_, Peoples Publishing House, Rani Jhansi Road, 1988, New Delhi, p. 125.

² Bishnulal Upadhyaya, _Karmavir Chhabilal Upadhyaya_, Published by Kul Bahadur Chhetry, Margherita, 1985, Assam, p. 29.
Dalbir Singh Lohar (1915-1969) of Dibrugarh was another renowned leader from the Nepali community. He participated in the procession with the Congress flag in hand during Gandhiji’s visit to Dibrugarh in 1921 where he happened to be the centre of attraction for being too young in the group. He became an active member of National Congress volunteer and protested against Cunningham Circular in 1924. As a result of it, he was imprisoned for three months. In 1942, the Indian National Congress passed a resolution against the British to quit India. Dalbir Singh Lohar took an active participation in the protest. Thus, he was the embodiment of patriotism. In the wake of this movement, the Congress Working Committee passed the resolution on Civil Disobedience. In the opinion of the Working Committee, Civil Disobedience should be initiated and controlled by those who believe in non-violence for the purpose of achieving Purna Swaraj as the article of faith, and the congress contains in its organization not merely such men and women but also those who accept non-violence as a policy essential in the existing circumstances in the country.\(^3\) During the period of the Civil Disobedience Movement, Dalbir Singh Lohar was imprisoned from 13-10-1930 to 12-01-1931. He also received training at the Shanti Sena training Camp at Golaghat and he himself organized a Santi Sena Bahini in 1940.\(^4\)

In the 1940s the most powerful weapon to protest against the Government was Satyagrah. During the individual Satyagraha Campaign a large number of political leaders were either kept-interned at home or placed under harsh restrictions. Dalbir Singh, Bairam Singh and many other leaders were extended from Assam for offering

\(^3\) Jaganath Upadhyaya, *The contribution of the Nepalese of Assam to the freedom Movement of India*, paper presented to International Conference Brahmaputra Civilization on 20\(^{th}\), 21\(^{st}\) & 22\(^{nd}\) October, 2000, Guwahati-78101, Assam.

\(^4\) Ibid.
Satyagraha remains in Goalpara district of Assam under harsh restrictions. But he did not remain quiet in Goalpara too and was involved in the Congress activities for which he was again sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for six months.²

Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan, another Freedom Fighter from Digboi joined the Indian National Congress and soon got involved in the trade union movement in the state. The employees of the Assam Oil Company at Digboi began strike on the 3rd April, 1939. In order to control those historical strikes, six thousand armed policemen were deployed against about ten thousand striking employees of the company. Entry of all non-residents of the company was banned, and meetings, processions, assembly of more than four persons', objectionable dresses like red shirt of union volunteers and volunteer organization were all declared illegal. All union workers were either from Digboi or from Dibrugarh division and their return was disallowed. There were many evictions from the employee’s quarters and many were arrested with false complaints.³

Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan lost his job of Apprentice motor mechanic. His promotion for foreman was n’t considered in 1939 for his involvement in this labour strike. He was extre negated not only from Digboi but from the province too within a period of 72 hours of receiving that order. He had no way out but to go to Tripura. In 1940 his father Jit Bahadur pradhan was seriously ill. Bhakta Bahadur pradhan requested C.S. Gunning, ⁴

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⁷ Bhuyan, Ibid.
the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur district for allowing him to enter Digboi to call on his father. But his request was declined. Thereafter Bhakta Bahadur a defiant freedom fighter had to go to Jail many a time.  

Similarly, Bir Bahadur Chettri, Rongjuli in Barpeta under Kamrup district was also arrested on 10th January; 1931 for his involvement in the Freedom movement. Anantallal Sarmah, a Nepali resident of Assam was sentenced for trying to enlist local Gorkha Soldiers in the Civil Disobedience Movement. In the Civil Disobedience Movement a similar attempt to get support of Assam Rifles officers was also made in Sonitpur (Darrang) district in the Brahmaputra Valley by a Nepali resident of Assam.

The *Quit India Movement* was a mass movement in accordance with a call given in the Quit India Resolution adopted by the All India Congress Committee during its session held in Bombay under the leadership of Gandhiji on 7th and 8th August, 1942. On 8 August evening Gandhiji and some other members of the Congress Committee were arrested on 9th August, The Congress Socialist Party, the Hindustan Red Army and 38 other organizations were declared unlawful by the British Government. The prominent leaders of Assam Gopinath Bordoloi and Siddhinath

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11 Bhuyan, op.cit., p. 170.

Sarmah who had gone to attend the AICC (All India Congress Committee) session were arrested. All important leaders were arrested except Tyagbir Hem Baruah, Who was mercifully left out due to acute illness. But Hem Baruah was the main leader who guided the young generation from behind.\textsuperscript{13}

During the \textit{Quit India Movement}, the Nepali freedom fighters who were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and kept in different Jails of Assam were Chhabilal Upadhyaya, Bishnulal Upadhyaya, Joy Narayan Upadhyaya, Narapati Upadhyaya, Kumud Chandra Sarma, Kashi Nath Luitel, and Homnath Guragain.\textsuperscript{14} Such other Freedom Fighters were Kushal Singh Chhetri and Man Bahadur Chhetri from Garigaon in Golaghat district.\textsuperscript{15} More than three hundred Nepali volunteers were recruited in \textit{Santisena} and \textit{Mritu Bahini} from different places of the Brahmaputra Valley. The Shanti Sena was formed in 1930 in Bombay. - Aman Basnet, a resident of Teliagaon in Sonitpur district received training of Shantisena in Tezpur in 1935. A Shantisena training Camp was opened in the remote and backward area of Teliagaon in 1936. Aman Basnet was the commander of this camp for more than 7 years. About 50 to 60 persons were trained in this Camp. The prominent persons among those trainees were Kamalapati Dahal, Prajapati Rijal, Keshar Bahadur Basnet, Man Bahadur Karki, Khemraj Dahal, Mrs. Krishna Maya Dahal, and Ganga Prasad.

\textsuperscript{13} Dr. Anuradha Dutta, \textit{Political Events of the Quit India Movement}, Paper presented on seminar at Jagiroad College held on 21st September, 1992, Golden Jubilee Celebration of Quit India Movement by the Seminar Committee, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{14} Bishnulal Upadhyaya, \textit{Asome Nepaliharu}, Behali, Sonitpur Assam, pp. 16, 17.

\textsuperscript{15} Upadhyaya Bishnulal, op.cit., p. 51.
Upadhyaya. On their way to Dhekiajuli Thana, they sang a patriotic song of Jyoti Prasad Agarwala. It reads:

"Biswa Bijayee Navajawan,
Biswa Bijajee Navajawan
Shakti Salini Bharatar,
Olai Aha, Olai Aha
Santan Tumi Biplabar"

Another procession was taken out from Nabeel Puthimari to Dhekiajuli, under the leaderships of Govinda Pokhrel (Mahajan). The prominent participants were Bhimi Koirala (Subba), Nemang Subba, Ram Nath Nirola, Rabiral Luitel, Nandalal Luitel, Narapati Luitel, and Premalal Luitel.

On 20th September 1942, about five thousand people under the leadership of Kamalakanta Das marched to Dhekiajuli Police Station. On this day persons, who were killed on police firing were Tileswar Baruah, Kumali Deuri, Khahuli Nath, Monbor Nath, Moniram Kachari, Ratan Kachari, Mohiram Koch, Sarunath (Surname) Chatia, Dayal Das, Parikh, Mangal Kurku and Larela Bora. A large number of Nepali people gathered there. It is worth to mention that 50 persons with Khukuri in their hands become uncontrollable who wanted to achieve the goal by means of violence. It was Phanidhar Das who asked them to be calm and to perform the flag hoisting ceremony non-violently.

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17 As informed by Sri Tara Narayan Upadhyaya of Puthimari, Sonitpur, Assam on 23-08-2000.

18 Bhuyan, op.cit., p. 72.

19 Jaganath Upadhyaya, op.cit., p. 15.
On 20th September, 1942 Dhekiajuli (Sonitpur) Centre Sevadal Bahini along with other congress worker including women with Swaraj Flag in their hands assembled two miles away from Dhekiajuli Thana. A throng of more than 50 Nepali Sevadal Volunteers came out with Khukuris. Nayak Phanidhar Das was successful in keeping the khukuris of the Nepali Volunteers in a safe place. He instructed the people gathered there to unfurl the flag at the Thana non-violently and get ready for the proposed procession. About 2000 men and women including volunteers of Sevadal in a huge procession proceeded towards Dhekiajuli Thana. Bande Mataram and Bharat Mata Ki Joy slogans echoed in the sky.20

A branch of the India National Congress Party was formed in Burachapari of Tezpur under the able leadership of Prasad Singh Subba. He was associated with Tezpur Graziers Association formed in 1933 under the initiatives of Chhabilal Upadhyaya and Pushpalal Upadhyaya. The activities of congress workers increased at Burachapari from where Prasad Singh Subba was in contact with the prominent leaders of Assam like Mahadev Sarma, Mohikan Das, Kamala Prasad Agarwala, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Lambodar Kalita, and Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati. Owing to this background a large number of volunteers from Burachapari came to Tezpur on 20th September, 1942 to perform the flag hoisting ceremony. Prasad Singh Subba was the leader of the Volunteers Force and other personalities of this force were Dhan Bahadur Dhakal, Narapati Ghimire, and Puspalal Upadhyaya. They came from Burachapari in boat and shouted the slogan:

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Jamuguri and Chatia (Sootea) of Sonitpur District became the core places for freedom fighters during the Quit India Movement. In 1942, the A.P.C.C. reported that Jamuguri and Sootea established virtually a people Raj for a long time and even the Police and military daren’t come to this place at the earliest stage of the movement.21 The noted participants in the Quit India Movement from the Nepali populated areas of Jamuguri covering Gomiripal, Panpur, Erabari, Talakabari were Tikaram Parajuli, Hari Bhakta Adhikari, Lilakanta Kasle, Bhimlal Acharya, Bhimlal Bhattarai, Bhagirath Dhungel, Premlal Dhungel, Homnath Chamлагain, Maheswar Guragain, Indralal Adhikari, Drona Chapagain, Narayan Dhakal, Durga Prased Upadhyaya, and Sriman Timsina.22

At Nalbari of Chatia (Sootea), there was a Shanti Sena Training camp in which23 Nepalese were trained, Baparam Gogoi Boruah was its commander and Nar Bahadur Chetri and Narapati Upadhyaya were his main associates from Sootea. Bal Bahadur Chhetri, Padma Parsad Upadhyaya and Narapati Upadhyaya were imprisoned from 10th September 1942 to 5th May 1943. Bal Bahadur Chhetri, a brilliant student of class X Standard gave up his study forever owing to his involvement in the Congress activities during the Freedom Movement and his subsequent imprisonment. He said, “I have sacrificed my studies for the course of swaraj, which is dearer to me than my

21 Bhandari, op.cit., p. 107.
studies. Others Nepali participants from Sootea were Mahanlal Khadka (Tewaripal), Mukti Nath Upadhyaya Pokhrel (Korianibari), Tikaram Upadhyaya Pokhrel (Nalbari), Dhanapati Upadhyaya Pokhrel (Nalbari), Taranath Sharma, Hari Mishra (Nagshankar), Nityananda Timsina, Padma Prasad Dhungel, Dharmananda Misra, Jaynarayan Nepal, Nara Bahadur Khadka, Balabhadr Chhetri, Chandra Bahadur Chhetri, Brahmalal Goiame, and Sriram Timsina.

