

STUDENTS IN POLITICS OF ASSAM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ALL ASSAM STUDENTS' UNION (AASU) AND ALL BODO STUDENTS' UNION (ABSU)

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ABSTRACT: *In the present century, the study of students' politics becomes a dominant subject in social sciences. Students are always remains as a catalyst for social change. The students have the power and potentiality to bring revolutionary changes in the society as well as alter the existing government. The awareness of the students in politics is a most crucial factor for the full fledged development of a society. Since the long past the students power of Assam have been seen active in raising their voices against the oppressive and exploitative nature of the government. Among them, All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) are two influential students power which emerged as a vibrant student body in the state. They have been seen mostly successful in many instances. This paper tries to highlight on the role played by these two students unions in the present developments in Assam, and their contributions in holding a vibrant and virtuous democracy in politics as well as society.*

KEYWORDS: *Student, Politics, AASU, ABSU,*

1. INTRODUCTION

The students have raised the contemporary issues. In the post-colonial history of India the role of youth activist in politics can be seen as a very positive sign for a healthy democratic nation. After independence the contribution of students to the Indian democracy is crucial to understand. If we observe in the Pan-Indian context, an entire generation of India's political leaders emerged from students movements. Like, in Assam also the students backed movements were successful in producing future politicians. We can refer here to the Assam Agitation which was a milestone of student politics in Assam. All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) are two important students' organizations of Assam which have a great impact on

students' politics as well as society in the state. Both the organizations have a very unique history of origins. While All Assam Students Union (AASU) has its base in Brahmaputra Valley, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) has its base in Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and Udalguri. Both the organizations have an indomitable power and influences in state politics. These two organizations have changed the flow of politics in Assam. This have manifested in number of socio political issues where they have participated in policy making process for the welfare of the people of Assam. If we observed the last few decades, it is clear that the students community have actively participated in politics and their participation has widely affected in the discourse of development in Assam. Though there is a huge controversy regarding the participation of students in politics yet majority justifies for the effective participation of students. Students are always playing a dominant role in the transformation of the structure of society. The social, political and economic structure of the society is shaped by the active involvement of the students' community in the sphere of politics. The students' community is responsible to build a democratic, egalitarian and secular society. The indomitable powers of the students of Assam have proven in Assam Agitation (1979-1985) as well as in Bodo Movement which demanded for a separate Bodo homeland. So, in this context it is necessary to understand the power and influences of two influential students' body in the politics Assam i.e. All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Bodo Students Union (ABSU). In the present political scenario of Assam, All Assam Student Union is a dominant student body. The feeling of ignorance and relative deprivation awakened the ignited minds of students to fight for their rights and demands. All Assam Students' Union was the first pioneering organization who raised its voice against mainstream India for betraying the region. In 1960s AASU established itself as a formal organization. Then onwards the AASU has been an integral part of Assam's socio-political life. Like All Assam Student's Union who represents the mainstream students group, All Bodo Students' Union is another ethnic based organization. Both the organizations are determining factor in the politics of Assam. All Bodo Students Union was formed in 1967 in the Bodoland region of Assam. ABSU was a ethnic based student organization. Its emergence was due to the fear of the ethnic groups of losing their unique identity under the umbrella of dominant mainstream Assamese Community. ABSU supported the movement for a separate state called Bodoland under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma. ABSU's in spite of academic demands, the students' bodies of Assam has raised major non-academic demands of the society. Their

demands includes right from the economic backwardness to the inclusion of backward castes and tribes in to the list of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, reservations of seats in the legislation of their communities of the region, the demand for separate states, autonomous council etc.

2. Objective of the Study

- i. The major objectives of the study are -To examine the role played by AASU and ABSU in present development of Assam.
- ii. To examine the role of both students organizations in upholding vibrant and virtuous democracy in Assam

3. Hypothesis

1. Both All Assam Student Union and All Bodo Students Union have indomitable power and influences in changing the flow of Assam politics

4. Methodology

The method of study used here is descriptive and analytics based on secondary data. The secondary datas are collected from various sources like books, journals, magazines', television, newspaper and internet. Also researchers' eye observation and internal criticisms are used for further analysis.

5. ALL ASSAM STUDENTS' UNION AND POLITICS OF ASSAM

All Assam Students Union was the first pioneer student organization who raised its voice against the indifferent attitude of the central government towards Assam. The history of All Assam Students Union or Sodou Asom Chatro Sangstha can be traced back to 1940s when Assam Students' Association was divided into the All Assam Student Federation and the All Assam Students' Congress. After a decade latter the two recombined as the All Assam Students' Association. In January 1967 it was renamed as All Assam Students' Union. Over the last six decades, the All Assam Students' Union have been playing most crucial role in the state in the most crucial period of the Assamese's social life. AASU demanded itself as a non-political organization. But its energetic role in the socio-political, economic, linguistic, academic as well

