CHAPTER IV
FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ROLE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF BODO WOMEN DURING THE STRUGGLE FOR BODOLAND.
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Women around the world are considered to be underrepresented in politics as well as in decision-making levels. The power relations that shape social, political, economic and cultural life prevent women from participating fully, whether it is in the private domain or in the public domain.\textsuperscript{236} Political participation is considered as a major path to women’s empowerment and participation in the decision-making process or increased decision-making power will lead to women’s empowerment in the real sense of the term.\textsuperscript{237} The balanced participation between men and women is essential for the success of democracy. Political participation may be broadly defined as the means of gaining access to the power structure where decisions with regard to the allocation of resources amongst people and other issues of community concern are made.\textsuperscript{238} It also includes voluntary activities of political processes such as voting, support of political groups, campaigning for political parties, contesting elections, communication with legislators, dissemination of political views and opinions among the electorate, and other related activities.\textsuperscript{239}

In the recent years, the notion of political participation has been expanded to include unconventional forms of political activities such as taking part in political movements and revolutions, strikes, demonstrations, petitioning, political membership, protests etc.\textsuperscript{240} Women’s participation today, has covered a range of activities including movements, protests, support meetings on issues connected with


\textsuperscript{238} \textit{ibid}., p. 77.


\textsuperscript{240} \textit{ibid}, p.94.
labour, dowry, rape, domestic violence, prise-rise, food adulteration, deforestation, etc.\textsuperscript{241}

The political participation of Bodo women in Bodo politics came about in an organized way during the struggle for Bodoland.\textsuperscript{242} The emergence of All Bodo Women’s Welfare Federation (ABWWF) contributed towards active participation of Bodo women during the struggle for Bodoland. Initially they focused on the empowerment of weaker sections of the society especially women, but subsequently they got involved actively with the struggle.\textsuperscript{243} As discussed in the third chapter, they also played a significant role in the struggle for self-determination and preservation of the identity of the Bodos.

As mentioned in the earlier chapter when the demand for political autonomy was mooted by a cross section of the Bodo society, including the student leaders, it was felt by the leaders of the struggle that Bodo women could also play a contributory role not only in terms of their direct participation in the movement but also contribute in terms of bringing about the overall welfare of the society. It was also hoped particularly by the women that such participation would lead to their upliftment. Thus, the ABWWF was formed in the background of the Bodoland struggle. The ABSU who played a crucial role in the struggle for Bodoland welcomed the formation of AATWWF (later came to be known as ABWWF) giving its full support. The ABWWF along with working for the overall upliftment of Bodo women also worked for the preservation and self-determination of the Bodo identity in collaboration with the ABSU during the struggle period. It may be stated here that regarding activities


\textsuperscript{242} Anuradha Dutta and Ratna Bhuyan, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{243} \textit{Interview} with ex-secretary, ABWWF, on October 10, 2014 at Kokrajhar.
related to the upliftment of Bodo women the ABWWF worked independently as an organization, whereas, in terms of fighting for Bodoland the Federation worked in collaboration with the ABSU.

As discussed in the earlier chapter, Bodo women through ABWWF participated and played a contributory role in the struggle for the preservation and self-determination of Bodo identity. Thus, for an understanding of the participation of women in the struggle and their role along with the factors that influenced their political participation during the struggle for Bodoland a sample of 200 women respondents were drawn from two districts i.e. Kokrajhar and Udalguri, as they were considered as the main centres of the Bodoland struggle. Further, data using structured questionnaire was collected from the respondents in order to collect information on factors influencing the role and participation of women in Bodo politics. The respondents were identified through purposive sampling with the help of the voters’ list.

Before taking up an analysis of the factors influencing the role and political participation of Bodo women, it is necessary to examine the socio-economic profile of the respondents and their participation in the struggle.

