

## The role of student organizations in the political scenario of Assam

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**Abstract:** *In every society of the world students have remains as a prime agents of social change. In culturally pluralistic society of Assam also there are various student groups demanding their own political cultural and socio-economic rights. Their participation in the political affairs brings a very positive sign for a democratic government as well as for political development of any society. The students participation in the political mobilization of Assam can be seen as a result of the feelings of their relative deprivation. This paper tries to examine the contribution of student organizations in holding a vibrant and virtuous democracy in the political landscape of Assam. In this case special emphasize will be given on the historical Assam Movement(1979-85) which was carried out by the All Assam Student Union, the larger student community of Assam. The Post-Assam movement period witnesses the demand for autonomy or separate ethnic homeland by the various student organizations within the ambit of Indian constitution. The most important observation which is common among these student organizations is their strong and unique stand against the deteriorating policies and decisions of both central and state government in the interest of the common people. The role played by these students organizations against the Citizenship Amendment Bill(2016) which is a burning issue in recent politics of North-East is crucial to analysis. Besides, these organizations plays an important role in environmental issues including protest against construction of big dams, the issues of identification and deportation of illegal foreign migrants etc. In fact the socio-political issues raised by these students organizations are much larger than the campus related grievances. These organizations are the constructive criticisers of governmental programmes and policies.*

**Key Words:** *Student Organization, Political-participation, Cultural Pluralism, Autonomy movement, AASU, ABSU, Post-colonial, Post- Assam Movement.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

It is becoming clear that students are seen as the catalyst for social transformation. the perception of student politics in Assam and their continuing role in state and politics have to be understood within the context of historical socio-cultural and economic grievances. it is also has the manifestations of deep-rooted youth frustrations against the institutional failure of the governmental machinery. The students organizations have a great impact on the governmental policy making process or even changes in policy formulations also. the consolidations of the students organizations despite having a contentious and contested group identity lies behind their common interest in specific issues. In the midst of cultural pluralism the students organizations in Assam creates mass awareness of the rights and entitlements among the common people. in recent years the dominant activities of the student organizations in the discourse of politics lies a big contribution to the sustenance of a healthy democracy.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The following brief literature review outlines the focal points of scholarly research. bora opines that 'the beginning of the student movement in Assam can be traced back to the time when the Assamese students consciously decided to channelize their talent for social, cultural and intellectual uplift of the Assamese. this consciousness also reflected in the efforts of the Assamese students to bring to light the subtle nuances of the Assamese language thereby asserts its unique identity' (bora, 1992). baruah opines that 'the students of this region have been launching massive movement on the issue of cultural identity and economic backwardness at the times with secessionist outcomes' (baruah, 2002). wali opines that 'the trajectory of the role of students in the north eastern region, as in the wider indian social aggression, hinges on how supportive the political collectivity is of the realization of the aspirations of the students' (baruah, 2002). Deka opines that 'students movements in the post-independence period upto 1960 were developing more into social movement in a quest for identity and took issues to safeguard the interest of Assam'(deka, 1996). Here, mentioned scholarly views basically emphasize on the 'identity' as main concern behind the students groups origins. point to be noted that though the student groups gives importance on 'identity consciousness' of their own, the very basic argument which lies this groups to the fore-front of the political

landscape is their role in mobilizing people to raise their voice against the deteriorating policies and decisions of the government.

### 3. STUDY OBJECTIVES:

- This article made an attempt to analyze the role of the student organizations in holding a vibrant and virtuous democracy.
- An attempt has been made to evaluate the role of major students organizations i.e. AASU, ABSU.

### 4 .METHODS:

The study is basically descriptive and analytics based on secondary data. The secondary data are collected from various source like books, journals, television, newspapers and internet. Also, the researchers eye observations and internal criticisms are used for further analysis.

