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Politics in Assam: History and the Present

SEMESTER VI

POLITICAL SCIENCE

BLOCK : 2

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BACHELOR OF ARTS
POLITICAL SCIENCE
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INTRODUCTION TO BLOCK 2

This is the second block of the fourth course or paper of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University's B.A. Sixth Semester Programme in Political Science. The fourth course or paper of the BA Sixth Semester Programme in Political Science is titled "Politics in Assam: History and the Present". The second block of this course contains seven units - (Units 9-15).

The Ninth Unit discusses the reorganisation of Assam with special reference to the North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.

The Tenth Unit focuses on two very significant Movements of Assam in the post-independent period, those are - the Language Movement and the Assam Movement.

The Eleventh Unit examines the problem of insurgency in Assam. This unit highlights the factors responsible for the growth of insurgency in Assam and its possible solutions.

The Twelfth Unit examines various provisions under the Sixth Schedule and Movement for Autonomy in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills.

The Thirteenth Unit discusses the Movement for Bodoland.

The Fourteenth Unit focuses on the issue of regionalsim in Assam with special reference to the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPF).

The Fifteenth Unit discusses the participation of women of Assam in the national freedom movement, Assam Movement and the Bodoland Movement.

While going through the units of the block, you will find that unit is further divided into certain sections and sub-sections, wherever necessary, for your better understanding. Again, the units carry certain activities after a particular section where needed. These "ACTIVITIES" will provide you the opportunity to practically apply your own thoughts based on the knowledge gained from reading the text in a particular section. Besides, in order to give you additional information on certain relevant topics, you will find a category called "LET US KNOW" after the sections in each unit. Another category that has been included at the end of each section of a particular unit is "CHECK YOUR PROGRESS". The purpose of this category is to help you to asses for yourself as to how thoroughly you have understood a particular section. You may then match your answers with "ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS" given at the end of each unit. The section "FURTHER READING" in each unit contains the names of a few books which you might want to consult if you are intereted in learning more elaborately about the concepts discussed in a particular unit. Furthermore, the category called "MODEL QUESTIONS" is intended to give you a hint of the type of questions you are likely to get in the examination.

UNIT 9: REORGNISATION OF ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

9.1 Learning Objectives

9.2 Introduction

9.3 Background

9.4 Formation of Nagaland

9.5 The North Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971: Provisions and Impact

9.6 Let Us Sum Up

9.7 Further Reading

9.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

9.9 Model Questions

9.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- explain the background of reorganisation of the State of Assam
- discuss the formation of Nagaland
- explain the constitutional development in the Naga Hills
- discuss the provisions and impact of the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971

9.2 INTRODUCTION

The Northeast region of India is better known for its cultural and ethnic diversity and the problems engulfing the region around linguistic reformations and ethnic assertions. The region has been in the midst of a struggle for identity over language, culture, history and ethnicity. As a result, the region has been witness to a number of ethnic movements over and again to pressurize the government to form separate political entities, including separate states along linguistic lines. An initiative in this regard was taken in the form of North-Eastern Areas Reorganisation Act ,1971,

which paved the way for division and fragmentation of Assam into different states.

9.3 BACKGROUND

The North-Eastern Region of India presents a unique picture of its own without any resemblance to any other part of the country, whether in part or whole in terms of its geographical contiguity with foreign countries, social and political history and diversity in population composition. It was may be one of the reasons why many parts of this region could not be brought under the direct control by East India Company. Though done in later years, Manipur and Tripura remained separate from direct British administration as they were Princely states. However, the Assamese speaking people, who comprised the major population group in the Brahmaputra valley, occupied the centre stage in the whole region. In the pre-independence period, there was a constant resistance on the part of the Assamese speaking people against the imposition of Bengali language in Assam and sincere efforts were made to counter the Bengali influence. This was one of the factors which led to the emergence of Assamese national consciousness and the gradual rise of the theory of assimilation and the eventual formation of a greater Assam including the tribal areas. As a matter of fact, the tribal areas were actually undergoing the process of gradual assimilation with the Assamese people in the upper and central parts of Assam. But this process of assimilation was halted, especially after independence, when most of the hill tribes started asserting their separate tribal identity based on their distinctive linguistic and cultural traditions. Thus, there arose a fear among some of the hill tribes and other non-Assamese linguistic groups of possible Assamese domination in the political and cultural spheres of the tribal communities of the hill areas. Thus, the process of gradual natural assimilation was halted and there arose demands for separate statehoods on the part of the hill tribes based on their distinctive ethnic and linguistic identities. The result was reorganization of the Northeastern region many times. By 1972, the whole

of the Northeastern region was divided into five states i.e. Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura and two union territories, namely, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. In 1987, these two states, namely, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh also got full-fledged statehood.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Tripura remained separate from direct British administration, as it was a Princely state. (True/ False)

.....

Q.2: In which year did Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh get full-fledged statehood ?

.....

9.4 FORMATION OF NAGALAND

- **Struggle for Naga political identity**

  Federal reconstitution of India has posed the problem of language based identity . Regarding secessionist tendencies in the hills, Nagaland provided an epic example. The question of Nagaland for the Nagas became quite sensational soon after Independence in 1947.The political developments were compounded by the militancy angle in the region. Naga resistance to any political change may be traced back to the year 1928, when a small gathering of Naga leaders from the Naga Club (which was political platform of the Nagas) conveyed their separate cultural identity to the visiting members of the Simon Commission and appealed that the Nagas be left out of any political reforms being contemplated by the Simon Commission. The political consciousness among the Nagas had started forming with the formation of Lotha Tribal Council in 1923. Ao Nagas formed a similar council in 1928, and other Naga tribes also organized tribal councils by the 1940s.Towards the end of British rule in India , the Deputy

Commissioner of the Naga Hills, C.R.Pawsey, formed the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945 with the intention of uniting the Nagas, which later transformed itself into the Naga National Council(NNC) in 1946. Later it emerged as one of the most powerful political organizations of the Nagas. It was expected to foster the welfare and social aspirations of the Naga Tribes, to achieve local autonomy within the province of Assam and to train the people for self-government.

In the post independent period, it was felt that there was a need for preserving the tribal cultural identity and promote the development of the tribal areas by way of helping the tribal groups to pursue their own welfare through creation of separate states . At the same time, it was assumed that small states were able to make better progress than big states.

- **Constitutional development in the Naga Hills and formation of Nagaland**

Prior to occupation of Assam by the British , The Ahom kings looked upon the Nagas as their subjects. The Raja of Manipur also exercised control over parts of the Naga Hills. The whole of Naga Hills became part of British India with the conquest of Assam in the early part of the 19th century. The Naga Hills District was formed in 1866 with headquarters at Samaguting under the administration of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, which was later transferred to the Province of Assam in 1874. The District headquarters were transferred to Wokha, in the heart of the Hills, in 1876, and two years later it was shifted to Kohima, and Wokha continued to be a subdivision headquarter. In 1889, the sub-divisional headquarter was shifted from Wokha to Mokokchung. Thus, the Naga Hills District of Assam under the British Administration had two sub-divisions - Kohima(Sadar) and Mokokchung. These arrangements were inherited by the central Government at the time of India's Independence in 1947. With effect from 26th January, 1950, the

Constitution of India brought about a change in the administrative set up of the Naga Hills District.

Under the Sixth Schedule (Part A) of the Constitution, the Naga Hills District was treated as an Autonomous District and was to have an Autonomous District Council, which could not become a reality as Nagas were dissatisfied with the Sixth Schedule and they , therefore, boycotted the elections for the Council. Consequently, the administration of the district was carried on under the transitional provisions Paragraph 19 of the Schedule, by the Government of Assam.

Consequent upon the constitution of Naga Hills District in 1866, the residual hill areas of the Naga Hills which lay between the external boundary of the Naga Hills District and the international boundary between India and Burma, continued as an unadministered area till 1937 when the Government of India Act, 1935 coming into force. Under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935 , these unadministered area was named as Naga Tribal Area and placed directly under the control of the Governor of Assam and the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District on behalf of the Governor General of India representing the British Emperor. After Independence, the Government of India extended the necessary laws rules and orders to the Naga Tribal Area for the purposes of administration.

After promulgation of the Constitution of India on 26th January, 1950, the Naga Tribal Area was placed under the Sixth Schedule (Part B), and came to be administered by the Governor of Assam as Agent of the President.

The North East Frontier Areas(Administration)Regulation, 1954 created the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) which also included the Naga Tribal Area, now renamed as Tuensang Frontier Division.

At the time of India's Independence in 1947, the political development in Naga Hills moved in two opposite directions. While on the one hand, there was the struggle carried out by the militant wing of the Naga National Council which at one extreme demanded full sovereignty. On the other hand , the moderate sections of the Naga National Council was looking for a viable solution by constitutional means. The nine point understanding concluded between the Naga National Council and Assam Governor Akbar Hyderi at Kohima in June 1947 came up as a conflict management mechanism. This understanding stipulated for a ten-year association of the Nagas with India, after which they would be free to decide their own fate. The agreement recognized " the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes" and tried to address questions of land, boundaries, etc.

After promulgation of the Indian Constitution in 1950, the provision of the Hyderi Understanding were inserted in the Sixth Schedule, but the Naga National Council showed its defiance and embarked upon a programme of mass agitation and open rebellion. An armed insurrection erupted in Tuensang in 1954 and soon engulfed two other districts , namely, Kohima and Mokokchung. First the police, and later on the army was deployed to put down the risings. In 1957, an agreement was reached between Naga leaders and the Union government, creating a single separate region of the Naga Hills in the form of a new administrative unit in the State of Assam , namely, the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA) (comprising the erstwhile Naga Hills District and Tuensang Frontier Division of the North East Frontier Agency). The NHTA became a Union territory directly administered by the Central government but with a large degree of autonomy.

However, this was not acceptable to the Nagas and the conflict between the Naga rebels and the security forces continued.

Subsequently, discussions were held between Prime Minister Nehru and the leaders of the Naga People Convention (NPC) and in July 1960 a 16-point agreement was arrived at whereby the Government of India recognised the formation of Nagaland as a full-fledged state within the Union of India. As per the first point of the agreement, it was declared that "The territories that were heretofore known as the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area under the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area Act, 1957, shall form a State within the Indian Union and he hereafter known as Nagaland." Accordingly, the State of Nagaland was inaugurated by the President of India on the December 1, 1963 at a colourful ceremony in Kohima.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: The Naga Hills District was formed in 1866 with headquarters at which place ?

.....

Q.4: After promulgation of the Constitution of India on 26th January, 1950, the Naga Tribal Area was placed under which Schedule?

.....

9.5 NORTHEAST AREAS REORGANISATION ACT, 1971: PROVISIONS AND IMPACT

The Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 passed on 30th December, 1971 provided for the establishment of the States of Manipur and Tripura and to provide for the formation of the State of Meghalaya and of the Union territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh by reorganisation of the existing State of Assam and for matters connected therewith.

Let us look at some of the important provisions of the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971. As per the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 :

- The two parliamentary constituencies of the existing Union territory of Manipur shall be deemed to be the two parliamentary

constituencies of the State of Manipur; and the two parliamentary constituencies of the existing Union territory of Tripura shall be deemed to be the two parliamentary constituencies of the State of Tripura.

- There shall be two parliamentary constituencies in the State of Meghalaya to be called the Shillong parliamentary constituency and the Tura parliamentary constituency.
- The whole of the Union territory of Mizoram shall form one parliamentary constituency to be called the Mizoram parliamentary constituency.
- The sitting member nominated to fill the seat allotted in the House of the People to the North- East Frontier Agency, shall now be deemed to be the have been nominated to fill the seat allotted to the Union territory of Arunachal Pradesh in the House of the People.
- The High Court of Assam and Nagaland shall cease to function and is hereby abolished.
- There shall be a common High Court for the States of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura to be called the Gauhati High Court (the High Court of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura).
- The President shall, by order, determine the grants- in- aid of the revenues of the States of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura and the share of each such State in the Union duties of excise, estate duty and taxes on income.
- Provisions relating to certain corporations, provisions relating to All India Services and other related services, legal powers to make rules , etc. with regard to the existing and newly formed states were other provisions included in the Act.

The emergence of separate states following the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 has been able to satisfy the sentiments of numerically smaller groups and communities residing mostly in the hill

areas to protect their cultural, identity, heritage and values by giving them the autonomy to develop in their own ways. Smaller states have also ensured better distribution of resources in favour of the tribal communities and has led to convenience in governance, as geographically smaller states are easier to govern at times. However, at the same time, there have been also a surge in demands for further devolution of powers in recent times based on linguistic and ethnic lines, often resulting in violent conflicts in some states. As such, it is important to ensure that all groups and communities residing in the Northeastern states get equal opportunities for securing their own development and participate equally with the majority communities in the process of governance in order to avoid further political division of the Northeastern states and maintain peace.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: Write any two provisions of the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971

.....

.....



9.6 LET US SUM UP

- The North-Eastern Region of India presents a unique picture of its own without resemblance to any other part of the country, whether in part or whole, in terms of its geographical contiguity with foreign countries, social and political history and diversity in population composition.
- However, the Assamese speaking people, who comprised the major population group in the Brahmaputra valley, occupied the centre stage in the whole region.
- In the pre-independence period, there was a constant resistance on the part of the Assamese speaking people against the imposition of

Bengali language in Assam and sincere efforts were made to counter the Bengali influence. This was one of the factors which led to the emergence of Assamese national consciousness and the gradual rise of the theory of assimilation and the eventual formation of a greater Assam including the tribal areas.

- As a matter of fact, the tribal areas were actually undergoing the process of gradual assimilation with the Assamese people in the upper and central parts of Assam.
- But this process of assimilation was halted, especially after independence, when most of the hill tribes started asserting their separate tribal identity based on their distinctive linguistic and cultural traditions.
- By 1972, the whole of the Northeastern region was divided into five states i.e. Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura and two union territories, namely, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. In 1987, these two states, namely, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh also got full-fledged statehood.
- Regarding secessionist tendencies in the hills, Nagaland provided an epic example. The question of Nagaland for the Nagas became quite sensational soon after Independence in 1947.The political developments were compounded by the militancy angle in the region.
- Naga resistance to any political change may be traced back to the year 1928, when a small gathering of Naga leaders from the Naga Club (which was political platform of the Nagas) conveyed their separate cultural identity to the visiting members of the Simon Commission and appealed that the Nagas be left out of any political reforms being contemplated by the Simon Commission.
- The political consciousness among the Nagas had started forming with the formation of Lotha Tribal Council in 1923. Ao Nagas formed a similar council in 1928, and other Naga tribes also organized tribal councils by the 1940s.

- Towards the end of British rule in India , the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, C.R.Pawsey, formed the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945 with the intention of uniting the Nagas, which later transformed itself into the Naga National Council(NNC) in 1946.
- Later it emerged as one of the most powerful political organizations of the Nagas. It was expected to foster the welfare and social aspirations of the Naga Tribes, to achieve local autonomy within the province of Assam and to train the people for self-government.
- In the post independent period, it was felt that there was a need for preserving the tribal cultural identity and promote the development of the tribal areas by way of helping the tribal groups to pursue their own welfare through creation of separate states . At the same time, it was assumed that small states were able to make better progress than big states.
- The Naga Hills District was formed in 1866 with headquarters at Samaguting under the administration of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, which was later transferred to the Province of Assam in 1874.
- The District headquarters were transferred to Wokha, in the heart of the Hills, in 1876, and two years later it was shifted to Kohima, and Wokha continued to be a subdivision headquarter. In 1889, the sub-divisional headquarter was shifted from Wokha to Mokokchung. Thus, the Naga Hills District of Assam under the British Administration had two sub-divisions - Kohima(Sadar) and Mokokchung.
- These arrangements were inherited by the central Government at the time of India's Independence in 1947. With effect from 26th January, 1950, the Constitution of India brought about a change in the administrative set up of the Naga Hills District.
- Consequent upon the constitution of Naga Hills District in 1866, the residual hill areas of the Naga Hills which lay between the external boundary of the Naga Hills District and the international boundary between India and Burma, continued as an unadministered area till 1937 when the Government of India Act, 1935 coming into force.

- Under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935 , these unadministered area was named as Naga Tribal Area and placed directly under the control of the Governor of Assam and the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills District on behalf of the Governor General of India representing the British Emperor.
- After Independence, the Government of India extended the necessary laws rules and orders to the Naga Tribal Area for the purposes of administration.
- After promulgation of the Constitution of India on 26th January, 1950, the Naga Tribal Area was placed under the Sixth Schedule (Part B), and came to be administered by the Governor of Assam as Agent of the President.
- The North East Frontier Areas(Administration)Regulation, 1954 created the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) which also included the Naga Tribal Area, now renamed as Tuensang Frontier Division.
- After promulgation of the Indian Constitution in 1950, the provision of the Hyderi Understanding were inserted in the Sixth Schedule, but the Naga National Council showed its defiance and embarked upon a programme of mass agitation and open rebellion.
- An armed insurrection erupted in Tuensang in 1954 and soon engulfed two other districts , namely, Kohima and Mokokchung.
- Subsequently, discussions were held between Prime Minister Nehru and the leaders of the Naga People Convention (NPC) and in July 1960 a 16-point agreement was arrived at whereby the Government of India recognised the formation of Nagaland as a full-fledged state within the Union of India.
- As per the first point of the agreement, it was declared that "The territories that were heretofore known as the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area under the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area Act, 1957, shall form a State within the Indian Union and he hereafter known as Nagaland."
- Accordingly, the State of Nagaland was inaugurated by the President of India on the December 1, 1963 at a colourful ceremony in Kohima.

- The Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 passed on 30th December, 1971 provided for the establishment of the States of Manipur and Tripura and to provide for the formation of the State of Meghalaya and of the Union territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh by reorganisation of the existing State of Assam and for matters connected therewith.
- The emergence of separate states following the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971 has been able to satisfy the sentiments of numerically smaller groups and communities residing mostly in the hill areas to protect their cultural, identity, heritage and values by giving them the autonomy to develop in their own ways.