**Fig.4.1 Socio-economic profile of the respondents who participated in the Bodoland struggle.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of the respondents:</th>
<th>Degree of participation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-25 years:</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-40 years:</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60 years:</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+years:</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Occupation of the respondents:

Government employee: 31.5%
Self employed: 18.5%
Housewife: 50.5%

Household income (per annum):

Below 1 lakh: 50.5%
Above 1 lakh: 31.5%
Above 3 lakh: 18.5%

Educational Qualification of the respondents:

Below HSLC: 63%
Above matriculate: 37%

The socio-economic profile (Fig. 4.1) of the respondents shows that women who participated in the struggle for Bodoland mostly belonged to the age group of 41-60 years. The study shows that 63% of the respondents’ educational qualification was below HSLC and 37% above matriculate. The study also shows that the respondents who participated mostly belong to the economically lower section of the society whose annual income was below 1 lakh. Further most of them were housewives and uneducated, though few of them were educated. Thus, we note that women who
participated in the struggle did not belong only to the literate group and most of them were from the economically lower strata.

**Role of women in the struggle for Bodoland**

As discussed in the earlier chapters, prior to the formation of ABWWF, Bodo women’s role in politics was negligible. It was only after the formation of AATWWF (later renamed as ABWWF), that women for the first time participated in the struggle for Bodoland in large numbers. The ABWWF thus provided a very important and significant platform for the women to embark upon the struggle for a Bodo homeland alongwith the ABSU. Thus, the members of ABWWF were playing a major role in mobilizing people in areas where the ABSU did not have access to. Members were drawn from ABWWF for the mobilization of groups at different levels i.e village and district level. Women through ABWWF were seen to be actively participating in the struggle. Mobilization of people was done through organizing several foot marches. Such foot marches were carried out across the Bodo areas during the struggle by the ABSU and as such in all such programmes the ABWWF played a contributory role. The formation of ABWWF laid the foundation for the mass participation of Bodo women in the struggle for Bodoland.\(^\text{244}\) It provided a common platform for them to organize and take collective action.\(^\text{245}\)

\(^{244}\) Abhijit Bhuyan, *The Socio-Political Movement for Bodoland and Beyond; A Gendered Paradigm*, Guwahati: Peace Studies, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, 2009, p. 34.

\(^{245}\) ibid., p. 34.
It may be stated here that during the struggle for Bodoland, as compared to previous times, Bodo women participated in larger numbers. As shown in Fig.4.2 sixty nine percent of the women respondents have participated in the struggle for Bodoland which is a fairly large number. However, the rest thirty one percent did not participate in the struggle because of reasons such as family responsibilities and ignorant behavior. It is found that prior to the Bodoland struggle the participation of women in public sphere was negligible, though a few number of women participated in the movement for language and script. However, it may be stated here that women through ABWWF for the first time participated in large numbers and played a significant role in the struggle for Bodoland.

Thus, the women through ABWWF agitated for the attainment of a separate Bodoland and also at the same time worked for the overall upliftment of Bodo women and as such they also addressed the various ill practices that plagued the Bodo society during that period. The Federation also tried to generate awareness among women
regarding their role in family and society including health and hygiene, family planning, necessity of cleanliness, child’s education, etc. through organizing various campaigns and workshops in Bodo areas.246

Table 4.3 Respondents view on the role of ABWWF (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents view on role of ABWWF</th>
<th>Role of the ABWWF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ABWWF played the role of generating awareness regarding the socio-political and civil rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 shows that ten percent of the respondents stated that the ABWWF played the role of generating awareness regarding the socio-political and civil rights of women mostly through organizing seminars and conferences on women’s issue. Also, eleven percent of the respondents view that the Federation worked extensively on social reformation activities and ill practices such as domestic violence, witch hunting, alcoholism, polygamy, etc. that plagued the Bodo society during that period. Four percent view that the ABWWF played the role of mobilizing people on various levels viz. village and district level mostly through programmes like foot marches and rallies. Further, five percent stated that the ABWWF protested against the killing and arrest of innocent Bodo youths. During the course of the struggle, many innocent youths were arrested and killed by the police forces suspecting them to be ABSU’s

246 Interview with ex-president, ABWWF, on November 14, 2014, at Kokrajhar.
messenger. The ABWWF condemned and protested against such police action. Twelve percent of the respondents opined that the Federation also protested against the atrocities on women by the police and para-military forces during that period. Many women were tortured and raped by them during their search operation activities especially in Bodo villages. However, majority of the respondents’ i.e fifty eight percent stated that the ABWWF played the role of generating awareness among Bodo women regarding their socio-political and civil rights. They also claim that the federation worked extensively and were involved in the social reformation activities as well as in the elimination of ill practices within the society. The federation also protested and staged demonstrations against the killings and arrest of innocent people and injustices committed by the police forces especially on women.

