PREFACE

The Bodo political assertion is an important part of the post-colonial political development in Assam and has its significant impact on socio-political history. Therefore, as a motivating factor of this assertion, the work is done on the political consciousness 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 and its related aspects of the Bodo community. Therefore, the introductory chapter of this work comprises this sense of political consciousness and its theoretical interpretation which can clearly be understood with the concept of “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 colonial societies to fight against colonialism or imperialism. Many times as believed by someone that nationalism is not a powerful instrument in the colonial societies like in Western World. From the Marxian point of view, this nationalism or nationalist movement was a struggle against feudal and imperialist powers in these societies. Western educated indigenous elite class in the colonial societies led these nationalist forces against the colonial rule. In India nationalism took its shape during the course of Indian National Movement. 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. 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.

Due to the collapse of colonialism and with the emergence of new societies brought the 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 system of modernization as a new system brought by the Europeans in India changed the traditional mind-set of the Bodos 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 led to 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 comprises generic details of the Bodos through 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, Syllet 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 also some significant aspects 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 effort to interest articulation. These socio-political organisations were come out into existence with their own ideologies and have been working sincerely for articulating the interest of the Bodos since their inception. It has also come out from this chapter that the injection of consciousness is developed by different political and non-political Bodo organizations to mobilize people of their community in an organized manner with a planned way.

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 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 as reflected in this chapter.

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 and focus group discussions.

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