9.7 FURTHER READING

1. Datta Ray , B. and Agrawal, S.P. *Reorganisation of North East India since 1947*. Concept Publishing Company, 1996.
2. Verma, Rajesh. *History of North East India*. Mittal Publications. 2103.

9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: True

Ans. to Q. No. 2: 1987

Ans. to Q. No. 3: Samaguting

Ans. to Q. No. 4: Sixth

Ans. to Q. No. 5:

(a) There shall be two parliamentary constituencies in the State of Meghalaya to be called the Shillong parliamentary constituency and the Tura parliamentary constituency.

(b) The President shall, by order, determine the grants- in- aid of the revenues of the States of Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura and the share of each such State in the Union duties of excise, estate duty and taxes on income.



9.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1: Mention the sub-divisions of the Naga Hills District of Assam under the British Administration.

Q. 2: The State of Nagaland was inaugurated in which year ?

Q. 3: The Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA) comprised of which areas?

Q. 4: Mention the name of the the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills who formed the the Naga Hills District Tribal Council in 1945.

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Write briefly about the constitutional development in the Naga hills and formation of Nagaland.

Q. 2: Write briefly about the struggle for Naga political identity.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Discuss briefly the formation of Nagaland.

Q. 2: Explain any seven provisions of the Northeast Areas Reorganization Act, 1971

*** ***** ***

UNIT 10: LANGUAGE MOVEMENT AND ASSAM MOVEMENT

UNIT STRUCTURE

10.1 Learning Objectives

10.2 Introduction

10.3 Language Movement

10.3.1 Origin and Course of the Language Movement

10.4 Assam Movement

10.4.1 Origin and Course of the Assam Movement

10.5 Let Us Sum Up

10.6 Further Reading

10.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.8 Model Questions

10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the background of the language movement in Assam
- discuss the events of the language movement
- explain the background of the Assam Movement
- discuss the events of the Assam Movement
- discuss the role of organisations such as the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP) in mobilising the people for a mass movement
- explain the provisions of the Assam Accord of 1985

10.2 INTRODUCTION

A close look at the political landscape of Assam reveals that as a geographical entity, Assam represents a point of convergence of many groups and communities as a consequence of different waves of immigration from different regions taking place at different periods of history. During the British colonial rule, new forms of experimentations were carried out by

the rulers in terms of encouraging human settlements in different parts of Assam based on economic and political calculations so much so that such political and administrative exercises even threatened to alter the demographic profile of Assam. As a matter of fact, colonial rule gave rise to new complexities in terms of cultural and linguistic expressions. Against this background, in the post-independence period, Assam witnessed intense scenes of conflict and tensions based on an assertion of the linguistic and cultural identity of the Assamese people. Such efforts to safeguard the linguistic and cultural identity of the Assamese people were seen in the form of the Language Movement of the 1960s and later the Assam Movement beginning in the late 1970s. In this unit, we shall discuss the Language Movement and the Assam Movement both of which are important landmarks in the political history of Assam.

10.3 LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

10.3.1 Origin and Course of the Language Movement

The genesis of the language movement in Assam could be traced back to the colonial period when the British had introduced the Bengali language in the government schools and law courts of Assam in 1837. This policy was resented by a section of informed intellectuals from Assam spearheaded by people like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan who asserted the distinctiveness of the Assamese language and pleaded with the colonial rulers to revoke the use of Bengali in schools. The American Baptist missionaries too strongly opposed the imposition of Bengali in Assam. Subsequently, in 1873 Assamese was restored as the medium of instruction in schools and as a language to be used in courts. The Asomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha established in 1888 in Calcutta (presently Kolkata) played a significant role in the field of development of Assamese language and literature. Starting from the second decade of the 20th century, the British colonial government began to encourage

immigration of Bengali speaking Muslims from erstwhile East Bengal into the land-abundant region of Assam. Large tracts of land came to be inhabited by such settlers. At the same time, the colonial administration needed to staff its lower and middle-level bureaucratic positions with people with knowledge of English. Accordingly, the British colonial government encouraged the migration of Bengali Hindus into Assam to fill various posts in departments such as the Railways and the Postal service given the fact that Bengali Hindus were exposed to western education at an early stage of colonial rule. Soon Bengali Hindus started occupying a dominant position in government offices and in the legal, medical and teaching professions.

Against the above background, the civil society in Assam started asserting its linguistic and cultural identity more vigorously after independence coupled by the fact that higher positions of the bureaucracy came to be now filled by members of the educated Assamese middle class. Certain sections of the Assamese society advocated declaring Assamese as the state language. Two prominent linguistic and literary bodies namely, the Assam Sahitya Sabha and the Assam Jatiya Mahasabha expressed concern over the dominance of the Bengali language. The Assam Sahitya Sabha urged upon the government to declare the Assamese language as the state language within 1960. It observed September 9, 1959 as the state language day across Assam. However, the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (A.P.H.L.C.) and other tribal organisations expressed their apprehension regarding making Assamese the official language. The supporters of adoption of Assamese as the official language organized meetings and passed resolutions reiterating their demand. Different organisations submitted memoranda to the Chief Minister. They assured that the rights of linguistic minorities shall be respected as laid down in the Constitution and recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission. Nevertheless, minority organisations such as the Bengal Sangram Parishad insisted that Bengali be made the second official language

of the state while it should be made the official language for Cachar at the district level. Significantly, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) passed a resolution whereby it was stated, among other things, that Assamese be declared by law as the official language of the state and be adopted for such purposes as may be decided by the government. Moreover, resolution also stated that Assamese be introduced as official language in all districts except the district of Cachar, the autonomous districts of Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills and North Cachar Hills in which areas it may be introduced as and when they are prepared for it. The APCC resolution evoked stiff opposition among different quarters in the Brahmaputra valley, Hill districts and Cachar. Subsequently, the atmosphere became rather tense. Provocative slogans were raised against the Assamese language and also against the APCC resolution by the non-Assamese speaking residents of Shillong. In response, counter demonstrations were staged by Assamese students in the Brahmaputra valley. Rallies were taken out in Dibrugarh and Jorhat wherein thousands of students participated demanding the immediate adoption of Assamese as the state language. Soon, the agitation spread to Sivasagar, Kamrup, Lakhimpur and several other districts. Large scale violence broke out in some parts of Assam including Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Mariani and Lumding railway stations, Silchar, Hailakandi, Guwahati and Goreswar. Incidents of violent clashes principally between sections of Assamese speaking and Bengali speaking communities as well as stoppage of trains and vandalism of railway property were reported in the riot hit areas. In July 1960 the All Assam Bengali Language Conference was held in Silchar wherein it was demanded that Assam be declared a ***bi-lingual state***. Incidents of violence took place particularly in Guwahati. In the midst of the turmoil, the police resorted to firing on July 4, 1960 killing one Assamese student named Ranjit Barpujari while injuring six others inside the hostel of Cotton College. Ranjit Barpujari was honoured as the first martyr of the Language Movement.



Bi-lingual state :
A state where two languages are used as official languages.

Subsequently, in this tense atmosphere, the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri B.P.Chaliha introduced the Assam Official Language Bill in the Legislative Assembly and the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 came into being. The Bill provided that Assamese shall be used for all or any of the official purposes of the State of Assam provided that the English language, so long as the use thereof is permissible under Article 343 of the Constitution of India, and thereafter Hindi in place of English, shall also be used for all official purposes of the State Government. Following the passage of the Act, the Bengali speaking population particularly those from Cachar as well as communities in hill areas expressed their apprehensions. The Cachar Sangram Parishad launched a movement demanding adoption of Bengali as a separate state language resulting in violent outbursts and police firing which killed eight persons while injuring over twenty other persons. At this stage, the then Union Home Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri proposed a formula to bring about reconciliation among the opposing groups in the wake of the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 and Cachar Sangram Parishad movement. The Shastri formula recommended the following: the Assam Official Language Act of 1960 may be amended to do away with the provision relating to Mahkuma Parishads; communication between the state headquarters and Cachar and autonomous hill districts would continue in English until replaced by Hindi; at the state level, English will continue to be used along with Assamese; the linguistic minorities in the state will be accorded safeguards; all Acts, Bills, Ordinance, Regulations and Orders will continue to be published in the Official Gazette in English even where these are published in Assamese.

The Shastri formula was accepted by the Assam Government and the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 was amended in 1961 based on the recommendations of the Shastri formula. Accordingly, the Act as amended provided for safeguard for the use of language in the Autonomous Districts and also provides for safeguard for the use of Bengali in the district of Cachar. (Source: The Assam Official

Language Act, 1960 http://www.neportal.org/northeastfiles/Assam/ActsOrdinances/Assam_Official_Language_Act_1968.asp).

The Assamese- Bengali rift resurfaced in the 1970s. In 1972, the Gauhati University decided to introduce the Assamese as the medium of instruction in all colleges under its jurisdiction. Initially, this decision would be applicable to the pre-University classes and gradually extended to degree classes. Exceptions were made in the case of Cachar, Manipur, Nagaland, the proposed district of Meghalaya and North East Frontier Agency or NEFA (presently Arunachal Pradesh). In all these areas, provision was made for retention of English as an alternative medium of instruction. However, the inhabitants of Cachar demanded that Bengali should also be recognised as a medium of instruction in the colleges along with Assamese. The Gauhati University authorities in an effort to pacify the agitating groups declared that English was to be retained as the medium of instruction for a period of time and students would be permitted to answer questions in their examinations in Assamese, English and Bengali. The decision of Gauhati University to allow students to write their examinations in Bengali met with strong opposition from large sections of the student community. Many students boycotted classes. Several students were arrested for breach of peace. The Assam Sahitya Sabha passed a resolution declaring that Assamese alone should be the medium of instruction in the Brahmaputra valley and English along with Assamese should be retained for a few years for answering examinations. Several incidents of violence and repression also broke out in different parts. Finally, the Gauhati University passed a resolution stating the following: Assamese shall be the medium of instruction in all colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University; English shall continue as an alternative medium of instruction till such time not exceeding ten years as may be considered necessary by the Academic Council. This decision of the Gauhati University created

uproar in Cachar district with the matter reaching the Supreme Court which passed a restraining order on the decision of the Gauhati University. In this background, the Chief Minister of Assam held consultations with representatives from different groups such as teachers, students, members of the general public, etc. Ultimately, it was decided that separate University would be established. It would have territorial jurisdiction over the colleges in the district of Cachar. A resolution to this effect was passed in the Assam Assembly in September, 1972 thereby paving the way for establishment of a separate University for the district of Cachar. The resolution also declared that the medium of instruction at the University stage for Gauhati and Dibrugarh universities should be Assamese while English should be continued as the medium of instruction.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Mention the name of a prominent intellectual from Assam who asserted the distinctiveness of the Assamese language and pleaded with the colonial rulers to revoke the use of Bengali in schools.

……

Q.2: Mention the names of two prominent linguistic and literary bodies of Assam.

……

……

Q.3: Mention the name of an organization from Cachar which launched a movement demanding adoption of Bengali as a separate state language.

……

Q.4: Mention any two recommendations of the Shastri formula.

……

……

10.4 ASSAM MOVEMENT

10.4.1 Origin and Course of the Assam Movement

The Assam Movement (1979-1985) could be said to be an epoch-making event in the political history of Assam. After independence, the issue of immigration from East Pakistan (Bangladesh after 1971) became a matter of serious concern of the government. In order to check the unrestrained large scale entry of foreign nationals from East Pakistan, the Parliament enacted the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950. This Act gave power to the central and the state governments to expel and drive out any person who came to the state secretly and illegally so as to safeguard the interests of the people of Assam. The Act clearly stated that large scale migration would hamper the economy of the province besides creating a serious law and order problem. However, the central and state governments did not implement the law effectively and the problem of large scale immigration from East Pakistan continued unabated. Subsequently, the situation became all too apparent during the Mongoldoi by-elections. After the death of Hiralal Patowary, the Janata Party MP, in March 1979, the Mangoldoi parliamentary seat became vacant. As a result, the process of holding a by-election to the Lok Sabha commenced. However, when the revision of electoral rolls started, numerous complaints were registered challenging the authenticity of citizenship of a large number of persons. This made the people of Assam increasingly apprehensive about the issue of foreign nationals. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU), in association with the press successfully mobilized public opinion among the people of Assam to achieve the objective that the by-election to the Mangoldoi constituency should be delayed till the names of all foreign nationals were removed from the electoral rolls. Soon, this issue no longer remained confined to the Mangoldoi constituency only, but spread to the whole of Assam.

There were widespread protests resisting the alleged unlawful inclusion of the names of foreign nationals in the electoral rolls in all other constituencies. In the wake of such discrepancies in the electoral rolls and reports of fresh immigration from Bangladesh into Assam, the AASU declared a twelve-hour general strike or Assam Bandh on June 8, 1979 in demand of the "detection, disenfranchisement and deportation" of foreigners. Significantly, a few political and cultural organizations including the Assam Sahitya Sabha came together to form a new coalition called the Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP) to mobilise the people of Assam on the issue of illegal immigration into Assam. In other words, organisations such as the AASU and the AGSP were successful in spearheading a mass movement marked a programme of protests and demonstrations urging the government to identify and expel illegal migrants.

In 1979, the Janata Party government in Assam collapsed leading to political instability in Assam. In November 1979, thousands of people from different parts of the state including the capital city of Guwahati courted arrest even as they launched a satyagraha or civil-disobedience to the law.President's Rule was imposed in December 1979 and it continued for one year. The AASU and AAGSP together called for the closure of all educational institutions. At the same time, they called for picketing in front of the offices of the state and central government.

In December 1979 the leaders of the movement gave a call to boycott the elections to the Lok Sabha unless the government agreed to revise the electoral rolls and names of the foreigners were removed from the electoral rolls. Prospective candidates were urged not to contest in the election until the revision of electoral rolls was effected.

On December 10, 1979 which was the last date for submitting the nomination papers for the parliamentary election, the leaders of the movement called for a state-wide bandh. The government declared a curfew at different parts of the state. In Barpeta, Khargeswar Talukdar, the general secretary of Barpeta AASU Unit,

who was in his early twenties, died when the police attacked the protestors calling for boycott of the election. The supporters of the Assam Movement honoured Talukdar as its first Martyr. An economic blockade was launched. The supporters of the movement stopped the flow of crude oil and plywood from Assam to the rest of the country. On 18th January, 1980, at Duliajan, the headquarters of Oil India Limited, the district administration supported by police gave instructions for the dispersal of the picketers. When the picketers declined to leave, the police was forced to use tear gas and then fired to disperse the picketers. In this police firing, four persons were killed and many were injured. The leadership of the movement declared the deceased as martyrs of the movement. People in Assam overwhelmingly supported the oil blockade and joined in the picketing.

Following the fall of the Keshab Gogoi ministry, President's Rule was once again imposed in Assam. Protests and demonstrations continued across the state on a mass scale. Central paramilitary forces were brought in and many protesters were arrested and beaten up in different parts of the state. Subsequently negotiations resumed between the state government and the leadership of the movement in December 1982. However, the government decided to hold elections in Assam on the basis of the electoral rolls prepared in 1979.The state witnessed scenes of violence around the time of the election. A new Congress Government headed by Hiteswar Saikia came to power after the election. Strikes and demonstrations against the government continued. Meanwhile in 1983, the Indian Parliament passed the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act or IMDT Act. This Act further made it difficult to prove that a person was an illegal immigrant in Assam as the burden of proving the citizenship or otherwise of an alleged immigrant rested on the accuser and the police and not the accused. Subsequently, in April 1984,negotiations between the Government of India and the leadership of the Movement took place. On August 15, 1985, the Assam Accord was signed between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the leaders of the movement. As per the terms of the Accord, all illegal immigrants who had entered Assam

after March 25th, 1971 would be detected and deported. Under the Accord, the Union Government declared that constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards would be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage the Assamese people. The Union government also agreed to increase patrolling across the border and to check future infiltration by building physical barriers such as walls and barbed-wire fencing. Other concessional measures such as building a new Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and setting up of an oil refinery in Assam were also promised by the Union Government. The Union Government assured that relevant laws for prevention of encroachment of government lands and lands in tribal belts and blocks would be strictly enforced and unauthorized encroachers would be evicted.

With the signing of the Accord, a new party, namely, the Asom Gana Parishad was formed. As agreed at the time of signing of the Accord, the State government formed after the election of 1983 was dismissed and the State Assembly was dissolved. In the ensuing Assembly elections held in December 1985, the Asom Gana Parishad was voted to power and a new government was formed with Prafulla Kumar Mahanta as the Chief Minister.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: Mention the name of the Act passed by the Union Parliament in 1950 to check the unrestrained large scale entry of foreign nationals from East Pakistan?

.....

Q.6: Mention the name of the organization which came into being after a few political and cultural organizations including the Assam Sahitya Sabha came together to mobilise the people of Assam on the issue of illegal immigration into Assam.

.....

Q.7: Which Act passed in 1983 transferred the burden of proving the citizenship or otherwise of an alleged immigrant on the accuser and the police rather than the accused?

.....

Q.8: Write about some of the provisions of the Assam Accord of 1985.

.....

.....



10.5 LET US SUM UP

- The genesis of the language movement in Assam could be traced back to the colonial period when the British had introduced the Bengali language in the government schools and law courts of Assam in 1837.
- The American Baptist missionaries too strongly opposed the imposition of Bengali in Assam. Subsequently, in 1873 Assamese was restored as the medium of instruction in schools and as a language to be used in courts.
- Large tracts of land came to be inhabited by such settlers. At the same time, the colonial administration needed to staff its lower and middle-level bureaucratic positions with people with knowledge of English.
- Two prominent linguistic and literary bodies namely, the Assam Sahitya Sabha and the Assam Jatiya Mahasabha expressed concern over the dominance of the Bengali language. The Assam Sahitya Sabha urged upon the government to declare the Assamese language as the state language within 1960.
- Minority organisations such as the Bengal Sangram Parishad insisted that Bengali be made the second official language of the state while it should be made the official language for Cachar at the district level.
- Significantly, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) passed a resolution whereby it was stated, among other things, that Assamese be declared by law as the official language of the state

and be adopted for such purposes as may be decided by the government.

