CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

Consciousness refers to being who is self-aware and political consciousness indicates one’s political state of mind. The concept of political consciousness derived from the group interaction and competition which may serve as a mobilizing force through psychological linkages as political mistrust, internal efficacy, perceived deprivation and discrimination (Olsen, 1970, p.682). It is a lifelong exploration of who we are, how we have been shaped and how our values and action can contribute to a better world for all. In this regard Marx states that political consciousness describes a person’s awareness of politics which has a link to understand one’s true position in history (Miller, 2002). Again, in the words of Valerie Miller, “Political Consciousness is a way of seeing, caring about and acting in the world” (Miller, 2002). It is a journey which is filled with conflict and growth resulting both the liberation and painfulness. Political consciousness builds new forms of more inclusive and transformative power relations for improving human life in the society. In this context the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire calls it a critical consciousness which give greater emphasis on understanding power relations. It helps people to ask the critical questions and to discover new truths and affirm collaborative values for solving real life problems. In this process people often examine their histories and then move to a careful analysis of their own country and circumstances and then they plan to address of their specific problems after its better identification. It is an important part of work of which involves helping people to develop a sense of their own rights those who have been fighting to get issue of respect, dignity and economic justice for centuries, especially with seriously marginalized groups (Miller, 2002).
In the context of the third World, this sense of political consciousness can clearly be understood with the concept of ‘Nationalism’ which is a strong force of political expression and consciousness. It is nationalism with which the realization of political consciousness is developed in the West in the late 18th and early 19th century with the formation and reformation of states in Europe (Upreti, 2006). The rise of feeling of nationalism led to the breakdown of different political entities by uniting people on the ground of ethnicity, language, culture etc. Consequently, these homogeneous cultural groups became independent nation states or acquire distinct political identity. In the third world the idea of nationalism was borrowed from the West to fight against the colonial rule due to the rise of indigenous movements in these societies (Upreti, 2006). It means the process of political emancipation in the third world was guided by this feeling of nationalism which was developed with the ‘anticolonial’ or ‘anti-colonialist’ revolution (Bebler, 1980). But many times as believed by someone the nationalism is not a powerful political instrument in the third world countries in general and the south Asian countries in particular that differed it from the Western world. The western connotation of nationalism was viewed as a consciousness within a particular community or a group as its self-assertion which consequently paved the way to the emergence of a new political society or a nation state. In this context the Marxists linked nationalism to the class struggle (Upreti, 2006). But these kinds of connotations regarding nationalism are not applicable in the context of third world countries, rather it is very difficult to explain and find out a clear-cut theoretical framework of nationalism in these societies. Another factor of its difficulty is that there emerged different types of nationalism hence varied type of interpretations of nationalism have come out. It is an admixture of liberal western and Marxian theoretical construct; therefore it is very
difficult to develop an acceptable conceptual framework in these societies of the third world. But broadly it is viewed by many that the nationalism was developed in the third world societies with the nationalist movements against the colonial rule of the imperialist powers. From the Marxian point of view, this nationalism or nationalist movement was a struggle against feudal and imperialist powers (Snyder, 1964:12) and the indigenous elite classes in these countries led these nationalist forces against the colonial rule.

Being a part of the third world, the region of South Asia also witnessed the emergence of Nationalism due to the colonial rule and the quest for independence with the right to self-rule. India was also not exception of that. In India nationalism took its shape during the course of Indian National Movement and ideology of this movement was to integrate communities against the struggle of colonialism and tried to make them as an integral part of the wider system of governance (Roy, 2005). This nationalistic approach draws inspirations from the proud historical traditions, the leaders of the nationalist movement against the colonial power, the liberal democratic constitution and its values and ideas of equality, freedom, secularism and so on (Upreti, 2006). In the earliest of the Nationalistic ideological building in the third world was dominated by educated members of the westernized elites (Bebler, 1980). The nationalist leaders of India also inspired from the western democratic education which reflects that the political ideology of the Indian nationalism emerged with the liberal democratic and secular outlook and with a view to notion of unity in diversity. But due to the erosion of democratic values and institutions, rise of fundamentalism, politicization of caste, class, language, religion and ethnic groups, political hegemony over others, underdevelopment, regional imbalance and so on gave rise to the emergence of sub-
nationalist movements, regionalism and different social movements in different corners of the Indian sub-continent (Upreti, 2006). For instance, since independence the Indian nationality has been challenged by some minority nationalities raised in Panjub, Jammu and Kashmir, North-East and so on based on religious and ethnic lines (Datta, 1992).

So far as the North Eastern part of India is concerned, the nationality question was emerged out with the Indian national movement or anti-colonial movement. But this nationalistic desire of the wider system of governance was opposed by some communities who could realize the hegemonic nature of the system (Roy, 2005). Therefore, the nationality question becomes very complex issue in this part of North East India in general and Assam in particular especially on the ground of ethnicity, culture and language. Again, it is one of the most heterogeneous linguistic and cultural regions of the world. Hence, it is the homeland of different nationalities. In this regard John Samuel classified these different nationalities as Well-formed Nationalities (like Asamiya, Bengali and Manipuri with their own cultural and linguistic base), Minority Nationalities (like Mizo, Naga, Tripuri, Khasi, Garo with different socio-cultural and political identities and moving through different phases of nationality formation), Sub-nationalities or Satellite Nationalities (like Bodos, Rabhas etc. developed under the shadow surrounding nationalities) and Ethno-Political identities (like many of the ethno-linguistic communities of Arunachal Pradesh with varied ethnic affiliation) (Samuel, 1993).

The feeling of minority nationality (Samuel, 1993) was taking shape and reflected immediately after the Indian independence among some hill tribes e.g., Nagas and Mizos of Assam. They fought for self-determination and were successful to be carved out of Assam with new political entities as separate states. This feeling of nationality
formation among these tribes was emerged out due to some reasons. The North Eastern part and its states were mostly independent before the annexation by the British in 1826 and even before Indian independence in 1947. The indigenous communities in this part of North-East controlled the land and forest and had a well-established system of governance on the basis of customary laws. As a result of the imposition of foreign rule and integration with the Indian administration after independence, these communities in this region gradually lost their control over land and forest and their system of customary laws were replaced by the Constitutional laws. Hence, the freedom loving people of this region was not ready to accept the Indian independence in 1947 as their independence rather they considered it as “continued colonization” (Roy, 2005). Apart from that in the pre-independent India the Britishers keeping view of the complex situation, the hill tribes were barred from active politics for the interest of the smooth running of their administration (Goswami, 1996, Rao, 1998) and they also kept them away from the plain civilization with the introduction of the inner line system of 1873 and the Excluded Area Act of 1935. Therefore this kind of restriction in regard to the interaction with other communities of the region put forwarded by the British administration was responsible for the emergence of the sense of alienation and mutually alienating minority nationalities in those excluded areas. This process kept them isolate from rest of India and anti-colonial movement. Even after independence, the ethno-political entities especially the Nagas and the Mizos remained alienated from the pan-Indian nationalism though the central policy makers tried to integrate them culturally, linguistically and politically with India (Samuel, 1993). Therefore, the hill tribes were neither a part of India nor Assam in the British administration though some of them had trade relations with neighbouring people of the Brahmaputra valley. They
maintained their distinct identity from that of the people of the Brahmaputra valley. They had maintained separate political entity without having significant interference from the outside which kept them geographically isolated from the other parts of the country (Hussain, 1992).