However, the prominent personalities to join the Quit India Movement from Biswanath Chariali in Sonitpur district were Kunja Hazarika, Nabin Chandra Hazarika, Cheniram Das, Harakanta Hazarika, Loknath Sharma (Borthakur), and Phaniram Das. There existed two camps for Mirtu Bahini and Shantisena. The main leaders of the Mirtu Bahini were Jiban Baruah and Loknath Sharma under Mirtu Bahini 13 persons were trained from the Nepali, Khadamanda Parajulee, Diliram Sapkota, Chhabilal Gajrel, Mahendra Kaflee, Tikaram Upadhyaya and Pandit Ramji Gyawali got required training there. The leader of the Shantisena was Binit Baruah. This camp lasted for more than one and a half years. Most of the freedom fighters initially received training in this camp. In recognition of their bravery and commitment, some of these Shantisena were promoted to Mirtyu Bahini. On 20th September of 1942 more than 150 students assembled at Biswanath Chariali in order to take out a procession towards the Sootea Thana under the able leadership of

24 As informed by Sri B.B. Chettri on 23-11-2002 at his residence, Sootea, Sonitpur, Assam. 23-11-2012
Badreswar Saikia and Binit Baruah. Of Course, the procession wouldn’t proceed towards Sootea because the flag was hoisted at 4 a.m. in the morning.  

The prominent leaders of Behali in Sonitpur district in the Quit India movement were Tileswari Mahanta, Bogiram Saikia, Mulan Chandra Sarma, Dr Ananda Prasanna Dutta, Saruda Prasanna Dutta, Magur Baruah, Nareswar Baruah, Robiram Bora, Kuladhur Dutta, Rupam Baruah, Punydhur Bora, Baneswar Saikia, Kamalakanta Bora, Nareswar Baruah, Lakheswar Hazarika, and Bhuhevar Bora.  

From Behali Gangmouthan (Mazgaon village), the prominent leaders from the Nepali community who were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment in the Tezpur Jail in 1942 were Hari Prasad Upadhyaaya, Bishnulal Upadhyaya, and Ramlal Upadhyaya. The active female participants from that village were Bhogmaya Devi, Tileswari Devi, Khageswari Devi, Tilrupsa Devi, Devi Annapurna Devi, Momnaya Devi, and Harka Maya Devi.  

In the Freedom Movement of India, the people of Behali area were completely involved. On the 16/17 September, 1942, Yogeswar Misra came to Behali from Bihar. A meeting was organized at Behali. In the meeting, Misra and Puspalata Das delivered lectures. Their speeches were emotional and enthusiastic. The people of Behali were stimulated by their speeches. A decision was taken to hoist the flag at Behali on 20th September, 1942 prior to 1942; a “Shantisena” camp was established there. In the proposed procession of 20th September, 1942 with an aim to hoist the flag at Behali Thana, there were “Shantisens” in the front, people with drums in the middle, and

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27 Bhandari, op.cit., p. 108.  
29 Bhandari, op. cit., p. 108
hundreds of Nepalese at the end wearing badges on their heads with the inscriptions Death or Freedom. In the procession Debi Prasad Sharma and Tileswari Mahanta led the gents and the ladies respectively. Debi Prasad Sharma attempted to hoist the flag at the at the Thana, but the people made of bamboo was smashed by the police during the lathi charge. Immediately, Baneswari Saikia caught hold of the flag without letting it fall on the ground. At this moment, Gadadhar Sharma took out his Khukuri from its Sheath and cut off the broken portion of the pole and kept the flag pole erect. But seeing the naked Khukuri the people became restless which resulted in uproar and the policemen got ready to shoot them. They were only waiting for the order of their officer. To disperse the mob the police lathi charged. Rabiram Saikia was severely wounded on his chest and was bleeding “Shantisena” who were trained for self-defense successfully protected themselves. When Saikia was injured, people became furious. The Nepalese held their Khukuris very tightly. There was the possibility of a violent eruption. So, to check the violence, Kumud Chendra Sharma, and Lakheswar Hazarika shouted loudly and with great difficulty and efforts, the mob was controlled. After hoisting of the flag at Behali Thana, the people returned to their respective homes.  

Lakheswar Hazarika, who was a teacher of Behali High School and a devoted worker of the Shanti Sena as well as the Congress Party, took shelter in the Khuti of

30 (i) Shyam Raj Jaishi, Assamma Nepaliharuka Aitihaskik Pristhabhumi, Budh Kumar Smriti Prakashan,
Digboi, Assam, pp. 128-130.

one Rangalal, Nepali grazier in a river island of the Brahmaputra in 1941 where Mitralal Upadhyaya also accompanied him.  

There was a Mirtya Bahini camp at Batiamari of Sonitpur district in 1942 where 35 Assamese Nepalis were trained. Some of these trainees were Jaganath Bhattarai, Debi Dutta Upadhyaya, Indra Upadhyaya, Bhavani Upadhyaya (Ghimie), Dhanapati Bhandari, Karnakhar Upadhyaya, Narothan Adhikari, Dataram Subedi, Ichcharam, Subedi, Ambika Prasad Upadhyaya, Bedi Nepal, Bal Bahadur Nepal Nandikeswar Kafle, Janaklal Rijal, Khadananda Bhattarai, Sadananda Ghimire, and Janaklal Acharya  

The leadership of this camp was entrusted in the hands of Kosheswar Bania, Dataram Das, and Ratnakanta Singh. This training camp lasted for more than one and half months.  

On the September 1942, a procession of about 150 Nepali from Batiamari under the leadership of kosheswar Bania with a flag in his hand proceeded toward Behali Thana. These entire volunteers were unarmed. They unfurled the congress flag in front of Behali Thana. Many of these congressmen had given up their studies owing to their involvement in the freedom movement. 

A large number of Nepali from Gomiri of the district participated directly or indirectly in the freedom movement and some of them were Bishnulal Subedi, Vilas Sharma Kami, Gaonbudha Bhimlal Dahal, Pundari Nirola, Tara Acharya, Nandalal


32. As informed by Sri Bal Bahadur Luitel on 18-12-1992 in his residence at Batiamari near Behali, Sonitpur, Assam. He reported that he was born in Kaziranga in 1912 and took active part in the Quit India Movement and went in under ground activities. He took part in the Flag Hoisting Day of 20th September 1942 at Behali.  

Dhamala, Chhabilal Bhandari and Padma Dhamala. The volunteers with, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala were chandralal Projapati Dhungel and Kishan Dahal.34

In the *Quit India Movement* the Nepali of Gomiri, Diparapukhuri and Teleni actively participated. The prominent leaders of Gohpur area who took great pains in mobilizing the people for hoisting the swaraj Flag at Gohpur Thana were Jonaram Bhuyan, Jiten Borah, Lakhikanta Bora, Guridhar Baruah, Kameswar Hazarika and Mukunda Kakati.35 On 18th September Puspalata Das came to Barangabari and a secret meeting ws held in which it was decided that the flag would be hoisted at the Gohpur Thana on 20th September, 1942. It was decided that *Mrityu Bahini* and *Shatisena* would make the necessary arrangements for the proposed procession. On the proposed day hundreds of people assembled at Gohpur to hoist the flag. On reaching the Thana, the marchers confronted the police barricade, Kanaklata stepped forward and argued with the officer-in-charge about the honesty of their mission, it was of no avail. When the people waiting behind came forward, the police opened fire and Kanaklata became the first victim.36 There were two rounds of firing. The second firing wounded Kanakeswar Barua of Balijan, Thuleswari Rajkhowa of Domarpukhuri (Now a permanent resident of Barangabari), and Bhola Bordoloi of Kathalanibari who were in the same row with Mukunda Kakati.37 The flag was hoisted by Rampati Rajkhowa.

34 Ibid.


There was a lathi charge by the police in which two Nepalese, namely Danibaru Bhandari and Prabhakar Adhikari felt victim. Adhikari even had open a small sub Shantisena camp at Dipora, of which he himself was the commander. The trainees thus came were Kashinath Dahal Debi Prasad Bhandari, Govinda Pokhrel, Narapati Upadhyaya, and Mitralal Upadhyaya. All these people received necessary training of the Shatisena from Janaram Bhuyan in the camp of Kalyanipur in 1942. The number of person trained in this camp was more than 120. Similarly, a procession was taken out from Gomiri and its leader was Jiten Bora. The main participants of this procession were Dhrubalal Acharya, Abinarayan Acharyan, Chhabilal Bhandari, Pundari Nirola, and Vilash Sharma (Dhamala).

There existed a Shantisena training camp at Bihpuria in 1942 where more than 120 persons were provided training. The main leaders of the camp were Lakanath Goswami, Yogeswar Baruah, Nandeswar Doley, Golok Chandra Baruah and Sailendra Saikia. This camp lasted till 1946. A large number of Nepalese received training in the camp. Prominent among them were Pandit Motilal Upadhyaya, Khadananda Bhattarai, Hari Prasad Upadhyaya, Monikanta Upadhyaya, Gopal Singh Chhetri, Palahman Karki, Tikaram Gautam, Dhanapati Sharma, Parsuram Ratnwal, Bhimlal Sharma, Parasuram Changle, Tilaram Sharma, Hiralal Sarmah, Bhimlal Sarmah, and Bhujilal Sharma gave up his studies and who worked as a congress activist till 1944. Even as a minor boy, he suffers police atrocities on several occasions, the
freedom fighters who received the Freedom Fighters pension from the Government of Assam were Bhimlal Sharma, Man Bahadur Chhetri and Brihaspati Sharma.\textsuperscript{40}

The Gorkhas who joined the \textit{Indian National Army} (INA) from the undivided Assam were Nar Bahadur Gurung (Now Meghalaya) Krishna Bahadur Chhetri, Sabitri and Indrini (now Nagaland) now from Manipur were Mohan Singh Chhetri and Suman Thapa. A large number of Gorkhas of INA became martyrs in Myanmar i.e. erstwhile Burma while fighting against the British forces. They were Mahan Singh Gorkha of 2/1 Gurkha Rifles Gian Bahadur Lama, Manilal Gurung of 2/1 Gurkha Rifles, Bhim Singh, Bhim Singh Rana, Sher Bahadur Bhandari, Bhim Singh Thapa, Ram Bahadur Thapa, Shital Bahadur, Man Bahadur, Thapa, Kul Bahadur, Dhan Bahadur, Damar Bahadur, and Gopal Singh Sahi.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{All India Gorkha League}

In the beginning of 20\textsuperscript{th} century the Nepalese were becoming conscious like other Communities and nationalities for their upliftment. They ventured to organize themselves under a nation-wide organization and thus in 1921, the All India Gorkha League from Dehradoon came into existence with an aim to achieve their political and civil rights.\textsuperscript{42} Though it could not foster well, the process of mobilizing the Nepalese was, however, accelerated by a handful of their elite.\textsuperscript{43} in the Darjeeling district of west Bengal which eventually culminated in the formation of the \textit{All India Gurkha

\textsuperscript{40} Bhandari, op.cit., p. 111.
\textsuperscript{41} As informed by Homnath Subedi of Dongibil, Lakhimpur, Assam on 3-02-13.
\textsuperscript{43} (ii) Bhandari, op.cit., pp. 119, 127.
\textsuperscript{43} Bhandari, op.cit., pp. 17,24.
League in 1943. Subsequently, it became successful in intensifying the
organizational base by spanning branches in the existing provinces particularly in the
North-East India.