Women of different age groups participated through ABWWF in the ABSU led Bodoland struggle at various levels in the form of processions, protest rallies, meetings, demonstrations, gheraos, rasta roko and rail roko programmes. The members of the Federation organized a procession against the arrest of innocent people in May 1989. In all such cases they compelled the authorities to release the innocent people who were arrested during police raids. Few members from the Federation went to the police station and secured the release of ex-military personnel who was arrested on the false ground of providing training to the members of the ABSU (Voluntary Force). In June 1990, almost 1000 women gheraoed the Mushalpur and Borbari police stations and secured the release of eight innocent villagers of east Bangabari. At times they also acted as custodians of the villagers and their properties to safeguard them from the targets of the police forces. The

247 Interview with ex-executive member, ABWWF, on September 23, 2013, at Kokrajhar.
248 Interview with ex-members, ABWWF, on October 12, 2014, at Kokrajhar.
249 Abhijit Bhuyan, op.cit., p.37.
Federation also extended help to the victims of the conflict between the Santhals and the Bodos during the course of the struggle. They arranged for rehabilitation and compensation for the victims belonging to both the communities. They also protested against the police and para-military atrocities on women. The protest against the Bhumka gang rape case in 1988 was the major initiative taken by ABWWF in this context.\textsuperscript{250} The ABWWF also organized many such protest rallies for the injustices committed on youths especially women during the struggle period, such as, a protest rally was organized at Kokrajhar in 1988 against the killing of an innocent youth by the security personnel assuming him to be an informant of the ABSU. Also, a two day conference was organized on 27\textsuperscript{th} and 28\textsuperscript{th} January 1988 at Bijni for the protection of women’s rights. The ABWWF called for a 12 hrs bandh against the violation of women’s rights. Again in 1989, a mass rally was organized in Udalguri and Goalpara against human rights violation. Further, a mass rally was organized at Gossaigaon against the killing of ABWWF workers (Helena, Rambhabati and Gaide) by the police personnel.\textsuperscript{251} Thus, we note that the ABWWF not only fought for the cause of the Bodo identity but also protested on large scale against the injustices done on Bodo youths, especially women.

It may be mentioned here that in certain situations, members from the Federation of different village and district committees acted as informants and carried confidential messages, letters and sometimes money from one place to another under the guidance of the ABSU.\textsuperscript{252} Further, few members of the Federation were also given


\textsuperscript{251} \textit{Interview} with ex-president of ABWWF, on March 2, 2013, at Kokrajhar.

\textsuperscript{252} \textit{Interview} with ex-president, ABWWF, on April 21, 2014, at Kokrajhar.
nursing training in first aid and minor illness to deal with emergency situations. Thus, it can be said that the ABWWF played a very significant role in the ABSU led struggle for Bodoland.

**Fig.4.4 Diagram showing the socio-political activities taken up by ABWWF within Bodo society (in percentage).**

![Diagram showing the socio-political activities taken up by ABWWF within Bodo society (in percentage).](image)

Note: A=Organized programmes like rally, meeting, conferences, protests, demonstrations, etc.; B=Social reformation activities; C=Encouraged education among Bodo women; and D=Encouraged women to participate in the rallies, meetings, etc. E=all of the above.

As shown in **Fig. 4.4** eight percent of the women respondents opined that the ABWWF organized programmes like rallies, public meetings, conferences, protests, demonstrations in order to generate consciousness among women regarding the political situation during that period. Also, seven percent of the respondents view that the ABWWF took up several social reformation activities in order to upgrade not only the status of the Bodo society but also more particularly women. Six percent of the respondents stated that the ABWWF encouraged education among Bodo women. Eleven percent of the respondents view that the members of the Federation
encouraged women to take part activities like rallies, protests, demonstrations, etc. However, majority of women respondents i.e. sixty eight percent stated that ABWWF had taken up many programmes to include women in socio-political activities during the course of the struggle such as organizing mass rallies, meetings, mass gatherings, protests, demonstrations etc. Such activities by the ABWWF helped in spreading the cause of the Bodos among women in general and more particularly make women realize that even their contribution could bring overall development in the society. Further, the ABWWF worked extensively on the social reformation issue as well as ill practices prevalent in Bodo society during that period. They protested against dowry, domestic violence, banning of alcohol, etc. They also protested against the killings in the name of practicing witchcraft. Further, the ABWWF encouraged education for girl child in order to make them aware of their socio-political and civil rights. The ABWWF organized workshops, seminars, publication of articles, magazines, etc. from time to time regarding such issues. The federation also encouraged women to participate in the rallies, public meetings and gatherings, etc. in order to be aware of the situation around them, particularly political situation. Thus, the study shows that the ABWWF had taken various measures to include women in the socio-political activities during the struggle period.