- The APCC resolution evoked stiff opposition among different quarters in the Brahmaputra valley, Hill districts and Cachar.
- Rallies were taken out in Dibrugarh and Jorhat wherein thousands of students participated demanding the immediate adoption of Assamese as the state language. Soon, the agitation spread to Sivasagar, Kamrup, Lakhimpur and several other districts.
- In the midst of the turmoil, the police resorted to firing on July 4, 1960 killing one Assamese student named Ranjit Barpujari while injuring six others inside the hostel of Cotton College. Ranjit Barpujari was honoured as the first martyr of the Language Movement.
- Subsequently, in this tense atmosphere, the Chief Minister of Assam, Shri B.P.Chaliha introduced the Assam Official Language Bill in the Legislative Assembly and the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 came into being.
- Following the passage of the Act, the Bengali speaking population particularly those from Cachar as well as communities in hill areas expressed their apprehensions.
- At this stage, the then Union Home Minister, Lal Bahdur Shastri proposed a formula to bring about reconciliation among the opposing groups in the wake of the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 and Cachar Sangram Parishad movement. The Shastri formula recommended among other things that the Assam Official Language Act of 1960 may be amended and communication between the state headquarters and Cachar and autonomous hill districts would continue in English until replaced by Hindi; at the state level, English will continue to be used along with Assamese and the linguistic minorities in the state will be accorded safeguards.
- The Assamese- Bengali rift resurfaced in the 1970s. In 1972, the Gauhati University decided to introduce the Assamese as the medium of instruction in all colleges under its jurisdiction. The decision of Gauhati

University to allow students to write their examinations in Bengali was met with strong opposition from large sections of the student community.

- Finally, the Gauhati University passed a resolution stating the following: Assamese shall be the medium of instruction in all colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University; English shall continue as an alternative medium of instruction till such time not exceeding ten years as may be considered necessary by the Academic Council. This decision of the Gauhati University created uproar in Cachar district with the matter reaching the Supreme Court which passed a restraining order on the decision of the Gauhati University.
- Ultimately, it was decided that separate University would be established. It would have territorial jurisdiction over the colleges in the district of Cachar. A resolution to this effect was passed in the Assam Assembly in September, 1972 thereby paving the way for establishment of a separate University for the district of Cachar.
- The Assam Movement (1979-1985) could be said to be an epoch-making event in the political history of Assam. When the revision of electoral rolls started in the wake of the by-election to the Mongoldoi parliamentary constituency, numerous complaints were registered challenging the authenticity of citizenship of a large number of persons.
- The AASU, in association with the press successfully mobilized public opinion among the people of Assam to achieve the objective that the by-election to the Mangoldoi constituency should be delayed till the names of all foreign nationals were removed from the electoral rolls. Soon, this issue no longer remained confined to the Mangoldoi constituency only, but spread to the whole of Assam. There were widespread protests resisting the alleged unlawful inclusion of the names of foreign nationals in the electoral rolls in all other constituencies.
- Significantly, a few political and cultural organizations including the Assam Sahitya Sabha came together to form a new coalition called the Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP) to mobilise the people of Assam on the issue of illegal immigration into Assam.

- In 1979, the Janata Party government in Assam collapsed leading to political instability in Assam. In November 1979, thousands of people from different parts of the state including the capital city of Guwahati courted arrest even as they launched a satyagraha or civil-disobedience to the law. President's Rule was imposed in December 1979 and it continued for one year.
- In December 1979 the leaders of the movement gave a call to boycott the elections to the Lok Sabha unless the government agreed to revise the electoral rolls and names of the foreigners were removed from the electoral rolls. Prospective candidates were urged not to contest in the election until the revision of electoral rolls was effected.
- In Barpeta, Khargeswar Talukdar, the general secretary of Barpeta AASU Unit, who was in his early twenties, died when the police attacked the protestors calling for boycott of the election. The supporters of the Assam Movement honoured Talukdar as its first Martyr. An economic blockade was launched. The supporters of the movement stopped the flow of crude oil and plywood from Assam to the rest of the country.
- On 18th January, 1980, at Duliajan, the headquarters of Oil India Limited, the district administration supported by police gave instructions for the dispersal of the picketers. When the picketers declined to leave, the police was forced to use tear gas and then fired to disperse the picketers. In this police firing, four persons were killed and many were injured. The leadership of the movement declared the deceased as martyrs of the movement. People in Assam overwhelmingly supported the oil blockade and joined in the picketing.
- On August 15, 1985, the Assam Accord was signed between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the leaders of the movement. As per the terms of the Accord, all illegal immigrants who had entered Assam between 1966 and March 1971 would be disenfranchised for ten years and those who came after 1971 would be deported. Under the Accord, the Union Government declared that constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards would be provided to

protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage the Assamese people. The Union government also agreed to increase patrolling across the border and to check future infiltration by building physical barriers such as walls and barbed-wire fencing, etc.

- With the signing of the Accord, a new party, namely, the Asom Gana Parishad was formed. As agreed at the time of signing of the Accord, the State government formed after the election of 1983 was dismissed and the State Assembly was dissolved. In the ensuing Assembly elections held in December 1985, the Asom Gana Parishad was voted to power and a new government was formed with Prafulla Kumar Mahanta as the Chief Minister.



10.6 FURTHER READING

1. Baruah, Sanjib. 2000. *India Against Itself*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
2. Gohain, Hiren. 1984. *Assam: The Burning Question*. Gauhati: Spectrum Publications.
3. Goswami, Sandhya. 1997. *Language Politics in Assam*, Ajanta, New Delhi.
4. Hussain, Monirul. 1994. *The Assam Movement - Class, Ideology and Identity*. Delhi: Manak Publications.

10.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: Anandaram Dhekial Phukan

Ans. to Q. No. 2: Assam Sahitya Sabha and Assam Jatiya Mahasabha

Ans. to Q. No. 3: Cachar Sangram Parishad.

Ans. to Q. No. 4: (i) The Assam Official Language Act of 1960 may be amended to do away with the provision relating to Mahkuma Parishads.

(ii) Communication between the state headquarters and Cachar and autonomous hill districts would continue in English until replaced by Hindi.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950

Ans. to Q. No. 6: Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP)

Ans. to Q. No. 7: Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act

Ans. to Q. No. 8: (i) All illegal immigrants who had entered Assam between 1966 and March 1971 would be disenfranchised for ten years and those who came after 1971 would be deported.

(ii) The Union Government declared that constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards would be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage the Assamese people.

(iii) The Union government also agreed to increase patrolling across the border and to check future infiltration by building physical barriers such as walls and barbed-wire fencing.

(iv) Building a new Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and setting up of an oil refinery in Assam were also promised by the Union Government.



10.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1: Name the organisation established in 1888 in Calcutta that played a significant role in the field of development of Assamese language and literature.

Q. 2: When did the Assam Sahitya Sabha observe the state language day across Assam?

Q. 3: In which year did the Parliament enact the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act ?

Q. 4: The issue of unabated infiltration came to light in the wake of by-election to which parliamentary constituency?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Analyse the background against which the civil society in Assam started asserting its linguistic and cultural identity more vigorously after independence.

Q. 2: Write briefly about the Shastri formula.

Q. 3: Explain the role of the ASSU in the Assam Movement.

Q. 4: Write briefly about the Assam Accord of 1985.

A) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Discuss the language movement in Assam.

Q. 2: Discuss the Assam Movement.

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UNIT 11: INSURGENCY IN ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

11.1 Learning Objectives

11.2 Introduction

11.3 Factors responsible for the Growth of Insurgency in Assam

11.4 Insurgent Outfits in Assam: ULFA and NDFB

11.5 Prospective Solutions to the problem of Insurgency

11.6 Let Us Sum Up

11.7 Further Reading

11.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.9 Model Questions

11.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the meaning of insurgency
- explain the factors responsible for the growth of insurgency in Assam
- discuss two important insurgent outfits in Assam, namely, ULFA and NDFB
- discuss some of the prospective solutions to the problem of insurgency.

11.2 INTRODUCTION

Secession, autonomy, separate statehood, ST status are certain demands which have been raised by certain sections in Assam. Very often, the demand for separate homeland is often accompanied by violence. Certain demands such as those for secession and separate statehood are directed against the established authority of the state and thereby assume the form of insurgency. The late1970s saw the beginning of the rise of most of the now active insurgent groups like ULFA, NDFB, MULTA, KPLT, Adivasi National Liberation Army, KLNLF. Most of these groups accuse the central government of ignorance about the region and internal colonization aimed at extracting resources from the region. The insurgent

scenario in the state is characterised by the existence of multiple separatist factions with demands ranging from regional autonomy to a separate state. These groups have made the region a hot bed of conflict and violence.

11.3 MEANING OF INSURGENCY; FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GROWTH OF INSURGENCY IN ASSAM

11.3.1 Meaning of Insurgency

Insurgency , literally means a kind of armed rebellion against the established authority. The insurgent groups aim at overthrowing the established government through different tactics, including armed rebellion and guerilla warfare backed up by political mobilization. The insurgent groups feel that their land and territory is under "political and economic occupation". They, generally try to garner the support of the masses by putting forward arguments about how the majoritarian state has deprived them and their region , economically, socially and politically and thereby try to justify their acts. They often indulge in violence and plays bargaining games with the authority. They operate within a definite territory and for a definite territory. So, they are not counted under terrorism. Their influence is limited to a certain community and space. Their interest also differs from outfits to outfit. They have varied objectives, role and activities. So, sometimes it becomes difficult to understand what their real motive is. Interestingly, inspite of having differences in aims and objectives, they have a common goal of fighting against the central government. Some of the common features that insurgent groups share are:

- A common ideology of blaming the government as wrong and illegitimate.
- To bring about a change in the politico -economic system.
- A popular support base.
- Dependent on one dominating and charismatic leadership.
- Mainly springs out of dissatisfaction over a long period of social injustice.

Insurgency is not a new phenomenon in India. The separatist tendencies have been visible in different parts of India since a very a long time. The nature of insurgency movement in India is largely sub regional and ethnic in nature. Separatism has been witnessed in different parts of India such as the Khalistan Movement in Punjab and Naxalite-Maoist insurgency covering many parts of central and eastern India. India's northeast India too has been witness to a prolonged period of insurgency related conflicts.

Assam is also one of the states that has been worst affected by guerilla warfare, bombings, military operations and unjustified torture of the militant groups on the local populace. Some of the important active outfits of Assam are:

- United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)
- National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)
- Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO)
- Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF)
- United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS)

The idea of secessionism among the Assamese could be traced back to late 1930s when it was a Governor's province. There was a grave threat towards the community becoming a minority as a consequence of immigration. Centre's apathy towards the problems of Assam was further compounded by the historical perceptions of the state political leadership which had developed a deep sense of grievance against the official policies during colonial rule as these policies affected the territorial, cultural and developmental interests of the region. Policies of Partition of India and the Grouping Plan further enhanced misgivings among the Assamese people about their fate and future. It got aggravated with the problem of immigration and language, leaving Assam to burn during the 1980s leading to the Assam Movement. During this period the armed insurgent group, namely, the ULFA was also born.

Again, the Bodos of Assam felt that they were on the verge of losing their cultural and ethnic identity due to the perceived cultural

and linguistic domination of the Assamese speaking population. So, in an effort to restore the process of Bodo cultural and ethnic identity and address the related issue of land alienation, the Bodo movement was eventually started. The All Bodo Students' Union, Bodo People's Action Committee and Bodo Security Force demanded separate Bodo statehood called Bodoland. The BLT faction later reached an agreement with the Government of Assam and formed a separate political entity within Assam called BTAD. But the NDFB continued with their demand of separate statehood.

11.3.2 Factors Responsible for Growth of Insurgencies in Assam

Erstwhile Assam and today's NE has still a low connectivity with mainland India. During the 1970s and 1980s, it was almost disconnected with mainland India, given the connectivity bottlenecks in those days. It was only through the 23 kilometers long corridor which connected Assam with other parts of India. Assam is more bordered by international boundaries than national. When erstwhile Assam got divided into seven states, it evolved as the only gateway to connect India with NE. So, structurally, economically and socially this region felt alienated and remained economically backward for long years. Representation from this part was low at All India level jobs. Business was taken over by the 'outsiders' like Marwaris from Rajasthan and other parts. Low level of development also hampered in the agricultural sector. Once, self sufficient, Assam at one stage, had to rely on exported rice and wheat. industrialization too was in a bad shape. So, literally, the region was suffering and the blame was unequal distribution of policies and programmes. So, many disgruntled youths started to unite against the government and the result was formation of insurgent groups one after another. The general factors contributing towards growth of insurgencies in Assam are:

(i) **Land Alienation:** Land is the principal form of property of the agrarian society in Assam. For the rural society, about nine-

tenth of them depend on agriculture and their mainstay of living is related to land. The problem started when immigration, both internal and external started and insecurity around land increased . It was two dimensional. First - Influx of "outsiders" created a fear psychosis among the mainstream Assamese population resulting in an agitation against illegal influx. Secondly, within Assam itself, the domination and so called "Assamese chauvinism" of the mainstream Assamese speaking population caused certain sections of tribal youths to agitate against the latter.

(ii) **Rural indebtedness:** Poverty, lack of paid work leading to financial distress in post independence India was a characteristic feature. Assam was also not free from it. The result was rural indebtedness. There was no credit flow from banks and no other such financial institutions was there to lend help. So, they had no other way out except borrowing and a chain system of borrowing emerged. As a result most of the time, the people lost their wealth (mortgaged land or jewelries) and they fell into a vicious cycle of poverty. So, lack of adequate financial support from the government led certain sections to agitate against the government.

(iii) **Unemployment:** Inability to utilize the potential of the youths in productive activities, inadequate employment opportunities, low remuneration in private organizations and related problems, inappropriate skill development programmes are some factors which contributor to rising unemployment in the region leading a huge chunk of the youths towards insurgency.

(iv) **Non-exploitation of Resources for the benefit of the region:** Assam is a store house of natural resources. It has a huge potential to generate employment and wealth. There is an immense potential for hydropower production from Brahmaputra, tourism, etc which could be used scientifically for the benefit of the region. There are huge oil reserves with the potentiality of the state becoming an oil exporter. However, despite the region

being endowed with such enormous resources, successive governments have failed to tap the potential of the region to the fullest. Instead, it was being increasingly felt that at best the centre had always been in interested in just extracting resources from the region, whether oil, coal, timber and minerals, rather than using them for the benefit of the people of the region. There was a strong feeling of anger against this "step motherly" treatment being meted out to the state. As such, many youths were driven to the path of insurgency and armed violence.

(v) **Support from foreign countries:** At different periods of time, some countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, Pakistan were seen to be lending support to those insurgents. They gave shelter knowingly or unknowingly to the insurgent groups making the problem acute. Some of these countries even supply arms, provide funds as well as training ground for these groups which have kept them alive.

(vi) **Human Rights violations:** Due to continuous strife in the region there is deployment of counter insurgency agencies like the Army, BSF, ITBP, CRPF, etc. It has been seen that in counter-insurgency operations, there have been instances of gross violation of human rights and many youths have been subjected to physical violence during such operations. This has resulted in the growth of mistrust between the common people and the government. This situation has worked favourably for the insurgents who try to mobilize public opinion in their favour. Many victims who have suffered at the hands of the security forces have been seen to join the insurgent groups which strengthen the outfits' organization.

(vii) **Failure of the government:** The Central government in India has failed to address the problems of this region over and again. Most of the bipartite or tripartite talks with the insurgent outfits did not yield any result. The government actually failed to understand the sentiments of the people at large. The continuous failure of the government in finding lasting solutions

to the conflict situation of the region has only resulted in the further surge of insurgent groups.

(viii) Mutual understanding between vested interests and insurgents: It is also alleged at times, that certain vested interest groups also play a role in the survival of insurgent outfits. They provide fund, as well as shelter and even involve and uses them for political gains.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: What do you understand by Insurgency?

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Q.2: Write the names of four insurgent groups active in Assam?

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11.4 INSURGENT OUTFITS IN ASSAM: ULFA AND NDFB

11.4.1 United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)

The ULFA was formed in April 1979 in Sivasagar in Assam by some youths which included Paresh Baruah, Arabinda Rajkhowa, Anup Chetia, Pradip Gogoi, Bhadreshwar Gohain and Budheswar Gogoi. Its main aim is secession from India by way of engaging in an armed struggle to form a sovereign socialist Assam. During the 1990s , the ULFA, in its early years, was successful in mobilizing large sections of the people of Assam on the issue of perceived "colonial" mode of exploitation of the resources of the region by the centre.

- **Main demands:**

  (i) Rights of the people of Assam to exercise control over their own land and resources.

  (ii) Protection and conservation of the ethnic people and their rights (constitutional and political rights) as well their culture and tradition.

  (iii) Rights over economic resources including oil and to stop further exploitation

  (iv) Provide social security through upgradation in education, health and other necessary sectors.

  (v) Structural development through building of bridges, proper connectivity, upgraded transport and communication as well as facilitation of capital for industrialization.

  (vi) Improved relation with neighbouring countries.

ULFA finished its first recruitment by 1984 and it started training and arm procurement process from groups like Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and NSCN. They learned the rudiment of insurgent tactics from KIA. They used the Indo-Burma forest as their training base camps. It was also found that they had good relations with the Royal Bhutan Army for steady support of rations and logistics. They were seen to be involved in money laundering and kidnapping as their sources of income. In a very short period of time, they grew as one of the most powerful insurgent groups in South Asia with strong mass support. Probably, it was the only insurgent group to have such an immense popularity. It was because they had a very clear ideology in the first instance and many people of the region looked upon them as "saviors".