Till the beginning of the 20th century, the Nepalese had never attempted to
form their own organizations to look after their interest but history has its own lessons.
And when the long drawn freedom movement (1857-1947) brought in its wake an
awareness of national identity to different ethnic groups, inhabiting these sub-
continents, particularly during the early decades of the last century, the Indian-
Nepalese couldn’t remain unaffected for long. The upsurge of national awakening was
directed either to presuming and protecting their national identity or for developing
their language, literature, culture and polity. Such consciousness among the Nepalese
was aroused in various ways in different states of India. They got organized in
accordance with immediate urge of the lands they live in.

In Darjeeling, they were busy initially to form Hill men’s Associations (1917)
and were pursuing the cause of a separate Eastern Himalayan Unit for them along with
demands for ensuring protection and development of their language, culture, literature
and polity. But contemporously the Nepalese in Assam were, on the other hand,
coming closer to the Assam Association (1903), the premier social organization of the
elite Assamese in search of a permanent solution to their problems and grievances. In
the meantime when the wakes of freedom movement with the mission of Mahatma
Gandhi entered the state it was the Assam Association that invited Chhabilal

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44 (i) Dr. Amalendu Guha, op.cit., p. 125.
(ii) Krishna Nath Sarma, Krishna Sarmar Diary, Asom Prakashan Parishad, Guwahati, 1972, Assam,
p. 78.

45 Bhuandari, op.cit., pp. 45, 48, 88, 89.
Upadhyaya, the leader par excellence from the Nepali to preside over its historic meeting held at Jorhat where the Association was converted to Assam Provincial Branch (1921) of the Indian National Congress Party (1885). Since then by dint of able leadership of Upadhyaya and subsequently of many such others the Nepali got involved almost en masse in the freedom movement and till the next couple of decades they weren’t much concerned with the cause of their community seriously and free from problems and difficulties. Rather, they being basically graziers and cultivators residing on river sides or in grazing lands like Kaziranga for convenience of rearing cows and buffaloes. They had been facing serious problems from 1910 to 1940. There were number of factors responsible for their playing and predicament. First, Kaziranga was already declared reserved forest by the British Government with consequent restriction for free movement of their cattle. Secondly, the graziers were ordered by the Government to vacate their grazing lands on a short notice. Thirdly, tax on cows and buffaloes was increased sharply and its collection process made also very tormenting. Names of the Nepali were deleted from the voters lists, mounting influx of immigrants cultivators from East-Bengal (present day Bangladesh) started occupying their grazing and farming lands and may more other problems kept cropping up.

The Nepalese in the state of present day Uttarakhand could articulate exceptionally advanced thinking in a few aspects since early decades of the 20th century. Based at Dehradun they ventured to be the pioneers to plead for the civil

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47 Bhandari, o.cit., p. 61.
rights of the Nepalese in the entire nation in the spheres of politics, culture and literature. They could earn good reputation in the world wars and the freedom movement of India too. It isn’t a legendary tale but history in the Indian context that an organization of the Nepalese named *Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League* (All India Gurkha League) was first founded in that very Dehradoon in the year 1925 under the initiative of some prominent Gorkha leaders there.\(^{48}\) The founder president of this organization was Thakur Chandan Singh and its general secretary was captain Hem Samsher Rana.\(^{49}\) Its main objectives were to educate the Nepalese in India in the modern trend and also to free them from outdated traditions and thus emancipate them from exploitation.\(^{50}\) It is interesting to note that Assam was also brought within the ambit of the Leader. A branch of the league was formed in Dibrughar on 18 April 1927 and Major Santavir Gurung, Rai bahadur Hitman Ral, Subedar Major and Subedar Sakalsing Rana were its president, Vice-President and General Secretary respectively.\(^{51}\) But unfortunately this premier organization ceased to function since 1933.

In India, the trend of foundation such organization viz, the *Himalachal Punjab Gorkha Association* (1916) in the far west, the *Tezpur Graziers Association* (1933) in the Far East and many others in the central region had caught the imagination of people through out that crucial period. However, so far as the *All India Gurkha League* is concerned, it seemed that history repeated itself. For once again there came

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\(^{48}\) Ibid.


an ecstatic day. Defying the *Defense of India Act* the Nepalese of Darjeeling moved by a mixed feeling of fear and excitement were heading for the Rank Cinema Hall, the venue of a historic meeting convened on 15 May 1943. The meeting attended by a mammoth gathering was presided over by Sardar Hanjit Dewan Raj Dambarsingh Gurug, the popular and unquestioned Gorkhali leader and MLA of the Bengal Legislative Assembly in his long and impressive lecture explained the objective of the meeting. It was to find a nation wide strong organization of the Nepalese to fight for their cause. In this context, the multifarious problem afflicting the Nepalese in Assam and their plight too were discussed at length in this national platform. After long deliberation marked by anxiety, excitement and aspiration Siva Kumar Rai proposed the name of the organization to be founded and thus the *All India Gurkha League* (1943) came into being as if it were rebirth of the previous but infact having no link with that.52

Incidentally, in Assam by the beginning of the 1940s the Nepalese, particularly of the Brahmaputra Valley were extremely anxious to have a strong organization of their own to give vent to their cumulative grievances, to ensure protection of their civil rights. Moreover, by that time, they had found many state level capable leaders who had emerged during the freedom movement. In this crucial moment, the advent of the AIGL in Nepali Community was a definite direction towards achievement in the fields of politics, education, culture, literature and the like.

In the meantime, the entire political scenario was under turmoil, both at home and abroad. The provincial autonomy introduced on the basis of the Government of India Act of 1935 was enforced in 1937 in Assam too and the ministry constitute alternately by the Muslim Leader headed by Sir Mahammad Sadullah and the congress

52 Ambar Pradhan, *Khoj Mato ani Chinharko*, 7 JNP Road Kurseng, p. 189.
headed by Gopinath Bordoloi till 1941. Both these parties got the chance to rule for a short period at a time. But their policies and decisions had left some long term effects and one such decision was to provide one lakh bigha of land to the Bengali immigrants for their settlement in the Assam Valley\textsuperscript{53} which ultimately affected most none other than the Nepali. Because the new comers from East-Bengal had been accommodated in the Waste-lands of riversides and forest where the Nepali had been residing for generations with their cows and buffalos engaged in animal husbandry and cultivation. Soon the Nepalese had to face a serious threat to their existence in these lands.\textsuperscript{54} Reported appeals particularly to the then premier Sir Saddulah for solving this serious problem fell on deaf ears. Ultimately, their sufferings became intolerable with reeps of new problems added to the nagging problems they had been facing for generation.

On the other hand the entire nation was in turmoil after the outbreak of the \textit{Second World War} with the intrusion of the \textit{Japanese INA} armies into the eastern frontier, declaration of the \textit{Quit India movement}, massive communal riots and sporadic famines. Practically there was chaos everywhere and nobody, not a single organization was there to pay attention to the Nepali who had been struggling for their very existence. In such a situation of chaos and confusion a ray of hope was seen when a leaflet of the AIGHL reached Tezpur in 1944 from Darjeeling with the massage of uniting the Gorkhas of the Indian origin and do something good for their sake.\textsuperscript{55}

A new zeal was noticed as if the curtain of darkness was removed. The Nepali of Tezpur and adjoining area decided to depute Pandit Ramji Gyawali of Biswanath

\textsuperscript{53} P.P. Sarma, op.cit., p. 110.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.

chariali as their representative to Darjeeling for establishing contact with the AIGHL. Ramji left for kamal Kutir at Kalimpong during the first week of May, 1944 where he called on the leaders of the AIGHL, especially Dambar Singh Gurung, Ari Bahadur Gurung and 9 few others. Incidentally, he reached there during the first annual conference of the AIGHL held at Children Park in Darjeeling and hence in this session he explained in details the problems and grievances that the Nepali had been facing since long. Immediately an emergent meeting was called and a decision was taken to depute Shiva Kumar Rai and Ari Bahadur Gurung, both stalwarts of the AIGHL to take stock of the situation and to organize the Nepalese in Assam. They first arrived at Tezpur in the Month of May, 1944 where Narapati Upadhyaya and others greeted them. Thus, Pandit Ramji Gyawali hailing from Panibhandar village of Biswanath Sub-division became the first person ever to invite the-AIGHL activists to Assam. These activists visited the village and the cattle rearing places on riversides and river islands of the Brahmaputra and saw their plight. Later a general meeting was convened at the Town Hall of Tezpur. It was presided over by Ari Bahadur Gurung and this meeting gave birth to the Tezpur branch of the AIGHL, the first ever local unit of the AIGHL on the soil of Assam. Prasad Singh Subba, a renowned social worker of Tezpur was selected the president and Ramji Gyowali, Narapati Upahyaya, Nityananda Timsina were the founder members of the branch.

On the following day, the leader along with Dadhiram Upadhya set out on a country boat towards Sulang, a Nepali populated area on the south bank of the

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56 Smriti Granthas- Prasad Singh Subba, ed., Durga Prasad Upadhyaya et.al Pasad Singh Subba

SmritiGrantha Prakashan Samiti, 1987, Tezpur , Assam, p. 26

57 Rout, op.cit., pp. 189, 190.

58 Ibid, p. 201.
Brahmaputra near Kaliabor in Nagaon district. After visiting the grazing lands of the Nepalese and realizing the encroachment problem there they proceeded to Mangaldoi with Sardar Vir Bahadur where the second local branch of the AIGL was founded.\textsuperscript{59}

Thus laying the foundation of the AIGL in Assam, these two leading activists returned to Darjeeling. They left behind the \textit{Gorkhalis} of Assam, inspired and hopeful.

Being impressed by the response of the Nepali Dambar Singh Gurung, the president of the AIGL along with Singh Kumar Rai and Ari Bahadur again visited Assam and reached Shillong on 23 July, 1944 for organization purpose.\textsuperscript{60} A delegation accompanied by them called on Gopinath Bordoloi, the congress statesman and discussed affably with him about the problem of the Nepali regarding preservation and protection of their grazing reserves. They also called on Md. Sabullah, the then prime Minister and the Revenue Minister of Assam. Eventually, the issue was discussed from 17 to 19 December, 1944 in the Assembly where the Governor himself showed keen interest and ultimately the house expressed assurance in all respects and suggested to the Government through a resolution to adopt measures to stop cultivation in the professional grazing reserves elsewhere. However, the failure of the Government to implement the recommendations compelled the Gurkhas League to persist with its demand for the protection of the interests of the \textit{Gurkha Graziers} in Assam.\textsuperscript{61}

Thereafter, the central leaders including the president himself frequently visited Assam from January 1945, delivered enthusiastic lectures in almost all the Nepali populated areas of Assam, encouraged the Nepali to open local and district

\textsuperscript{59} Bhuyan, op.cit., p. 319.

