



Aspiration of Separate State within Assam: A study on Ethnic Aspiration

Abstract

Assam is the homeland of different ethnic groups and it is considered about the melting pot of diverse races, castes, religions, languages and culture. After independent, different ethnic group has inspired for their separated ethnic identity and inter-ethnic conflict are seen as a common phenomenon. Since 2013, the disrupting situation of law and order situation in Assam highlight the frustration of common people, where the different minority groups revived their demand of separate state after Telangana creation. At this instant, government faced a great challenge to keep unity among multi ethnic groups as a substitute of further division. This article tried to focus on the present situation of Assam after the creation a separate state of Telangana. Again, tried to explore what is origin of these demand and role of ethnicity. Moreover, find out the role of insurgence group in this regard. At last find out the challenges for the state to normalize this situation.

Key words: Ethnic Groups, Separate State, Insurgence Groups, Ethnicity, State,

Introduction

In Assam, growing ethnic movement to deal with the feeling of discrimination and marginalization, rising violence has been seen among different ethnic groups. It is a politic of primordial affinities and attachment and an activated primordial consciousness (Subba 1996: 39). It is related with the formation of a nation within a nation through various ways such as struggle, violence etc. The process of aspiration of separate state has originated from the discriminatory politics of colonial India. These processes of discrimination are continued even after independent. Special provisions of Sixth Schedule are contained for the tribal areas in the constitution to deal with this feeling of discrimination. As a result, at present within Assam there are 8 Autonomous Councils and along with simultaneous movement are going on for separate states. They are the divergent groups from the Assam movement (1979-85), as the Assam movement upraised only for the Assamese Identity. It has alienated all different non Assamese people and it has inspired all these ethnic groups for separate identity outside of Assam.

In July 30, 2013, after the government has announced its plans for created a separate state of Telangana, instantly demand for a separate Bodoland, Kamatapur and also Karbi Angling and Dima Hasao within the Assam to be carved out. The robust disorder prevails in the entire Assam, with pre-poll violence in the kokrajhar and Karbi-Anglong district in the form of attacking the government office, politician houses, giving bandh, railway line block, and hunger strike etc. Even, the last two year this condition has been continued with latest threatening of Jihadi group uprising. The Joint Action Committee for Autonomous State (JACAS) had given 1,000-hour Karbi Anglong bandh from 5 am of October 27, 2014 due to delay of discussion. (The Assam tribune, 20 October 2014).

Abrupt effect in the entire Assam

In the interim, the entire Assam came again in the limelight with its violating necessary and the victim seen their death of relative in front of their eyes. With the slogan of "No Bodoland, no rest" and "Divide Assam 50:50", the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), invigorated their demand for "Bodoland" and called for a 48 hours bandha in kokrajhar from August 6 and has announced a 12 hour rail-blockade on August

2, 2013 followed by a 60-hour Assam bandh from August 5 and finally a 1,000-hour economic blockade later this month rendering to their propaganda. Hagrama Mohilary, chief of BTC as well as BPF, has said in support that "If Centre can separate Andhra Pradesh and create Telangana, why can't it separate Assam and create Bodoland. Bodoland demand is not new; it is one of the oldest demands. BTC had already passed the resolution in February 2010 for the creation of Bodoland .Again, the Centre should also table the Bodoland state bill in Parliament soon," (The Assam tribune, 05 August2013)

Over again, in Karbi Anglong with the fresh violence the situation become so worst and the agitated protester has been burnt down the government building and two deaths reported. Again, 300-hour Karbi Anglong bandh called by the KPLT. In august 1, the protester of several organizations gathered in fronted of Karbi Autonomous council office in Diphu and locked their main gate. Even more the agitation, attacked the house of congress house on congress MP Birensing Ingti, MLA Bidyasing Engleng, Council's chief executive member Joyram Engleng and its executive member Tuliram Ronghang and damaged their property by threw stone