By 1990s, it started indulging in various violent activities and the Government of India classified it as a terrorist organization and banned it under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in 1990. There were a number of military operations carried out by the Government of India like Operation Bajrang in 1990, Operation Rhino in 1991, Operation All Clear in 2003 and Operation Rhino 2

by the Indian Army. By 2011, ULFA leaders led by ULFA 'vice chairman' Pradip Gogoi, along with 'foreign secretary" Sashadhar Choudhury and "central publicity secretary", Mithinga Daimary announced that the outfit's central executive council would sit for talks with the Central Government without precondition. Interestingly, this was not supported by ULFA's "commander-in-chief" Paresh Baruah who declared the general council itself as unconstitutional. Hence, a formal spilt in ULFA occurred and it split into ULFA- Anti Talks Faction (ULFA-ATF) led by Paresh Baruah and ULFA Pro-Talks Faction (ULFA-PTF) led by Arabinda Rajkhowa.

In recent times, the outfit has been weakened considerably. Many recruiters have surrendered and returned along with their leaders, powerful members like Anup Chetia have been arrested and the flow of youth to the organization has also decreased. The popular mass support that the organization used to enjoy earlier has declined as people got fed up with the violent path that the outfit adopted. In the contemporary period, the trend is more towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on evolving political solution rather than a military one.

11.4.2 National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)

In 1986, October 3, Ranjan Daimary formed an armed outfit called Bodo Security Force (BdSF) in Odla Kashibari Village near Udalguri, to preserve the identity and security of the Bodo people living in Assam and demanded formation of a separate state of Bodoland within India. This organization was rechristened as NDFB on November 25, 1994 following the rejection of the Bodo Accord signed between the Government of India and All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU)-Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC). With the rechristening of BdSF as NDFB, the organization started Guerrilla Warfare. The motive of NDFB is establishment of sovereign Bodoland. The ideology of the group is ethnic nationalism , Marxism, Socialism and Democracy. It shows its allegiance to UNLFW- a

conglomeration of several separatist outfits from the North East region . The NDFB has two groups namely National Council (political wing) and Bodoland Army(armed wing). After the Operation All Clear launched by the Indian Army in 2003, the NDFB decided to go for ceasefire and agreed to sit for talks with the government in 2004. The NDFB subsequently split into two factions namely, NDFB - Progressive and the faction led by Ranjan Daimary alias D R Nabla. It had its headquarters in Myanmar and it is currently operating in the areas in the north and north west of Brahmaputra(Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Darrang, Barpeta, Dhubri, Nalbari and Sonitpur districts)in Assam and in the Garo Hills in Meghalaya. The Myanmar Army, of late, has launched offensive operations against the Indian insurgent groups operating out of Myanmar, including ULFA and NDFB.

The original motive of NDFB has been diluted over time and it has coordinated efforts with the ULFA. Sometime in 1999, the ULFA and NDFB formed a coordination committee for launching a united struggle. NDFB also works with NSCN(IM). Somewhere down the line, the ideology followed by NDFB started to mismatch with that of its counterpart , Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) and civil society organizations including All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) and Bodo Sahitya Sabha. The violence they have indulged themselves in is not supported by the majority of the Bodo population as well as the civil society organizations. They are seen to have indulged themselves in violence from time to time. Mention may be made of 1998 santhal killings in Gossaigaon, landmine attack on Security Forces Personnel in Kamrup, bombing of a passenger train near Tezpur , serial blasts in Guwahati city, etc. In 2012, NDFB of Nabla faction split further, leading to the formation of another new faction, which was led by a non-Bodo I K Songbijit.

- **Main Demands:**
  - (i) Securing a sovereign Bodoland.
  - (ii) To liberate the Bodo people from "Indian" expansionism and occupation.

(iii) To uphold integrity of Bodoland through establishment of a democratic socialist society and to promote liberty, equality and fraternity.

(iv) To liberate the Bodo community from exploitation of other communities in Assam and uphold their ethnic identity and cultural traditions.

(v) Introduction of the Roman script for Bodo Language.

(vi) Preservation of Tribal Belts and Blocks for security against illegal immigrants.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: The ULFA was formed in April 1979 .(True/ False)

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Q.4: Mention any two demands of the NDFB ?

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11.5 PROSPECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF INSURGENCY

Assam, a serene land of peace has been living in a fear psychosis for a number of decades. It has been reeling under insecurity and violence. Bandhs and strikes have become a way of life. In April, 2000, the then Union Minister for Home Affairs, L.K.Advani expressed the government's readiness to enter into a dialogue process with the NDFB and ULFA , if they were interested to give up violence and agreed to negotiations within the framework of Indian Constitution. It ended before starting and the issue remained as it was. Regarding ULFA as stated earlier peace talks bifurcated the organization. Same has happened with NDFB. So, plausible solution is not possible unless the organizations compromised with their motive and ideology. Yet, some of the prospective solutions may work out to a large extent.

- Rapid economic development should be brought as soon as possible by mobilising the resources available.

- Governance system and delivery mechanism of administration should reach the needy instead of the elite.
- Counter-insurgency programmes and use of force should be avoided and should be taken only as a last resort.
- The armed groups must demand reasonable demands as seeking sovereignty is unreasonable.
- For proper political settlement of the problems the government should be transparent and avoid creation of tensions.
- The state police and central forces should equally cooperate with one another in matters of intelligence sharing, investigation and operations against militants so that the information received is credible and foolproof so that it does not create confusion among the population and the insurgent groups.
- Moreover, the operating Autonomous Councils should be empowered.
- Work permit to the immigrant workers can be given.
- Emphasizing the importance of the role of Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and North Eastern Council (NEC) as agencies for effective implementation of development policies.
- Most importantly, the centre must remain mindful of the cultural psyche of the people of the region and try to fulfil their socio-cultural aspirations.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: Mention any two solutions to the problem of insurgency in Assam?

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11.6 LET US SUM UP

- Insurgency , literally means a kind of armed rebellion against the established authority. The insurgent groups aim at overthrowing the established government through different tactics, including armed rebellion and guerilla warfare backed up by political mobilization.
- Insurgency is not a new phenomenon in India. The separatist tendencies have been visible in different parts of India since a very a long time. Separatism has been witnessed in different parts of India such as the Khalistan Movement in Punjab and Naxalite-Maoist insurgency covering many parts of central and eastern India. India's northeast India too has been witness to a prolonged period of insurgency related conflicts.
- Assam is also one of the states that has been worst affected by guerilla warfare, bombings, military operations and unjustified torture of the militant groups on the local populace.
- The idea of secessionism among the Assamese could be traced back to late 1930s when it was a Governor's province. There was a grave threat towards the community becoming a minority as a consequence of immigration. Centre's apathy towards the problems of Assam was further compounded by the historical perceptions of the state political leadership which had developed a deep sense of grievance against the official policies during colonial rule as these policies affected the territorial, cultural and developmental interests of the region.
- Policies of Partition of India and the Grouping Plan further enhanced misgivings among the Assamese people about their fate and future. It got aggravated with the problem of immigration and language, leaving Assam to burn during the 1980s leading to the Assam Movement. During this period the armed insurgent group, namely, the ULFA was also born.

- Again, the Bodos of Assam felt that they were on the verge of losing their cultural and ethnic identity due to the perceived cultural and linguistic domination of the Assamese speaking population. So, in an effort to restore the process of Bodo cultural and ethnic identity and address the related issue of land alienation, the Bodo movement was eventually started.
- The All Bodo Students' Union, Bodo People's Action Committee and Bodo Security Force (which later split into BLT and NDFB) demanded separate Bodo statehood called Bodoland. The BLT faction later reached an agreement with the Government of Assam and formed a separate political entity within Assam called BTAD. But the NDFB continued with their demand of separate statehood.
- Some of the general factors contributing towards growth of insurgencies in Assam are Land Alienation, Rural indebtedness, Unemployment, Non-exploitation of Resources for the benefit of the region, etc.
- The ULFA was formed in April 1979 in Sivasagar in Assam by some youths. Some of the main demands of the ULFA include rights of the people of Assam to exercise control over their own land and resources, protection and conservation of the ethnic people and their rights (constitutional and political rights) as well their culture and tradition, etc.
- A formal spilt in ULFA occurred and it split into ULFA- Anti Talks Faction (ULFA-ATF) led by Paresh Baruah and ULFA Pro-Talks Faction (ULFA-PTF) led by Arabinda Rajkhowa.
- In 1986, October 3, an armed outfit called Bodo Security Force (BdSF) was formed in Odla Kashibari Village near Udalguri. This organization was rechristened as NDFB on November 25, 1994. Some of the demands of the NDFB include securing a sovereign Bodoland, to liberate the Bodo people from "Indian" expansionism and occupation.
- The NDFB subsequently split into two factions namely, NDFB - Progressive and the faction led by Ranjan Daimary alias D R Nabla.

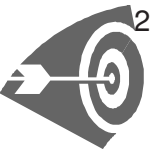
In 2012, NDFB of Nabla faction split further, leading to the formation of another new faction, which was led by a non-Bodo I K Songbijit.

- Some of the prospective solutions to insurgency may be- rapid economic development of the region by mobilising the resources available; governance system and delivery mechanism of administration should be made to reach the needy instead of the elite; counter-insurgency programmes and use of force should be avoided and should be taken only as a last resort; The armed groups must demand reasonable demands as seeking sovereignty is unreasonable ; etc.



11.7 FURTHER READING

1. Baruah, Sanjib. (2001). *India Against Itself*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
2. Bhattacharjee .J.B.(2007). *Roots of Insurgency in Northeast India*. New Delhi : Akansha Pulishing House.



11.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: Insurgency , literally means a kind of armed rebellion against the established authority. The insurgent groups aim at overthrowing the established government through different tactics, including armed rebellion and guerilla warfare backed up by political mobilization. The insurgent groups feel that their land and territory is under "political and economic occupation". They, generally try to garner the support of the masses by putting forward arguments about how the majoritarian state has deprived them and their region, economically, socially and politically and thereby try to justify their acts. They often indulge in violence and plays bargaining games with the authority. They operate within a definite territory and for a definite territory.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: (i) Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF)

(ii) United Peoples Democratic Solidarity (UPDS)

Ans. to Q. No. 3: True

Ans. to Q. No. 4: (i) Securing a sovereign Bodoland.

(ii) To liberate the Bodo people from "Indian" expansionism and occupation.

Ans. to Q. No. 5: (i) Rapid economic development should be brought as soon as possible by mobilising the resources available.

(ii) Governance system and delivery mechanism of administration should reach the needy instead of the elite.



11.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1: Mention any two factors responsible for the growth of insurgencies in Assam.

Q. 2: Operation All Clear was launched by the Indian Army in which year?

Q. 3: In which year was the ULFA was formed ?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Explain the meaning of insurgency.

Q. 2: Explain any four common features that insurgent groups share.

Q. 3: Write a short note on ULFA or NDFB

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Explain any five factors responsible for growth of insurgencies in Assam.

Q. 2: Explain the prospective solutions to the problem of insurgency.

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UNIT 12: SIXTH SCHEDULE AND MOVEMENT FOR AUTONOMY IN THE HILLS

UNIT STRUCTURE

12.1 Learning Objectives

12.2 Introduction

12.3 Constitutional Provisions under the Sixth Schedule

12.4 Movement for Autonomy in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills

12.5 Let Us Sum Up

12.6 Further Reading

12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.8 Model Questions

12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- explain the historical background of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution
- explain the features of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- discuss the establishment of District Councils and Regional Councils in Assam
- discuss the movement for autonomy in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills

12.2 INTRODUCTION

India attained independence in 1947 and before India attained independence the British Government had identified the tribal areas and gave assurances for their protection and also development. However, they took no effective measures to provide political autonomy to the tribes. There emerged various demands for autonomy and better status from the tribes of the hill areas of Assam within the framework of the Constitution of India after independence. Then the Constitution of India made special provisions

through the Sixth Schedule for local self-government in the hill areas inhabited by tribal people in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

The origin of the Sixth Schedule goes back to the very constitution of Assam as a separate province of British India in 1874. Some parts of the province described as 'backward tracts' were to be administered under the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874. The need for a separate system of local administration was felt as the people of those areas have a distinct culture which they wanted to maintain and keep intact. The people of these areas wanted to maintain their authority over their land, forests, streams and rivers and safeguard their customs and traditions, dress, food habits and also preserve their tribal social norms and their own system of social justice.

However, because of various historical reasons, the people of these areas remained backward both economically and educationally. They have a rich heritage which needed to be protected from being overrun by people from the plains. It was felt that the system of local administration prescribed for the other areas of the country would not be suitable for the hill areas of the North East and hence a simpler form of administrative arrangement has been provided through the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution which provides special constitutional safeguards to the hill areas of the north east.

12.3 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS UNDER THE SIXTH SCHEDULE

In order to ensure the participation of the people of the 'backward tracts' and to safeguard tribal interests, the interim Government of India appointed a Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly under the chairmanship of Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi. This Committee was known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee. The Bordoloi Committee made an intensive study of the various demands and aspirations of the hill tribes and recommended the introduction of a simple and inexpensive administrative set-up for administration of tribal areas to be called District Councils. The recommendations of the Bordoloi

Committee were incorporated into Article 244(2) of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Bordoloi Committee also made provisions for Regional Council for the tribes other than the main tribes. This scheme sought to build up autonomous administration (District Councils and Regional Councils) in the hill areas of Assam which included at that time the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District, Garo Hills District, Lushai Hills District, Naga Hills District, North Cachar Hills District and Mikir Hills District.

- **Features of the Sixth Schedule**

1. The aim of the Sixth Schedule is to empower the tribal population of the hill areas by providing them the means to participate in decision making and their own governance. It is a measure for decentralization of power and expanding democracy to the grass root level.
2. The Sixth Schedule is a measure to provide protection to the indigenous population along with their tradition and culture. Though the tribal people are very keen about the preservation of their own culture, tradition and social system and institutions and are very conscious of their authority over their land, forest, streams and rivers yet they did not have enough means to preserve their own identity. The rich heritage of the indigeneous people needs to be protected and developed. The idea behind the Sixth Schedule is to provide the tribal people with a simple and inexpensive administrative set up of their own which would safeguard their customs, tradition social norms and way of life.
3. At present, there are nine autonomous hill tribal districts in these four states of the north east. They are the North Cachar Hills District (Assam), the Karbi Anglong District (Assam), the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (Assam), the Khasi Hills District (Meghalaya), the Garo Hills District (Meghalaya), the Jaintia Hills District (Meghalaya), Tripura Tribal Areas District (Tripura), the Chakma District (Mizoram), the Mara District (Mizoram) and the Lai District (Mizoram).

4. The Sixth Schedule along with the Fifth Schedule applicable to the Scheduled areas and the Scheduled Tribes outside the northeastern region were described by the former Chief Justice of India, late Mohammed Hidayatullah as 'miniature constitutions for certain scheduled areas of India' which implies that the Sixth Schedule is a little Constitution within the Constitution of India. The Sixth Schedule provides every detail about the rules for establishment, determination of the autonomous districts and autonomous regions, composition powers and functions of the District Council or Regional Councils. The Autonomous District Council is a body which is created by the Parliament. The Autonomous District Council may act independently of the State Legislature.

5. The Sixth Schedule provides for constitutional bodies for administration of the tribal areas in the States of Assam, Megahalya , Tripura and Mozoram. It provides that certain designated tribal areas of these states will constitute autonomous districts and autonomous regions. Again, if there are different Scheduled Tribes in an autonomous district, the Governor may, by public notification, divide the area or areas inhabited by them into autonomous regions. The areas of the autonomous districts are determined by the State Governor. The Sixth Schedule empowers the Governor of a State to create a new autonomous district, increase or diminish the area of any existing District Council, unite two or more autonomous districts or parts thereof so as to form one autonomous district, define the boundaries of any district and alter the name of any autonomous district. The administrative areas of the District Councils however, may differ from place to place. For instance, the District Councils in Assam and Meghalaya have been constituted at the district level whereas in Mizoram, the District Councils have been created at both the district and sub-divisional levels.

6. According to the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, the District Councils shall consist of thirty members, 26 are elected from the single member constituencies on the basis of adult franchise and not more than four persons are nominated by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Executive Member of the Council for a term of five years. There will be a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman in each District Council who are elected by the elected members of the District Councils. Functionally, the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman act like the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of a legislature. The District Councils are empowered to make laws for allotment, occupation, use of land; management of unreserved forests, use of water courses and canals for agriculture purpose, regulation of shifting cultivation, establishment of village councils and town committees, administration of village policy, public health and sanitation, appointment and succession of chiefs. Laws made by the District Council are published in the official gazette of the concerned state.

   Paragraph 4 of the Sixth Schedule entitles the District Council to constitute Village and District Council Courts in the autonomous areas to adjudicate or try cases of customary laws in which both the parties are tribals. No other court except the High Court and the Supreme Court of India have jurisdiction over suits and cases decided by the Council Courts. District council has the powers to collect land revenues and levy and collect various taxes. In addition to these sources of revenue, grants-in-aid, loans and advances etc. from the state government constitute other sources of income of the Councils. Like the local self government institutions of the non-tribal areas (panchayats) , the district councils also constitute a part of the third stratum of Indian administration.

7. The Sixth Schedule provides for an Executive Committee (EC) of the District Council to carry on its executive functions. The

EC consists of the Chief Executive Member, and other Executive Members. It is just on the lines of a cabinet system in parliamentary democracy. The District Council is like a miniature government at the district level. It is clear from the provisions of the Sixth Schedule that the civil administration of the autonomous districts is carried on by two authorities viz. Deputy Commissioner representing the state Government and the Executive Committee of the District Councils. The Sixth Schedule has thus created two sets of authorities.

