CHAPTER: VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Political assertion of the Bodos has been an important part of the post-colonial political discourses in Assam with significant impacts on the socio-political history of the state. The present work, therefore, is an attempt to comprehend the nature of political assertion of the community in its historicity, besides analysing the factors responsible for shaping the political consciousness of the community as a whole. Political consciousness is conceived as one’s political state of mind, or a person’s awareness of politics which has a link to understand one’s true position in history, as Marx pointed out. The introductory chapter of this work, therefore, makes an attempt to theoretically examine the process of formation of political consciousness essentially linking with ‘Nationalism’—a strong force of political expression and consciousness. The realisation of political consciousness was developed with nationalism in the West in the late 18th and early 19th century with the formation and reformation of new states in Europe. It was borrowed from the West to the colonised world to fight against colonialism. Nevertheless, nationalism in the colonised world has always been a much more difficult process than the Western World. From the Marxian point of view, nationalism or nationalist movement was a struggle against feudal and imperialist powers in the colonised societies. Western educated indigenous elite class led the nationalist forces against colonial rule. In India, nationalism took its shape during the course of Indian National Movement.

Nevertheless, 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 in different corners of the Indian sub-continent. The nationalistic question in North-East India was also emerged with the Indian National Movement. Being a homeland of different nationalities, some communities opposed the nationalistic desire of the wider system who could realize the hegemonic nature of the system (Roy, 2005). Though the sense of nationality was emerged with the greater Assamese nationality but due to Assamiya hegemony, the sense of sub-nationality was emerged among smaller communities like the Bodos. There are some reasons for the emergence of the Bodo sub-nationality are, opposition of the Indian state, opposition of the supremacy of Assamese nationality, and clash with other surrounding peripheral as well as dominant nationalities like Adivasi, Koch and Bengali (Roy, 2005).

Collapse of colonialism and the emergence of new societies brought massive political changes in the late 1950s and 1960s. Hence, in the post independent period, being a backward society, the urge for development, social reform and economic growth made them politically conscious.

Apart from that the processes of modernization ushered in by the Europeans, the Indian society experienced certain changes. The traditional mind-set of the Bodos also changed with introducing democratic values such as liberty, equality, justice and fraternity. Under this new condition, the Bodos developed the sense of self-respect and socio-economic and political consciousness. Moreover, with the introduction of modern western education by the Britishers, role played by Christian Missionaries and reform movement led by Guru Kalicharan Brahma in the Bodo society resulted in the growth and development of political consciousness among Bodos in post-colonial period.
The second chapter deals with the historical background of the Bodos. It also points out the generic details of the Bodos through a brief historical analysis. Being a part of the North-East India, Assam is the homeland of different races with their composite culture and distinct identity. The Bodos are the largest and dominant plain tribe of Assam. They are also the real roots of the present Assamese culture. They belong to the Indo-Mongoloid stock and their population being concentrated mostly on the North bank of the Brahmaputra river with some of them staying on the south bank as well. Few of them are staying in Burma, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sikkim and Bhutan. Linguistically, their origin is derived from the Assam Burmese branch of Tibeto Burman sub-family. Regarding the migration of the Bodos into India, there is no authentic source of history as because they have been inhabiting in the North-Eastern region of this country since time immemorial. This chapter also deals with their early history of glorious past with the kingdom over Brahmaputra valley, down to North Bengal, Cachar Hills, Sylhet and Tripura. Apart from that, the role of Christian Missionaries to construct the Bodo ethnic assertion and Brahma Movement as way of socio-religious and cultural awakening of the Bodos are some significant outcomes of this chapter.

The third chapter of this study has focussed on the origin and background as well as aims and objectives of the political and non-political organisations of the Bodos and their efforts to interest articulation. These socio-political organisations have come into existence with their own ideologies and have been working since inception, as it appears, for articulating the interest of the Bodos. It has also come out from the chapter that political consciousness is developed by different political and non-political Bodo organizations in the process of political mobilization of the people in an organized and
planned manner. Finally, it can be stated that these Bodo organizations were quite successful for articulating socio-economic and political aspirations of the Bodos.

The forth chapter reveals that the newly emerged tribal organisations among the Bodos out of rising political consciousness made various attempts to develop and uplift their conditions and tried to locate reasons for their backwardness and consequently, they tried to introduce reforms in social practices and so on. In this regard, the struggling Bodo ethnic group of the Brahmaputra Valley has been appealing to the ruling elite for the solution of their problems through political demands and submitting memorandums. All these political demands and memorandums related to Bodo issues submitted by different Bodo organizations shows the presence of strong political consciousness and also it makes their political consciousness stronger.