as cultural development of Assam can't be ignored. Since its inception AASU has been playing a decisive role in the politics of Assam. AASU is the most influential student organization which is able to change major policies of the government. The chief concern of the organization is for the hope and aspirations of the Assamese society as well as development of Assam. AASU has always plays a most determining role in the political scenario of Assam. AASU's role in getting recognition of Assamese language as the official language of Assam is very crucial. The first important development was that, the All Assam Student Union in 1972 launched a movement to make the Asamiya language as the medium of instruction up to graduate level in addition to existing English language. As a result of AASU's movement government of Assam made Assamese the official language of the state. Also, government established a policy of giving preference to "sons of the soil" in employment in the state administrative services as well as pressed for the use of Assamese as the medium of instruction in schools, colleges and universities. This policy of Assam government had hurt the feelings of various ethnic groups of Assam. Because this instruction of government had submerged the identity of ethnic communities in the greater Assamese nationality. This has caused much difficulty in the process of assimilation of ethnic communities. The forced introduction of Assamese as a medium of instruction paves the path for the ethnic communities to process of disintegration of the Assamese nationality. The second important milestone in the student politics of Assam was the Assam Movement. Assam movement was started in the year 1979 and lasted till the signed of Assam Accord in 1985. The Assam movement was agony of frustrated Assamese youths against the indifferent attitude of the central government towards problems of Assam. The students of Assam felt that during post-independence era Assam remained underdeveloped than their counterparts Indian states. The central government gave Assam less than 35% of the value as royalty despite contributing 60% of India's crude oil production. Also, large scale migration from Bangladesh sparked the Assam movement demanding the detection and deportation of the illegal migrants from Assam. The Assam Movement was the largest students' movement of the world for which ASSU gets full credits. It is one of the most vigorous students' movements that received unprecedented public support and people's active participation. The movement continued six years till the signing of Assam Accord on August 15th 1985. The chief demand of the Accord was identification and deportation of illegal migrants. The present development of NRC in Assam can be seen as the result of the demand of Assam Movement. Some provisions of

the Assam Accord was partially implemented by the government through the establishment of various projects like the Central University in Tezpur, Indian Institute of Technology and Sankardev Kalakhetra in Guwahati, Assam University in Silchar, Jyoti Chitran in Tezpur, Numaligarh Refinery in Golaghat and Bogibeel bridge over Brahmaputra river. The most incredible success of All Assam Students Union was the formation of a regional political party. The birth of Assam Gana Parishad in 1985 was the result of Assam Movement which won 1985 assembly elections and formed government in Dispur.

6. ALL BODO STUDENTS UNION IN POLITICAL MILIEU OF ASSAM

All Bodo Students Union is another determining factor in the politics of Assam. The ABSU was formed in the Bodo Region of Assam as a non-political students' organization in the year 1967 at Kokrajhar Tribal Rest House. The purpose of the foundation of All Bodo Students Union is to unite the students of various Bodo groups into an organization. It is for the purpose to safeguard and develop the socio-economy, culture, tradition language and literature of the Bodo community. The main aims and objectives of All Bodo Students Union are (1) The education through the mother i.e. Bodo language should be propagate among the masses. (2) To work for the improve and development of the Bodo language and literature through various literary activities, publication works etc. (3) To work for the educational development of students' belonging to Bodo community (4) To work for the safeguard and strengthening of Bodo culture (5) To work for the economic safeguard of the Bodo nation by taking economic agenda and programs (6) Though ABSU is a non-political organization, it tries to settle the political issues when the existence of the Bodo people is threatened (7) Struggle to achieve the rights and privileges given in the Indian Constitution through the democratic process. (8) ABSU supports the principle of democratic socialism for economic emancipations. Union shall also welcome the principle of new economic order that may emerge from time to time. (9) ABSU also committed to fight for ensuring safety and security, dignity and securing human rights and civil liberty of Bodo Nationality living around the world. Preservation of Bodos identity and its unique culture is the prime concern of ABSU. They considered the Official Language Policy of Assam, 1960 as a hindrance in achieving their goal. The intention of Official Language Act, 1960 was to imposition of Assamese language over the indigenous people of Assam. Through this policy Government of Assam tried to 'Assimilation' of tribal people or complete subordination with

assimilation of the identity and cultures of indigenous communities. The process was completely undemocratic and it violates the constitution of the country and destroys the plural and multi-ethnic character of Assam. As a consequence ethnic communities of Assam felt alienated and became more anxious about their identity. ABSU demanded for a separate Bodoland comprised of the entire Kokrajhar, Sadiya, Lakhimpur, Nalbari, Barpeta, Darrang, Goalpara and large area of Dhubri District. To achieve the ultimate objective of the movement ABSU adopted various methods including bandhs, roads and rails blockade and mass mobilization technique. The ABSU tried to set up parallel administration with the help of the Bodo people force (George, 1994; 883). In many times ABSU militants have adopted terrorist methods. It has made several tribal organizations suspicious and apprehensive of the ABSU (UB)'s final intentions. Under the leadership of ABSU, the Bodo struggle is achieving economic, political and social progress of the community. ABSU adopted a ninety two point charter of demands. But this organization has agreed to suspend eighty nine demands and the three demands were kept. These includes creation of a separate state with the status of a Union Territory for the plain tribes in the northern valley of the Brahmaputra making the river the natural boundary, constitution of district councils in tribal areas in the southern valley of the Brahmaputra and formation of a regional council of the Bodos and the non-karbi tribes within the Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council.

7. CONCLUSION

The AASU and ABSU has emerged two most influential and most successful student organization in Assam. AASU's role in immigration issues and ABSU's role in autonomy movement is immense. Assam Accord was the fruits of AASU's six year of long Assam Movement, but still this could not effectively apply. Likely, though statehood is not granted to the Bodos but they are able to achieve BTAD. The student politics in Assam thus have a notable role in the present day situations in Assam. In true sense the demand of autonomy by the All Bodo Student Union in Assam is also the by-product of the Assam Movement. The main motto of the ABSU was to preserve the culture and unique identity of the Bodos. Reviewing the history of students' politics in world we can observe that students have taken both violent as well as non violent path to find justice for themselves and for common masses. Many question arises whether the participation of students in politics have a positive or negative impact on them and on the society.

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