8. The provisions of the Sixth Schedule can be amended only by the Parliament like any other part of the constitution. But it must mentioned here that the amendments of some parts of the Sixth Schedule are not regarded as amendments to the Constitution under Article 368.

- **Establishment of District Councils and Regional Councils in Assam**

Under the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, the Government of Assam framed the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of District Councils) Rules 1951 and the Pawi-Lakher (Constitution of Regional Councils) Rules, 1952 for the autonomous region in the Lushai Hills District. Accordingly, the District Councils and the Regional Councils were constituted in 1952 and 1953 respectively. The two districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar were granted autonomy as far back as in 1952 under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution to bring economic, educational and linguistic aspirations, preservation of land rights, ethnic identity of the respective tribes and also for speeding up infrastructure development in the districts.

The plain tribes of Assam in the last few decades have also become organized and have demanded constitutional safeguard and also special administrative arrangement for their respective community in the pattern of hill administration in Assam.

In 2003 the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD) comprising four plains districts were also granted autonomy under the Sixth Schedule. Thus, the Sixth Schedule gradually extended to the plain tribal areas of Assam.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Mention any two features of the Sixth Schedule .

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Q.2: The Bordoloi Committee also made provisions for Regional Council for the tribes other than the main tribes. (True/False).

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12.4 MOVEMENT FOR AUTONOMY IN KARBI ANGLONG AND NORTH CACHAR HILLS

Since independence, Assam which is a land of diverse ethnic communities, has witnessed a number of identity movements , both peaceful and violent which are centred around political demands for statehood. Assam has experienced reorganizations several times leading to the drastic reduction in size of the state. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India provides for Autonomous Councils for the hill areas of Assam. But the two hill districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills since the 1960s have been citing the inadequacies of the Autonomous Councils under the Sixth Schedule. In fact, in recent times, Karbi-Dimasa Autonomy movement has undergone a major change with the movement giving rise to demand for exclusive autonomous homeland on ethnic lines.

The demand of the hill people of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hill districts for an autonomous state in Assam is rooted in the long history of similar movements in the north-east which have led first to the separate state of Nagaland, then Mizoram and later Meghalaya. In the recent past,

Assam has witnessed a series of ethnic flare ups with a number of ethnic groups like the Rabhas, the Tiwas, the Misings, the Sonowal Kacharis, the Koch Rajbonghsis, the Boro, the Dimasas and the Karbis intensifying their demands for either greater autonomy or separate statehood based on their ethnic identities. Tracing the genesis of the district of Karbi Anglong, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District came into being in November, 1951. The new district was formally created with some parts of the districts of Sivasagar (now Golaghat), Nagaon, Cachar and United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of the present State of Meghalaya. Subsequently, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was bifurcated into two separate districts, namely, the Mikir Hills district and North Cachar Hills district in the year 1970. The Mikir Hills district was again rechristened as "Karbi Anglong District" with effect from October 14, 1976. Thus, Karbi Anglong came into being as a full-fledged separate district in the map of Assam with its head quarters at Diphu. Likewise, North Cachar hills also emerged as a full-fledged district with its headquarters in Halflong. Presently, the North Cachar Hills district has been renamed as Dima Hasao district.

Both districts enjoys autonomy as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Karbis and the Dimasas occupy an important position among the tribal communities of Assam.

In the mid 1950s, demands were made for the creation of a separate hill state in the form of the Hill State Movement. Karbi Anglong did not participate actively in the Hill State Movement being led by the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference.

In 1970 when Meghalaya was formed, the two districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar were given the option to join the new autonomous state, but however on the contrary, they decided to remain in Assam. However, the two hill districts all along desired greater devolution of powers.

The question of ethnic identity assertion of the Karbis again found prominence in the politics of the district in the mid-1980s. Some of the ultra nationalist policies followed by the Asssam government were also responsible for creating doubts among the tribal population in different parts

of Assam including Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills (presently Dima Hasao). There are mainly two factors are: i) Introduction of Assamese as a compulsory 'Third Language' under the Secondary Education Board of Assam (SEBA) as per a circular issued in 1986. ii) Introduction of new Language Policy making mandatory the knowledge of Assamese for all recruitment to government services. The two Hill Districts considered these moves of the then government as the violation of Bimala Prasad Chaliha's commitment of not making the knowledge of Assamese compulsory for recruitment to government services . Against this background, an umbrella organization called-Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) was constituted to safeguard the language, culture and tradition of the hill people of both North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong. The ASDC raised the demand for an autonomous State for Karbi Anglong and N.C.Hills under Article 244-A of the Indian Constitution. The Article 244-A deals with the formation of an autonomous State comprising certain tribal areas in Assam and creation of local Legislature or Council of Ministers or both.

Accordingly, the struggle for an autonomous State within the State of Assam was launched in pursuance of Art.244-A of the Indian Constitution as a means of securing administrative and political autonomy to the fullest extent possible. A series of bandhs were organized by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous State Demand Committee over a period of time. It observed a Karbi Anglong State demand day on 17 June, 1986. The ASDC claimed to have observed a parallel Independence Day Programme on 15 August, 1986 to fulfil the demand for the creation of an autonomous state. Protest marches, prayer meetings, etc., were organized in different parts of the district even as demands were raised for constituting an Autonomous State within Assam under Article 244-A of the Constitution comprising the two hill districts.

In an effort to prevent further reorganization and division of the State of Assam while at the same finding a solution within the framework of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ASDC, Karbi Students' Association (KSA), North Cachar

Hills Students' Federation (NCHSF), Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) on the one hand and the Assam government on the other, on April 1,1995, in the presence of the Union Home Minister. This led to the enhancement of the powers and functions of the Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong in terms of as many as thirty subjects/departments. Henceforth, the Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong was renamed as Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

Accordingly, under the Memorandum of Understanding, 1995, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council was entrusted functions in relation to thirty subjects/departments to which the executive powers of the State of Assam extended. However, even in the aftermath of the MoU of 1995, the demand for an autonomous or separate state for the Karbis has not come to a logical end as the political struggle for fulfilment of the ethnic aspirations of the Karbis is still alive. It may be mentioned here that a new district, namely , the West Karbi Anglong district was created out of the existing Karbi Anglong district of Assam in 2015 with headquarters in Hamren. The district comes under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and is administered according to the provisions of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: The ASDC raised the demand for an autonomous State for Karbi Anglong and N.C.Hills under which Article of the Indian Constitution?

.....

Q.4: A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ASDC, Karbi Students' Association (KSA), North Cachar Hills Students' Federation (NCHSF), Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) on the one hand and the Assam government on the other, on April 1,1995. (True/False)

.....



12.5 LET US SUM UP

- In order to ensure the participation of the people of the 'backward tracts' and to safeguard tribal interests, the interim Government of India appointed a Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly under the chairmanship of Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi. This Committee was known as the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee.
- The Bordoloi Committee made an intensive study of the various demands and aspirations of the hill tribes and recommended the introduction of a simple and inexpensive administrative set-up for administration of tribal areas to be called District Councils.
- The recommendations of the Bordoloi Committee were incorporated into Article 244(2) of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Bordoloi Committee also made provisions for Regional Council for the tribes other than the main tribes. This scheme sought to build up autonomous administration (District Councils and Regional Councils) in the hill areas of Assam.
- The aim of the Sixth Schedule is to empower the tribal population of the hill areas by providing them the means to participate in decision making and their own governance. It is a measure for decentralization of power and expanding democracy to the grass root level.
- The Sixth Schedule is a measure to provide protection to the indigenous population along with their tradition and culture.
- At present, there are nine autonomous hill tribal districts in these four states of the north east. They are the North Cachar Hills District (Assam), the Karbi Anglong District (Assam), the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (Assam), the Khasi Hills District (Meghalaya), the Garo Hills District (Meghalaya), the Jaintia Hills District (Meghalaya), Tripura Tribal Areas District (Tripura), the Chakma District (Mizoram), the Mara District (Mizoram) and the Lai District (Mizoram).

- The Sixth Schedule provides for constitutional bodies for administration of the tribal areas in the States of Assam, Megahalya , Tripura and Mozoram. It provides that certain designated tribal areas of these states will constitute autonomous districts and autonomous regions.
- The Sixth Schedule provides for an Executive Committee (EC) of the District Council to carry on its executive functions. The EC consists of the Chief Executive Member, and other Executive Members. It is just on the lines of a cabinet system in parliamentary democracy.
- Under the Sixth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, the Government of Assam framed the Assam Autonomous District (Constitution of District Councils) Rules 1951 and the Pawi-Lakher (Constitution of Regional Councils) Rules, 1952 for the autonomous region in the Lushai Hills District. Accordingly, the District Councils and the Regional Councils were constituted in 1952 and 1953 respectively.
- Since independence, Assam which is a land of diverse ethnic communities, has witnessed a number of identity movements , both peaceful and violent which are centred around political demands for statehood. Assam has experienced reorganizations several times leading to the drastic reduction in size of the state.
- The demand of the hill people of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hill districts for an autonomous state in Assam is rooted in the long history of similar movements in the north-east which have led first to the separate state of Nagaland, then Mizoram and later Meghalaya.
- Tracing the genesis of the district of Karbi Anglong, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District came into being in November, 1951. The new district was formally created with some parts of the districts of Sivasagar (now Golaghat), Nagaon, Cachar and United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district of the present State of Meghalaya. Subsequently, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was bifurcated into two separate districts, namely, the Mikir Hills district and North Cachar Hills district in the year 1970.

- The Mikir Hills district was again rechristened as "Karbi Anglong District" with effect from October 14, 1976. Thus, Karbi Anglong came into being as a full-fledged separate district in the map of Assam with its head quarters at Diphu. Likewise, North Cachar hills also emerged as a full-fledged district with its headquarters in Halflong. Presently, the North Cachar Hills district has been renamed as Dima Hasao district.
- Both districts enjoys autonomy as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Karbis and the Dimasas occupy an important position among the tribal communities of Assam.
- In the mid 1950s, demands were made for the creation of a separate hill state in the form of the Hill State Movement. Karbi Anglong did not participate actively in the Hill State Movement being led by the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference.
- The question of ethnic identity assertion of the Karbis again found prominence in the politics of the district in the mid-1980s. Some of the ultra nationalist policies followed by the Asssam government were also responsible for creating doubts among the tribal population in different parts of Assam including Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills (presently Dima Hasao).
- Against this background, an umbrella organization called-Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) was constituted to safeguard the language, culture and tradition of the hill people of both North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong.
- The ASDC raised the demand for an autonomous State for Karbi Anglong and N.C.Hills under Article 244-A of the Indian Constitution. The Article 244-A deals with the formation of an autonomous State comprising certain tribal areas in Assam and creation of local Legislature or Council of Ministers or both.
- Accordingly, the struggle for an autonomous State within the State of Assam was launched in pursuance of Art.244-A of the Indian Constitution as a means of securing administrative and political autonomy to the fullest extent possible. A series of bandhs were

organized by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous State Demand Committee over a period of time. It observed a Karbi Anglong State demand day on 17 June, 1986.

- The ASDC claimed to have observed a parallel Independence Day Programme on 15 August, 1986 to fulfil the demand for the creation of an autonomous state. Protest marches, prayer meetings, etc., were organized in different parts of the district even as demands were raised for constituting an Autonomous State within Assam under Article 244-A of the Constitution comprising the two hill districts.
- In an effort to prevent further reorganization and division of the State of Assam while at the same finding a solution within the framework of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ASDC, Karbi Students' Association (KSA), North Cachar Hills Students' Federation (NCHSF), Dimasa Students' Union (DSU) on the one hand and the Assam government on the other, on April 1,1995, in the presence of the Union Home Minister.
- This led to the enhancement of the powers and functions of the Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong in terms of as many as thirty subjects/departments. Henceforth, the Autonomous District Council of Karbi Anglong was renamed as Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.
- Accordingly, under the Memorandum of Understanding, 1995, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council was entrusted functions in relation to thirty subjects/departments to which the executive powers of the State of Assam extended.



12.6 FURTHER READING

1. Konwar, Narayan. *Society and Politics In Assam*. Guwahati : Book Land.
2. Sengupta, Sarthar(ed.). *Tribal Studies in North East India*. New Delhi : Mittal Publications.

3. Kumar. B.B.(ed.). *Problems of Ethnicity in North East India*. New Delhi. Concept Publishing Company

12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: (a) The aim of the Sixth Schedule is to empower the tribal population of the hill areas by providing them the means to participate in decision making and their own governance. It is a measure for decentralization of power and expanding democracy to the grass root level.

(b) The Sixth Schedule is a measure to provide protection to the indigenous population along with their tradition and culture. Though the tribal people are very keen about the preservation of their own culture, tradition and social system and institutions and are very conscious of their authority over their land, forest, streams and rivers yet they did not have enough means to preserve their own identity. The rich heritage of the indigeneous people needs to be protected and developed. The idea behind the Sixth Schedule is to provide the tribal people with a simple and inexpensive administrative set up of their own which would safeguard their customs, tradition social norms and way of life.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: True

Ans. to Q. No. 3: Article 244-A

Ans. to Q. No. 4: True

12.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1: Name the states covered under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Q. 2: The recommendations of the .....Committee were

incorporated into the Article 244(2) of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. (Fill in the Blank)

Q. 3: Name the Hill Tribes under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in Assam.

Q. 4: In which year BTAD was granted autonomy?

B. Short Questions: (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Write briefly about the North-East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas Committee.

Q. 2: Write briefly about the establishment of District Councils and Regional Councils in Assam.

C. Long Questions: (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Discuss any six features of the Sixth Schedule.

Q. 2: Discuss the autonomy movement in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills Districts.

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UNIT 13: MOVEMENT FOR BODOLAND

UNIT STRUCTURE

13.1 Learning Objectives
13.2 Introduction
13.3 Movement for Bodoland
13.3.1 Background of the Movement for Bodoland
13.3.2 The Demand for Bodoland
13.3.3 Bodo Accord and the establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council
13.4 Let Us Sum Up
13.5 Further Reading
13.6 Answers to Check Your Progress
13.7 Model Questions

13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the issue of assertion of the Bodo ethnic identity
- discuss the background of the movement for Bodoland with reference to the Roman Script movement and the demand for Udayachal
- describe the demand for Bodoland and the events surrounding the movement for Bodoland
- discuss the Memorandum of Settlement and establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

The issue of ethnic self-consciousness manifested in terms of assertion based on one's tribe, community and language often with the demand for political autonomy has been an important feature of politics of the North-Eastern region in the contemporary period. Such sentiments are often expressed in terms of organised movements. In this unit we shall attempt to learn about the ethnic identity based movement of the Bodo people which has been an important factor in the political history of Assam.

13.3 MOVEMENT FOR BODOLAND

13.3.1 Background of the Movement for Bodoland

The collective mobilisation of the Bodo community for securing political autonomy and the demand for a separate state of Bodoland within the Indian union has been a major factor in the post-independent political history of Assam. Infact, the socio-political movement for Bodoland marks a new chapter in the history of social movements in the country. Let us now examine the background of the movement for Bodoland.

- **Roman Script Movement**

  In the initial period, assertion of the Bodo identity was associated with the language issue. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was formed at Basugoan, near Kokrajhar in 1952. Immediately after its inaugural meeting, the BSS presented a memorandum to the then Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Bishnu Ram Medhi, seeking Bodo as the medium of instruction in Bodo areas. Subsequently, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) organized a massive demonstration in Kokrajhar making the same demand. In 1963, the Assam Government introduced the Bodo language in the Bodo Kachari belts up to class III. In 1966, although the Assam Government recognized the Bodo language up to the secondary stage of education in Assam, it did not take appropriate steps to implement this scheme. This led to wide-spread dissatisfaction and the BSS took to agitation once again. It was sorted out later when the State Government and the BSS signed an accord providing for a time-bound programme for introduction of the Bodo medium. The enactment of the Assam Official Languages Act (1960), making Assamese the sole official language of the State and the demand for making Assamese as the sole medium of instruction in the state's universities further agitated the Bodo leaders who opposed this move. A Satyagraha campaign was launched. Many Bodo leaders were arrested under Maintenance

of Internal Security Act (MISA). The movement for Bodo autonomy took a new turn by 1974 when the Udayachal demand was pushed into the background and the Bodos wanted the introduction of Roman script for their language (Roman had been used for the Bodo as far back as in 1886). Finally, at the request of the Union government, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam and Bodo Sahitya Sabha agreed to accept the Devanagri script in April 1975. Subsequently, the Assam Government granted the Bodo language the status of an associate official language in the Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division.

- **Demand for Udayachal**

An important development in the political history of Assam was the demand for Udayachal. The younger generation of tribal activists formed the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) at Kokrajhar on February 27, 1967, under the presidentship of Modoram Brahma. It demanded a political unit in the entire northern tract of Assam for the plains tribal population of Assam, in response to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's proposal of January 13, 1967 to reorganize Assam on a federal basis. Influenced by the formation of the All Parties Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) by the leaders of the hill tribes demanding separation from Assam, the leaders of the plains tribes in Assam demanded an autonomous region within Assam, with safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, to be known as Udayachal, so that the tribal people could protect their land adequately and conserve their traditional culture. This stage of the movement was marked by non-violent agitation for full autonomy. The supporters of the movement boycotted the bye-election to the Lok Sabha seat from the Kokrajhar constituency during July 1967 and May 1968 .The movement for Udayachal stirred the political orientation of the younger generation of the Bodo population and made them more conscious of their ethnic identity.