But in regards to the plain tribals of Assam particularly of the Brahmaputra valley contributed to the growth and development of Assamiya nationality. The plain tribes of the valley was an inseparable part of the larger Assamiya nationality and they together with the other Assamiya groups participated and contributed to the Indian National Movement for freedom from the colonization and strengthens the Assamiya nationality. These groups greatly contributed to the language, literature and cultural traditions of Assamiya rather they enrich it. Moreover, they did not pose a threat to the Assamiya nationality rather they identified themselves with the Assamiya nationality giving up their own dialectic and identity. That is why most of them were inducted into the Hindu fold as well as from the latter part of the 19th century most of the plain tribes of the Brahmaputra valley adopted Assamiya language as their mother tongue because of their absence of well-developed language of their own. This kind of language and cultural assimilation of these sub-nationalities or satellite-nationalities (Samuel, 1993) of the Brahmaputra valley formulated the larger Assamiya nationality (Hussain, 1992). In reality, this sense of sub-nationality among other ethnic groups of the Brahmaputra valley was grown up with the Assamiya nationality. For example some of the plain tribal groups like Tiwas, Rabhas, Deuris adopted Assamiya script for developing their own language whereas others like Bodos adopted Devnagiri script but all of them contributed to enrich the Assamiya literature and culture significantly. Late Bishnu Prashad Rabha, a communist leader contributed a lot in the field of Assamese cultural
history and he was placed as the ‘Kolaguru’ in the Assamese society. Likewise, Medini Mohan Choudhury, another tribal leader belongs to the Bodo community also contributed greatly to the contemporary Assamese literature (Hussain, 1992).

Nevertheless, the sense of sub-nationality developed mainly on the ground of ethnic lines in the North East in general and Assam in particular. It indicates mostly “a tribe of a geographical area with one name, common heritage, common language, common culture and therefore one identity” (Roy, 2005). Hence, the study of the ethnic community in relation with the concept of nationalism and political consciousness has become all the more important over the years especially in the India’s North-East because of their increasing ethno-cultural conflicts. During the colonial period, the educated middle class of the ethnic communities tried to compare their position with that of the other communities as a reference group in the society keeping in view of their historical background in the past and they feel that they have been neglected, exploited and discriminated against for decades which compelled to grow the sense of sub-nationality among these ethnic communities within the Asamiya nationality. Hence, as they are socially and economically backward, they are trying to develop the sense as a community by preserving their own identity and autonomy as well as raising their voice against those discriminations and deprivation. This process of struggle for autonomy has again helped the people becoming politically consciousness. Besides, since ethnicity or an ethnic group is characterized by a high level of consciousness of a kind among its members therefore it is also the effort of the researcher to synthesize both the political consciousness and ethnicity to explore the causes for its better identification.
So far as the ethnic movement or ethnic conflict is concerned, it is a worldwide phenomenon which includes the conflict between the state and ethnic groups and inter-ethnic conflicts. But, in India, movements based on ethnicity or ethnic conflicts were started in the early parts of twentieth century in different parts of the country because of the repressive behavior of the British administration as was same case happened regarding the rise of the sense of Nationalism. This repressive behavior and socio-economic policies of the British government led to deep dissatisfaction and those policies no doubt adversely affected the lives of people specially the oppressed class, which again led to the emergence of these movements in the British India. Meanwhile, there are of course such evidences of such movements or conflicts especially in the north-eastern part of India where it becomes also important to understand about the nature of the societies and the social structures to address the issues of ethnicity among both the tribal and non-tribal communities and the rising tendency of discontented people for their identity movements (Basumatary, 2012).

Here, it is necessary to conceptualize the word “ethnicity” before going for details on the political consciousness among the plain tribes specially the Bodos in post-colonial Assam. In the context of North-East India, the term “ethnic group” is a recent sociological alternative to the term tribe (Pakem, 1990). Regarding “ethnicity” the meaning varies from different scholars. Therefore, there is no consensus among the comparative political scientists on the concept of “ethnic” or “ethnicity”. According to Western anthropologists, ethnic group is a biologically self-perpetuating community who shares their fundamental cultural values and having the membership of the community by which they can be identified and distinguished from other communities of the same social order (Bhan, 1999). Again the Soviet ethnographers have identified
“ethnicity” as a community of people who has a historical background characterized by common relative stability, cultural features and distinctive psychological traits and by an awareness of their identity differed from other communities (Bhan, 1999).

Horowitz identified the concept ethnicity as an umbrella and states that it easily accepts the group’s differentiation by colour, language and religion. It also includes tribes, races, nationalities and castes (Horowitz, 1985). Many critics criticize this definition for its inadequacy to provide a clear concept. In this regard, Kanchan Chandra, a renowned political scientist gives a definition of ethnicity which includes both a subjective and an objective element. By ethnicity he meant descent-based attributes which, “include those acquired genetically (e.g. skin colour, gender, hair type, eye colour, height and physical features), through cultural and historical inheritance (i.e., name, language, place of birth and origin of one’s parents and ancestors), or in the course of one’s lifetime as makers of such an inheritance (e.g., last name or tribal markings)” (Chandra, 2006). Again, according to Smith, an ethnic group is “a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity” (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996, p.6).

Form the above it can be said that an ethnic group is a group who has some common genetic features, whose members are conscious of their group identity, shares common cultural and historical inheritance and distinguished form other communities.

Thus, ethnicity is the process of ethnic mobilization by which the leadership and organizations are giving priority to the promotion of language, literature, culture and economic conditions etc. of the concerned ethnic group. At the same time these
leaderships also promise to fight against exploitation, corruption and to struggle for just and constitutional rights of the people through democratic processes (Hazarika, 2005). In this context, we can refer the part of North-east India, which is the land of a large number of distinct tribe or ethnic groups where each of them has own culture, language, religion, social customs and traditions. The agitating tribes have demarcated and claimed their own geographical areas on the basis of their historic and present occupation of them.

Among those tribes, the Bodo community is one of the major plains tribal groups of Assam in this North-Eastern region of India. They are the “sons of the soil” of Assam. They have assimilated with the Assamese society from the very beginning though they have own language, culture and customs. This community is more backward socially, economically and politically even they have been neglecting since British period. Even after independence, no such significant development has been noticed on behalf of the Bodos by the central government as well as the state government though some provisions have been provided by the constitution of India in its Sixth Schedule. Therefore, it assumes more importance to discuss and study about the growth and development of the sense of sub-nationality or political consciousness among the Bodos especially in the post-colonial Assam which was reflected in the form of different agitating programmed for the redress of their various grievances and to get autonomy for the self-determination. This process of struggle has made the people politically conscious.
Growth and Development of Political Consciousness among the Bodos:

In the beginning of the Post-Colonial period of Assam, the plain tribes did not get any protective measures in the form of autonomy or an autonomous district council like the hill tribes. Rather, in 1950’s, the imposition of Assamese language and language movements of 1960 and 1972 of the Asamiyas was a hegemonic attempt as a dominant nationality undermining the minority language groups and their identity in the region (Samuel, 1993). That is why the plain tribals of the Brahmaputra valley especially the Bodos from the late 1960’s started to agitate with a new vigor for articulating their own identity and to get autonomy to overcome their miserable socio-economic and cultural condition on the ground of ethnicity. The socio-economic oppression or Asamiya hegemony over their culture, language, increasing socio-economic problems and political mobilization create the sense of sub-nationalism as a strong force of political consciousness among them. Therefore, the Bodo sub-nationality was emerged within the Asamiya nationality due to some multifaceted reasons such as the opposition of the Indian state, against the supremacy of the Assamese nationality and clash with other surrounding peripheral as well as dominant nationalities like Adivasi, Koch and Bengali (Roy, 2005).