\textsuperscript{60} Jaishi, op.cit., p. 142.

\textsuperscript{61} Rout, op. cit., pp. 205, 208.
branches. Ultimately, the provincial branch of the AIGL was opened for future co-ordinated activities in Assam.\textsuperscript{62} Local branches were founded at Singri, Behali, Biswanathghat, Dipora, Panibhandar, Teliagaon, Dhaibari, Gamiri, Barsola, Lumding, Dibrugarh, Digboi, Tinsukia, Margherita, Dongibil, Baigunchuli, Dahan, Nabil, Orang, and Chatia (Sootea). The leading persons from Assam, were involved in this programme were Chhabilal Upadhyaya, Bishnulal Upadhyaya, Prasad Singh Subba, Dalbir Singh, Lohar, Babur Bahadur Rana, Sete Rana, Loknath Joshi, Charudatta Rai, K.C. Thakuri, Mukhia Mahajan, Bahadur Khadka, Prajapati Rajal, Pashupati Upadhyaya, Dittha Balabhadra, Chudal, Narayan Dhungana, Dharmananda Upadhyaya, Ichcharam Subedi, and Bhishma Prasad Upadhyaya. Here, it should again be mentioned that though the AIGL was a nationwide organization, its main activities were found to be limited to the undivided Assam and Darjeeling. The first annual conference of the AIGL held at children park in Darjeeling on 13 May, 1944 was attended by Ramji Gywali from was and by virtue of his presence he was selected as one of the three vice-presidents were Rangalal Lama from Dooars and Ratanlal Brahmins from Darjeeling. The main resolution adopted in the conference pertained to the demand for the recognition of the Nepalese as a backward and minority community in India to ensure their rights and protections.\textsuperscript{63} The second annual conference was held at Kurseong on 12 and 13 May 1945 and in the new executive body Charudatta Rai of Shillong was selected as a Vice-president and Prasad Singh Subba of Tezpur as an executive member from Assam. The resolutions adopted related to the demand for the recognition of the Indian-Nepalese as a minority community

\textsuperscript{62} Sharma, op.cit., p. 121.

\textsuperscript{63} Lil Bahadur Chetry ed, \textit{Dambor Singh Gurung .... Samskshipta Parichaya}, Smriti Grantha (Souvenir)

22\textsuperscript{nd} Confeence, Assam Gorkha Sammelon, 1997, Guwahati, Assam, p. 5.
reservation of seats for them in the legislature on the basis of their population, to ensure their proper representation in the interim government.\textsuperscript{64}

Gradually, the organizational base of the AIGL in Assam became the stronghold, that the third and the fourth annual conferences of this premier organization were held at Shillong; the erstwhile capital of Assam from 19 to 21 April, 1946 and Tezpur from 3 to 6 April, 1947. The Tezpur conference is said to be a historic and unprecedented one from all sides. Here in this conference about 600 delegates were participated from Kohima to Dhubri and Tura to Sadia of the greater Assam that had 6 districts branches and about 80 primary units by that time.\textsuperscript{65} A huge gathering of about 80 mounds of rice was cooked daily there in the conference map.\textsuperscript{66} Synchronizing with the conference a mammoth colorful procession of about 70,000 people trode through the streets of Tezpur Town. The decision in the delegates session, the lectures in the general meetings, the slogan, the gathering infused the Nepali masses with socio-political consciousness while the nation was about to be free from foreign rule. In this Tezpur Conference the entire central executive bodies along with Bishnulal Upadhyaya and Bhimsen Chhetri as members were present.

Interestingly, all these personalities were the stalwarts of the congress party and it passed important resolution in 1945 that states, the Gurkha league extends its full support to congress on the questions of Independence of the country and in other national issues……\textsuperscript{67} Reiterating its stand in this conference a historic and daring

\textsuperscript{64} Shiva Kumar Rai, op. cit., p. 10.

\textsuperscript{65} Sharma, op. cit., pp. 141, 142.

\textsuperscript{66} ibid, pp. 120, 121.

\textsuperscript{67} Bhuyan, po. Cit., p. 320.
resolution of the AIGL was adopted by stating that thirty lakh khukuris would be used if needed to save Assam from "C" grouping.  

In the meantime, the Sudden death of Dambar Singh Gurung, the founder president of this organization was a great loss to the nation. Gradually, it was perceived that the great responsibility of leading the AIGL was bestowed upon its leaders from Assam. In its sixth conference held at Saikhowaghat Tinsukia district of Assam in 1949 Dalbir Singh Lohar and Prasad Singh Subba from Assam were selected as President and Vice-President respectively and eventually the head office of the AIGL was also shifted to Shillong. After organizing four national conferences including the 7th one in 1950 at Lanka, the AIGL within six years 1946 became well organized in Assam. By the 1950s and on the eve by the general election of 1952 there were Sete Rana, Dalbir Singh Lohar, Loknath Joshi, Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan, Bishnu Lal Upadhaya, Prasad Singh Subba, Hari Prasad Gorkha Rai all prominent leaders and intellectuals of Assam in fore front of the AIGL. It was the time for the AIGL to decide whether to participate or not in the ensuing election and it was a decision equally crucial for the activists of Assam. 

It may be mentioned here that though there were many local branches of the AIGL in Assam founded since 1944, its provincial branch the Assam Provincial Gurkha League which eventually became the Assam Pradeshik only in 1945 with its headquarters at Shillong. Its first annual conference was held on 31st December, 1946

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68 Ibid, p. 159.  
69 Lil Bahadur Chetry, Gorkha League Ra Sammelon, Pharkera Herda, Smriti Grantha (Souvenir), Conference, Assam Gorkha Sammelon, 1995, Moharicamp, Dhemaji, Assam, p. 79.
and 1 January, 1947 in Guwahati where a state executive body was also constituted.\textsuperscript{70} It passed a resolution which reads as:

"The session of the Assam Provincial Gorkha League is of considered opinion that Grouping of Assam with Bengal for the purpose of framing the provincial constitution is most unjust to Assam and if Assam goes into section ‘C’ as provided for by the cabinet mission’s recommendation, the whole future of Assam will be fraught with the greatest dangers so much so that the very entity of Assam will be at stake. Hence, it is resolved that the Assam Provincial Gorkha League representing the Gorkha in Assam who are the children of the soil while supporting the Assam Assembly’s mandate to the constituent Assembly members from Assam not to go into section ‘C’ pledges itself fight to the last to preserve the integrity of Assam and the right of her children to frame their own constitution."

The APGL since its inception was conscious about the civil rights of the Nepali because it was the first ever statewide organization of any kind to look after their grievances. While the AIGL was committed to fight for the political rights of the Indian Gorkhas and decided to take part in the first general election of democratic India in 1952, the APGL also followed the same tract. It entered into the electoral fray by nominating six independent candidates from six different constituencies of Assam.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{70} Smriti Grantha (Souvenir, 13\textsuperscript{th} Biennial Conference, Assam Gorkha Sammelon, 1968, ed., C.B. Chetry and Chintamani Subedi, Tinsukia, Assam. (The details of the conference of the APGL are summarized in Appendix-II)

\textsuperscript{71} Adhiveshanaka (Souvenir), 13\textsuperscript{th} Biennial Confeence, Assam Gorkha Sammelon, 1968, ed., C.B. Chetry and Chintamani Subedi, Tinsukia, Assam. (See Appendix-III).
Moreover, the APGL supported socialist candidate Prajapati Rijal from Dhekiajuli (South) constituency. But unfortunately none of them could win the election which might be attributed to many reasons like the scattered population of the Nepalese in Assam, their affiliation to different political parties, lack of political consciousness.

With all these developments the activists of the APGL started to review their past experiences since their association with the AIGL. The impetus for organizational zeal was originally provided by the AIGL through the formation of about eighty enthusiastic local branches in Assam as early as 1947.\textsuperscript{72} The contribution of the AIGL could never be underestimated from 1943 to 1955. Some of its remarkable achievements were checking encroachment of the grazing reserves and revoking of the order for eviction (1944) of Nepali greziers; extending financial help of Rs. 1000/- from its fund to the Nepali victims of eviction in Darrang district (1947); donating Dalbir Singh Lahkor, the Vice President of the AIGL Rs. 1000/- as financial help for constituting Gorkha Sewadal in Assam (1947); infusion into the people the consciousness to work for the development of language and literature by publishing and circulating the status of the protected class for the Nepalese in the Tribal Belts and Blocks in Assam and so on.\textsuperscript{73} Likewise, the activist of the AIGL also maintained a cordial relationship with the AIGL and accepted its worthy suggestions for solving some long standing problems of the Nepali, like the suggestions regarding the appropriate recognition of the role played by the Nepali in the freedom movement of India, the suggesting to fight for citizenship and other local problems and so on. A

\textsuperscript{72} Bishnulal Upadhyaya, Karmavir Chhabilal Upadhyaya, published by Kul Bahadur Chetry, 1995, Margherita, Assam, p. 53.

\textsuperscript{73} The Proceeding of the AIGL Central Committee meeting dated 17-08-1947.
delegation of the AIGL presented a memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam on 16 July, 1948 at Shillong emphasizing the point that the Nepalese of Assam or anywhere else in India didn’t need to procure any certificate of "Domicile" as they were automatically citizens of India as per para 2, para-5 of the Draft constitution. The signatories to that memorandum were Sete Rana and Chhabilal Upadhyaya, both Vice-Presidents of the AIGL, Bhawan Singh Rai, Amaldhwaj Limbu, Bishnulal Upadhyaya, and Kumud Chandra Sarma. It is seen that the peripheral branches of the League were also equally active.

The Tezpur Jilla Gorkha League75 district level branch of the organization for the undivided Darrang district based at Tezpur was formally constituted on 16 May, 1947 in the wake of the AIGL’S fourth conference held in this town. Thereafter, all the existing local branches of the districts were incorporated in this district branch and an executive body with Chhabilal Upadhyaya as the president, Prasad Singh Subba as the vice president, Dharmananda Upadhyaya as the General Secretary, and Pandit Narapatî Upadhyaya as the Asstt. General Secretary and other executive members were constituted. This district branch played a vital role in bridging the gap between the local branches and the state branch on some issues of the league. Particularly on the Domicile issues as cited above its role was noteworthy. It was the Tezpur district branch of the league that on 28.03.1948 unanimously adopted a resolution to appeal to the government for checking encroachment in the grazing reserves and to demand the

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74 The copy of the memorandum of the APGL dated 16-07-1948.