Further the Federation organized various seminars to spread awareness among Bodo women regarding Bodo issues in general and women’s issue in particular (as shown in (Table 4.5 and 4.6). They were mostly one day seminar and the common topic of discussion was related to women. They also discussed on Bodo issue in these seminars. The regular speakers of these seminars were mostly the executive members of the Federation. The speeches were mostly delivered in the Bodo language.
Table 4.5: List of seminars organized by AATWWF/ABWWF during the Bodoland struggle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Topic of the Seminar</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Organized by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The role of Bodoland movement in building and preserving Bodo identity.</td>
<td>04-12-89</td>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>DC/AATWWF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The role of Bodo women in the Bodoland struggle</td>
<td>19-10-91</td>
<td>Arampara L.P. School, Darrang</td>
<td>DC/AATWWF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The role of Bodo women in the Bodoland struggle</td>
<td>20-10-91</td>
<td>Bishnu Rabha High School, Orang, Darrang</td>
<td>DC/AATWWF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview excerpts from ex-president ABWWF, 14/06/2013

Table 4.6: Topics discussed different seminars organized by AATWWF/ABWWF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The role of women in social reform activities.</td>
<td>Ex-general secretary of AATWWF</td>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>18-01-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The role of Bodo women in the struggle for Bodoland.</td>
<td>Ex-executive member of AATWWF</td>
<td>Kokrajhar</td>
<td>20-10-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Role of women in building Bodo nationality through the struggle for Bodoland.</td>
<td>Ex-executive member AATWWF</td>
<td>Kokrajhar</td>
<td>21-12-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Importance of higher education for girls.</td>
<td>Ex-president, AATWWF</td>
<td>Dotoma</td>
<td>23-12-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The role of Bodo women in social reforms.</td>
<td>Ex-general secretary, AATWWF</td>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>23-12-91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The role of women in building Bodo nationality through the long drawn struggle for Bodoland.</td>
<td>Ex-executive member, AATWWF</td>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>24-12-91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview excerpts, ex-executive members, ABWWF, 19/06/2013.
Thus, the study shows that by organizing these seminars and conferences, the ABWWF tried to spread awareness among women on Bodo issue in general and more particularly on women. Through such seminars the ABWWF attempted to highlight the fact that even women have the capacity to contribute towards the overall development of the society and also women in particular.

Fig. 4.7 Factors that influenced the role and political participation of Bodo women (in percentage)

Note: A= Growing political awareness among the Bodo women; B= objective of bringing women in a common platform; C= Atrocities on Bodo women by the police and para military forces and protection of human rights; D= role played by BSS and ABSU; E= continuous fake encounters on Bodo youths by police and para-military forces; and F= all of the above factors.

Data collected from field shows that several factors determined the role of ABWWF in the fulfillment of their objectives as well as their participation in the struggle for Bodoland. As shown in Fig. 4.7 ten percent of the women respondents stated that the enhanced political awareness among Bodo women was the result of the various activities such as seminars, workshops and conferences which were organized by the AATWWF and ABWWF in order to bring awareness among them
regarding their socio-political rights. Various issues concerning women and society were discussed in such seminars (Table 4.5 and 4.6). Further, the federation also made efforts to generate awareness through the spread of education among the Bodo women. They also published magazines namely Songdan, Raikhumuthi, etc. which contained articles on issues like the contribution of women for the upliftment of the Bodo society, importance of education, the need for the involvement of women in politics, etc. which to certain extent helped in generating awareness among the Bodo community in general and women in particular. Thus, this awareness contributed to the participation of women in the struggle in the form of mass rallies and demonstrations, hunger strikes, protest rallies as well as in the various meetings held across the Bodo areas. They also carried confidential messages for the ABSU, money, etc.

