

A STUDY ON MASS ORGANIZATION IN ASSAM

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Introduction

Mass organization has played a vital role in Assam. In the present day a youth icon named Akhil Gogoi who is a peasant leader and an RTI activist from Assam. Over the years he has been leading many anti-graft movements in the state. Akhil came to national attention after he was awarded the Shanmugam Manjunath Integrity Award in 2008 for his relentless fight against corruption and attempts to bring transparency in government functionings. In 2010, he was awarded the national Right to Information (RTI) Award by Public Cause Research Foundation (PCRf) for his role in exposing the 1.25 crore scam in Sampoorna Gram Rozgar Yojna (SGRY) and Rs 60 lakh scam in the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) in Golaghat district of Assam by using the RTI Act. He donated the entire sum of Rs. 2lakhs of the Award to his organisation KMSS. Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD), popularly known as Bodoland come into being as a result of an agreement signed among the Bodo Liberation Tigers, Government of India and the Government of Assam on 10th February, 2003. The Agreement is the culmination of the protracted Movement of the Bodo Ethnic group for a separate state. Under the agreement an Autonomous Council representing the different sections of the Population was formed and a package of substantial amount of Money was granted by the central government for development of the Bodo inhabited districts. The Agreement under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution of India confers upon the Bodo Council a series of special rights which will be the guidelines of development of the area. The Study is the first of its kind regarding Bodoland and Bodo movement. It captures the socio-economic status of the Bodo people through extensive field study of all four districts of Bodoland. The field survey was done under the sponsorship of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies. The study brings out the strong points of Bodo socio-economic status and makes a projection of Bodoland development based on these Positive factors. The study examines how an ethnic aspiration can be productively channelized under the Constitutional guarantee of sub-stateformat. Amallesh Banerjee is a distinguished scholar with his Teaching experience spanning over more than five decades. He served as Professor and Head of the Department of Economics of Rabindra Bharati University and as a Guest Professor of Jadavpur University. As a specialist of Northeast India economy, he made

important contributions. He has published a dozen of Books and 160 Research papers at national and international level. The main thrust of his research is macro economics and development economics. He was a Fellow of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies. He was President of Bengal Economic Association and also the Vice-President of India Economic Association. Professor Banerjee is the Chairman of the Institute of Business Management and Research, Kolkata and President of Global Centre for Development Studies. Since mid 2009, Gogoi has been leading a state-wide movement against construction of big dams in the ecologically sensitive regions of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. In particular, his organisation KMSS demands immediate halt to the ongoing construction of the dam of Lower Subansiri, a mega hydroelectric power project under NHPC with an estimated capacity of 2000 MW. For some time, he was also associated with Anna Hazare led anti-graft campaign India against Corruption. However, he broke with IAC after some of the IAC members decided to form a political party. Explaining his reasons to resign from IAC, Gogoi said that the support IAC had received was only for building up a strong and sustained mass movement against rampant corruption, and not floating a election centred political party. Akhil Gogoi was born on 01-03-1976 in Vill-Lukhurakhon, Selenghat, Dist- Jorhat, Assam. He attended Cotton College, Guwahati in English literature in 1993-1996. He was the general secretary of the college students union for two consecutive years. Soon he joined the United Revolutionary Movement Council of Assam(URMCA), a mass organisation of CPI-ML-PCC under the leadership of naxalite leader Santosh Rana. However, by the end of 1990s he broke with Rana and devoted himself as an editor of Notun padatik, an independent Marxist journal published in Assamese, along with Dr Hiren Gohain. Gogoi lives in Golaghat district of Assam along with his wife. In April 2010, a secret report of the Assam government alleged that Akhil Gogoi had close connections with CPI-Maoist. Gogoi challenged the report and dared the Assam government to prove the allegation. Intellectuals across the country including Magsaysay Award Winner Sandeep Pandey and Medha Patkar condemned the government for trying to implicate the activist. In an interview with NDTV, Akhil Gogoi said, "I am a Marxist and I do believe in social transformation. But I am not a Maoist. They don't