75 Documents of the Tezpur Jilla Gorkha League, available in the cover-file preserved by Bishnulal Upadhyaya, (by courtesy of Dr. Khemraj Nepal, Bhipukhuri, Sonitpur, Assam).
protecting of the cattle breeders therein Minister of Assam on 30.03.1948. The memorandum reads as follows:

"Whereas the professional glazers in Assam have been tending their cattle for the last several generations, thereby rendering yeomen's service to the people of Assam in the shape of providing them with meeting of the Tezpur District committee of AIGL strongly resolve forthwith be suspended, that while appreciating the proposal of the Government to introduce the system collective Garming, the Government be urged to introduce this system not in grazing reserves but in the land which haven't been tapped so far, though they are potentially fertile that the Government be urged to look into the scientific breeding of the cattle and hygienic production of milk and milk products item of the 'Grow more food' campaign programme."\(^6\)

**Post-Colonial Period**

After Independence with the democratization of political process, the Nepali elite too, like any other ethnic community, realized that in order to assert their various rights they have to actively participate in the political process of the state. However, the APGL wanted to keep itself aloof from active party politics declaring it was a socio-cultural organization. Hence, instead of contesting in the Assam Legislative Assembly Election in 1952, the APGL appealed to the Assam Provincial Congress Committee (herein after the APCC) to nominate a number of the Nepalese as its candidates for certain constituencies. Thus, the APGL unanimously adopted a resolution in its executive meeting held at Singri (near Dhekiajuli) of Sonitpur the then Darrang district on July 26, 1951, demanding twelve electoral constituencies to be

\(^6\) Ibid.
reserved by the APCC for the Nepalese of Assam. But the APCC nominated only Dalbir Singh Lohar from Saikhowa constituencies.

The Nepali elite were however, not happy with the decision of the APCC. As a result, politically ambitious Nepali leaders had foiled their nomination from other political party and also as Independent candidates. Prajapati Rijal contested the election under the banner of Praja Socialist Party from South Dhekiajuli constituency. However, except Dalbir Singh Lohar from Saikhow, all other Nepali candidates who contested the election failed to win their seats. Thus, it appeared the Nepali candidate nominated by the Congress was successful to win the seat. It is interesting to note that although the AIGHL had declared itself a political organization, the APGL- a branch of APGL maintained it’s a political character. In fact, they wanted to maintain non-communal party politics and within the national political parties, particularly the Indian National Congress.

In the Maieli session of AIGHL held in 27-30 January, 1955, the representatives of Darjeeling raised a proposal to convert League into a political party. They felt that such attempt would help them to realize political benefits to their community. But the representatives of AIGHL did not support such move and thereby discouraged political organization on communal lines. The APGL considered that it is better to keep aloof from such political platform for maintaining unity and integrity among the other groups in Assam. Therefore, the APGL decided to cut off themselves from AIGHL in September 1955 in its Dimapur session and declared the APGL as purely a socio-cultural organization.

77 Upadhyaya Bishnulal Assame Nepaliharu; Behali, Sonitpur, Assam, 1984, p. 20
78 Ibid.
79 Lil Bahadur Chetry, op.cit., p. 80
Thus, the AGS the most articulate organization of the Nepalese played its role in organizing the Nepalese of Assam socially and politically. The congress also used to nominate the leaders of the AGS as its candidates in the elections realizing the credibility of AGS leaders to organize their people socially and politically.  

The formation of Janata Party in 1977 also cast a spell among the politically ambitious Nepali elite in Assam. They got themselves divided into two factions expressing their loyalty to the Congress and newly formed Janata Party. A member of Nepali elite joined the Janata Party and a section of them even contested the Assam Legislative Assembly Election of 1978. Besides, a number of Nepali leaders also contested this election either as Congress (I) candidates or Independents. It was a remarkable election as this time the highest number of Nepali leaders contested the election (of 1978) than everbefore. As many as thirteen candidates of Congress, Janata Party and Independent contested the election.

Unlike the earlier election to the Assam Legislative Assembly, the Nepali leaders achieved an unprecedented success in the mid term poll of 1978. After all, they won four seats of which three went to the Janata Party candidates and one to the Congress (I). In other words, the Nepali candidates created a record in capturing the highest number of seats in the Assam Legislative Assembly.

The political atmosphere in Assam underwent a significant change due to the Anti-Foreigners Movement (1979-85) led by All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) which led to the formation of Asom

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80 Sammelon, the literary Mouthpieces of AGS, ed. Durga Prasad Ghimere, Vol. 65, October 1995, p. 45
81 Report of the Sixth General Election to the Assam Legislative Assembly, Department of Election, Government of Assam, 1978, p. 23-25
Gana Parishad, a regional political party after the signing of the Assam Accord in New Delhi with the movement leaders and the central Government in 1985. More significantly, for the first time in the history of general election of the Assam Legislative Assembly, a regional party formed the Government. Like people of Assam, the Nepali elite also appeared to be enthusiastic to directly involve themselves in their election. Although the Nepali elite contested the election from Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and newly formed another regional political party; United Minorities Front (UMF), besides Congress (I) and Independents, only two Congress (I) candidates, Swarup Upadhyaya and Kul Bahadur Chetry from Behali and Margherita Constituencies respectively won the election out of nineteen candidates who contested the election.  

Indeed, the increasing numbers of the candidates in the election reveals the growing political awareness among the Nepali elite in Assam.

As it has been already been mentioned that a substantial section of the Nepalese extended their support to a regional political party, i.e., Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). Perhaps they growingly perceived that the Congress Party has been using them only as a vote bank for capturing power. Moreover, they were in firm belief that time has come for them to remain with the AGP which might be sympathetic towards their grievances. As such, on the eve of the election, ‘Assam Nepali Jatiya Chetana Manch’ was formed on December, 1995. More importantly, a section of the Nepalese of Assam even went to the extent of forming of ‘Asom Nepali Parishad (18 May, 1997)

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82 Report of the Eight General Election to the Assam Legislative Assembly and the House of People, Election Department, Government of Assam, 1985, pp. 5-179

83 Reported in The Assam Tribune, April 3, 1996
as one of the wing of AGP under the leadership of Tarapati Upadhyaya and Churamoni Sarmah.  

On the other hand, the student community of the Nepalese had been raising their various demands since its formation in 1976. Although the successive Governments had fulfilled some of their demands, but a number of grievances were not conceded by the Government for which they felt insecure in the state. Therefore, the All Assam Nepali Students' Union- a student organization of Nepali community demanded 'Special Protected Class' status for the Nepalese of Assam since March, 1999.

To concede the demand, the AANSU even formed a political platform for the protection of the constitutional right of their people namely 'Special Protected Class Demand Committee' (SPCDC) in December 26, 1999 for the protection of the constitutional rights of their people. Such development was, the AANSU alleged, due to the negligence of successive Governments towards their community. As such, the APCDC decided to contest for 16 Assam Legislative Assembly seats in the 2001 election by nominating their own candidates and making alliance with like-minded parties and organizations. The SPCDC also selected 16 constituencies where the Nepalese constitute a substantial number of voters' namely Tamulpur, Paneri, Majbat, Dhekiajuli, Borchola, Sootia, Gohpur, Digboi, Sadiya, Behali, Tingkhong, Sarupathar, Kaliabor, Margherita, Biswanath and Dispur. Perhaps, they perceived that Nepali Community of Assam will extend their full confidence in the newly formed political

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84 Reported in Amar Assom, 17th July, 2001
85 Memorandum submitted by the AANSU to the chief Minister of Assam, Dispur on 10 March, 1999
86 Reported in Amar Assom, January 5, 2000
87 Reported in Aaji, (Assamese News paper) March 22, 2001
platform, SPCDC. But later on it appeared that the SPCDC could nominate its own candidates only in three constituencies, Margherita, Dhekiajuli and Sootia and extended its support a few independent candidates in other constituencies particularly in the Bodoland Autonomopus Council (BAC) region.

In spite of attempts made by the SPCDC, all the three candidates were defeated in their respective constituencies. This time it appeared that only Tanka Bahadur Rai from Congress (I) won the seat from Borchola constituency and he is the lone member from Nepali community to represent Assam Legislative Assembly.

Efforts n’t only for civil rights, for the development of Nepali language, literature and culture through writings, song, stage dramas, and exhibitions even with the initiative of the local branches and under the aegis of the league were on in full swing during this period. But even with all these enthusiastic activities and achievements the results of the first general election in 1952 was a disappointing one for the Nepalese in Assam. Though it wasn’t strange, still it was a matter to be reflected seriously within the purview of the League. The League itself was losing its initial zeal in the entire national scenario after the untimely demise of the unquestioned, popular Dambar Singh Gurung in 1948. Moreover, the tenth conference of the AIGL which in history is famous as the Mateli Conference being held at Mateli in Dooars of Jalpaiguri district of west Bangal in 1955 was the turning point for the APGL to think independently. Because after the Mateli conference the AIGL’s Darjeeling Branch started its activities openly as a political party and hence the AIGL in its Dimapur conference (Seventh conference) in the same year resolved to snap its ties with the Parent Organization for ever. 88 The Nepalese under banner of the League

88 Chhetry, op. cit., p. 80.
by now had come to realize that not by involving in active politics but through social reformation, economic upliftment, academic advancement and participations in the events taking place in the state they could bring progress in future.

The APGL as like the AIGL had lost the confidence of the masses and it was becoming almost ineffectual. Even the biennial conferences for two sessions (1955-57 & 1957-59) of the APGL could not be held due to organizational weakness. Again after the Lanka Conference of 1961 the APGL had to wait for long five years to convene the next conference in 1966, held at Garhpal of Sonitpur District. The Garhpal conference was historic in the sense that it ignited the leaders of the APGL to sever all links with the AIGL; it was even decided to change the nomenclature and the APGL and was rechristened as the Assam Gorkha Sammelan (1966), and set out to organize its defunct units from Dhubri to Sadiya with a renewed zeal.

The Electoral politics of Assam

The elite Nepalese steadily became conscious of the backwardness of their community. They began to mobilize their community in a bid to maintain their distinct identity as a measure of dispelling backwardness which culminated in the formation of a number of socio-cultural and political organizations in the state. In this respect however, they were greatly influenced by their Darjeeling counterparts.

Being influenced by their Darjeeling counterparts, the Nepalese under the leadership of their budding elite gradually became conscious of their civil and political rights. After independence however, the democratization of the political process and growth of competitive politics further inspired them to mobilize their community more vigorously than ever before so as to exert pressure upon the ruling authority for adequate share of power in the administration of the state. Indeed, they realized the fact that unless they involved in the electoral politics it would not be possible for them
to safeguard their interests. In this connection it is worthwhile to mention that while some of the ethnic groups of the state and some other tribal people were involved in the electoral politics under their own organizational banners. The elite of some other groups sought to obtain berths in the dominant political parties to contest elections on the basis of their respective organizational strength. Thus, a section of the Nepali elite with the growth of their organizational capacity wanted to involve in the electoral politics by seeking nomination especially from the Indian National Congress (INC) party\textsuperscript{89} so as to protect their interests. It may be noted that the Nepali elite participated in the electoral politics even in the Pre-Independence period. Dalbir Singh Lohar, a prominent leader of the Nepalese, was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1946 as a congress candidate from Tinsukia constituency. He was a prominent worker of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha, a labour wing of the India National Congress Party. Moreover, Chhabilal Upadhyaya was selected as a member of the Tezpur local Board in 1948 by the Government of Assam\textsuperscript{90} where as Bishnulal Upadhyaya was elected to the same office in 1950.

