

PREFACE

The entire North East region of India is a homeland of diverse cultures and ethnic groups. The diversity of geography, society and culture of the region is the unique example of Indian diversity. While there is no denying the geographical reality of the North East, yet complexities are bound to arise if the term is used as an umbrella connotation involving cultural and political aspects as well. The socio-cultural and economic diversity of North Eastern region has much significance in the politics of post-independence India. In Assam too, while these varieties reflect the beautiful facet of Assam's socio cultural side on one hand, the same varieties become the main factor of socio-political conflicts of the region on the other hand. However, the problem created by socio-cultural variety becomes a common issue in all over India. The Indian politics in the post-Independent period is increasingly designed by the issues based on this socio-cultural variety. Further, the socio-cultural diversity became a challenge to Indian nation building process at some times. In the case of Assam, the socio-cultural diversity of the land posed as a major challenge to the Assamese society formation in the early part of the twentieth century and is continued. By 1960s, this multi-ethnic state had to face problem of assertion by various ethnic groups to protect and preserve their identity and as a result faced reorganization. But reorganization of the state could not solve the socio-political problems in Assam, rather, another chain of movements for self assertion developed. Among them are the Bodos and the Misings, started demanding self assertion in this period.

The Bodos and the Misings is the largest and second largest plain tribe in Assam respectively, who once identified themselves as 'Assamese' because of the long historical process of assimilation to Assamese formation, gradually, have started their efforts to drift away from the identity. It has been observed that the self assertion among the various ethnic groups of Assam began in the first part of the 20th century. Though the movement by the Bodos and the Misings was started in the beginning of 20th century, it turned to an organized form in the second part. They raised some fundamental questions to the Assamese formation in this period, and subsequently demanded a separate socio cultural identity than Assamese. The demand for socio-cultural identification was followed by the demand of political autonomy and an organized movement by the way of politicization of cultural symbols. Unlike the struggle to establish a separate Bodo–identity from Assamese with the demand of autonomy at the initial stage and later demand of separate state and cultural totality, the Misings preferred to solve the core socio-economic and political issues by the means of political autonomy as well as protection, preservation and development of its own cultural heritage. Misings wanted to form a greater Assamese society with the equal partaking of all tribes and ethnic groups of Assam. However, as a result of these long standing movements by the Bodos to establish their socio-cultural and political identity, Bodo Accord was signed 1993 for creation of a Bodoland Autonomous Council and later replaced this accord by the formation of BTAD in 2003. Same way, as a political solution to the long standing Mising issues, the Mising Autonomous Council was created in 1995.

It is to be noted that the issue of self-governance of the tribal people of the plains of Assam including the Bodo and the Mising was not raised in the post- independence period only. Rather, it has been noticed that the roots of these movements developed in the colonial period itself. The formation of tribal league in long back 1933 in colonial period, PTCA struggle to realize the expectations of the tribal people, organizations like Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS), All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), Mising Bane Kebang (MBK), Mising Agom Kebang (MAK) and their role in raising the fundamental issues of the Bodos and the Misings and making people mobilized has to be addressed. However, it is seen that gradually in 1960s onwards, mobilization of people through cultural line and revival of cultural elements became the instrumental tool of the Bodo and the Mising self assertion movements. The present work is an attempt to find out the factors behind these movements for protection of socio-economic, political and cultural heritages of the Bodos and the Misings and also to find out the reasons behind their cultural revivalism, the nature of its move, intensity in the sense of mobilizing and organizing the people for these movements as well as the changing trends of Bodo and Mising movements and ways of managing diversity in a multi ethnic state, particularly, Assam.

For a systematic presentation of the present research work, the work has been divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, the ethnic identity, history and culture of the Bodos and the Misings has been discussed. The second chapter tries to trace the background of the movements as well as also tries to find out the causes behind the Bodo

and the Mising movement which got its momentum during the post Independence period, as whole. In the third and fourth chapter of this work, the revival process of the cultural elements and the process how people were culturally mobilized for a movement with economic-political aim have been discussed. To do this, the third chapter examines the revival process of the Bodo and the Mising languages, development of language and literature and the manner, that the people were mobilized by an organized form in the line of language and literature. The fourth chapter tries to define the revival process of the traditional religious beliefs, traditional dress code, traditional food items and the role of songs resonating ethnic consciousness in making the people politically mobilized. The fifth chapter examines how the state tries to manage diversity in this multi ethnic set up, particularly in Assam and the traces the changing trends in the Bodo and the Mising movements. Chapter VI summarizes and concludes the study.

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