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believe in mass activities. We at KMSS are trying to organise the masses for revolution. But the attempt of the government to implicate me as a Maoists shows their frustration because they have been unable to contain the growing popularity of KMSS". It created an embarrassment for the Assam government and the matter was dropped thereafter. In July **2012 violence in the** Indian state of Assam broke out with riots between indigenous Bodos and illegal immigrant Bangladeshi Muslims. The first incident was reported to have taken place on 20 July 2012. As of 8 August 2012, 77 people had died and over 400,000 people were taking shelter in 270 relief camps, after being displaced from almost 400 villages. Eleven people have been reported missing. On 27 July 2012, Assam's Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi blamed the national government for a "delay in army deployment to riot-hit areas". The next day, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited the relief camps in Kokrajhar and called the recent violence a blot on the face of India. Indian Home Minister P. Chidambaram visited the state on Monday, 30 July to review the security situation and the relief and rehabilitation measures being taken. Lok Sabha from Bodoland, Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary blamed illegal immigration for the violence in the state. The Election Commissioner of India, H.S. Brahma, said that of the 27 districts in Assam, 11 of them will be shown to have a Muslim majority when the 2011 census figures are published. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was criticised for not dealing with the flood of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The violence and exodus of thousands of people from North East reportedly led to a series of incessant protests in Assam, at multiple locations, during the months of August–September. The protesters' main demand was expeditious detection and deportation of illegal infiltrators from Assam. On 15 September, at a convention of non-political tribal groups, organisations representing Bodo, Dimas, Tiwa, Deuri, Karbi, Garo, Rabha, Sonowal Kachari and other tribal communities decided to form a coordination committee for the cause. The tribal leaders said that illegal immigration has threatened the existence, right to land and resources to all indigenous people of the entire state, and it was not limited to Bodoland alone. This violent outbreak follows ethnic tensions between the indigenous Bodo community and Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh who settled in Assam. While the Muslim community state that they are descendants of East Bengali Muslims brought to Assam during the British Raj, local communities allege that the Muslim population has increased, boosted by refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan prior to the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War and by subsequent illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

By the mid-1970s, increased competition for livelihood, land and political power led to frequent incidents of violence, including the Nellie massacre after the controversial 1983 State elections, which left nearly 3,000 dead, and other large scale clashes. These incidents resulted in resentment directed at India's central government, not only from Bodos, Rabhas, Tiwas, and other indigenous tribes-people for failing to prevent illegal migration, but also from the indigenous Assamese Muslim community for failing to protect the rights of minorities.

Central Government Response

On the request of Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary, MP of Kokrajhar, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh called the Chief Minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi, on 23 July 2012, and instructed him to do whatever was necessary to restore peace. The violence continued despite the efforts of the state law enforcement agencies, and on 24 July 2012, India's central government deployed paramilitary forces and 13 columns of the Indian Army to the affected districts. On the same day, shoot-on-sight orders and an indefinite curfew were enforced across Kokrajhar district, which also led to the death of four people when police fired at violent crowds in the Rampur, Assam and Chaparkata areas of Kokrajhar. The Army conducted flag marches and the disrupted rail services were resumed on 25 July 2012, under the protection of the central forces. Union Home Secretary R.K. Singh stated that there were signs of improvement and called upon the Assam government to immediately act against the "ring leaders" of both factions. On 26 July, an indefinite curfew and the shoot-on-sight orders were enforced in Kokrajhar district, along with a night curfew in Chirang and Dhubri districts. On 26 July, the state's chief minister, Tarun Gogoi, announced the payment of INR 600,000 as compensation to the next of kin of the dead. Gogoi also announced that the people who were rendered homeless or displaced would be provided new houses at government expense. The chief minister assured the population that peace would soon return to the violence-affected areas. The Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, visited the district of Kokrajhar to observe the situation on 28 July 2012 and offered support to the victims. The prime minister said that the Centre will "closely work with the state government to provide a sense of security to all affected areas to ensure that they can go back to their houses secure in the knowledge that their lives and livelihood are secure". Singh said INR 200,000 would be given to the next of kin of those who died and INR 50,000 to the injured. He announced INR 100 crore for relief and rehabilitation of the affected people in the six