Apart from that due to the collapse of colonialism and with the emergence of new societies of Asia and Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s brought the massive political changes on the world’s stage (Ray & Bhattacharya, 1983:223). The post independent societies in these countries remained technologically backward, politically dependent and therefore they have been economically exploited and indigent. Hence, with this border view, the society in Assam particularly the Bodo ethnic tribes being a part of that kind were no longer remained free from those aspects. Their urge for
development, social reform and economic growth were some of the parts of their struggle for freedom from different exploitations and dependence. This aspiration for independence, their own ethnic identity and dignity and urge for development made them politically consciousness and also gave practical basis for academic concern with the concept of modernization and political development. In this regard, perhaps Lucian W. Pye has rightly said that political development is the political prerequisite of economic development. He also found that it is more important to know the ways how the political system facilitate economic growth and development because sometimes the performance of political system may not enough for development but it can prevent economic growth and development. From that perspective, in the Bodo inhabited areas, it is observed that the performance of the political system is lying behind so that the government’s policies are not being properly implemented as because the political system has failed to generate economic growth and development. Again, the problems of political development would vary according to the economic problems faced by different ethnic groups in the Assamese society.

With the emergence of Brahma Movement led by Kalicharan Brahma and emergence of the middle class among the Bodos made them conscious both politically and socially which created the influx of new participants (popular participation) in to the system. This expansion of popular participation among the Bodos created serious strain on the existing institutions and bring new interests to political system. Consequently, new issues begin to arise and the continuity of the old system is broken. Therefore, the need of re-establishing the entire structure of political relation is felt mass mobilization. The Bodos also felt that the regional government is not successful to use the powers to influence the distribution of goods, services and values throughout the Assamese
society. Even it was not able to strengthen the opportunities and potentialities of the disadvantaged groups like Bodos in the society. This situation created the distribution crisis (Bhusan, 2011) among the Bodos and equally made them politically conscious.

In this regard the views of Samuel P. Huntington are also significant where he stated that political Development is not taking place rather it is Political Decay in the present third world societies. The system of modernization brings about socio-economic mobilization in these societies. Social mobilization and political participation are rapidly increasing. As a result these processes deteriorate political institutions because the relationship between operation of the institutions and aspects of modernization are not fully established in these societies. For example, with the introduction of universal adult franchise in the Bodo inhabited areas, there should also be creation of institutions for giving new educated Bodo elites a chance to participate in the decision making process. But there are a few roles and positions which are again dominated by high caste Assamese elite class hence their aspirations are not fulfilled. Thus, the newly mobilized and educated Bodo people have lost their trust in the existing institutions and try to regulate the system in their own way which led to the emergence of mass politics in the late 1980’s. This also results in all-round frustration among some Bodo youths which again paves the way to marginalized groups like National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT).

From another point of view the manifestation of the consciousness of ethnic identity among the Bodos takes extreme form due to the rise of educated middle class and the growing socio-economic and political problems. It is the result of discriminatory practices and the inadequacy of existing socio-economic and political institutions dealing with this ethnic group (Bhan, 1999). Same thing happens with the Bodos of
Assam. They feel that they are depriving from their land and facing the problem of economic neglect and linguistic, cultural and political identity as a distinct tribe. Again they blamed the heavy influx of the outsiders and the Assamiyas attitude of alienating and dominating the tribals for their degraded situation. In this context Hiren Gohain (1989) revealed that the Bodo struggle is one kind of struggle against the Assamese hegemony. By the sixties the cultural pull of the upper caste Hindus became stronger and they were anxious to occupy the superior position of the Aryan ancestry in the Assamese society. After the Indian independence the Assamese became the most powerful political force led by a number of educated and landed families and gradually came to occupy the important positions into government services (Gohain, 1989). In this regard, they had to struggle with the existing Bengali middle class for political and cultural hegemony and consequently by the fifties they became successful to play significant role in the society, culture and polity in the region. This class actually tried to turn up the Assamese society into a hegemonious society adopting the Assamese way of life and making the Assamese language as the official language (Gohain, 1989). This cultural campaign and the monopoly of power politics in the state administration naturally generated resentment and resistance among the various Bodos and underprivileged groups of the society who were very much conscious with their own culture, language and heritages. They started to raise their voice against the Assamese hegemony in the state and eventually some hill tribes viz., the Khasis and the Garos (Meghalaya), the Nagas (Nagaland), and the Mizos (Mizoram) craved away from Assam with new assignments. On the other hand the plain tribes including the Bodo community united together as Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) launched a popular movement for another new assignment to be known as Udayachal (Gohain,
1989) for their distinct identity in the sixties. Being the largest plain tribal community in the state, the Bodos felt the discrimination most bitterly because they had no chance for preserving their own cultural heritage in the atmosphere of Assamese hegemony. They were being deprived in education and hence the literacy rate was too low among them. A Handful Bodo youth hardly receive their opportunity for higher education at great sacrifice. But getting good jobs were again more difficult after competing with the politically powerful and educationally advanced caste-Hindu Assamese. This type of hegemonic atmosphere left them feeling of frustration (Gohain, 1989).

Apart from that, the impact of modern civilization in India, which was installed by the British administration, is another aspect for awakening the Bodos. The Britishers introduced the modern system of western education, the emergence of employment avenues to the people, social mobility irrespective of caste and religions, advancement of transport and communication, effective new administrative and political system, introduction of rules of law and new legal system treating all sections of people equality before the law, protection of the rights of the disadvantageous people in society and introduction of new economic system in the place of the static traditional caste based economy. These new systems brought by the Europeans in India changed the traditional mindset of the Bodo people with introducing democratic values such as liberty, equality, justice and fraternity. Under this new liberal intellectual conditions set by the Europeans, the Bodos developed the sense of self respect, socio-economic, cultural, and political consciousness amongst all sections of Bodo people in their own ways. This has also created identity consciousness based on ethnicity, race, language and religion among them (Basumatary, 2012). Gradually, they started to reassert their identity by reviewing and restructuring their lost history, culture, tradition, language and custom
etc. This movement for re-assertiveness was started with the Brahma movement in the early part of the 20th century.