### 5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

This article made a modest attempt to understand the role of student organizations in the political discourses of Assam. It has been widely observed that the students of Assam has a great contribution in all major movements in the state. The major organizations lead to massive protests movements including both violent and non-violent measures. The role performed by these students' organisations can be evaluate under as follows. Firstly, these students' organizations are successful in bringing people together and coming out them to the street against the deteriorating policies and decisions of the government. In fact these organizations plays a role of the initiator regarding people's participation in a democratic government. So, the student's organizations has a great contribution in sustenance of a healthy democracy. Secondly, the ordinary people who were outside the electoral process, after the Assam Agitation (1979-85) they got the opportunity to contest in Assembly elections. They directly participated in the policy-making processes. In fact political participation was enlarged by active participation of the student groups. Thirdly, In the Post-Assam Movement period the political landscape of Assam has been witnessing the politics of difference. As a result of the hegemonic putative nature of the Assam Movement, the various student organizations emerged with their demands for rights and entitlements. In pre-independence period the students of Assam formed Asom Chattra Sammilon (Assam Student Conference) in 1916 as an non-political organization. The Sammilon mobilized the people to take part in anti-colonial movement led by Indian National Congress. The student community of Assam actively participated in the Oil Refinery Movement(1955),Official Language Movement(1960),Food Crisis Movement(1964-67),Anti-SRC Movement(1966-68), Medium Instruction Movement(1972),Anti-foreigner Movement(1979-84), Bodoland Movement(1986-2001) and recent movement against the construction of big dams and more recent in protest against Citizenship Amendment Bill(2016).The student groups are successful in raising popular protest movements directed against the state as well as central government. These students groups are vehement and vocal protester for the greater public cause. It was rare case for Indian State where after a prolonged anti-government agitation led by students, student community formed a government with the bunch of fresh university out students. The movement led by AASU was a movement against outsiders. AASU leaders formed Asom Gana Parisad(AGP), a regional party and came to power immediately after the movement. The student groups which are witnessing in Post-Assam Movement period are All Assam Deuri Student Union (AADSU), All Boro Students Union (ABSU), All Mishing Student Union (TMPK), Karbi Student Union (KSU), All Assam Moran Student Union(AAMSU), All Assam Nepali Student Union (AANSU), All Assam Sarania Kachari Student Union(AASKSU), All Assam Tea Tribes Student Union, All Tai-Ahom Student Union etc. All these students organizations are based on ethnic lines and their first and foremost demand is to preserve and protect the identity of their own community. Their demand is for larger political participation in the decision making process of the government for rights and entitlement of their community. All Assam Student Union is also not free from Community biases. After the six years of prolonged anti governmental agitation AASU came to the MoU with central government and signed Assam Accord in 1985. Clause 6 of the Assam Accord promised safeguards to protect the cultural identity of the 'Assamese people'. Here, the word 'Assamese' is ambiguous to define. Thus, gradually as an outgrowth of the Assam Movement a new tribal student organization was emerged in Assam known as All Bodo Student Union(ABSU).Due to the sense of insecurity from the Clause 6 of the Assam Accord ABSU leaders demanded a separate state to be called 'Bodoland' within the ambit of the Indian Constitution. Though their demand for separate state was not granted, the government of India has created an autonomous council for Bodos first as 'Bodoland Territorial Council' and later renamed as 'Bodo Territorial Area District'(BTAD). There are some students organizations which have direct affiliation to Political parties. Examples of this kind are Assam Yuva Parishad, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthee Parishad, Students Federation of India, National Students Union of India etc. These students groups are backed by their respective political parties and their primary goal is to popularize the ideologies of their parties among the students. Here, the notable point is that though these students organizations have worked in their respective jurisdictions the feelings of solidarity in common and crucial issues brings them under the one umbrella. Irrespective of their ideological moorings and community affiliations the

student groups are united in fought against the issues such as displacement due to the construction of big dams, eviction of forest dwellers, issues relating to flood and erosion etc. In present scenario, the students' groups are furious against the government proposed Citizenship amendment Bill(2016). The BJP government at the centre have planned to rehabilitate the persecuted religious minorities of Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It will create a lots of problems that Assam has already taken the burdens of migrated people from East Bangladesh. Here, the students of Assam with the help of North-East Students Organization (NESO) have played a very crucial role. The students of the Assam's Colleges and Universities are comes out to the street with play card in their hand protesting against the Bill. Their forms of protest includes slogans against the government, total bandh of the state, protest rally, as well as awareness created through the new forms of protests in social media like Facebook, twitter, WhatsApp etc.

## 6. FINDINGS:

The most important findings from the above discussions is the emergence of new students groups after the Post-Assam Movement period. And these organizations are more identify conscious which leads Assam a hub of 'identity politics'. Second important observation is due to the emergence of different kinds of protest platforms like social media in comparison to protest of 1980s, in present context physical mobilization of Students becoming less. Thirdly, Students groups are very successful regarding political articulation and political interest aggregation of societal issues.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS:

In the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century students' participation in the political affairs becomes priority based. The need and demands of the students are changing in every particular juncture of time. Students as a social category represent not only the on campus issues but also off campus issues. Students groups in Assam are more volatile in creating and developing public opinions. The Students participation in the political affairs of any nation is a hopeful approach as well as very essence of a democratic government.

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