Whereas, the All Koch Rajbongshi Students' Union (AKRSU) has called for a 36-hour Assam bandh for the demand of kamatapur, and a hunger strike for their statehood demand from August 1, and as per Article 244(A), submitted a memorandum to Pandey for Gandhi and threatened that if the demand has not acknowledged, the union done a fast-unto-death after August 15.2013. The picketers shouted slogans as 'we want Kamatapur', 'No Kamatapur no rest', 'Kamatpur is our legal demand'. In fact, Dec 13, 2010 AKRSU and Koch Rajbongshi Mahila Samiti staged a protest at Jantar Mantar pressing for creation of a new State and inclusion of the community in the Scheduled Tribe list of Assam where AGP MP Kumar Deepak Das joined the protest and added that the regional party cannot support a demand for a new State but demand of kamatapur was a political demand and hence the government should solve it politically (The Assam tribune, 14 December 2010).

Origin of demand and role of ethnicity

The demand of separated state within Assam had more three decade of long history and it begun with Bodoland under the banner of All Bodo students union in 1987 lead by Upendranath Brahma and which was influenced from Assam movement (1979-1985). But, this movement was derived end on 20 February 1993 with Bodo Accord with inclusion of those villages with 50 per cent or more Bodo people. Meanwhile, due to ethnic conflict and ethnic cleansing, the Accord of Autonomous Council would not able to fulfill the common people aspiration. Till, the demand for separated state had persistent under the banner of BLT (Bodo Liberation Tigers) and their insurgency outfit in the lower Assam. Meanwhile, on 10 February 2003, the BTC (Bodoland Territorial Council) was formed with authority over four districts: Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri and Chirang .But split cadres of BLT had sustained their demand under the banner of NDFB and now, in fact some anti-take NDFB cadres have tenacious their insurgent activity to revive their demand of separate state.

Nonetheless, "The government of India Act, 1919 which declared Mikir Hills Tracts (the present areas of Karbi Anglong) and NC Hills as a 'backward tract' and the govt. of India Act 1935, which declared the said areas as "Excluded and partially Excluded Areas' on the recommendation of Simon Commission stood as testimony to the age old socio-political incompatibility of the peoples of the hills and the plains. These Acts remain documentary witnesses of the compulsion of the British rulers to administer the hills and the plains separately.

In a note to the Simon Commission the provincial Govt. of Assam had contended that "The backward tracts should be excluded from the province of Assam those areas had nothing in common with tracts should be excluded from the Province of Assam those areas had nothing in common with the rest of the province. It further contended that there was no sympathy on either side and the union of the hills and the plains was artificial resented by both parties and hence in the interest of both the hills and the plains, the present artificial union should be ended." (Elwin Teron, 01 September 2013). On the basis of this

commendation, the demand for separate state of Karbi Anglong & Dima Hasao has been continued under Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution and it was made as far back as in 1951.

All over again, the demand for Kamatapur has continued from 1990 and it came into focus after the attacked of Royal Bhutan army on Kamatapur Liberation organization (KLO) in Bhutan in 2003 and the hunger strike by “the Greater Cooch Behar Peoples’ Association in 2005 for a separate Cooch Behar State demand (the territory that is being claimed as Kamatapur by the agitators), with the proposed areas is spread over 15 districts of Assam including Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Chirang, Baska, Barpeta, Udalguri, Darrang, Dhemaji, Kamrup, Morigaon, Lakhimpur, Nalbari and Sonitpur, while the six districts of West Bengal include Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda.

Subsequently, in advance of the Bidhan shabha elections in 2016, all the organization revived their demand for a separate state through giving threatened of bandh, economic blocked. The demands for separate state are mostly community centric and due to flow of the immigration, the minority groups faced the threatening of lose their culture, language and land .Due to this strong cultural awareness, a conflicting situation has shaped in this region.

Role of Insurgences

As ,Rani P Das (2014) argued that “India’s Northeast saw new twists and turns in so far as its conflicts and peace processes were concerned. If peace appeared to be knocking at the doors with most of the major rebel groups coming to truce mode, the emergence of many smaller groups and break-away factions and continuing bloodshed, mostly because of internecine turf wars, painted the year with warnings of more violent conflict amidst the perceived calm”. (20 January 2014)

By way of demanding the separated state, the kamatapur Liberation organization (KLO) address the problems of unemployment, land alienation, seek of their regional language and identity and for strengthening their activity, have a linked to the National Democratic front of Bodoland, ULFA and also Maoist insurgent of Nepal. Meanwhile, in several recent blasts in west Bengal and northeast, they have found to be involved. (Times of India, 12 November 2014). From January to Novembers in 2014, the NDFB (IKS) killed more than 56 peoples in different place of BTC areas where within May 1-12 in 2014 , 46 people were died due to in discriminated firing of NDFB-IKS militants on the a minority community in several place of Baksa district .