In the beginning of the 20th century the Colonial rulers tried to move to the plains and the hill areas to establish a degree of political and administrative dominance over them. Following this move, the British policies along with the Christian Missionaries and their introduction of western education greatly influenced the communities and their social formation which planted the seeds of identity movement among the tribal and non-tribal which appeared in the post-independent period (Basumatary, 2012). As a result, at the earliest stage of 20th century, the educated middle class among the Brahmas of the Bodo group gradually took shape keeping in view of their socio economic problems. The Brahmas among the Bodos are the educationally and socio-economically advanced section and who has naturally provided the leadership of the different phases of the struggle for Bodo identity and autonomy. In fact, most of elite come from families who follow the Brahma religion. Only a few of them are from Christian and traditional Bodo families (Mittal & Sharma, 1998:p.137). They came in contact with the Western education in the beginning of twentieth century. In the second decade of the twentieth century a reformist movement took place among them (Chaudhuri, 2004:p.17) which was basically socio-religious in character aiming at uniting the Bodos for their social progress, the rise of collective consciousness and aspirations among them.

This influence upon a section of the Bodo people was perhaps one of the major factors to arouse a level of cultural consciousness among them. They also propagated the need for education and social reforms like changes in marriage customs, stoppage of dowry system, pig rearing and such others for the benefit of their people. Accordingly, the Brahma of the Bodo community became culturally distinct and educationally advanced
to articulate ideas and to initiate steps for bringing about socio-political changes among themselves (Das & Basu, 2005: p159).

Again, it was felt that till the beginning of the 20th century, the Bodos liked to live with their self-satiated agrarian economy. But, gradually they were infused by the national feeling during the time of national movement. Consequently, they started to seek equal rights and status with the fellow countrymen that developed political consciousness among the Bodos. This sense of political consciousness brought drastic change in their socio-economic institutions. Some scholars in this regard opined that the political aspiration of the Bodos for their self-rule began when the Simon Commission was arrived in the province and when a memorandum was submitted to that royal commission by the Kachari Youths’ Association and by the Goalpara district Boro Association in 1929. Hence, in this regard Dr. C. Bhattacharjee reveals, “In reality the Boro Movement may be identified to have started from the year 1929 with the submission of memorandum by the plain tribes” (Bhattacharjee, 1996 p.75 & Brahma, 2011p.142). The Memorandum submitted by the plains tribes reflected about their glorious past history and reacted against the mixed electorate (Bhattacharjee, 1996 p.75).

So far as the growth and development of political consciousness among the Bodos is concerned, it was the result of a long-drawn process of identity formation starting from the colonial period and gradually becoming much more assertive in the post-colonial period. Therefore, to properly understand the political development and political consciousness among the Bodos, it also becomes relevant to study their background of various political demands raised by their various organizations. In this context, the college going Bodos in 1930’s, particularly the Brahmas formed the Bodo Chhatra
Sammilan with the explicit aim of uniting the Bodo-speaking tribes through conferences and to take initiative for social reforms (Mittal & Sharma, 1998:p.303). Their first priority was to demand for facilities in education, health and economic development (Das & Basu, 2005:p.159). At first, the activities of this association were started in Kokrajhar subdivision and were later extended to other parts of Assam (Mittal & Sharma, 1998:p303). Again, with the formation of the tribal league in 1933, a platform for all the tribes in the plains of Assam, had played an important role in its legislative politics to protect the interest of the plains tribes and refrained from any type of agitation politics. The only existing political party of the plains tribes in Assam at that time, the Tribal League latter transformed into a socio-cultural organization i.e., the Tribal Sangha in 1954, which almost paralyzed Bodo politics for two decades, until the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) came into being in 1967 (Dutta & Bhuyan, 2007:p.95).

In the independent India, the earlier Bodo leaders assured the Bodo people to improve their condition with the new opportunities which had brought about by the democratic process. But it did not bring much benefit to the socio-economic condition of the plain tribes of Assam. The conditions of the tribes actually worsened under the new politico-administrative arrangements (Dutta & Bhuyan, 2007:p.95). The State Government also did not have necessary good will towards the plain tribals to help them giving weight age to the grievances according to their own genius and tradition (Dutta, 1993:p.137). Therefore, various organizations, government officials, social workers and political leaders of the community felt to establish a literary forum i.e., Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952 to promote and preserve the Bodo language, literature and culture for their distinct identity. This literary organization discussed about this identity question in its various...
meetings and demanded for the recognition of the Bodo language as the medium of instruction on the primary level education in the Bodo dominated areas in 1961 (Choudhury, 2004:p.59-61). This organization provided the platform to the Bodos in organizing themselves. At the same time, as stated earlier, some leaders of the plains tribes felt that they are constitutionally discriminated and deprived from getting any type of autonomy which their counterparts i.e., hill tribes of the state of Assam enjoying constitutional protection under the provision of sixth schedule of the constitution of India. They also deprived from the provision under the fifth schedule of the constitution. Even in their own state they were very much neglected and the financial packages meant for tribal development often either diverted or misused.

As a result, the Bodo leaders formed the Plain Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), a political organization on February 1967 to fight for “full autonomy in the predominantly plains tribal areas” in Assam popularly to be known as Udayachal (Bhuyan, 1989:p.113-114). The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) formed in 1967 was offered active support to them becoming very much concerned about decades of neglect and apathy by the subsequent state government towards the Bodo community. Seven years later of its formation the demand was upgraded with union territory status (Das & Basu, 2005:p.178) by influencing the formation of Maghalaya as an Autonomous state in 1970 followed by the passage of the North Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act. 1971 (Dutta & Bhuyan, 2007:p.97). In this part, PTCA could not make much further effort when it entered into a pact with the Janata Party in 1977 (Dutta & Bhuyan, 2007:p.97). This however affected the movement for union territory status and the leaders reverted to the regional Autonomy (Das & Basu, 2005:p.178).
However, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) was eager to unify various factions and rivals of the PTCA. As a result, it took the initiative in forming a new party called United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF) in 1984 (Basu & Kohli, 1998:p.200) and with these political parties ABSU jointly demanded a separate state, called Bodoland. During that period, the achievements of the Assam Movement led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) inspired the leaders of All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and the Bodo youths to fight for new struggle for Bodoland. ABSU touched every section of Bodo society and aroused consciousness among them. Consequently, ABSU formally declared the starting of a democratic and peaceful Gandhian mass movement on 2\textsuperscript{nd} March, 1987 for an independent state of Bodoland under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma. It spread the messages of united non-violent struggle by creating a political organization, the Bodo Peoples’ Action Committee (BPAC) among the Bodo masses and it also spearheaded the movement. This agitational programme of ABSU/ BPAC followed by massive mass participation of Bodos and supported by various tribal groups, minority groups and by different tribal and non-tribal students union to fight against “Assamese Chauvinism”. The ABSU/ BPAC leadership adopted the methods like bandh, rally and mass mobilization to arouse the consciousness among them and gave the slogan “Divide Assam fifty-fifty”. Some Bodo youths took violent methods under the banner-ship of BLT and NDFB. BLT was in favor of the creation of a separate state of Bodoland within Indian Union while the NDFB demanded for the formation of a sovereign and independent state of Bodoland outside India.