affected districts, INR 100 crore as Special Plan assistance for development programs in the affected areas and another INR 100 crore under the Indira Awaas Yojana. INR 30,000 each would be given to those whose houses were totally destroyed, INR 20,000 under the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund to those whose houses were partially damaged. The prime minister ordered an inquiry committee to be set up to look into the violence, and directed the state government to provide security so that the affected people can return home. On 28 July, Gogoi said that the late arrival of central forces, including the Army, assisted the spread of clashes in the State. According to the media reports, the Army was initially reluctant to deploy the troops and wanted clarification from the Defence Ministry on deployment because the situation "seemed to have communal overtones". When the situation deteriorated rapidly and another request was made, the ministry authorised Army deployment on 25 July 2012.

The Centre has authorized the Assam government to deploy more than 11,000 paramilitary personnel in the state's violence-hit districts and has dispatched a relief plane with medical teams and supplies. Central paramilitary forces are now out in full force in Assam; the deployment of 65 paramilitary companies has been ordered and 53 companies have reached Assam. Of these, five were sent on the night of 20 July. 7,300 paramilitary personnel were deployed in strife-torn Kokrajhar, Chirang and Dhubri districts after moving them from other states in the wake of clashes between Bodos and Bengali-speaking Muslims. AIUFD leader Badruddin Ajmal claimed that the state administration was complicit in the violence and demanded a CBI inquiry into the riots. Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi, recommended a CBI probe into the clashes in BTAD and Dhubri districts and claimed "internal and external forces were at work". On 7 August 2012, the Centre ordered CBI probe into the continued ethnic clashes in the State. According to the Times of India, some 14 Muslim groups which came into existence in the last 20 years are under observation by intelligence agencies after inputs suggested that their activities were "inimical to peace and social harmony". The organizations named are Muslim Security Council of Assam, United Liberation Militia of Assam, Islamic Liberation Army of Assam, Muslim Volunteer Force, Muslim Liberation Army, Muslim Security Force, Islamic Sevak Sangh and Islamic United Reformation Protest of India.

Criticism of Central Government Response

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and some senior Indian officials are said to have questioned whether the deployment of the Indian Army to curb the outbreak of violence was enacted fast enough. On 7 August 2012, the Govt of India ordered CBI probe of the matter. CBI on 19 September 2012, carried out first arrests by arresting five youths in connection with alleged lynching of four former Bodo youths in Kokrajhar area on 20 July. BPPF MLA Pradip Brahma was arrested along with Mohammed Hashem Ali, Mohammed Adom Ali Sheikh, Mohammed Hashim Ali Rehman, Mohammed Qurban Ali Sheikh, Mohammed Imran Hussain. They were arrested after they allegedly confessed of their involvement.

Repercussions in other parts of India

On August 8 and 9, some Manipuris were attacked in Pune. Students and professionals were beaten up by Muslims in Pune's Kondhwa and Poona College areas. Attackers asked victims which state they belonged to, and those who replied Manipur [North East India] were beaten. One of the victims said some attackers wore college uniform while others were in casual clothes. Police arrested nine Muslim youths for the attacks — Nadeem Rashid Ansari (18), Imamuddin Shafiq Shaikh (20), Vasim Faruq Shaikh (22), Muzaffar Azim Jamadar (19), Muzammil Ubedulla Shaikh (18), Tipu Javed Shaikh (19), Ejaz Sherahmed Shaikh (21), Rafiq Mehmood Shaikh (21) and Mateen Mohammed Pathan (19). All were released on bail.

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