However, as a party of the political strategy the major political parties more particularly the ruling party also needed the support of the Nepalese in the game of power politics. Hence, they preferred to put up Nepali candidates in those constituencies where their population constituted a sizeable number of voters. At the same time, the Nepali elite also thought it wise that the interests of their community could be better served if they remained with the party in power. As such various socio-cultural and socio political organizations of the Nepalese persuaded the party in power

\textsuperscript{89} Bishnulal Upadhyaya, Asame Nepaliharr, Behali, 1984, Sonitpur, Assam, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{90} (i) Bishnulal Upadhyaya, op.cit., p. 62.


especially the *Indian National Congress* to accommodate a considerable number of Nepalese as its candidates in the election. For instance on the eve of the first general election to the *Assam Legislative Assembly* (ALA), held in 1952, the *Assam provincial Gurkha League* (APGL) appealed to the Assam Provincial Congress Committee (APCC) to nominate a number of Nepalese as its candidates and earmarked certain constituencies.

Thus, in a meeting of its executive committee held at Singri of the undivided Darrang district on 26 July, 1951 the APGL adopted a resolution demanding twelve electoral constituencies. They were North Lakhimpur, Bihpuria, Digboi, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Nagaon, Dibrugarh, Shillong, Gohpur, South Tezpur, South Dhekiajuli and Paneri. But the APCC nominated only Dalbir Singh Lohar as its candidates to contest election from Saikhowa constituency. The Nepali elite were, however, not happy with the decision of the APCC. The socialist party also fielded prajapati Rijal a Nepali elite as its candidate from South Dekiajuli constituency. Besides, a number of politically aspirant Nepali elite contested this election as independent (IND) candidates, backed by the AIGL.91 They were Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan (Digboi), Parashuram Katuwal (North Lakhimpur), Prasad Singh Subba (South Tezpur), Kishan Chandra Thakur (Bihpuria) and Dhurbanath Joshi (Shillong). Unfortunately, all the non-congress Nepali candidates including the independents lost the election except Dalbir Singh Lohar who got elected to the ALA as an INC candidate.

91 (i) Ibid, p. 21.


Similarly, in the second general election of 1957, despite vigorous persuasion of the APGL the APCC eventually nominated only Bishnulal Upadhyaya as its candidate to contest election from the Gohpur constituency and he won the election. On the other hand, all the Nepali elite who fought the election either as the nominees of non congress parties or as independent candidates lost the election. The victory of the lone congress nominee in both the first and the second general elections to the ALA obviously left an indelible impression in the minds of the Nepali elite that their winning prospect would be bright only if they fight the election as the candidate of the ruling congress party.  

There was another group of Nepali elite who joined other parties like the Praja Socialist Party, and the Communist Party. The leading persons among them were Prajapati Rijal, Dharmananda Upadhyaya, Ram Sarma, Bhim Bahadur Tiwari, and Prem Singh Subedi. In the second general election also the elite Nepali appealed to the APCE to nominate their candidates when the Chief Minister was Bishnuram Medhi. This time by offering the post (Job) of the SDC for Hailakandi Circle to Bhabani Prasad Upadhyaya the attention of the candidates was directed. However, the Nepali elite under the banner of the non-political organization of the APGL decided to seek more nominations from the congress party in the subsequent elections. As such in its tenth annual session held at Lanka of Nagaon district on 20 April, 1961 the APGL unanimously resolved:

92 (i) Bishnulal Upadhyaya, op.cit., p. 22.  
(iii) Ibid, pp. 22, 23.  
(iii) Ibid, p. 23.
"Where as the Gurkhas of Assam have not so far been satisfactorily represented in the state Legislature and whereas having completely identified themselves with the interests of Assam, they have been considerably contribution towards the progress, prosperity and security of the state, this tenth session of the Assam pradeshik Gurkha League resolves that the Assam Pradeshik Ccongress Committee be requested to give nomination to the Gorkha congress men from the following constituencies, (i) Digboi (2) Gohpur and (3) Borsala."93

As a matter of fact, the APGL leadership strongly felt that unless the Nepalese were adequately represented in the ALA, the socio-economic development of their community as a whole would not be possible. Therefore, leadership of the APGL exerted considerable pressure on the APCC to nominate good number of the Nepalese as congress candidates in the third general election of 1962. They even went to the extent of suggestion names of some Nepali elite such as Dalbir Singh, Bishnulal Upadhyaya and Chandra Bahadur Chetri to be nominated by the APCC. The APCC, however, partially turned down their request by nominating only Bishnulal Upadhyay to contest election from Gohpur, Assembly Constituency. Upadhyaya won the election for the second time on the others hand Dharmananda Upadhyaya another Nepali leader also contested this elections as candidate of the socialist party of India from the Sadia Assembly Constituency but he could not win the seat.94

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93 Resolution of the Assam Pradesh Gorkha League adopted in its tenth Annual Conference held at Lanka, Nagaon district on 20 April, 1961.

94 (i) Bishnulal Upadhyaya, op. cit., p. 28.
(ii) Ibid, p. 28.
It may be noted that the Nepali elite who failed to manage ticket from the congress party fought election either as nominees of the non-congress parties or as independent candidates. But none of them could come out successful probably for this reason. Their elite began to conceive that there was no alternative but obtain congress nominations in order to ensure their victory in whatever representation they had in the ALA was quite inadequate. On the eve of the 1967 general election to the ALA, therefore, the *Assam Gorkha Sammelan* the APGL was rechristened as the Assam Gorkha Sammalon in (1966) persistently requested the APCC to nominate Dalbirsingh Lohar, Bishnulal Upadhya, Chandra Bahadur chetri and Khemraj Adhikari as the congress Nepali candidates considering the request of the *Assam Gorkha Sammelan* (hereafter AGS) the APCC, however for the first time nominated the two Nepali leaders namely Dalbir Singh Lohar and Bishnulal Upadhya to contest the election in 1967 from Tingkhong and Gohpur Assembly Constituencies respectively. Unfortunately, Lohar lost the election while Upadyaya retained his seat for the third time. Besides, some other Nepali leaders also contested this election as nominees of non-congress parties but all of them were defeated.\(^5\)

In fact, the AGS fail to convince the leadership of the congress party that they needed more representation in the ALA to ventilate their grievances effectively. On the other hand, it seems that the congress party leadership was not much bothered about the sentiments of the Nepalese had no other alternative except remain with the congress party even if their wishes were not adequately fulfilled. Despite that most of the Nepalese remained loyal to the congress party. The congress party also as per its tradition continued to nominate at best two Nepali leaders as its candidates in the elections. Thus the APCC nominated Chandra Bahadur Chetry to contest the election

of 1972 from the Digboi Assembly constituency and he won the seat. Apart from Chetry, one more Nepali candidate named Ram Chandra Sarma successfully contested this election successfully as the nominee of the Praja Socialist Party from Golpur Constituent Assembly. Thus, for the first time, there were two Nepali members from two national parties in the ALA. It may be mentioned that a meeting of the APGL held on 5th March 1962 at Lanka not only pleaded for nomination but also for inclusion of the members of the ALA in the cabinet. The Nepali elite abortively tried to secure a berth of their member in the council of ministers to this effect while submitting a memorandum to the chief minister of Assam on 22 April, 1972 the AGS pleaded:

"Although the work of ministry formation is over, it has come to our sight through press reports that it is going to be expanded very soon, like all the minority groups here the Nepalese have also a sizeable population in Assam. Some of whom are in defence service and others engaged in agriculture and labour in far flung areas doing their best for the defence and production of the country. They will feel proud and secure even after 25 years of long congress rule if C.B. (Chandra Bahadur) Chetry – the only representative of this community in the Legislature is taken into the cabinet. We are confident that Shri Chetri, being quite young educated and active can shoulder the responsibility of administration under your able guidance."

The formation of the Janata Party in 1977 brought about a significant change in the political scenario of the entire nation and to the Nepali politics of Assam too. As a

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96 Bishnual Upadhyaya, op. cit., p. 31.
97 Ibid.
98 Memorandum of the AGS Submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam on 22nd April 1972. (See Appendix IV)
result the politically ambitions our Nepali elite in Assam were divided into two factions expressing their loyalty a number of the Nepali elite joined the Janata Party and a section of them even fought the election to the ALA in 1978 as its nominees. On the other hand Padma Bahadur Chauhan and Kul Bahadur Chetry who were nominees of Janata Party and won the election had nothing to do with the AGS. Besides, many other Nepalese also contested this election either as congress candidates or as Independents.99

Many Nepali elite contested the election in 1978 than ever before. More importantly, on the eve of this election a section of the elite change their party allegiance. For instance, Ram Sharma who was elected to the ALA in 1972 as a candidate of the Praja Socialist Party contested the election of 1978 as a nominee of the Janata Party and won the seat. In this election more than one Nepali elite contested from the same constituency. Unlike the earlier elections they achieved an unprecedented success in the election of 1978. After all they won total while one to the congress party.

Ram Sharma was included in the council of ministers and thus became first person in the ALA as a Legislative member from the Nepali community. He was offered a ministerial berth.

Unlike the proceeding poll only a few Nepali leaders contested the controversial general election of 1983. It happened so because this election was held when the historic Assam movement (1979-1985) demanding deportation of foreign nationals from the state was in full swing. More importantly, the All Assam Students'
Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram parishad—the two leading organizations of
the Assam Movement vehemently opposed, holding of the election on the plea that the
names of a large number of foreigners were included in the electoral rolls of the state.
In view of this, they called upon the people to boycott the election at any cost and
under such an adverse situation; a few Nepali elite could contest this election. 100

It is interesting to note that both the winning candidates viz Padma Bahadur
Chouhan and Kul Bahadur Chetry for the first time could manage berths in the council
of Ministers headed by Hiteswar Saikia in 1983. Moreover, it may be recalled that
these two candidates had been elected to the ALA in 1978 under the banner of Janata
Party. It was seen that the candidates were more concerned about their victory in the
election than the principle or ideology of the party concerned for this reason, they
frequently changed parties. Similarly, the most articulate section of the Nepali leaders
perhaps became aware of the fact that it would be more profitable on their part to
associate with the party which had a better chance of forming the Government. This
was imperative, they believed, in order to have adequate share in the administration of
the state.

In any case, the general election of 1988 was unique in the sense that it brought
about a significant change in the politics of the state i.e, the emergence of two regional
parties viz Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and United Minorities Front (UMF). This
election was held after the six-year long Assam Movement against foreign nationals
and the signing of the Assam Accord. The people of Assam, therefore, demonstrated
tremendous interest in this election. Likewise, the Nepali elite also exhibited

100 Since no constituency-wise official records of the Nepali Votes are separately maintained it has
been difficult to point out their accurate total number in a particular electoral constituency.
unprecedented enthusiasms and participate to involve themselves actively in this election than ever before. At the same time, different political parties, both national and regional fielded-the Nepali elite as their candidates especially in those constituencies where the Nepalese constituted a substantial number of voters. Perhaps they did so either to muster the support of the Nepali voters as to divide their votes to prevent the opposition candidates from winning. Besides, a section of the Nepali elite contested this election as Independent candidates. By and large, there were a large number of Nepali leaders who contested the election of 1985.