Due to the complete breakdown of the law and order machinery of the state in its Bodo dominated areas the government initiates dialogue with the ABSU/BPAC leadership.
Consequently, an agreement was reached in 1993 between Centre and state government and Bodo leadership, which led to the formation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) constituted under the Bodoland Autonomous Council Act of 1993 (Assam Act of 1993). However, the signing of the Bodo Accord on 20th February 1993, paved the way for the creation of a separate administration for Bodo dominated areas of Assam in the form of BAC. Despite the Bodo Accord in the form of BAC, the economic development was not taken place and the neglect continued in Bodo dominated areas though some efforts were taken up for improving those situations it became too late. However, there were thousands of people still languishing in refugee camps in miserable conditions where their lives have been disrupted several times in last few decades. As a result, the consciousness among the Bodos gradually took a definite form and developed to the stage of demanding statehood for Bodoland again, for safeguarding their interests (Basumatary, 2012). Apart from that the future of the BAC remained uncertain due to the controversy over its jurisdiction, powers and functions of the council and consequent differences of opinion between and among the various Bodo and non-Bodo groups (Das & Basu, 2005). A section of Bodo leaders also regarded the autonomy as puppet autonomy and started for another struggle. It takes violent measures. Finally, after a long 10 years movement the time came for signing a new Bodo Accord popularly known as Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), on 10th February, 2003 was signed between the Central Government, the BLT, and the State Government under sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution. As a result of this agreement, the Central Legislature passed the sixth schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2003 and the Bodoland Territorial Council, the latest autonomous council for the Bodos in the plains of Assam was constituted as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule.
Accordingly, the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) was added to as item No.3 of Part 1 of the table appended to Paragraph 20 of the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India (Basumatary, 2012). The BTAD has an area of 8970 sq.km which is about 11.4 per cent of the total geographical area of Assam with 3082 villages. There are four districts namely Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri which are newly created under the provision of the Bodo Territorial Council. These districts have been carved out from the original district of Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur. Apart from that, there are ten Sub-Divisions including district headquarters, 33 development blocks, 415 Village Council Development Committees and 3082 Villages under the Council (Basumatary, 2012).

After the new political development among the Bodos in the form of BAC and BTC/BTAD, some Bodo youth came back to the mainstream of politics who earlier took the violent methods. A few years ago, a new political party BPPF was formed by a number of Bodo organizations together. It is a common platform to different Bodo organizations to provide a common political forum for the leaders of Bodo movement and now it will be interesting to see the role of the leaders for the Bodo community to keep them politically conscious and focus on the aspirations towards their grievances.

**Statement of the Problem:**

The plains tribal communities in the north-eastern part of India never had a chance to represent themselves during the colonial period. This has caused deep political resentment among the plains tribes specially, the Bodos of Assam who feel that they have been neglected, exploited, alienated and discriminated against for decades. The main problems among them are establishment of their distinct ethnic identity,
participation in the political affairs of the state, appointment in the Government jobs, lack of adequate facilities of modern system of education, land alienation, political neglect which become increasingly acute among themselves. Again the Bodo inhabited districts of Kokrajhar, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Kamrup are among the least developed.

Under the British umbrella, the ethnic population of the country was not comfortable with those policies which kept them to remain far distance from the main stream. This was happened in the case of the Bodo-Kacharis in the plains of Assam for which they were lagging behind their fellow Indians in terms of many aspects particularly in education. This opportunity for general and mass education came to the North-Eastern part of India only after Indian independence though, this part of India specially Assam was known rich from the colonial period in producing oil, natural gas, tea plantation in comparison to the other parts of India and even the neighboring states like West Bengal (Basumatary, 2012). After the Indian independence from the colonial rule, the tribals were given the scheduled tribe (ST) status hence tribal Belts and Blocks were created for their protection from the outsiders. But these protected lands were being encroached by the powerful landlords and immigrants through adopting some illegal means (Basumatary, 2012).

Even after independence, due to the low rate of education and ignorance towards the system of education, the problem of getting occupational livelihood as well as employment remain major problems among the plains tribes of Assam in general and the Bodos in particular though they thought that in the novel condition of the independence from the colonizers will make them out of reach from the miserable conditions which was not materialized. Moreover, the Bodos feel that the system of higher education was out of reach for most of the Bodos due to the absence of higher
educational institutions like IITs, IIMs, Engineering Colleges and Universities in their area for several decades (Basumatary, 2012). Though some of the higher educational institutes are there in the province but they are located faraway places such as Guwahati, Dibrugarh and other parts of the region. Of course, few Bodo youths became successful to receive higher education with great difficulties but majority of them were not admitted to those best educational institutions year after year. Moreover, even after getting higher education the Bodo youths hardly compete with other non-tribal educated youths who are both economically and politically powerful so that they are deprived from getting prestigious jobs. Though only ten percent of jobs are reserved for the plain tribes as per the norms of the State Government, the backlogs are even not fulfilled in various categories and most of the appointments are made on the basis of the party affiliation and other considerations (Basumatary, 2012). Again, the state governments’ attitude to establish Assamese hegemony in the state administration with making knowledge in Assamese Language as the pre-requisite for services undermining the Bodo language which the Bodos treated as the step of violation of the Article 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution and clause No. 7 of Assam Official Language Act of 1960 (Basumatary, 2012). Therefore, the Bodos are not comfortable with the motive and activities of the State administration.

Moreover, in the post-colonial period, the plains tribes specially the Bodos compared their position as regards constitutional safeguard with that of the Scheduled Tribes in the hill areas of Assam and the Scheduled Tribes living in other states. They found the plains tribes of Assam enjoy the minimum constitutional safeguard among all the Scheduled Tribes in India. Because those people living outside Assam enjoy the benefits of fifth schedule, the objective of which is to protect the interest of the tribal’s
land and to protect the tribal way of life. The Schedule Tribes living in the hill districts of Assam enjoy the provision of the Sixth Schedule which meant to protect the customs, practices and identities of the tribal people and afford them the opportunities of growth and progress according to their own genius and traditions. But the Scheduled Tribes living in the plains of Assam enjoy neither of the two.

Again, the question of giving inadequate protection to their land and to maintain their economic stability is another important issue. Because from the beginning of this century, a large number of East Bengal immigrants infiltrated into their area swallowing up many of their old villages and the most fertile areas (Mittal & Sharma 1998: p-300). Apart from that they have been easy target for many glaring exploitations and injustices for decades due to their illiteracy and simplicity. The age-long activities of the non-tribal traders and money lenders and the adverse socio economic efforts of recent urbanization and industrialization without careful arrangements for their economic protection and rehabilitation endangered a feeling of deprivation, discrimination and injustice among the Bodos (Narzary, 1998). On the other hand, the leadership of the major political parties has neglected the Bodo inhabited areas and also did not try to address the problems of the Bodo people in the plains areas where non-tribal constituted the majority and obviously a reliable vote bank in election politics. Again the “Assamization Policy” of the Assam Government, anti-tribal attitude, repressive behavior which have reduced the Bodos to the status of the Second class citizens of the state.