The fifth chapter, dealing with the question of political consciousness empirically, is based primarily on analysis and interpretation of field survey data from BTAD region. The factors responsible for shaping political consciousness of the Bodos are analysed on the basis of the empirical insights gathered through an intensive field study. Attempt has been made to comprehend the achievements of the community in terms of educational attainment, livelihood and employment scenario highlighting the pertinent questions associated with the agrarian community, the level of economic prosperity indicated by the existing material conditions of life, participation of people in the organised socio-political activities, and the impacts of social protection measures initiated by the state. The quantitative insights gathered through the field study have been supplemented by some amount of qualitative insights gathered through FGDs and personal interviews with the political leadership of the community as well as leading citizens.
Essentially, it has been argued in the chapter that the common grievances of the community, which provides the basis for political mobilization historically and primarily responsible for shaping political consciousness of the community, are still valid. For instance, historically, the Bodos have been deprived of minimum level education. In the recent years, owing primarily on the interventions made by the state in the sphere of primary education, the literacy rate among the Bodos has significantly increased. Nevertheless, the average level of educational attainment has considerably been poor due to massive drop out at the level of middle school. Consequently, the sense of educational deprivation has still its political implications.

Historically, the Bodos are predominantly an agrarian community, and it is therefore expected that the Bodos living in the BTAD would still substantially depend on agriculture as their main source of livelihood, as the region does not witness proliferation of other economic opportunities backed by industrialization. It has been, however, been found that the agriculture sector has no more been attractive, especially for the young workforce. In addition to the traditional practices associated with agriculture, the other crucial factor is considerably small size of ownership holding. Though the small size of ownership holding is not something unique to the Bodo community, the question of small size of holding of the Bodos has always been an important political issue, as it has been perceived as a consequence of land alienation from the tribal community to the non-tribal farmers, especially the immigrants. The Bodo peasants with small size of holding sought to supplement the land to be tilled by leasing in agricultural land. The resultant operational holding has still remained smaller than what can be considered as subsistence holding to make the peasants economically better off.
The sector of agriculture being conspicuously poor, a sizeable section of the workforce is bound to migrate out in search of livelihood opportunities. The chapter has pointed out the aspect of migration and its probable political implications.

The housing and associated basic amenities, which indicate material condition of life of the people, also witness a deep sense of deprivation of the Bodos. The material conditions of life of the common Bodo people are found to be considerably poor. Even a significant section of the people does not have adequate size of homestead backed by Myadi Patta. Backed by poor economic contribution of the agricultural sector and lack of adequate employment opportunities naturally resulted in considerably poor annual income of the common people of the community. The chapter, therefore, provides an analysis of the overall economic condition of the common Bodo people for a better comprehension of the political processes to take off.

The chapter has also indicated association of the common Bodo people with various socio-political activities. The analysis reveals a considerably high level of political participation of the common Bodo people, which has been instrumental in precipitation of their political consciousness with a deep sense of deprivation. Constructing a distinct socio-cultural or sub-national identity of the Bodos, the political leadership found a solid political ground to mobilize the anger of the community against the dominant Assamese nationality on one hand and the state on the other. Attempt has also been made to understand the impacts of the state dispensations in the form of various several welfare as well as social protection schemes. The state dispensations, being largely ineffective, contributed to further consolidation of the grievances to be articulated politically.
The empirical findings have been corroborated with some amount of qualitative insights, as has already been mentioned. It has been observed that the factors including language and literature, which significantly contributed to the process of formation of the Bodo identity subsequently, started asserting itself against exploitation and discrimination of the Bodos by other communities. The political leadership of the community contributed a lot to consolidate the Bodo identity as a distinct sub-national identity. Moreover, they want to establish their own community as one of stronger communities in the region through culturally, politically and economically, resulting in establishing some organizations like BSS, ABSU and other political parties. They also feel that some measures like separate directorate for Bodo language and education, separate political identity in the form of separate state can only consolidate the Bodo distinct identity. Some of them also feel that without unity and integrity among the Bodos and better co-ordination among the political parties and Bodo national organisations, it is simply not possible to establish a strong foundation for their distinct identity.

The limited autonomy structured in the form of BTC, which is the outcome of the prolonged political movement of the Bodos, further consolidated political identity of the Bodos, though its socio-economic dispensations are far from the level of expectation of the community as a whole. Therefore, the political struggle of the community must lead to separate state to ensure fulfilment of the common aspiration of the Bodos, a nationality in making.
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