In March 1999, the United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) was formed with the merged of two insurgent groups Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) and Karbi People’s Front (KPF). But after several ceasefires agreement with different fragmented group, now the KPLT (Karbi People’s Liberation Tigers) has continued their violence which was formed on 8 January 2011, by the anti-talk faction of group Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLFF) with the objective of carving out an Autonomous Karbi state out of Assam. In fact, more than 30 civilian were killed in different place of Karbi Anglong from 2009 to 2014 by different insurgent groups.

Challenges for state

The state government has increased addition 25 companies of forces and the Chief Minister appeal the whole organization to keep peace, not to press for further division of the State and remain as a family (The Assam tribune, 12 August 2013). On 27 February 2014, under the leadership of former union Home Secretary GK Pillai, a one member committee was formed to examine the legality of Bodoland state and he has to submit his report within 2014. Meanwhile, for controlling the whole situation, the government passed an order to shoot at sight to the violators in Karbi Anglong (Leonora Juergens, 30 April 2014). Currently, with various organizations the center is holding separate negotiation, including those demanding separate States of Kamatapur, Karbi Anglong and also Bodoland.

Conversely, the government has a great challenge to tackle the whole situation. Multi ethnic groups have inhabited within this designated areas of separate state. In fact, as per the provision of the Bodo Accord of 2003, under BTC (Bodoland Territorial Council) is predominantly Bodo but has no demographic profile of a major homogenous Bodo population. In fact, some areas of the BTAD are inhabited by a significantly large number of non-Bodo like Koch-Rajbonchi, Rabha, and Tiwas who constitute over 73 per cent of the BTAD's population. However, a substantial proportion of seats in the BTC (30 of 46) are reserved for scheduled tribes (STs), against those 73 per cent dominant majority of other backward class (OBC) and which lead a feel of under-representative and deprivation in distribution of resources and lack of administrative protection to non Bodos from a new class of political elites. (Leonora Juergens, 30 April 2014). Again, within the territorial separation of the BTAD, the areas of kamatapur are overlap. In several time, it was visible to betrothed in quarrel between the BTAD authorities and Koch Rajbangsi's leader over this issue.

Nevertheless, the increasing high rate of Muslim population and recent uprising JEHADIs insurgency activity in the Brahmaputra valley bring threatened to the minority group and in resulted ethnic clashes have been spurt out in the past two decades: 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2008 and 2012 which provided strong aspiration of separated state within this areas. In a census, only in Dhubri district the Muslims population was rise to 74.29 per cent in 2001 instead of 64.46 per cent in 1971. So, the NDFB demanded 1951 as the cut-off year for the identification and deportation of foreigners, instead of 1971 from the National Register of Citizens (NRC)-List as per the 1985 Accord of Assam. (Leonora Juergens, 30 April 2014).

Conclusion

Leonora Juergens (2014) contended that "Rather than reorganising the political boundaries of the BTAD, an alternative formulation of the BTC is necessary in order to address the conflicting demands. Instead of the current model of majoritarian politics in the BTC, the practice of consociational democracy could be better suited its multi-ethnic politico-administrative structure, as it would foster inter-ethnic cooperation and tolerance. Simultaneously, proportionality as the principal standard of representation would instil greater political participation and help protect minority interests, including the allocation of public funds and possibly a comprehensive reformation of land rights and the foreigners act" (30 April 2014).

So, it is better for the political party not to use the emotion of ethnicity of minority group for the cheek of their vote bank and strains to bring all the groups on a common platform for talks and negotiation and immediate steps must be taken to find a long lasting solutions for keeping unity among the multi ethnic groups in Assam.

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