Again, in the 1980s the objectives of the anti-foreigners movement which was led by All Assam Students Union were to drive out the foreigners from the land of the state for preserving the distinct identities of various ethnic groups. Taking this advantage of this
movement some leaders of AASU formed the Assam Gana Parishad Government in the state and completely undermined the language and culture of the other indigenous groups which led to the violation of the Clause 6 of the Assam Accord except their effort to promote only the Assamese language and culture (Basumatary, 2012). Most of the ethnic groups especially the Bodos and their various organizations mainly the ABSU naturally took it as complete negation of the diverse cultural and linguistic heritage of Assam (Basumatary, 2012). This kind of discrimination and the unresolved questions regarding the illegal settlements of the outsiders in their land and protection to their language and culture led to violent conflicts especially among the Bodos which rocked the state almost for two decades. Apart from that, some of the militant outfits have been continuing some violent activities where most of whom formed on the lines of identity and culture (Basumatary, 2012).

These deprivations and discriminations developed a sense of political consciousness among the Bodos to secure their distinct identity, history, dignity and socio- economic and political justice in the dominated Assamese society and persuaded them to follow a non-violent democratic mass movement in the 1980’s for their political autonomy.

Therefore, it is the Researcher’s effort to measure about the level of political consciousness among the Bodos and what are the actual motivating factors behind it are the main concerns for investigation.
Literature review:

Literature review, on this topic is an ongoing process. Following is a mention about some of my reviews:

B.C. Upreti’s interpretation of Nationalism in his article “Nationalism in South Asia: Trends and Interpretations” (July-Sept, 2006) is very clear about its nature in South Asia. According to him nationalism is a strong force of political consciousness though it is a complex phenomenon having different bases and expressions in different situation. Especially the nature of nationalism in South Asia is different from that of the western societies. The feeling of nationalism was developed in South Asia with the freedom struggle against colonialism and politico-administrative discriminations. The South Asian region is also significant due to its different regional and ethno-cultural identities so that the sub-national tendencies have become prominent in these societies. The author has also given ideas about these different forms of nationalism explaining the situation such as great nationalism and little nationalism, religious nationalism, language and cultural nationalism and so on. Apart from that the author has not forgotten about to interpret the relevance of nationalism as a tool of political expression or consciousness in the context of South Asia.

“Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist: Assam’s Anti-Foreigners Upsurge, 1979-80” (Oct., 1980), is a thought provoking article published in the Economic and Political Weekly by Amalendu Guha where he tried to analyze the Assam’s anti-foreigners movement in its several aspects and draws some reasonable conclusions. The nationality question involves with this movement. He classified nationality into two viz., one is All India on the basis of Pan-Indian culture homogeneities and another is Regional
(Assamese, Bengali etc.) on the basis of regional cultural homogeneities. According to him regional identity of the Assamese or Asamiya little nationalism began to take shape since 1850’s through the political mobilization by the Asamiya middle class on the language issue. According to Guha the anti-foreigners movement started in 1979 was the initiation of the Asamiya upper class that controls the State’s power and effective local press and planned for that but not the initiation from the part of students. He also examines that there are two sides of the movement as non-violent or peaceful turned towards Delhi and another one is violent or coercive turned towards dissident minorities. The motive of the move was mostly lies with the issue of assimilation rather than deportation of illegal migrants.

In his article i.e., “Is There a Nationality Question in India?” Achin Vanaik (1998) raised the question of nationality in India and pointed the stand of Indian Marxists. He rejected any characterization of India being a multi-national entity. Rather, India is very much a nation state and the sense of classical Marxist has solved the “National Question”. He also raised the issue of bourgeoisie and the class state of India which creates problem of national building. Vanaik also indicates about the dual dimensions of Nationalism. In this article, the author touches almost all the aspects of nationality such as sub-nationalities, regionalism, sub-state and state-wise struggles and state autonomy.

John Samuel in his article entitled “Language and Nationality in North-East India” (1993) reflects about the role of language in nationality formation in the North-Eastern part of India. He also describes language not only as a vehicle of the history of a nationality but also it is the integral part of the nationality itself. North-East part of India is one of the most heterogeneous cultural and linguistic regions of the world having lots of complexities in the nationality formation. Therefore, the author classifies various
phases of nationality formation in this part of India into four different categories viz. a) Well-formed nationalities like Asamiya, b) Minority communities like Mizo, Naga, c) Sub-nationalities or Satellite-nationalities like Bodos and d) Ethno-political entities like many ethno-linguistic communities in Arunachal Pradesh. According to the author, in all these different transitional phases, language plays an important role.

The article published in the Economic and Political Weekly, May 21, 2005, “Conflicting Nations in North-East India” where Sanjay K. Roy explains how the ethnic groups of North-East India have challenged the state constructed definition of a nation and tried to establish a new narrative to define their nationhood. This paper is an effort to deconstruct the idea of the “Nation from Bellow”. It also examines the worse socio-economic and political condition of subordinate nationalisms and their quest for freedom with the nature of ethno-national movements.

In his article “Self-Assertion in the Third World” (July-Sept., 2006), Anton Bebler expressed his view that the ideologies constitute most relevant political form through which political emancipation of the third world societies have been expressed. These ideologies are varying widely in nature and have different purposes though they perform the basic function of self-assertion in third world societies. The Self-Assertive nature of these ideologies supports politico-economic independence, equality and respect among nations, and an independent stand in world’s stage.

Monirul Hussain in his article “Tribal Question in Assam” published in the Economic and Political Weekly (May, 1992) raised the nationality question of the Asamiyas with whom the sub-national groups emerged. He particularly emphasized the tribals of the Brahmaputra valley who contributed towards the emergence and growth of Asamiya
nationality and its literature and culture. They did not pose a threat to the formation of Asamiya nationality rather they identified themselves with the Asamiya nationality giving up their own dialectic. It also reveals that due to the Asamiya chauvinism or hegemony over minority communities gave rise to the sense of sub-nationality within the Asamiya nationality among the tribes specially the autochthon tribal groups according to the author.

Suryasikha Pathak in her article published in the Economic and Political Weekly 6th March, 2010, titled “Tribal Politics in Assam:1933-1947”, described the tribal politics in Assam starting form 1933 with the formation of the Tribal League to 1947. In this article she describes about various problems of the plain tribes including the Bodos like land alienation, issue of immigration as the issues of the tribal identity. She also expresses that the tribals were deprived and exploited by the upper caste of the Assamese society that is why the issue of “tribal identity” becomes an important part of the Assamese society.

Sarthak Sengupta (2008) in his edited book “Tribal Studies in North-East India” is a book of impressive collection of papers of eminent anthropologists and other social scientists on the socio-cultural life, ethnic tensions, ethnological aspects and development issues etc. among the varied types of the tribal inhabitants of North-East India. So far as the concept of ethnicity and the Bodos are concerned, the contribution of Saswati Biswas, Chandra Jyoti Biswas and Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri are very important. Saswati Biswas deals with the tribal culture and its problems of preservation and protection. She also indicates how the inner tension and strain of the tribal society affects the tribal culture and role of the non-tribals. C. J. Sonowal in his contribution to this book highlighted the widespread problems of ethnicity, identity crisis in North-East
in general and including the Bodos of Assam in particular. On the other hand in her contribution, Sucheeta Sen Choudhury deals with the participation of Bodo women and their organizations in the socio-political movements which empowered them to enter into the political arena and in decision making process of the Bodo politics.