Another seven percent opined that an important factor that led to women’s participation in the struggle was the objective of bringing women in a common platform provided by ABWWF in order to organize and take collective action. They joined the agitation in collaboration with ABSU to secure political rights for their community in general and women in particular. Bodo women through ABWWF participated in the struggle for Bodoland with the view to fight for the cause of Bodoland, overall improvement of the Bodo society and more specifically improve the status and position of Bodo women.

Eleven percent of the respondents stated that the growing atrocities on Bodo women by police and paramilitary forces and the cause of the protection of human rights led to women’s participation in large numbers during the struggle for

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253 Interview with ex-members, ABWWF, on May 13, 2013, at Kokrajhar.
254 Abhijit Bhuyan, op.cit., p. 34.
Bodoland. Such atrocities committed during the struggle included incidents of rape, molestation, etc by the armed forces. Men were driven away from the villages, wells were poisoned, glass particles were mixed in food grains and in the absence of men, women were tortured. The ABWWF staged demonstrations against such police excesses and violation of human rights. For example, in the year 1988 after the incident of Bhumka gang rape case by the Task Force of the Assam police, the ABWWF organized protest rally at Judges’ Field, Guwahati, and demanded immediate justice for the victim. Also in the year 1989, they organized processions against the arrest of innocent people in Bodo dominated areas for participating in the struggle for Bodoland.

Also eight percent of the respondents view that another important factor that led to the participation of Bodo women was the role played by Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) and ABSU for including women through AATWWF (later known as ABWWF) in the struggle for Bodoland. The Roman Script movement in 1970s led by BSS witnessed a visible number of Bodo women participating in it. However, it was during the struggle for Bodoland which was launched by ABSU that a large number of Bodo women participated in the struggle. The leaders of the struggle like Upendranath Brahma and Sansuma Khungur Bwismuthiary were among those leaders who highlighted the need for women’s participation in the struggle. They stated that a society cannot progress without the progress of women. The ABSU included Bodo women with the intention of spreading its aims and objectives particularly among the illiterate Bodo women. Also, the ABSU encouraged women under ABWWF for

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255 Interview with ex-executive members, ABWWF, on 14 August, 2014, at Kokrajhar.
256 Interview with ex-president, ABWWF, on 17 July, 2013, at Gossaigaon.
mobilizing people in the areas it did not have access to.\textsuperscript{257} The Mushalpur area of Nalbari was one such area.\textsuperscript{258} In the beginning of the struggle mobilization of people was done by foot march. Therefore the ABSU encouraged women to take part in its various activities like organizing mass rallies, processions, road and rail blockade, etc. for attainment of Bodoland. Thus, in all such programmes Bodo women had played a significant role.

Further, ten percent of the respondents view that the continuous \textit{fake encounters} on the innocent Bodo youths by the police forces also led to women’s participation in the struggle.

However, \textbf{majority} of the respondents, that is, fifty four percent of the respondents were of the view that the significant factors which contributed to the participation of Bodo women in large numbers during the struggle include all the above which included growing political awareness among the Bodo women, objective of bringing women in a common platform, atrocities on Bodo women by the armed forces and protection of human rigidts, role played by the major Bodo organizations such as BSS and ABSU and the continuous fake encounters on Bodo youths by police and para military forces. Further the indifferent attitude and communal bias of the then ruling political parties e.g. AGP and participation of large number of women during the students’ movement in Assam during that period can also be considered as some of the important factors that influenced Bodo women to join the Bodoland struggle.\textsuperscript{259}

\textsuperscript{258} \textit{ibid.}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{259} \textit{Interview} with ex-general secretary, ABWWF, on July 10, 2013, at Kokrajhar.
However, there were barriers towards the full political participation of Bodo women.

Political participation of women may differ from one society to the other. The cultural, socio-economic and political constraints of women are considered as the reasons for women’s low level of political participation. Generally, women’s reproductive and familial roles make it difficult for women to be actively engaged in politics. In many societies, economic dependence, lack of political socialization and women’s domestic responsibility are basically considered as the key factors for low level of participation.