13.3.2 The Demand for Bodoland

In the late nineteen seventies, the PTCA leaders downgraded their earlier demand for a Union Territory to that for an Autonomous Region, leading to a split in the party, with the PTCA (Progressive) headed by Binoy Khungur Basumatary reviving the demand for separation from Assam. Meanwhile, since 1979, the Bodos had become actively involved in the Assam Movement. Under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma, the Bodos actively participated in the Assam Movement. However, when the AGP government came to power in the State after the agitation, the Bodo leaders including Upendranath Brahma were denied berths in the cabinet. This did not go down well with the Bodo community. At the same time, the success of the leaders of the Assam Movement in mobilising the people of the state caught the attention of the Bodos, particularly the youth. The accession of Upendranath Brahma to the presidentship of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) marked the beginning of a new era in the political history of the Bodos. By early 1987, the ABSU completed its preparations for launching of a mass movement demanding a separate state for the Bodos to be known as the Bodoland. On March 2, 1987, the ABSU, under the presidentship of Upendranath Brahma formally declared the starting of a democratic and peaceful Gandhian mass movement for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland outside Assam on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra. The ABSU created a political organization, the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC), to spearhead the movement. The ABSU/BPAC movement began with the slogan "Divide Assam 50-50". The focus on ethnic identity was sharper this time than in the previous Udayachal movement of the seventies, which had demanded a homeland for all the plains tribes in Assam. The Bodoland movement attempted to forge a "larger Bodo nationality" covering all the plains tribes of Assam including those of non-Bodo origin.

The ABSU demanded the creation of a separate state in the north bank of the Brahmaputra for the plains tribals of Assam. It

also demanded creation of regional Councils for non-Karbi tribes in Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council. Two powerful student bodies, the All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) and the All Cachar Karimganj Students Association extended their moral support to the ABSU movement. Several organizations such as the Assam Tea Tribes Students Association and the Rabha Students' Association condemned the police torture on Bodo people. Demonstrations, protests, strikes, road blockades etc., were staged by ABSU and other organisations. The ABSU organised mass hunger strikes in front of district and sub-divisional offices including those of the DCs, SDOs and SDCs. Subsequently, the ABSU held discussions with the Assam Government. After discussions with the Chief Minister of Assam, Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the ABSU agreed to tone down its demands and decided to concentrate, on three demands. Among the three demands, the main demand was creation of a separate state, namely, Bodoland for the plains tribal communities on the north bank of the Brahmaputra with the river serving as the natural boundary.

The call for a separate state of Bodoland found favour with many sections of the Bodo community in the Bodo dominated areas of Assam. Meanwhile, after the initial phase, the Bodo Movement came to be marked by sporadic incidents of violence. At the same time, the formation of the Bodo Security Force (BdSF) which is now known as the National Democratic Front of Assam (NDFB) marked a new chapter in the movement as it launched a militant movement running parallel to political efforts that had already begun to take root.

After several years of violent agitations, the Government of India and the Government of Assam negotiated an accord with some major Bodo groups. The bipartite Bodo Accord of February 20, 1993 provided for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) within the state of Assam with the council enjoying maximum autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution. It was proposed that the BAC would comprise the contiguous geographical areas between Sankosh and Mazbat/Pasnoi river. The accord could

not work because some of its essential provisions were not implemented and severe infighting among the Bodo factions and their leaderships made it impossible to achieve stability within the BAC. During the five years since the accord was signed, no elections were held for the Bodoland Autonomous Council (the initial operation period of the council ran out long ago). No proper boundary was drawn, marking the autonomous tribal region (comprising the contiguous geographical areas between the rivers Sankosh and Mazbat). As a result, the territorial jurisdiction of the BAC remained uncertain. By 1996, Bodo leaders almost abandoned the idea of BAC and instead reverted to the idea of a separate Bodoland.

Meanwhile, subsequent to the Accord, a section of the Bodo youths declined to lay down arms as they disapproved of the scheme laid down by the Accord with the result that they formed the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force or BLTF under the leadership of Prem Singh Brahma to continue to fight for greater political autonomy. The militant outfits, namely, the BdSF and the BLTF differed in terms of the grievances and demands of the Bodo community and the course of action to be adopted to achieve the objective of a homeland for the Bodo community. While the BLTF demanded a separate state of Bodoland to be carved out of the state of Assam, the BdSF demanded sovereignty by way of secession from India. Subsequently, the struggle was beginning to turn aggressively exclusivist in nature. The Bodoland Accord soon collapsed and violence erupted in Bodo areas. The scale of violence escalated as the movement progressed. Attacks on school buildings, markets, public buildings and bridges paralysed normal life in the affected area. Bodo armed militants began a campaign of terror in the proposed Bodoland area through targeted violence, extortions, kidnappings, etc. They attacked school buildings, bazaars, public buildings, railway stations, roads, bridges etc., to pressurise the central as well as state governments. Many innocent lives were lost in bomb attacks on buses, markets and public places. Large-scale attacks were carried out against the Adivasi community in May 1996,

displacing over one lakh people in the Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Dhubri districts. It may be noted here that the Adivasis had been cohabiting with the Bodos for centuries together since the time they were brought by the British from parts of central and eastern India to work in the tea plantations of Assam. A second wave of attacks in May 1998 resulted in further displacement of people. The spate of violence led to the displacement of thousands of people. Besides, there were also instances of fratricidal clashes between the Bodo militant groups themselves. As a result many Bodo people also lost their lives and were displaced in the cycle of violence and counter-violence. In fact, certain sections of the Adivasi and other non-Bodo communities also began to arm themselves in order to fight back. This resulted in significant displacement of the Bodo population from areas where they were in a minority. In the process, the whole atmosphere deteriorated with regard to inter-personal and inter-community relationships. Against this background, the non-Bodo communities started perceiving the ABSU led movement as turning one sided and exclusivist in nature which led to a decline of support on the part of non-Bodo organisations for the Bodoland movement. The large-scale violence took a heavy toll not only in terms of killings, massacres, destruction of public and private property and ***internal displacement*** but also on other aspects of public life. The Union Government decided to hold discussions with militant outfits (BLTF and NDFB). Both the militant outfits were involved in the dialogue process. The centre first entered into a dialogue with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force which was waging an armed struggle demanding a separate state of Bodoland. The discussion started in the year 2000 and till November 2001 several rounds of tripartite talks were held among the Government of India, Government of Assam and Bodo Liberation Tigers Force. The BLTF demanded that the Bodos be granted Sixth Schedule Status. It proposed the creation of an administrative structure under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution which would replace the Bodoland Autonomous Council.



Internal displacement :
A situation where people are forced to leave their place of residence and take shelter in other places within the territory of the country.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: In which year was the Bodo Sahitya Sabha formed ?

.....

Q.2: Which script did the Plains Tribal Council of Assam and Bodo Sahitya Sabha finally agree to accept in April 1975 ?

.....

.....

Q.3: What was the name of the autonomous region demanded by the leaders of the plains tribes in Assam in the 1960s ?

.....

Q.4: What is the full form of MISA ?

.....

Q.5: Under whose presidentship did the ABSU formally declare the starting of a democratic and peaceful Gandhian mass movement for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland?

.....

.....

Q.6: When was the bipartite Bodo Accord providing for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) signed?

.....

13.3.3 Bodo Accord and the Establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council

The movement for Bodoland finally culminated in the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement or the Bodo Accord with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) on February 10, 2003 by both the Union and State governments and the establishment of an autonomous self governing body to be known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) within the State of Assam and to provide constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India to the said Autonomous Body. It may be noted here that the

tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizorm are specified in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The tribal areas of Assam included the North Cachar Hills District and the Karbi Anglong District. Accordingly, the Sixth Schedule was applicable only to the hill areas of Assam. As such, the Sixth Schedule was amended in the Bodo case as the community in question was basically a tribal group inhabiting the plains of the State. The area under the BTC jurisdiction is called the Bodo Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). The Council enjoys autonomy and control over departments specified in the Memorandum of Settlement on Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), 2003, but it does not control the district administration. The Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) was disbanded as an armed outfit in the year 2003. As per the Accord, an interim BTC was formed which came to be headed by former BLT Chairman Hargrama Mohilary.

Different non-Bodo organisations opposed the formation of the BTC and 18 non-Bodo organisations together formed the Sanmilita Janagosthiya Sangram Samiti (SJSS) to oppose the proposed Accord. They launched a series of agitations and have been organising strong programmes of agitation with the support of non-Bodos within the BTC area even after the Accord was signed. The non-Bodo organisations pointed out that non-Bodos constitute the majority of the total population in proposed BTC area. The non-Bodo organisations demanded that proper safeguards should be ensured to protect the rights and interests of the non-Bodo community.

The first election to the BTC took place on 13th May, 2005. A political party namely, the Bodo People's Progressive Forum (BPPF) was formed one month ahead of the election. It comprised of former members of the dissolved BLT and the ABSU. Rabiram Narzary became the first President of the BPPF. However, fissures soon appeared in the BPPF which came to be split between two factions- one faction led by former members of the ABSU and the other by former members of the BLT. This faction of the BPPF was headed by Hargrama Mahilary, the ex-BLT chief and Chief Executive Member

of the interim BTC. In the ensuing elections, Hargrama Mahilary was elected as the leader of the newly elected BTC.



LET US KNOW

As per the Memorandum of Settlement on Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), there shall be an Executive Council comprising of not more than 12 Executive Members, one of whom shall be the Chief and another one the Deputy Chief of the said Executive Council. There shall be adequate representation for the non-tribal members in the Executive Council. The Chief and the Deputy Chief of the Council shall have the status equivalent to the Cabinet Minister and the other Executive Members equivalent to the Minister of the State of Assam for protocol purposes in BTC area. Some of the subjects to be entrusted to BTC by Assam Government are as follows: Small, Cottage and Rural Industry, Animal Husbandry & Veterinary, Forest, Agriculture, PWD, etc. The State Government would provide an amount, to be decided every year on population ratio basis, as grants-in-aid in two equal instalments to the BTC for executing development works.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.7: Who were the signatories of the Memorandum of Settlement or the Bodo Accord 2003 ?

.....

Q.8: The area under the BTC jurisdiction is known as what?

.....



13.4 LET US SUM UP

- In Assam, the issue of identity politics centering on the issue of ethnicity is of a complex nature.

- Along with the political struggle, armed struggles have also been a distinguishing feature of ethnic identity based politics in the State.
- The collective mobilisation of the Bodo community for securing political autonomy and the consequent demand for a separate state of Bodoland within the Indian union has been a major factor in the post-independent political history of Assam.
- In the initial period, assertion of the Bodo identity was associated with the language issue. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was formed at Basugoan, near Kokrajhar in 1952.
- The enactment of the Assam Official Languages Act (1960), making Assamese the sole official language of the State and the demand for making Assamese as the sole medium of instruction in the state's universities further agitated the Bodo leaders who opposed this move.
- Finally, at the request of the Union government, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam and Bodo Sahitya Sabha agreed to accept the Devanagri script in April 1975.
- Subsequently, the Assam Government granted the Bodo language the status of an associate official language in the Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division.
- The younger generation of tribal activists formed the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) at Kokrajhar on February 27, 1967, under the presidentship of Modoram Brahma.
- The leaders of the plains tribes in Assam demanded an autonomous region within Assam, with safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, to be known as Udayachal.
- By early 1987, the ABSU completed its preparations for launching of a mass movement demanding a separate state for the Bodos to be known as the Bodoland.
- On March 2, 1987, the ABSU, under the presidentship of Upendranath Brahma formally declared the starting of a democratic and peaceful Gandhian mass movement for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland outside Assam on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra.

- The ABSU created a political organization, the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC), to spearhead the movement. The ABSU/BPAC movement began with the slogan "Divide Assam 50-50".
- The ABSU demanded the creation of a separate state in the north bank of the Brahmaputra for the plains tribals of Assam. It also demanded creation of regional Councils for non-Karbi tribes in Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council.
- The Bodo Security Force (BdSF) which is now known as the National Democratic Front of Assam (NDFB) launched a militant movement running parallel to political efforts had already begun to take root.
- After several years of violent agitations, the Government of India and the Government of Assam negotiated an accord with some major Bodo groups. The bipartite Bodo Accord of February 20, 1993 provided for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) within the state of Assam with the council enjoying maximum autonomy within the framework of the Indian Constitution.
- The accord could not work because some of its essential provisions were not implemented and severe infighting among the Bodo factions and their leaderships made it impossible to achieve stability within the BAC.
- Meanwhile, subsequent to the Accord, the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force or BLTF was formed under the leadership of Prem Singh Brahma to continue to fight for greater political autonomy.
- While the BLTF demanded a separate state of Bodoland to be carved out of the state of Assam, the BdSF demanded sovereignty by way of secession from India. The scale of violence escalated as the movement progressed.
- The Union Government decided to hold discussions with militant outfits. Both the militant outfits were involved in the dialogue process. The centre first entered into a dialogue with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force which was waging an armed struggle demanding a separate state of Bodoland.
- The movement for Bodoland finally culminated in the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force

(BLTF) on February 10, 2003 by both the Union and State governments and the establishment of an autonomous self governing body to be known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) within the State of Assam and to provide constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India to the said Autonomous Body.

- The Sixth Schedule was amended in the Bodo case as the community in question was basically a tribal group inhabiting the plains of the State. The area under the BTC jurisdiction is called the Bodo Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). The Council enjoys autonomy and control over departments specified in the Memorandum of Settlement on Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), 2003, but it does not control the district administration.
- The Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) was disbanded as an armed outfit in the year 2003. As per the Accord, an interim BTC was formed. It was headed by former BLT Chairman Hargrama Mohilary.
- Different non-Bodo organisations opposed the formation of the BTC and 18 non-Bodo organisations together formed the Sanmilita Janagosthiya Sangram Samiti (SJSS) to oppose the proposed Accord.
- The first election to the BTC took place on 13th May, 2005. Hargrama Mahilary was elected as the leader of the newly elected BTC.

13.5 FURTHER READING

1. Kundu, Dilip Kumar, Triparthy, Ajay & Agarwal, Bhavna. (2010). *The State and the Bodo Movement in Assam*. APH Publishing Corporation.
2. Sonowal, Khema. 2012. *Why Bodo Movement?* Guwahati: Eastern Book House.

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: 1952

Ans. to Q. No. 2: Devanagri script

Ans. to Q. No. 3: Udayachal

Ans. to Q. No. 4: Maintenance of Internal Security Act

Ans. to Q. No. 5: Upendranath Brahma

Ans. to Q. No. 6: on February 20, 1993

Ans. to Q. No. 7: Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF), Union Government and and Assam State Government

Ans. to Q. No. 8: Bodoland Territorial Area Districts



13.7 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1: Where was the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was formed in 1952?

Q. 2: The demand for the autonomous region of Udayachal was demanded under which Schedule of the Indian Constitution ?

Q. 3: Name the political organization created by the ABSU to spearhead the movement for Bodoland.

Q. 4: When was the Memorandum of Settlement for the establishment of an autonomous self governing body to be known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was signed?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Discuss the Roman Script Movement.

Q. 2: Discuss the demand for Udayachal.

Q. 3: Explain the three demands that the ABSU agreed to concentrate on after holding discussions with the Chief Minister of Assam?

Q. 4: Write briefly about the Memorandum of Settlement and establishment of the Bodoland Territorial Council.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Explain the historical background of the Movement for the Bodoland.

Q. 2: Describe the events surrounding the demand for Bodoland up to the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement in 2003.

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UNIT 14: GROWTH OF REGIONALISM IN ASSAM: EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES - AGP AND BPPF

UNIT STRUCTURE

14.1 Learning Objectives

14.2 Introduction

14.3 Regionalism : A Brief Overview

14.3.1 Growth of Regionalism in India

14.3.2 Regionalism in Assam

14.4 Emergence of Regional Political Parties in Assam

14.4.1 Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)

14.4.2 Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPF)

14.5 Let Us Sum Up

14.6 Further Reading

14.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

14.8 Model Questions

14.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to-

- explain the nature and growth of regionalism in Assam
- discuss the emergence of regional political parties in Assam
- describe the formation, growth and the role of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in the politics of Assam
- discuss the formation, growth and the role of Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF) in the politics of Bodoland and Assam.

14.2 INTRODUCTION

In a large country like India, regionalism is as natural as the diversity of the nation itself. India is home to diverse ethnic cultures, caste groups, languages and religions. In the post independent period, different groups

have asserted themselves to protect their ethnic and linguistic identities as well as to secure political and economic interests and attain adequate cultural safeguards for the development of their respective region and its people.

As a matter of fact, regional politics in India is not a new phenomenon. Since the process of unification of the nation during and after independence, regional politics have taken a centre-stage. For example, Assam fought against the grouping system of the Cabinet Mission Plan and the people of the region stood united against such partisan politics of the Mission. In this unit, attempts have been made to acquaint you with the growth of regionalism in a federal polity like India with special reference to the growth of regionalism in Assam, emergence of regional political parties in Assam and the formation and growth of Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF).

14.3 REGIONALISM - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Let us now discuss the issue of regionalism in greater detail.

14.3.1 Growth of Regionalism in India

Regionalism has continued as the most potent force in Indian politics ever since she attained independence in 1947. It has remained as the main foundation for many regional political parties which have been assuming the seat of power in many states since 1960s. The best manifestation the emerging vole of regional political parties can be attributed to the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which ruled at the national level from 1999 to 2004. The NDA was but a coalition of various region-based political parties.

Regionalism is rooted in India's manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, communities, religions and is often fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation. The British colonial

division of the Indian territory broadly divided the country into two parts– the directly-ruled provinces, and some 560 (indirectly-ruled) autocratic princely kingdoms of many sizes, religions, tribes, and languages added complexity to regionalism in India. In India, regionalism, or the acute sense of loyalty to a particular region has manifested itself in various ways and forms. The issue of deprivation is often associated with the growth of regionalism. Regionalism has often expressed itself in antagonistic terms because of the deprivation felt due to long-term neglect in the field of development and resource distribution.