Another edited book of Sarthak Sengupta (2014), “Ethnicity in North-East India”, is an important work about the dynamic nature of ethnicity in North-East India. It is a collection of eleven original essays of different experienced researchers to address the issue of ethnicity which is the inspiring source of scholars of social sciences particularly those concerned with the issue of ethnicity in the North-Eastern part of India. The issue of ethnicity has now become a major concern in anthropological study and other branches of social sciences. It is not a simple and isolated aspect, rather interconnected to many other multifaceted social issues which are reflected in the writings of Sekh Rahim Mondal where he gave a conceptual and theoretical consideration of ethnicity in the very first article in this edited volume. Thus, it is very much linked with the issue of identity consciousness and also linked with the aspect of culture. Again, in this volume, another scholar S.K. Nanda clears views in his article that usually ethnicity poses serious challenges and threats to the process of national building process especially in multicultural society like the North-Eastern part of India. He also opines that ethnicity is detrimental and antithetical to the unity and integrity of a multicultural society. Walter Fernandes in his contribution in this volume discusses the impact of the customary laws on tribal identity in North-East India. It is the central theme for the identity of the tribal communities which interaction with modernity in the form of education, religious change and the formal law has affected the tribal communities in general and their customary law in particular. This work has reflected that mobilization of people on
ethnic line has been a significant aspect of North East India. In this respect Girin Phukon writes about the socio-political dimensions of ethnic movement in Assam. According to him the socio-economic and political environment mobilize the issue of ethnicity.

“The Bodos of Assam-A socio-cultural study” (2007), is a book of seven chapters including the concluding chapter, written by Dr. Harka Bahadur Chhetri Atreya reflects the history, outlook, beliefs, philosophy, religious faith, social life and various problems and political settlements relating to the Bodo community of Assam. The book comprises generic details of the Bodos through their historical analysis and describes the Bodos as a major community in the plains of Assam or the real roots of the present Assamese culture. It also includes beliefs, philosophy, religious faith, language and literature of the Bodos as well as the influence of the Brahma Dharma and Christianity upon them. The author also discusses about the traditional heritages of the Bodos and their political heritages of the Bodos and their political activities since the beginning of the twentieth century. Again it deals with the formation of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and its role to the cultural movement, social unrest and revolutionary activities of the Bodos. The movement for a separate Bodoland state, the militant activities, reaction of the society and state as well as settlement through Government accord has been analyzed on the basis of providing some data. And finally, the author outlined the drawbacks, social problems and suggestive remedies aiming at common peace and prosperity.

A book called “Autonomy Movements and Federal India” (2002) by Bhupinder Shing deals with the urges and aspirations of some ethnic communities and their socio-political movements. Their goals vary from total independence to degrees of autonomy within the constitutional federal framework. This book is a unique and authentic one, in
which the author has been an active participant in Bodo, Naga and Jharkhand movements from both sides – one is officially on the authority’s side and another, is emotionally and morally on the protagonists’ side.

P.S. Datta in his “Autonomy Movements in Assam” (1993) states about the struggling ethnic groups of Assam which have been appealing to the ruling elite for the solution of their problems outside the political control of the “governing caste Hindu Assamese elite” for long times and a solution evaded them so long. The aim of the author has been to give an opportunity to his fellow countryman to know and understand the self-perception and the subjective assessment of these ethnic groups of Assam without the help of any so called political analyst or social scientist.

“History of North-East India” an important work by Rajesh Verma reflects that North-Eastern region is a strategic point for India which is surrounded by the countries like China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. This region is significant from another point of view that it is dominance of diverse mongoloid races of people and tribal cultures. The term “North-East” is a collective term which is used for the eight states of India viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim. The book starts with an introduction on the land, people and historiography of the North-East. It also describes the factors that led to its downfall of the six centuries long Ahom rule. It also covers a discussion on the appearance of Europeans and the Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) followed by the policy of annexation of North-Eastern states. Again, it also examines the frontier policy of the British government in North-East India. This work further reflects a description on the people of North-East who contributed in the freedom struggle against the colonial rule. At last, it concludes with
the events and progress of North-East since independence and recent socio-economic conditions of the region.

The book “Sub-Regional Movement in India” (2004), by Snehamoy Chakleder is on sub-regional movement that has begun since sixties of the last century in various parts of Assam. Two Sub-regional movements, namely Bodoland movement of Assam and Gorkhaland movement of West-Bengal have been discussed here in Global and National perspective. After the reorganization of most of the federal units primarily on linguistic consideration, the minorities felt insecure. They faced ever increasing difficulties due to the monolinguual and mono-cultural policy of the state government. So that in order to preserve their cultural identity, the minority groups launched vigorous movement for political autonomy. This book focuses on the type of ethnic based sub-regional movement which is confined to a particular area of a state.

“India’s North-East- the Process of Change and Development” (1994), consists of nine independent chapters on various issues written by eminent scholars of the North-East India and edited by R. K. Samanta. The scholars have explored the reasons for backwardness of this region and provided strengths and means to overcome the limitations of change and development in the region. It is reflected from this volume that the concept of change and development is a dynamic one. Its primary objective is to satisfy the essential material needs of the society, but not at the cost of local environment and people’s culture.

The editor, B. Pakem (1990) in his “Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India” is a volume of proceeding of a seminar on questions of nationalities; ethnicity and cultural identity in the context of North-East India. The editor indicated
that the issues of nationalities, ethnicity and cultural identity have assumed a multidimensional importance for economic, cultural and political development of North-East India. The editor opines that most of the communities of North-East India were not conscious about their ethnic identities in the pre-colonial period. It started to develop from the phase of colonial administration. In this volume the editor focuses on territorial issues, historical background of nationalities and identity movements in North-East India.

Sujit Choudhury’s “The Bodos-Emergence and Assertion of an Ethnic Minority” (2007) is an attempt to trace different phases of history through which the Bodos emerged as the most dominant ethnic minority in the plains of Assam. It expresses that the older generation of scholars used the term “Bodo” to denote the earliest Indo-Mongoloid migrants to eastern India who subsequently spread over different regions of Bengal, Assam and Tripura. But recent developments make it imperative to redefine the term Bodo which means the plain tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley known earlier as “the Bodo Kacharis”. Only that aspect of Bodo history has been considered in this study which can be traced on the basis of evidences, direct or indirect, and at the same time which is capable of throwing some light on the complex process of formation of the Assamese nationality vis-à-vis the evolution of Bodo society.

“Genesis of Conflict and Peace- Understanding North-East India Views and Reviews” (2007), edited by Anuradha Dutta and Ratna Bhuyan is an outcome of workshops on “Problems and Prospects of Peace in North-East India” held by Peace Studies OKDISCSCD with a view to analyze the reasons for the escalating violence and conflicts in the entire North-Eastern region. This work is divided into two volumes. The first volume contains about the portents of violence and peace process. So far as the Bodos
are concerned, the ethnic assertion among the Bodos in the context of the Bodoland movement, insurgency in the Bodoland area and initiation of peace process have been discussed here by various eminent scholars in detail.

Sanjib Baruah in his book “India against Itself”, (1999) gives a brief introduction of Assam and its people. He also provides historical and geographical background for understanding Assamese sub-nationalism in the pre-colonial Assam. He discusses some of the areas of tension between Assamese and pan-Indian politicians that were apparent even during the political mobilization of anti-colonialism. Some of these tensions became more serious after independence. In the last chapter of his work, he gives definition of the term “Bodo” and focuses the process of unequal assimilation of Bodo cultural politics into the Assamese sub-national formation. After that, he discusses about the political mobilization among the Bodos for cultural and political autonomy and the challenges to the Assamese sub-nationalism.