In the case of Bodo women also similar factors acted as barriers towards their political participation among which male dominance, domestic responsibilities, lack of education, economic reasons and lack of political awareness are the prominent ones.

Fig 4.8 Reasons for low level of political participation of Bodo women (in percentage).

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Bodo society, being a patriarchal society did not encourage women to participate in public sphere. As shown in Fig. 4.8, fifty four percent of women respondents regard male dominance in Bodo society as the primary reason for the low level of political participation. The society with traditional values and norms act as a constraint towards women’s political participation. Though initially, women during the course of the struggle were encouraged by the ABSU to participate in the struggle, but in terms of decision-making capacity their participation is marginal. Even after the formation of new political party BPPF (after 2003) many women joined the party and were involved in various activities during elections, yet, they never were given due recognition. This shows that male dominance that is prevalent in Bodo society marginalizes women from decision-making capacity both in public and as well as in private sphere.

Besides male dominance, domestic responsibilities act as a barrier towards women’s low level of political participation. Women consider domestic responsibilities as one of the major hindrances towards their low level of participation. Traditionally, women have always been confined to household activities like looking after the house, children and elders in the family, cooking food, working in the fields, weaving, etc. Even today, inspite of the increasing engagement of Bodo women in different professions, they continue to bear the responsibility of their household activities. As a result, it did not allow much scope for them to get engaged or generate interest in public affairs. The age old norms and conventions of gender-stereotype, therefore, played a major role in prohibiting Bodo women to be actively involved in the political sphere.
The social setting for women plays a major role in generating political interest, knowledge and sense of efficacy.\textsuperscript{261} Political efficacy is the subjective political competence of women that leads to effective participation. It implies an understanding of the political system which generates self-confidence of a person.\textsuperscript{262} Education, urban residence, media exposure and political affiliation are believed to strengthen the sense of efficacy of women. Further, confidence in one’s political competence is considered essential to stimulate women into participating in the political affairs of the society. Political efficacy is therefore, an important component which enhances political participation. Thirty five percent of Bodo women respondents claim that lack of political efficacy among them resulted in low level of political participation. Thus, conscious political socialization and civic education are considered essential to increase the level of political efficacy among Bodo women.

Lack of education and ignorance are also considered as important factors for low level of political participation of women in Bodo society. Lack of education among Bodo women resulted in their low level of participation in politics. Traditionally, Bodo girl child was not given equal education opportunity as the male child. From childhood they were trained for household activities only. Further, women were never included as part of decision making either in public or in private sphere. They were always considered as responsible for household activities only. They were effectively conditioned into stereotype gender role which excluded them from anything political. As a result, Bodo women remained ignorant regarding matters of political importance.

\textsuperscript{261} Toshimenla Jamir, \textit{op.cit.}, p.67. \\
\textsuperscript{262} \textit{ibid.}, p.67.
The economic constraint faced by Bodo women also leads to low level of political participation. This aspect is especially significant for those aspiring to run for political office as a candidate. Most women candidates faced the problem of mobilizing resources for use in the elections. Further, the political parties said to be dominated by male, shows less interest in funding for women candidates.

Thus, the above discussion shows that various reasons contributed towards Bodo women’s low level of political participation. The presence and significance of patriarchy always dominated the Bodo society as a result of which women remained excluded from mainstream Bodo politics.

Thus, to conclude it is interesting to note that the ABWWF provided a common platform through which they collectively fought not only for the cause of Bodoland but also for the overall upliftment of women. Factors such as growing political awareness among the Bodo women, the objective of bringing women in a common platform, atrocities on Bodo women by the armed forces and protection of human rights, the role played by the major Bodo organizations like the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) and the all Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU) and the continuous fake encounters on the innocent Bodo youths by the police forces contributed towards the participation of Bodo women in the Bodoland struggle. The Bodo women fought equally with the ABSU for the cause of Bodoland as well as for the upliftment of their own status, questioning the patriarchal norms and values, but when it came to allocation of position in the decision making level it is seen that the participation of Bodo women in politics is marginal. It may also be stated here that though they got support from ABSU for the activities related to Bodoland struggle, but the issues specifically related to women were sidelined. Thus, it is seen that although
organizations like BSS and ABSU encouraged the participation of women but it was done primarily with a view to increasing the numbers in their struggle, rather than the general upliftment of the Bodo women.