14.3.2 Regionalism in Assam

There is no denying the fact that there was ample space for regionalism in Assam to grow. It grew primarily because of the fact that (during and after the British rule), Assam remained a peripheral hinterland (a place situated far away from the centre) throughout history and the national government always seemed to govern from a distance in both the pre-independence period and post-independence period. After independence, Assam's region specific grievances remained grossly unaddressed and as a result popular movements began to surface. Widespread disparity between the state and national levels in various areas of economic development made the Assamese people disappointed. The illegal foreign national issue on the other hand provided a popular and emotive dimension. The resultant 'Assam Movement'- a movement to deport illegal foreign nationals from Assam, lasted for six long years (1979-1985). The formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) after the movement, and its coming to power in 1985 and many other such events exhibit the existence of regionalism in Assam.

Regionalism during the Assam Movement took varied shape and became closely linked with the idea of 'ethnicity'. Ethnicity is an important ingredient of regionalism. Ethnicity implies belonging

to a race or community sharing a common cultural tradition. The groups that democratically fought to protect and preserve the broad Assamese national identity and culture believed in the capability of the Indian federal structure to accommodate their aspirations within the constitutional framework of the country. They demanded more autonomy for the state. On the other end of the political spectrum, there emerged extremist groups who wanted a separate nation for the people. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) demanded complete secession from India and went underground. As such, the socio-political environment of Assam remained disturbed for quite some time until the 'Assam Accord' was signed in 1985. The years from 1979 to 1985 witnessed political instability in the state, imposition of President's Rule, sustained, often violent, agitation, frequent general strikes, civil disobedience campaigns which paralyzed all normal life for prolonged periods, and unprecedented ethnic violence.

Finally, the Rajiv Gandhi government was able to sign an accord (Assam Accord) with the leaders of the movement on 15th August 1985. It was agreed that all those foreigners who had entered Assam after March 25, 1971 were to be detected and deported; A parallel package for the economic development of Assam, including a second oil refinery, a paper mill and an institute of technology, was also worked out. The central government also promised to provide 'legislative and administrative safeguards to protect the cultural, social, and linguistic identity and heritage' of the Assamese people. The existing assembly was dissolved and fresh elections held in December 1985. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), formed by the leaders of the anti-foreigners movement, was elected to power.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Mention an example of a government at the central level which was basically a coalition of region-based political parties.

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q.2: The Assam Movement was started in the year .....
(Fill up the Blank)

Q.3: When was the Assam Accord signed?

.....

Q.4: It was agreed that all those foreigners who had entered Assam after March 25, 1971 were to be deported. (True/False)

.....

14.4 EMERGENCE OF REGIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES IN ASSAM

During last two decades, the rise of regional parties has influenced not only state politics but also the national parties and national politics. With sizeable electoral support, the regional parties have not only managed to win elections and form state governments, their influence is visible in the sphere of national politics too.

In Assam too, a good number of regional political parties have emerged after the Assam Movement. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF), All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), are some notable regional political parties of Assam.

14.4.1 Asom Gana Parishad (AGP)

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) was the product of the six-year-long Assam Movement, which was spearheaded by the All

Assam Students Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The Assamese people were raising demands for steps against the foreign infiltrators who had entered the state through porous border, mostly from Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) and occupied vast areas of the state thus threatening the economic, political, social and cultural existence of the indigenous people of the state. When the revision of electoral rolls of Mangaldoi Lok Sabha Constituency was undertaken following the death of sitting MP, Hiralal Patwari, in 1978, the names of several lakhs of illegal immigrants were detected in the electoral rolls. Immediately, the AASU under the leadership of Prafulla Kumar Mahanta (President) and late Bhrigu Kumar Phukan (General Secretary) demanded action against the infiltrators. AASU received the support of the people of Assam in demanding the postponement of the bye-election to Mangaldoi Lok Sabha Constituency and a thorough revision of all the electoral rolls of the state in order to detect (foreign infiltrators), delete (from voter's lists) and deport all the illegal infiltrators. Soon a mass movement was launched throughout the state and thus, the Assam Movement was started in 1979. Many organizations like the Asom Sahitya Sabha, two regional political parties- Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad (PLP), the Asom Jattiyabadi Dal (AJD) the Sadau Asom Karmachari Parishad, Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva-Chatra Parishad, Asom Yuvak Samaj, All Assam Central and semi-Central Employee's Association etc., joined hands with AASU and launched a common platform in the form of the the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) to guide the Movement. The Movement continued for six long years and during these years and hundreds of party workers sacrificed their lives. The central government had to come to the negotiation table with the AASU and AAGSP. Several rounds of discussions with successive governments in New Delhi culminated in the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985 between AASU, the AAGSP and the Central Government in presence of the then Prime

Minister late Rajiv Gandhi. Following the Assam Accord, the State Assembly was dissolved, paving the way for fresh elections.

The AASU called for a National Convention of the people of Assam at Golaghat on Ocober 13-14, 1985. In this convention, it was decided that a regional political party under the name and style of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) would be constituted. Accordingly, the Asom Gana Parishad party was formally launched at Golaghat on October 14, 1985. Incidentally, the then Central Executive Committee of the All Assam Students' Union with Sri Prafulla Kumar Mahanta as the President and Bhrigu Kumar Phukan as the General Secretary handed over charge to a new batch of leaders at a convention held in Lakhimpur in September, 1985.

When the AGP was formed, the first presidium was headed by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta who became the President and Late Bhrigu Kumar Phukan who became one of the General Secretaries of the newly formed party. The six-year long movement against the foreign infiltrators in Assam thus paved the way for the formation of a regional political organization in the form of the AGP with the former leadership of the AASU as the key functionaries. The AGP contested the elections to the State Assembly held in December 1985. It won a landslide victory by winning 67 out of the 126 seats apart from capturing seven of the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies. The AGP thus formed the government in Assam. This was a historic moment for Assam because AGP was the first regional party to form government in the State. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, became at the age of thirty-three, the youngest Chief Minister of independent India. There were several factors which helped the party to form government, merely after two months of its formation.

- The political campaign of the party was based on a national issue i.e. expulsion of illegal immigrants from Assam. This serious issue helped the party immensely in winning mass support.

- The party was mainly formed by the leaders of the Assam movement who enjoyed an overwhelming support from the public.
- The support of the student community was another reason behind the success of AGP.
- Though there were other regional political parties in Assam at that time like Plains Tribal Council of Assam and United Minorities Front, the support base of these parties remained limited while the AGP could garner support from all sections of the societies.

The AGP was unable to successfully implement the Assam Accord's core provisions for disenfranchising and expelling illegal aliens, in part because Parliament passed a legislation making it more difficult to prove illegal alien status in the form of the IMDT Act. Meanwhile, the law and order situation in the state deteriorated gravely. As a result, in November 1990, the AGP government was dismissed and President's Rule declared. However, the party failed to retain power in the next assembly elections. In March 1991, differences among the party leaders led to its split. This resulted in the formation of the Natun Asom Gana Parishad by leaders like Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, Dinesh Goswami, Pulakesh Barua and few others who parted from the party. However, the Natun Asom Gana Parishad soon merged with the parent party, that is, the AGP, in 1992. Yet again in 2000, the AGP had to face another split. This split was led by Atul Borah, who went on to form the Trinamool Gana Parishad. AGP faced another setback in 2005 when Prafulla Mahanta was expelled from the party. Mahanta then formed his own party and named it as Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive). On 14 October, 2008 Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive) merged with the mother party, with an aim to boost the ailing party and became a single unified party once again. The headquarters of the party are situated at Ambari in Guwahati. In the last Assembly Elections held in 2016, AGP won 14 seats.

14.4.2 Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF)

Before discussing the Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF) it would highly be purposeful to discuss the context in which the party emerged. As discussed in the previous unit, the movement for Bodoland finally culminated in the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement or the Bodo Accord with the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) on February 10, 2003 by both the Union and State governments and the establishment of an autonomous self governing body to be known as the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) within the State of Assam and to provide constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India to the said Autonomous Body.

The Bodo Accord of 2003 also required the leaders of the movement to ensure the surrender of all arms, explosives, and ammunition by their followers, and bring those who had gone underground back into the national mainstream. The successful completion of formalities witnessed the biggest ever surrender ceremony in the country as a total of over two thousand Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) militants along with varieties of sophisticated weapons bade farewell to arms on December 6, 2003. The leaders of the BLT along with the leaders of All Bodo Students' Union launched a political party called Bodo People's Progressive Front (BPPF). However, in the run-up to the elections to the Bodoland Territorial Council, there occurred a split in the Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF). As a result, there emerged two factions of the BPPF, namely, BPPF (Hagrama) and BPPF (Rabiram). BPPF (Hagrama) was led by Hagrama Mahilary the erstwhile BLT chief and chief executive member of the ad hoc BTC while BPPF (Rabiram) was led by Rabiram Narzary, former ABSU president. Subsequently, in the elections to the BTC, BPPF (Hagrama) won. The BPPF (Hagrama) was later renamed as Bodoland People's Front (BPF). However, BPPF (Rabiram) could not win any seat in the elections.

In the Assam Assembly elections of April 2006, BPPF (Hagrama) teamed up with the Indian National Congress and won 11 seats and thus became an ally of the Indian National Congress led ruling coalition in Assam. In the General Elections of 2009, its candidate, Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary was elected to the 15th Lok Sabha from Kokrajhar constituency. Biswajit Daimary of the BPF got elected to the Rajya Sabha in May, 2008. In the 2011 Assam Assembly election, BPF won 12 seats. The BPF however ended its 13 year-old alliance with the Congress party when it came out of the state government in June 2014 over issues relating to the all-round development of the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. The BPF incidentally had one Cabinet Minister in the state cabinet holding the portfolios of Transport, Tourism and Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes in BTAD until the party broke its alliance with the state government. In the last Assembly Elections held in 2016, BPF won 12 seats and become a partner of the Coalition Government in Assam.

In the ultimate analysis, in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nation like India, regionalism can be a very powerful force when it comes to meeting the goals of national development by way of seeking removal of economic imbalances across various regions and securing the due share of every region in the allocation and distribution of resources. As a matter of fact, regional political parties can help raise and address region specific local issues and help the Union government to formulate national panning in a way that helps the equitable development of all regions of the country and safeguard the ethnic and cultural identities of different communities. In this sense, regional development becomes the path to national development, thereby achieving the welfare of the entire nation at large.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.5: When the AGP was formed, who became its first president?

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.....

.....

Q.6: In which year was the Natun Asom Gana Parishad formed?

.....

Q.7: Which faction of the BPPF won the first election to the BTC?

.....

.....

Q.8: How many members did the BPF win in the 2011 Assam Assembly election?

.....



14.5 LET US SUM UP

- Regionalism has continued as the most potent force in Indian politics ever since she attained independence in 1947. It has remained as the main foundation for many regional political parties which have been assuming the seat of power in many states since 1960s.
- Regionalism is rooted in India's manifold diversity of languages, cultures, tribes, communities, religions and often fuelled by a sense of regional deprivation.
- The Illegal foreign national issue on the other hand provided a popular and emotive dimension. The resultant 'Assam Movement'- a movement to deport illegal foreign nationals from Assam, lasted for six long years (1979-1985). The formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) after the movement, and its coming to power in 1985 and many other such events exhibit the existence of regionalism in Assam.

- Regionalism during the Assam movement took varied shape and became closely linked with the idea of 'ethnicity'. Ethnicity is an important ingredient of regionalism. Later, these ethnic assertions took the shape of identity politics. The groups that democratically fought to protect and preserve Assamese identity and culture believed in the capability of Indian federal structure to accommodate its aspirations within the constitutional framework of the country.
- The AGP contested the elections to the state assembly held in December 1985 and swept the polls by winning 67 out of the 126 seats apart from capturing seven of the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies, and formed the Government in Assam. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta became the youngest Chief Minister of independent India at the age of thirty two.
- In March 1991, differences among the party leaders led to its split. This resulted in the formation of the Natun Asom Gana Parishad by leaders like Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, Dinesh Goswami, Pulakesh Barua and few others who parted from the party. However, the Natun Asom Gana Parishad soon merged with the parent party, that is, the AGP, in 1992.
- Yet again in 2000, the AGP had to face another split. This split was led by Atul Borah , who went on to form the Trinamool Gana Parishad. AGP faced another setback in 2005 when Prafulla Mahanta was expelled from the party. Mahanta then formed his own party and named it as Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive).
- On 14 October, 2008 Asom Gana Parishad (Progressive) merged with the parent party, with an aim to boost the ailing party and became a single unified party once again.
- The Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) Accord was signed in 1993. The leaders of the BLT along with the leaders of All Bodo Students' Union launched a political party called Bodo People's Progressive Front (BPPF). However, in the run-up to the elections to the Bodoland Territorial Council, there occurred a split in the

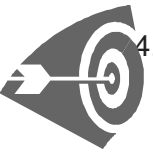
Bodoland People's Progressive Front (BPPF). As a result, there emerged two factions of the BPPF, namely, BPPF (Hagrama) and BPPF (Rabiram).

- The BPPF (Hagrama) was later renamed as Bodoland People's Front (BPF). However, BPPF (Rabiram) could not win any seat in the elections.



14.6 FURTHER READING

1. Das, Samir Kumar. (1997). *Regionalism in Power- The Case of Asom Gana Parishad*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications.
2. Kalita, Haren Chandra. (2011). *Regional Politics- The Role of Asom Gana Parishad*. Guwahati: E.B.H.Publishers.
3. Baruah, Sanjib. (2001). *India Against Itself*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
4. Kundu, Dilip Kumar, Triparthy, Ajay & Agarwal, Bhavna. (2010). *The State and the Bodo Movement in Assam*. APH Publishing Corporation.



14.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government

Ans. to Q. No. 2: 1979

Ans. to Q. No. 3: August 1985

Ans. to Q. No. 4: True

Ans. to Q. No. 5: Prafulla Kumar Mahanta

Ans. to Q. No. 6: 1991

Ans. to Q. No. 7: BPPF (Hagrama)

Ans. to Q. No. 8: 12



14.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1: Where was the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) launched?

Q. 2: In the State Assembly elections held in the month of December in 1985, the AGP won how many seats?

Q. 3: Name the two factions of the BPPF.

Q. 4: The BPPF (Hagrama) was later renamed as what?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Mention any four factors which helped the AGP to form government for the first time.

Q. 2: Write about the background leading to the formation of the BPPF.

Q. 3: Write briefly about the growth of regionalism in India.

Q. 4: Write briefly about regionalism in Assam.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Write a note on the AGP.

Q. 2: Write a note on the BPPF.

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UNIT 15: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ASSAM

UNIT STRUCTURE

15.1 Learning Objectives

15.2 Introduction

15.3 Political Participation of Women

15.4 Women's Participation in the National Freedom Struggle in the context of Assam

15.5 Women's Political Participation in the Post Independent Period

15.5.1 Women's Participation in the Assam Movement

15.5.2 Women's Participation in the Bodoland Movement

15.6 Let Us Sum Up

15.7 Further Reading

15.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

15.9 Model Questions

15.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:-

- explain the meaning of political participation in a broader sense
- evaluate the level of participation of women in Assam during the National Freedom Struggle
- discuss the role of women in the Assam Movement
- discuss the level of women's participation in the Bodoland Movement.

15.2 INTRODUCTION

In a country like India where society is inherently conservative and patriarchal, participation of women in the public and political spheres has been a peripheral matter since a long time. Situations have, however improved after India's independence with the enforcement of a democratic Constitution which guarantees equal social, economic and political rights

and liberties to all citizens, men and women alike without distinction of any kind. The aim of this unit is to examine and understand women's political participation within the specific context of the state of Assam.

15.3 POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

The first step in our discussion would be refining and clarifying our understanding of the term, "political participation". According to Myron Weiner, "the concept of political participation refers to any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organised or unorganised episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods intended to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs, or the choice of political leaders at any level of the government." Based on this definition, women's political participation would not only incorporate women's involvement in active politics through means like holding party offices, contesting elections, exercising voting rights, winning elections to hold varied portfolios as a Member of Parliament or Member of State Legislative Assembly ; but also women's involvement in other such socio-political activities that ultimately aim at influencing political decision making. Political participation of women in this broader sense, may include women's activist role in bring about policy reforms through participation in civil society movements like movements against domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape etc. Therefore, political participation of women would encompass all those activities be it on the legal, social or political platform where the womenfolk have successfully or unsuccessfully raised concerns with an ultimate aim of influencing governmental administration and legislative decision making either by being a part of the system or from outside it. Based on the broader sense of the term, the level of women's political participation in the context of Assam can be studied in two waves. **The first wave** rose in the pre-independence period where Assamese women, keeping in trend with the pan Indian scenario, participated in the national struggle for freedom and independence of India from British imperialism. **The second wave** of women's political

participation in Assam rose in the period after independence of India mostly in the form of participation in popular movements concerning various issues affecting the state of Assam.

15.4 WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN THE CONTEXT OF ASSAM

Several Indian women leaders have attained distinguished recognition for themselves by playing a significant role of activism in India's struggle for freedom. In the initial phase of India's struggle against British rule, it was the women from the royal families who played a gallant role. Noteworthy among them are Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, Rani of Ramgarh, Rani of Jyetpore, Begum Hazrat Mahal of Oudh etc. In the later phase of the Indian freedom struggle starting from the 1920's, the trend had been towards the involvement of more and more women from the ordinary masses under the able guidance and motivation of Mahatma Gandhi. It was during this phase that the women in Assam too started exhibiting a streak of revolutionary consciousness and took an active part in the various mass struggles against the oppressive colonial rule. This **first wave** of women's political participation in Assam has been discussed in the following paragraphs in terms of Assamese women's involvement in various landmark anti-British struggles.