It is evident that more than one Nepali contested this election from the same constituency as was the case in 1978. But it is difficult to gauge where the case the Nepali leaders contested the election with a view to dividing the Nepali voters on being instigated by an interested group or they wanted to fulfill their political aspirations. Similarly, it may be noted that for the first time in the state a Nepali leader named Padam Bahadur Chauhan contested this election from two Assembly

101 In 1985 General Election two Nepali elite named Gharmananda Upadhyaya and Bilashi Ram Chetry as the candidates of Indian Congress (Socialist) and Independent respectively contested from the Terzpupe Parliamentary Constituency but no one came out successful. (Report of the Eight General Election to the Assam Legislative Assembly and the House of the People, Election Department, Government of Assam, 1985) pp. 55, 170.

102 The United Minority Front (UMF) was formed on 10\textsuperscript{th} November 1985 at Hojai under the active initiative of the following organizations such as the Jait Ulema-Hind, citizen' Rights preservation Committee, Minority Forum and All Assam Minority Students' Union. The fundamental objective of the UMF was to oppose the implementation of the Assam Accord. Interestingly, a Nepali elite named Khem Prasad Upadhyaya was also elected as the vice-President of the UMF. He subsequently together with other Nepali elite unsuccessfully contested in the election to the ALA held on 16\textsuperscript{th} December, 1985 as the nominee of the UMF from the Soota Constituency. Reported in the Sentinel (English Daily), Guwahati, 11\textsuperscript{th} November 1985. (See Appendix-IV)
Constituent i.e. Tamulpur and Panery as a strategy of ensuring this victory. But unfortunately, he failed to win from either of the two constituencies. Moreover, on the eve of this election the Nepali elite were divided and as such they contested this election from different platforms consequently. a section of them joined the United Minorities Front and also contested election under its banner which vehemently opposed the implementation of the Assam Accord. However, a few candidates from the UMF contested the election, though; they could not win from any constituency. By large, it was a puzzling situation and therefore a section of the Nepali were in a state of dilemma whether they would remain with the congress (I), the AGP, the UMF or any other national or regional political party. As a result, they were divided into various groups before the 1985 election.

Similarly, a large number of the Nepali elite fought the election of 1991 as the nominees of different political parties and as independent candidates. There was the continuation of an identical trend which developed in the election of 1985. Indeed with the growing political awareness, the Nepali elite tended to involve in the electoral politics in a big way. Nevertheless, no other Nepali candidate could win the election

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except the congress (I) nominees in the 1991 Lok Sabha polls. Similarly, for the first time, a Nepali leader named Swarup Upadyaya was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Tezpur Parliamentary Constituency of Assam as the Congress (I) leadership thought it wise to include a Nepali leader named Kul Bahadur Chhetry in the State Cabinet (1991-1996) headed by Hiteswar Saikia.

On the eve of the 1996 election to the ALA, a new development took place when a section of Nepali elite shifted their allegiance from the congress (I) to a regional party i.e. Asom Gana Parishad. The congress has traditionally been using them, they alleged, as a vote bank for capturing power. But in reality perhaps it was done because a section of the Nepali elite foresaw that the winning prospect of the congress (I) was bleak. Moreover, as the AGP gradually stated changing its attitude towards the other communities, they thought sake of their own interest. In the meantime, a Jatiya Abhivartan was organized by the AANSU on 31 December, 1995 to discuss the issue of forming a political party of the Nepalese. However, instead of it, a co-ordination committee named Asom Nepali Jatiya Chetana Manch was formed whose President and Secretary were Tarapati Upadhyaya and Ram Prasad Shama respectively. More importantly, the All Assam Nepali student union (AANSU) which had no apparent enmity with the congress (I) till then, went on to strengthen the AGP by voting them to power.

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165 It became obvious when the following three Nepali leaders contested in the same constituency. In case of the Lok Sabha Election also there was a dearth of Electoral understanding and seat adjustment among the Nepali elite.

166 Congress (I) K Utkhat Karibaloi Nepali Chhatra Santhar Abadan (appeal of the AANSU to oust the Congress-I). Reported in the Dainik Janambhumi (Assamese Daily), Jorhat, 22 April, 1996. (See Appendix-VI)
It is therefore, surprising that though the AANSU being a students' organization was supposed to play a non-political role, it already involved in party politics. Thus, it obviously exposed its nature by directly involving in party politics. While reciprocating the sentiments of this section of the Nepalese, the AGP nominated two Nepali leaders named Tarapati Upadhyaya from Majbat ALA constituency and Harka Bahadur Biswakarma from Tezpur Parliamentary constituency as its candidates to contest the election of 1996. Both of them, however, lost the seats. Apart from this, the division of the congress into two functions viz Congress (I) and All India Indira Congress-Tiwari (AIIC-T) had also divided the Nepali congress men into two groups and they contested the election of 1996 separately.\(^{107}\)

Thus, the Nepali elite who failed to manage Congress (I) nomination contested the election as the nominees of the (AIIC-T). For instance, Padam Bahadur Chauhan, who happened to be an MLA of the Janata Party in 1978, and an INC (I) party member and minister in the Hiteswar Saikia Ministry (1983-1985) contested the election as an AIIC (T) party candidate. Similarly, Swarup Upadhyay who was elected to the Lok Sabha as an INC (I) candidate in 1991 from the Tezpur parliamentary constituency played the role of a protagonist of the AIIC (T) party and as its nominee abortively contested this election to the Lok Sabha from the same parliamentary constituency. Now, the victory of Mani Kumar Subba, the lone Nepali congress candidate is noteworthy.

On the other hand under the active patronage of the AGP a new organization of the Nepalese Viz., Assam Nepali Parishad (ANP) emerged with Tarapati Upadhyaya

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\(^{107}\) Statistical Report on General Election 1996 to the Legislative Assembly of Assam, Election Commission of India, New Delhi, pp. 156-169. (See Appendix-VII)
and Churamoni Sharma as its president and secretary respectively. Thus, a section of the Nepali leadership has shown its predilection to the new political strategy of the AGP. At the same time, however, a fraction of the Nepali leadership was not in a position to resist the temptation of testing political power. Therefore, these cropped up a capricious polarization among the Nepali elite under the banner of the AGS and the ANP supporting the Congress (I) and the AGP respectively. It appears that the Nepali elite are equally concerned about their own political interest as far as the interest of the entire Community.

It may be said that an important development took place in the history of Nepali politics in Assam when under the active patronage of the AANSU a political platform viz. *Special Protected Class Demand Committee* (SPCDC) was formed in 1999. And under its banner four Nepali leaders unsuccessfully fought this election. In fact, it would not be an exaggeration to say that all India Nepali Leaders elected to the ALA so far barring the Janata Government regime happened to be the Congress (I) members. More importantly, the split of the Nepali elite into different factions from time to time leading to the *Asom Nepali Jatiya Chetan Manch, Asom Nepali Parishad, and Special Protected Class Demand Committee* seem to have annihilated their impact on the elections.

It is evident that the Nepali elite increasingly played a significant role in the electoral politics of Assam. They gradually realized that in order to serve the community they must involve themselves in the electoral politics so that they might have a share in the decision making procession of the state. By and large, the Nepali

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elite increasingly perceived that the Socio-Economic development of their community as a whole would n’t be possible if they remain unrepresented in the state legislator.

The formation of the Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Bhasha Samiti the organizational activities gained momentum in North-East India along with other Parts of the country. To synchronise the activities of the branched at peripheral level, a grand meet was now mandatory. Therefore, a conference of the ABNBS with the representatives of the North-Eastern States was held at Dibrugarh on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> February 1974 at the active initiative of the Reception Committee. This Committee comprised of president Bal Bahadur Rai (Dibrugarh), and Vice-Presidents Dharmananda Upadhyaya and Devendra Kumar Sharma (Digboi) General Secretary Man Bahadur Chetry (Digboi), Joint Secretaries Hari Prasad Sharma, Ghanashyam Khati, Hari Prasad Sharma, auditors, Bishnulal Sharma and Dev Bahadur Chetri and others. Chandra Bahadur Chettri, MLA, was one of the patron.<sup>109</sup> This conference was successful in creating awareness on the issue amongst the Nepalese of the North-Eastern region. A souvenir with Durga Gautam as editor was released on the occasion. Eventually, the first national level conference of the ABNBS was held at Udalguri in the district of Darrang, Assam under the active initiative of Tarapati Upadhyaya, Chandra Mohan Chhetri and many others workers where on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1975, thousand of representatives from many states participated. The Conference made its record of being the first of its kind with unique and varied programmes. The Co-operations of the Bodos and other communities was remarkable in the cultural rally and also in other programmes. This was the first rally in the history of the Nepali Language Demand Movement.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Naha Sapcota, op. cit., p. 113.
Under the initiative of Maligaon Branch of the ABNBS, the Assam State Branch of the ABNBS was formed in Septembers, 1976 of Maligaon in a meeting of representatives from different districts and villages with Pahalman Thapa as the President and Shisir Kumar Gurung and Jay Prasad Sharma as the Secretaries of the Branch. This Assam Branch was the first State Branch of the ABNBS in India. The members of the State Branch actively endeavoured to set up primary branches of the organization and they made the people aware of the issue even in the interior villages. The contribution of the members of the executive committee in doing up the organization was remarkable. They had to face many odds, but they tried to rid people of any fear in extending support to the agitation for the just demand.\textsuperscript{111} The Assam State Branch of the ABNBS was reconstituted in 1981 at the Nagrijuli conference if the \textit{Assam Gorkha Sammelan}. This was followed by the State conference first convened at Shantipur (Bongaigaon) and later at Maligaon (Guwahati).\textsuperscript{112}

The Assam Branch of the ABNBS organized a symposium on 18\textsuperscript{th} February, 1979 at the Gopinath Bordoloi Hall, Dighalipukhuri where many leaders and academicians participated. Amongst them were Dr. D.P. Barua, Ex. V.C. of the Gauhati University, Principal Tirthanath Sarma of Pragiyotish College, Guwahati, Lakheswar Brahma, President of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Md. Akram Hussain, MLA, and Prem Kumar Ali, General Secretary of the ABNBS from Darjeeling, Pahalman Thapa, Chandra Kala Newar and Bharat Yadav. This symposium made the general people understand the issue and convinced them of the fact.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{111} Prokriya, po. cit., p. 59.


\textsuperscript{113} Naba Sapcota, op. cit., p. 102
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\textsuperscript{111} Prokriya, po. cit., p. 59.
\textsuperscript{112} Tarapati Upadhyaya, Nepali Bhasa Mangko Sangharsha Bar Prokriya, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{113} Naba Sapcota, op. cit., p. 102
Under the initiative of Maligaon Branch of the ABNBS, the Assam State Branch of the ABNBS was formed in September 1976 of Maligaon in a meeting of representatives from different districts and villages with Pahalman Thapa as the President and Shisir Kumar Gurung and Jay Prasad Sharma as the Secretaries of the Branch. This Assam Branch was the first State Branch of the ABNBS in India. The members of the State Branch actively endeavoured to set up primary branches of the organization and they made the people aware of the issue even in the interior villages. The contribution of the members of the executive committee in doing up the organization was remarkable. They had to face many odds, but they tried to rid people of any fear in extending support to the agitation for the just demand. The Assam State Branch of the ABNBS was reconstituted in 1981 at the Nagrijuli conference if the Assam Gorkha Sammelan. This was followed by the State conference first convened at Shantipur (Bongaigaon) and later at Maligaon (Guwahati).