“Why Bodo Movement” (2013), a book written by Khema Sonowal is an attractive one for more competent scholars to undertake deeper and more extensive studies on the issue of Bodo movement and their various affairs and attributes. In this book, the writer has attempted to analyze their historical background, socio-political status of the Bodos, socio-political organizations of the Bodos and their interest articulation, the different phases of the movement so far crossed the leadership of the movement, the participation of the Bodo people in the democratic electoral politics of India etc. However, the contents of the chapters of the work are still relevant for an objective analysis of the problems of the region in the context of current socio-political situation of the north-east India. The work also focuses about the Movement of the Bodos for self-determination which has been a common phenomenon in the restive, multi-ethnic North-east India.
Because India’s North-east is a meeting place of diverse ethnic groups since long past where each group has its distinct languages, cultures and customs. Therefore, the Indian politics has been experiencing ethnic conflict, inter-ethnic mobility since the post-independent period. Most of the ethnic groups are politically articulated and organized on the line of ethnicity. They have been struggling for self-determination and as a result of their struggle; many ethnic groups have attained autonomy. In the post-independent India this movement has become more prominent. Keeping in view of this entire scenario an attempt has made in this work to examine the causes for demanding such facilities and political share in the light of the Bodo ethnic movement for self-determination. The Bodos, an ancient tribal ethnic group belonging to Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid group, had once dominated the area, but later on, were sidelined and remained neglected by the advanced communities. It also focuses on their violent movement in the eighties of the 20th century and attracted much attention of both national and international communities. The movements though subsided after the sighting of several Accords with the Government of India, but are still in a dormant phase in the region.

Premananda Mosahari in his “Political Identity Crisis of the Bodos and their Bodoland Movement” (2011) tries to reflect the struggle of the Bodos to some extent for their survival with political identity in their homeland up to the signing of BTC Accord in the year 2003. In this work, the author has tried to analyze the historical background of the Bodo community from their earlier kingdom, the emergence of the Bodo elites, and the awakening phase of Baba Kalicharan Brahma and so on. It also tried to explain about the dynamic leadership of the youth generation under the banner of ABSU throughout the movement in this work. This work also provides information about the various plans
and programmers which were undertaken by the Bodo activists during the time of their long struggle. In this work, various Bodo organizations and their emergence, background and role were discussed.

Sekhar Brahma’s “Religion of the Boros and their Socio-cultural Transition” (2006) is an effort which tries to highlight the true picture of the Bodo society and its development since the beginning of the last century. Religion of the Bodos and their socio-cultural transition investigates into the different religious cult that came into existence to break the sole domination of the traditional Bathou religion in the Boro society and social reaction among the Bodos. As a result of the presence of new religions, the author has tried to analyze systematically how different religions came among the Bodos and shaped the Bodo society and how far these religions were responsible for creating social tensions and urge for political aspiration among them. The work also reveals that the entire development process, the religious movement, upward social mobility, ethnic crisis etc. are inter-related to each other and their roots were laid in the Brahma dharma movement or the spread of Christianity in the early part of twentieth century. Being a member of the same community, the author could access more inside the grass root people and into their beliefs, practices, customs and aspirations and have better understanding of changing mode of every aspects of their lives in this work.

“The Kacharis”(2012, 2nd edition) authored by Rev. Sidney Endle, a monograph about the most aboriginal races of the Bodos or the Boros of the Kachari folk of Assam and the northern part of West Bengal. This monograph is a result of experience gathered by Rev. Sidney Endle, who lived his whole life and worked among the Bodos. The Bodo Kacharis are known as “Meches” as is mentioned in his work. This book also discusses
about the characteristics, physical, moral, origin and historic summary, social and domestic life, laws and customs, religion, folk-lore, traditions and superstitions and most of the aspects of the Bodos. It also includes an appendix of grammar of the Kachari language which enhances its importance. His dedicated study about this tribe is a milestone for the social anthropologists, ethnologists and also for researchers too.

**Aims and Objectives of the Study:**

The main objectives of the study are:

(i) To examine the growth and development of political consciousness among the Bodos.

(ii) To study the level of political participation and political consciousness of Bodo people.

(iii) To study the background, nature, aims and objectives, demands and activities of the Bodo organizations for raising political consciousness.

(iv) To study the role of educated middle class in raising political consciousness among the Bodos in post-colonial period.

**Research Questions:**

This work is an attempt to find out results from setting up of some research questions. Following are those research questions…

(i) What is the level of political consciousness among the Bodos in post-colonial period and has it helped in solving socio-economic problems of the Bodos?
(ii) What are the motivating factors behind the rise of political consciousness among Bodos?

(iii) Have the Bodo organizations (like Bodo Sahitya Sabha, All Bodo Students Union and so on) been playing important roles in rising political consciousness among the Bodo people?

(iv) Does the rise of educated middle class among the Bodos lead to the growth and development of political consciousness?

(v) What is the level of political consciousness and degree of participation of Bodo women in post-colonial period?

**Methodology:**

The methods of the study are field survey on the basis of simple random sampling. With the purpose of studying the political consciousness of the Bodo community, the field survey is conducted with the help of interview schedule. The interview schedule is semi-structured as well as open-ended and a special emphasis was given on focused group discussion.

The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) or Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) has been chosen as the focus area of the study which consists of four districts, namely, Baksa, Chirang, Kokrajhar and Udalguri having 25 Development Blocks, 13 Revenue Circles and 3082 villages. There, 1 (One) block having highest ST population was selected from each four districts i.e., (1block x 4districts) = 4 blocks. Again, 3 (three) villages from each four blocks i.e., (3villages x 4blocks) = 12 villages are selected at random from the list of villages having highest number of ST population. From each
villages 25 (twenty five) household i.e., (12villages x 25households) =300 households were selected through house listing. Thereafter, a total of 300 adult household members (both male & female) were surveyed.

**Significance of the Study:**

Over the years there has been much discussion on the problems and prospects of scheduled tribes of North-East India. In this context, it becomes relevant to properly understand the political development and political consciousness among the plains tribes specially the Bodos and to study their background of political demands and movements in post-colonial period of Assam.

Despite the intensity of these issues till today, in this part of North-East India a very few studies have been conducted on the political consciousness among the Bodos. Moreover, this issue is yet to receive the required attention in Assam. Since development of political consciousness always brings changes to the society, urgency was felt to study on this issue in post-colonial Assam. Apart from this, a large number of aspects of the Bodo issues still remain untouched.

Therefore, this study may help to find out some interesting problems relating to the Bodos on what basis the administration can form policies to lessening the intensity on the Bodo problems and other plains tribes in North-East India. Since the importance of the ethnic issues in the North-Eastern part of India is very relevant, the study on the topic “Political Consciousness among the Bodos in Post-Colonial Assam” in the researchers’ part will enhance its importance too. Till today, a very few studies have been conducted on this issue, that is why this study is expected to provide the platform to the investigators for their further studies in this field.
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