In the Non-cooperation Movement which can be considered as the first potent milestone in India's liberation struggle, women in Assam made a significant presence. It must be mentioned here that Gandhiji's call to women had an immediate liberating effect and he was able to draw large number of women into the movement. In the beginning, a small number of women participated in the Movement, like Bidyutprova Devi, Girija Devi, Hemanta Kumari Devi, Dharmada Devi, Nalinibala Devi, Pushpalata Das, Guneshwari Nath and Chandraprova Saikiani. They organised meetings both at the rural and the urban level to disseminate the message and intent of "non-cooperation, swadeshi and constructive

work". Gandhiji's visit to Assam in 1921 provided boost to their activities. To cite an example of the Gandhian influence on the political awakening of women in Assam, Mongri who was a labourer in a tea garden and an alcoholic, was so influenced by Gandhi that she gave up on liquor and actively participated in the anti-liquor campaign. Mongri was martyred in a clash that occurred during the picketing of liquor shops and became the first woman in Assam to be killed for the participation in Non-cooperation movement. Bhanumati Talukdar of Godebori, a remote village in Kamrup was a prominent full time worker of the Congress whilst being a mother of 3 children was referred to as "Volunteerani bai" by the local people and christened as the "Sarojini of Assam" by the great Mahatma himself. Pramila Medak, of the Mishing Community of Golaghat despite being excommunicated by her community continued to take an active part in the movement defying all social stereotypes and restrictions. These are just a few examples, besides them, the womenfolk of Assam as a whole became an integral part of the movement either by directly or indirectly.

The Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam too saw a vibrant participation of women. In 1930, Pushpalata Das along with Sarla Saxena, Punyaprava Barua and Jyotsna Majumdar, established the "Mukti Sangha" to mobilise girls in the national movement. Their fiery spirited speeches encouraged many young minds to fight for Poorna Swaraj. It is during this movement that at various places of Assam, "Nari Bahinis" or women squads were formed for carrying out programmes of picketing. Anti-opium campaign was very strongly carried out by women during this phase. With a large number of men behind bars, women came out in thousands breaking the law to show their support to the programme of Salt Satyagraha. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee Report of 1930 records with appreciation the tremendous participation of rural women along with their urban counterparts , during this phase of the movement.

In the Quit India Movement women in Assam came out in large numbers. It was in 1940's that women wings were made an integral part of

the Indian National Congress at both national and provincial level. In Assam, the women's wing was set up in September 1940 with Pushpalata Das and Amolprava Das as joint secretaries. The following year, the All Assam Girl Students' Committee was formed in Shillong. In the face of unprecedented police repression and with large numbers of men in prison, prominent women leaders took upon themselves the task of coordinating the activities. Chandraprova Saikiani was one of the main guiding forces among women. In 1942, the Mrityu Bahini or Suicide Squad was formed to carry out subversive activities in a more organised manner. The Quit India phase showcased the rise of a novel wave of female militancy. Kanaklata, Ratnabala Phukan, Buddheshwari Hazarika, Khahuli Nath and Damayanti Bora were active members of the Mrityu Bahini and were acclaimed as fearless radical women nationalists. Besides them, common women of the Assamese society made immense contributions via means like facilitation of hiding weapons, using their domestic role to support subversive and revolutionary activities. Many others worked as spies, money raisers, saboteurs etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1: Name some prominent Assamese women leaders who played a significant role in the Indian Freedom Movement.

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Q.2: State the definition of political participation provided by Myron Weiner.

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Q.3: Who was named the "Sarojini of Assam" by Mahatma Gandhi?

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15.5 WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE POST-INDEPENDENT PERIOD

The second wave of women's political participation in Assam beginning after 1947 can be classified in three distinct parts.

The first being women's involvement in popular movements centred around socio-political, economic and linguistic issues of the state. Assam in the post independent period became an evident hotbed of various popular struggles. The first among the many ensuing civil society movements was the Official Language Movement in Assam which surfaced as early as in the 1950's and persisted till the year 1960 was characterised by a strong shade of women's involvement. Other movements that require mention are the Refinery Movement of 1967, Medium Issue Movement, 1972. However, it was the Anti-Foreigner Movement / Assam Movement (1979-1985) that led to a widespread and the most intensive form of women's participation. Women's role in this movement will be discussed at length in the later section of the unit.

The second part relates to women's massive participation in ethnic identity related movements of the Bodos, Mishings, Karbis which basically pressed for safeguarding their unique ethnic identity against majoritarian pressures through proper safeguards of constitutionally recognised political and cultural autonomy. A section in this unit is specifically devoted to understand the pattern of women's participation in the Bodoland Movement.

The third part deals with Assamese women's participation in electoral politics after independence. It is unfortunate that even with the overwhelming participation of women in the Indian Freedom Struggle where many women leaders showcased their significant political talents of leadership, management, intelligence, statesmanship; after independence, such participation did not translate over to democratic representative institutions. Women's participation in electoral politics both in Assam and India was very negligible immediately after independence and even today it is not very significant.

15.5.1 Women's Participation in the Assam Movement

In the case of Assam Movement which had at its core, the demands of locating and expelling illegal migrants from Assam, economic development of the state, safeguarding larger Assamese linguistic and cultural identity, infrastructural development of the state; the participation of women was as widespread as that of men. The participation of women from different class, caste and the communal background is one of the most important features of the anti-foreigners' agitation of 1979-85. Women were spontaneous participants and they took part in all activities, be it satyagraha, picketing or procession. The agitation was primarily a student-led movement with the student community, boys and girls alike participating in large proportions. One of the important roles played by the women in this movement was the act of fundraising for the sustenance of the movement. The numerous Mahila Samiti (Women's Association) that came up during the agitation contributed money to All Assam Students' Union (AASU) to carry on the agitation and this process lasted until the end of the agitation. Assam Women Writers Association supported the cause of the agitation and pleaded the government not to hold election without correcting voters list which was alleged to comprise of a large number of names of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

In almost every corner of every locality, a women's association was formed and these women were not merely supporting the agitation but they were creating new avenues for self-employment and self-dependence. They used handloom: their traditional companion as an instrument to carry on their fights against the 'other'. The newspaper reports were full of their offer to help victims of violence, to provide food and aid to those who were picketing, they were themselves engaged in picketing and at the same time, they were weaving cloths, which was the main source of earning for many families. Another notable women's organisation that played a crucial

role in the movement is Assam Jagrata Mahila Parishad . It provided crucial assistance in the political mobilisation of women. They symbolised women as mother and their inspiration as a source of strength to carry on the agitation in the face of hardships. An important outcome of the anti-foreigner's agitation in Assam was the emergence of women leaders at the time of the movement. Students involved in the AASU led movement gave girl students the opportunity to lead from the front. An example of such leadership was Rekha Rani Bodo, a tribal leader. She was elected as president of All Assam Tribal Women's Association in 1982 and was a part of AASU.

Another important contribution of women towards the Assam agitation was through their role of "Peacekeepers". During the anti-foreigners' agitation in Assam, thousands of women poured into the streets in support of the agitation and many of them were victims of violence. In such situation, many women's organisations came up who urged for peace. Several Matribahinis (Mother Force) were created to assist those who suffered during the agitation. Samajsewi Matribahini (Social Worker Mother Force) was one such organisation who offered material help to those women who were either molested by Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans or lost family members, by granting them hand looms to become self-dependent financially. Purbanchaliya Mahila Sanstha (Northeastern Women's Association) was another organization involved in helping those who suffered due to the agitation. The women involved in this organisation went from place to place, to offer medical and material support to those injured in conflicts that broke out between the protesters and security forces. By 1981, there was many women's organisation involved in maintaining peace in society. They were protesting against the army and police torture on agitators.

Finally, if we look at the entire period of the agitation, women's participation was not of equal intensity. At the beginning, the middle-class women living in urban areas were supporters of the agitation. They spontaneously came out of home for processions and picketing.

Old ladies and young girls in rural areas supported the agitation and took to the streets. But once the agitation became more intense, women of different ethnic groups too started participating in the agitation. The common perception was that, as the 'mother Assam' (Aai Axomi) is in danger and everyone should come out of home to save her from 'intruders'.

A positive change brought by the Assam Movement on women's lives was their growing political consciousness. This led to a blossoming of a multitude of women's organisations and women clubs. Some of them are- Mula Gabhoru Santha, Sanjukta Mahila Sangha (United Women's Association), Satya Sandhya Mahila Sangha (Satya Sandhya Women's Association), Sankari Samaj Mahila Samiti (Sankari Society Women's Committee) etc. Although many of these were dissolved after the agitation, a large number of these associations continued operating. It gave women a sense of unity, togetherness and strength to stand together against issues, such as domestic violence and social disturbances due to drunkards. After the agitation was over many of these women's associations continue working as self-help groups and organisations for social and political empowerment of women.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.4: Name two women associations/ organizations formed during the Assam movement.

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Q.5: Mention two important ways through which women of Assam contributed towards the Assam Agitation.

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15.5.2 Women's Participation in the Bodoland Movement

The Bodoland Movement has been the most significant tribal movement in contemporary Assam. This movement had seeded in the colonial times but intensified into a radical political, cultural and extremist assertion in the 1980s. Some of the reasons for the emergence of the Bodoland Movement are- feeling of discrimination, deprivation and injustice experienced by the Bodo community in Assam. During the campaign in order to protect political, economic and cultural identity, the leaders of the Bodo Movement emphasized that the Bodo people are ethnically different from rest of the people of Assam and hence entitled to political entitlement in the form of a separate state-Bodoland.

This Movement was primarily led by All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and one of the distinguishing features of this Movement was the extensive participation of the Bodo women. The Bodoland Movement marked the beginning of a political awakening among the Bodo women. With the establishment of All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation (AATWWF) in 1986 later known All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) in 1993, membership was open to all section of women. Large number of women from villages to towns had joined this organization as members. Pramila Rani Brahma was elected as the first president of AATWWF. With the establishment of this federation, it started to function as women wing to ABSU, aiding the principal actor in taking forward the Bodoland Movement.

The Women's Federation played a very significant role in promoting political as well as cultural consciousness among the Bodo women and performed an even greater role in the political mobilisation of women during the Movement. The Bodo women under the banner of this organisation collectively performed a wide range of activities to support and sustain the Movement. They participated extensively in protests, dharna, gheraos and processions

against police and army brutality and state atrocities. A section of women of the organisation also provided indirect support to the Movement by facilitating the active members with food, nursing and healthcare. Therefore, women participation in the Bodoland Movement reflected the diversity of roles that Bodo women could adapt to. Then again, there was this other section of enlightened and educated Bodo women, equipped with managerial and leadership skills, who assisted in disseminating Bodo sub-nationalist values through fiery speeches and skillful mobilisation. A section of the Bodo women engaged themselves as members of the Bodo Volunteer Force. The Bodo Volunteer Force was the military wing of the ABSU. This Force required messengers to carry secret messages. Many AATWWF members of different village councils and district committees were involved in this activity. Carrying money for ABSU was also a part of their job. Many Bodo women received training in nursing and healthcare by doctors in Primary Healthcare Centres as a part of the larger strategy of the Movement. These women were to provide nursing and immediate medical aid to the injured activists. From 1989 onwards girls began to receive training in the use of firearms. Such training was given in the remote villages of Bodo dominated areas. The aim of such training was to provide some measures for their safety. There was no plan to bring them to armed action. But they were told that if situation so demanded they would be called in. Additionally, there was also an emission of literary activities among Bodo women during the Movement. Songdan, the first magazine of Bodo women by Bodo women and for Bodo women, was published in 1991 by the AATWWF. The magazine called Raikhrnuthi was published in the same year. These magazines were published once in a year and women related issues were of primary concern to them though they also published other writings of women. The editorial board members were women though the writers were not necessarily women. Many renowned Bodo intellectuals, poets, ABSU activists, etc. wrote on women related issues in those

magazines. Those articles discussed the contribution of women to upliftment of the Bodos, involvement of the Bodo women in politics, women's contribution to the development of Bodo society etc.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.6: Name the principal women organization that played a pivotal role in Bodoland Movement.

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Q.7: Write Briefly about the Bodo Volunteer Force and the engagement of Bodo women in it.

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15.6 LET US SUM UP

- In a country like India where society is inherently conservative and patriarchal, participation of women in the public and political spheres has been a peripheral matter since a long time. Situations have, however improved after independence of India with the enforcement of a democratic Constitution which guarantees equal social, economic and political rights and liberties to all citizens, men and women alike without distinction of any kind.
- Women's political participation not only incorporates women's involvement in active politics through means like holding party offices, contesting elections, exercising voting rights, winning elections to hold varied portfolios as a Member of Parliament or Member of State Legislative Assembly; but also women's involvement in other such socio-political activities that ultimately aim at influencing political decision making process.
- The level of women's political participation in the context of Assam can be studied in two waves. The first wave rose in the pre-independence period where Assamese women, keeping in trend with the pan Indian

scenario, participated in the national struggle for freedom and independence of India from British imperialism. The second wave of women's political participation in Assam rose in the period after independence of India mostly in the form of participation in popular movements concerning various issues affecting the state of Assam.

- In the Non-cooperation Movement which can be considered as the first potent milestone in India's liberation struggle, women in Assam made a resounding presence. In the beginning, the conservative nature of Assamese society limited the participation of women to a small circle consisting of women like Bidyutprova Devi, Girija Devi, Hemanta Kumari Devi, Dharmada Devi, Nalinibala Devi, Pushpalata Das, Guneshwari Nath and Chandraprova Saikiani among others.
- The Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam too saw a vibrant participation of women. In 1930, Pushpalata Das along with Sarla Saxena, Punyaprava Barua and Jyotsna Majumdar, established the "Mukti Sangha" to mobilise girls in the national movement. Their fiery spirited speeches enkindled young minds who pledged to fight for Poorna Swaraj.
- The Quit India phase showcased the rise of a novel wave of female militancy. Kanaklata, Ratnabala Phukan, Buddheshwari Hazarika, Khahuli Nath and Damayanti Bora were active members of the Mrityu Bahini and were acclaimed as fearless radical women nationalists.
- The participation of women from the different class, caste and the communal background is one of the most important features of the anti-foreigners' agitation of 1979-85. Women were spontaneous participants and they took part in all activities, be it satyagraha, picketing or procession.
- The Bodoland Movement was primarily led by All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and one of the distinguishing features of this movement was the extensive participation of the Bodo women. The Bodoland Movement marked the beginning of a political awakening among the Bodo women. With the establishment of All Assam Tribal Women's

Welfare Federation (AATWWF) in 1986 which was rechristened as All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) in 1993, large scale engagement of women in the movement began.



15.7 FURTHER READING

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5. Sharma, Nabanita. (2017): *Role of Women during the Anti-Foreigners' Agitation in Assam 1979-1985*, Journal of North East India Studies, 7(2): 18-32.
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15.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1: Kanaklata Barua, Pushpalata Das etc.

Ans. to Q. No. 2: According to Myron Weiner, "the concept of political participation refers to any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organised or unorganised episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods intended to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs, or the choice of political leaders at any level of the government."

Ans. to Q. No. 3: Bhanumati Talukdar

Ans. to Q. No. 4: Mula Gabhoru Santha, Sanjukta Mahila Sangha (United Women's Association).

Ans. to Q. No. 5: One of the important roles played by the women in the Assam Movement was the act of fundraising for the sustenance of the movement. The numerous Mahila Samiti (Women's Association) that came up during the agitation contributed money to AASU's coffer to carry on the agitation and this process lasted until the end of the agitation. Another important contribution of women towards the Assam agitation was through their role of "Peacekeepers". During the anti-foreigners' agitation in Assam, thousands of women poured into the streets in support of the agitation and many of them were victims of violence. In such situation, many women's organisations came up who urged for peace. Several Matribahinis (Mother Force) were created to assist those who suffered during the agitation. Samajsewi Matribahini (Social Worker Mother Force) was one such organisation who offered material help to those women who were either molested by Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans or lost family members, by granting them hand looms to become self-dependent financially.

Ans. to Q. No. 6: All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation (AATWWF) in 1986 later known All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) in 1993.

Ans. to Q. No. 7: The Bodo Volunteer force was the military wing of the ABSU. This Force required messengers to carry secret messages. A section of the Bodo women quite gallantly engaged themselves as members of the Bodo Volunteer Force.



15.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q. 1: Who was Kanaklata Barua?

Q. 2: Whom did Gandhi name "the Sarojini of Assam"??

Q. 3: Who was the first chairperson of the All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Federation (AATWWF)?

Q. 4: What is Bodo Volunteer Force?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q. 1: Write about the role of women in Assam in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Q. 2: Write short notes on (a) Women as peacekeepers in Assam Movement (b) Women as fundraisers in Assam Movement.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q. 1: Examine the role of women in the different phases of Indian freedom struggle in the context of the state of Assam.

Q. 2: Analyse the role of women in the Assam movement.

Q. 3: Examine the role of women in the Bodoland Movement.

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Websites:

1) http://www.agp.org

2) www.satp.org

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Regarding the course as mentioned above, we would like to know your opinions and comments so as to improve the quality of self learning materials in future. Please respond to the following statements by ticking the number you feel most reflect your opinion. After completion of the additional comments, please detach the page and send/mail the same to us at the address given below.

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1) Approximately how many hours did you spend for studying the units in the course? ☐☐☐

2) Please give your opinions (by ✓ mark) to the following items based on your reading of the block:

Sl. No.	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I)	The SLMs of the course fulfil the learning objectives set out in the beginning of each unit					
II)	The units of the SLM could satisfy my academic needs and expectations					
III)	The Unit writers have excellent knowledge about the course contents					
IV)	Language and contents of the units were presented at a level which I could readily understand					
V)	Ample opportunity for participation in the activities provided in the units					
VI)	Used enough Illustrations (Diagrams, tables etc.) for conceptual clarity					
VII)	Quality of content is engaging, relevant, and up-to-date					
VIII)	The self check questions are very helpful					
IX)	The Possible/model questions and the answers to check my progress have benefited me a lot					

Additional Comments: *(Please feel free to provide your open comments)*

1) Which aspects of the SLM, according to you, worked well?

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2) What sort of changes/improvements do you feel KKHSOU could implement to improve the overall quality of the SLM?

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.