The Assam Branch of the ABNBS organized a symposium on 18th February, 1979 at the Gopinath Bordoloi Hall, Dighalipukhuri where many leaders and academicians participated. Amongst them were Dr. D.P. Barua, Ex. V.C. of the Gauhati University, Principal Tirhanath Sarma of Pragjyotish College, Guwahati, Lakheswar Brahma, President of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Md. Akram Hussain, MLA, and Prem Kumar Ali, General Secretary of the ABNBS from Darjeeling, Pahalman Thapa, Chandra Kala Newar and Bharat Yadav. This symposium made the general people understand the issue and convinced them of the fact.

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113 Naba Sapcota, op. cit., p. 102
The agitational programme was continuing in phased manner with posterings, wall writings, and submission of memoranda, sending letters, post Cards, and telegrams.114

Assam was in the frontline in the Dilli Jau115 (March to Delhi) programme of 7 and 8 November, 1981. On 8 November, 1981, there was an all India level agitational programme, organized by the ABNBS with a rally marching from the Boat club to the India Gate. In this rally there assembled more than 1500 Indian Nepalese with three hundred and twenty two members taking part from Assam alone and about five hundred from the entire North-East. In this rally Bishnulal Upadhya, Padam Bahadur Chauhan; Lil Bahadur Chettri represented the Assam Gorkha Sammelon. The women’s rally was headed by Munmi Sapcota, Pushpa Gurung and Chandra Kala Newar, all from Assam while the men’s rally was led by B.M. Pradhan and DM Pradhan, president and Secretary respectively of the Assam Branch, ABNBS. This rally had its contribution in removing misconception from the minds of general public and MP’s regarding the demand of the Nepali language.116

On 2nd October, 1982 following the Central Committee’s directive, Assam State Branch of the ABNBS organizer in Guwahati. Besides other leaders, Sarat Chandra Singha the Ex-Chief Minister of Assam attended the Seminar and at Gorkha LP School, Paltan Bazar in Guwahati. Besides other leaders, Sarat Chandra Singha the

114 Ul Bahadur Chhetry, Bhasa Manytako Andolan, Purvanchaliko Methan, Prakriya, op. cit., p. 31.
115 (i) Naba Sapcota, Prakriya, op.cit., p. 103.

(ii) Bulletin (Mouth piece of the AGS), No. 23, 1979, p. 8.
Ex-Chief Minister of Assam attended the Seminar and advocated recognition of the Nepali Language.

The Assam State Branch of the ABNBS as per directives of the Central Committee staged a hunger strike at Dispur in front of the Janata Bhawan on 2, 3, and 4 October, 1983. During that period Assam was running through a very crucial stage. The Government had banned all dharanas, rallies and strikes, in the wake of the Assam Agitation on foreigners' issue. But Ramesh Chandra, the then Secretary to the Government was kind enough to allow exclusively relay hunger strike when he realized that the programme was a mentional one and it had no implication on the state Government.

The continuous twelve hour relay hunger-strike for three days (from 6 am of 2 October to 6 pm of 4 October, 1983) was carried on with batches of twenty-five participants in each as allowed by the Government. Thousands of people had gathered at Guwahati Paltan Bazar Nepali Mandir from different districts of Assam to take part in this programme. Needless to say, the programme even at that crucial time in Assam was successful, thanks to the active participation of many dignitaries and common folk spontaneously.

The ABNBS chalked out a national level agitational programme of relay hunger strike to be staged in Dheli from 18-15 February, 1984. To participate at Boat club, a large number of participants from many parts of the country along with a team of thirty-six members (including 2 women), who had travelled two hundred and thirty-six Kms on foot from Dehradoon, arrived there on 18th February after walking 10 days

118 Ibid.
since 9th February 1984. Amongst those three youths- Dharanidhar Pokhrel, Kamal Upadhyaya and Nareswar Mainali were from Assam.\textsuperscript{119}

Again in 1986 there was the third phase of programme in Delhi organized by the ABNBS, where a good number of members from took part in the hunger strike. Then the Government promulgated orders under section 144 of the Cr. P.C. to prohibit the agitation. But violating the prohibiting order the members resorted to hunger strike culminating in lathi charge and arrest. B.M. Pradhan, the president of Assam State Unit of the ABNBS, was also arrested along with the central leaders.\textsuperscript{120}

Another organization called the \textit{Bharatiya Nepali Rastriya Parishad} was formed after a two day seminar on 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} June, 1990 at Gangtok, the Capital of Sikkim, under the initiative of Nar Bahadur Bhandari, the then Chief Minister of the State, with a view to boosting up the movement in co-ordination with the ABNBS. A large number of elite groups of the Nepali had participated in the Seminar.\textsuperscript{121}

In this context, Dr. Sunil Kumar Chatterjee, in his book “\textit{Language and Literatures of Modern India}” clearly states, other Indian languages are to be added in this Eight Schedule following the wishes of their speakers and their importance i.e. \textit{Sindhi and Nepali}.\textsuperscript{122} In 1967 the Government of India included the \textit{Sindhi} in Eight Schedule of the constitution, when stated that since \textit{Sindhi} is now in Pakistan and Sindhis have no state of their own, it was important to include Sindhi in the constitution to make its speakers at home as Indians.\textsuperscript{123} The movement was so acute in

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{120} Naba Sapcota, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.

Darjeeling that on 7th September, 1981 Krishna Subba and Devaraj Sharma lost their lives when the police gunned down against them. On 19th August, 1992 Indrajit Khullar, the Congress MP raised the voice against the inclusion of Nepali language in the constitution as foreign language. Dil Kumar Bhandari made hunger strike in front of the speaker.

In 1991 the 4th conference of the State Branch of the ABNBS was held at Devkota Nagar, Guwahati on 3, 4 and 5 June, where a remarkable decision was taken. The executive committee of this newly formed branch had Tarapati Upadhyayati, as president, Laxmi Prasad Parajuli, Maina Thana and Gopal Bahadur Nepali as Vice- Presidents and advocate R.P. Sharma and Prem Sharma General Secretaries. R.P. Sharma suddenly proposed in the open session with a huge gathering to form a "self-immolation team" to pressurise the Government for conceding to the demand of recognition of the Nepali Language. In support of the proposed a large number of enthusiastic youths, both male and female registered their names for self-immolation. This decision created sensation in the society and the Government also seemed to be moved a bit.

The Assam State Branch alone staged a dharna at Boat Club on 9th December, 1991 where a large number of people from Assam took part in support of the demand.

Another organization named Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Bhasha Sangharsha Samiti also was formed by Anjan Upadhyaya, a CPI (M) youth leader of Assam, with

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124 Rudraman Thapa, op. cit., p. 97.
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
a view to involving the entire CPI (M) Cadres at national level in the cause of acquiring the Constitutional recognition to the Nepali language.\textsuperscript{127}

During the movement many unpleasant incidents also occurred. One such incident was a comment by Morarji Desai, the Prime Minister of India, Who labelled Nepali a "foreign language" in September 1977 infront of a delegate team.\textsuperscript{128} Assam also almost all organizations got up for agitation for the recognition of the language. Among these organizations the \textit{All Assam Nepali Students' Union} (AANSU) played a vital role. Besides writing and submitting memorandum for the cause from time to time. The Union launched two-day agenda on 7\textsuperscript{th} and 8\textsuperscript{th} October 1981 in the stage to give wide publicity of the movement by wall-writing and it was a very successful programme. One could witness the slogans on the walls of Guwahati city and towns of many districts of the state for a long time. The Union, under its banner, staged a nine hour hunger-strike in September, 1991 at Boat-Club, New Delhi with its members in order to pressurize the Union Government to concede to the long cherished demand of the Nepali Language.\textsuperscript{129}

The Nepali intellelgentia were swept, by the sentiment of the sense of deprivation and suppression of the community that had been recognized as one of the most patriotic in the country and whose innumerable youths had laid down their lives


(ii) Bullewtin (Mouth piece of the AGS), No. 23,1979, p. 8

in the frontiers for protection of the motherland. The Nepali elite group felt deeply aggrieved on account of the community’s just and very simple to safeguard their national identity. The community had openly opted for living in India in 1946-47 by curtly rejecting Lord Mountbatten, the then viceroy of India’s proposal to the All India Gorkha League for carving out a third country with the territories of Nepal annexed to India by the Britishers of the Treaty of Segowlee, together with Pakistan which was in the offing.\textsuperscript{130} The poets and writers from Assam also extended their support for the legitimate demand of the Indian Nepalese.

Almost all editorial of Nepali Magazines published from this state during this contained the theme of the constitutional recognition to the Nepali language and the delaying lactic of the Government of India.


\textsuperscript{130} Shistir Kumar Gurung, Neopli Bhasako Manyata, Morarji Desai ko Den, Prakriya, o. cit., pp. 43, 47.
Hindi, Bengali and English newspapers and periodicals of Assam also published articles on the issue *Saptahik Purvanchal, Sambad Sammelan, The Sentinel* and *Purvanchal Prahari* are a few names to be taken note of this regard.  

Thus, the above mentioned facts reveal that the political leaders of the community have been loosing their confidence in the party as well as in the community due to frequent change of party allegiance. Another glaring feature in the last Assam Legislative Assembly election was that the AGP had not nominated any candidates from Nepali community in spite of having many Nepali leaders in the party.

Another most important feature of Nepali politics in Assam is that candidates either for Assam Legislative Assembly or Lok Sabha were able to win the election only under the banner of national political parties more particularly, Congress (I). Candidates contesting under the nomination of political parties on communal lines either it from AIGL or SPCDC were not able to capture any seats in the elections.

From the above it is evident that the process of political awakening of the Nepalese in Assam began since the national freedom movement. They gradually realized that the socio-cultural and economic development of their community is possible only when the country would be free from the clutch of British colonialism. That is why, the Nepalese too alongside other communities jumped into the freedom struggle.

The attempt of AIGL to form a political platform in Assam was discarded by the Nepalese of Assam. In fact, they preferred to remain with the national party.

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131 Naba Sapcota, op. cit., p. 116.

capable of forming Government either in the centre or in the states. Thus, they changed the Assam Provincial Gorkha League to Assam Gorkha Sammelon a socio-cultural organization so as to accommodate all Nepalese into the organization. But even after the change in the nature of the organization, the AGS continued to persuade the Congress to nominate its leaders as party candidates where the Nepalese constitute a substantial number of voters.

However, a section of the Nepali elite after 1996 shifted their allegiance to the regional political party which resulted in the formation of ‘Asom Nepali Parishad,’ a wing of the AGP. But the political organization of the Nepalese under the AGP appears to be futile and not a single candidate could enter in the Assam Legislative Assembly.

In the recent years, the AANSU-student organization of the Nepalese formed a political party namely, SPCDC so as to preserve and protect the constitutional rights of the Nepalese. However, this budding political platform could not attract them. Nonetheless, they appear to remain in the national political parties as they considered that they would be able to achieve hopes and aspirations only by accommodating themselves in the national mainstream.