Autonomy Movement And Durable Solution: A Historical Interpretation Of Bodo Movement

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Abstract-Mobilization and movement to reclaim lost identity and space as well as to carve out new one is a universal phenomenon. In North Eastern part of India ethnicity and identity are the root causes behind such mobilization. In western part of Assam, the Bodos have been fighting for the cause of a separate Bodoland. A historical understanding of the movement have brought into light different phases of the same: from moderate to militant phases out of its interplay with different factors. The response from the state is visible in different forms; sometimes through the means of suppression while on other times through political and constitutional solutions as evident in the creation of Bodoland Territorial Council. In understanding the same the paper seeks to understand the particular historical juncture at which different autonomy arrangement has been innovated and at the same time durability of such arrangement is critically analyzed.

Index Terms: Bodo, autonomy movement, ethnicity, Assam movement, Bodoland Territorial Council, sixth schedule, peace accord.

1. INTRODUCTION
The recent urgency to relook the Bodoland region emerged in the context of violent conflicts of 2014 between the Bodos and non-Bodos over the prospect of winning the Lok Sabha election from the Kokrajhar constituency by a non-Bodo. Such schism can be included as part of recurrent conflicts erupted over the last few decades. In the context of such growing incidence, this paper deals with the historical background of the movement with its different phases beginning with a sociological understanding of the ‘Bodo’ tribe. A deep level historical understanding is essential given the existence of different perspectives in interpreting such recurrent violence that will help us to unravel certain ambiguities. The paper provides a historical account of the long drawn Bodo movement with different phases and different stakeholders whose demand have been ranging from separate homeland to more autonomy that ultimately found a solution with the creation of BTC in 2003. Such an account will be followed by the description of the autonomy arrangement for Bodoland as provided under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and the role of peace accords as well as the post 2003 status of stability and peace in the region.

2.WHO ARE THE BODOS?
Within Assam, the Bodos are a historically marginalized community. They are Tibeto-Burman speaking, an Indo-Mongoloid ethnic group migrating from South West China to North East India through Tibet and Bhutan centuries ago (Nath, 2003). They were also known as Kacharis in the pre-colonial historiography of Assam and are considered aborigines of the Brahmaputra valley. They had a glorious history of royal kingdom, rich ancestry and distinct culture of their own in the past (Basumatary, 2014, p. 10). As articulated by Robert Snafer, in the Linguistic Survey of India the Bodos or Bodo Kacharis are described as a member of the Bodo sub-section under the Assam Burmese group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibeto-Chinese speech family (www. Bodosahityasahba.org). Bodos are one of the most important plain tribal groups constituting around 37.5% of the total tribal populations in the state of Assam. Since colonial time, the Bodos have been defining themselves as a community distinct from other communities. Gradually, a sense of discrimination and injustice has been perpetrated on the part of Bodos due to threat to their identity from dominant Assamese society and polity, land alienation, discriminatory clauses of Assam accord and social and economic backwardness fuelled by illegal migration (Sanjib, 1999). It is against such injustices that the frustrated educated Bodo elites and intellectuals have been putting forward their demand for more autonomy from the Assamese society and polity. Over the years the Bodo movement took militant forms and the demand for autonomy gradually moved towards the demand for a separate state.

3. ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC CONFLICT
In defining ethnicity, it will be useful to adopt Horowitz’s definition who defined it as a sense of collective belonging based on common descent, language, history, culture, race or religion or an amalgamation of these factors (Ashutosh, 2009, p. 227). Smritana Saikia defined ethnicity as a common consciousness of collective origins and traditions. For Saikia, the ascriptive values of an ethnicity give the practitioners of these values a distinct social identity as well as to use it as a means to express distinct political identity and organization. Ethnic conflict can be defined as a form of conflict in which the goal of at least one conflict party are defined in exclusively ethnic terms and the primary dividing line of confrontation is one of ethnic distinctions (Smitana, 2015, pp. 4-5). Ethnic conflicts within a state refer to identity conflicts which is a sort of internal conflict. The principal aspect of identity clash includes ethnic, religious, tribal or linguistic differences. These clashes frequently involve a combination of identity and the search for protection where the primary debate concerns the devolution of power Ethnic group or communities are characterized by certain features. These include according to Gursel G. Ismayilov firstly, the group must have a name for itself. Secondly, language is the dominant indicator of ethnic and national identity. The struggle over language politics and language rights are often a prime cause behind ethnic conflict. Thirdly, religion that historically had been an important indicator of ethnicity. Fourthly a defined geographical area is the basis of economic and political structures that are elemental for the ethnic and national identity. Therefore in most of the ethnic conflicts whether Kurds, Palestinians, Tamils of Sri Lanka, Bodos of Assam have been fighting for their acclaimed territorial space whether as a separate state or for more autonomy within that territory. They conjointed a sense of mythology and sacredness with such territory. Coakley viewed that ethnic protest is a central political
issue in many societies and in thinking about the means to manage/curbed it, territorial consideration remain the most significant means. The problem with this lies in the fact that the persons of a same ethnic community may not occupy a precise territory; or in some cases it does not necessarily coincide with the territory of the state. The way the state responds depends upon the form of ethnic mobilization and the nature of the programmes put forward by the ethnic activists. The territorial context within which the movement takes place will determine the way state will respond. (Coakley, 2005) Robert Tuolor pointed out two types of autonomy movements that characterize the political discourse in North East India. These are: 1. Movement for more autonomy within the existing arrangement. 2. Militant, secessionist scheme of political and geographical delimitation of territory (Tuolor, 2013) The history of Bodo movement has shown evolution through a successive period in which both of these demands are raised in its course time and again.

4. GROWTH OF DISTINCT ‘BODO’ IDENTITY
Historically the Bodos consider themselves as part of the composite indigenous population of Assam. The question is why after a point of time they developed a sense of separateness and distinctiveness to the extent of creating a separate homeland distinct from Assamese people. Assam movement worked as a catalyzing factor in igniting the Bodo people because of the adoption of exclusionary historical and cultural symbols by the former as well as ill considered policy consequences. Bodo student leaders accused the Assamese leaders because of their anti tribal prejudices and equalize the first AGP Government in Assam as ‘Assamese Government’ implying a narrowly based government of the Assamese that cannot speak for the Assam as a whole (Baruah, 1999, pp. 173-175). It is the long term process of experiencing and perceiving deprivation and exclusion that led to the gradual development of a sense of ‘self’ and ‘other’ among the Bodos. Gradually, lack of communication and mistrust widened the gap. Initially this was not the case. There had been wide prevalence of Assamese language among Bodos. In terms of culture also they followed more or less same practices whether in terms of agricultural festival, death ceremony. Bodos were intermingled and assimilated with the Assamese to such an extent that till now it is not fully clear among the historians and academicians whether Bodos are Assamese or Assamese are Bodos. Given the deep level of belongingness, the question arises why the Bodo’s need for separating or distancing themselves from others emerged at all. It is the Bodo people themselves, who actually is a part of the process can feel that the terms on which they are assimilated with the greater Assamese society are not equal. The assimilation comes at the cost of subjugation of distinctive culture of the Bodos. In other words the acceptance of the Bodos by the Assamese comes at the cost subjugation of Bodos’ own distinctive culture and acceptance of Hinduism along with the language, culture etc. It is this unequal term on the basis of which the assimilation has taken place is a source of contention for the Bodos. To understand the long drawn movement of Bodos whether for separate homeland or for greater autonomy, we have to understand its historical background.

4.1 ECONOMIC DEPRIVATION
In interpreting the recent conflict in Bodoland, some analysis has been ended by equalizing the incident with Hindu- Muslim communal conflict. However adoption of such approach will be narrower that will undermine its historical context. Rather, it can be started in a different note by referring Udayon Misra (2012) who pointed out the issue of ‘land’ as the core behind such conflict. In the sphere of economic life agriculture occupy the central position among the Bodos although in present time their presence in other sectors like service, trade, commerce etc can be seen (Goswami, 2012, p. 91). However their agricultural practice in the pre-colonial and colonial time was different from the most commonly prevalent settled agriculture. They were basically practicing shifting cultivation on a community basis for which they did not require to possess a settled piece of land. Due to the shifting nature of cultivation, they were not popular with the concept of private ownership to the land. Given the small size of the population they could practice community cultivation which requiring large tract of land. Along with the small size of population, the simple way of their living enabled them to well fulfill their basic needs with whatever harvest they could get from such agricultural practice. Therefore they could live peacefully without any conflict. They practiced largely self sufficient agriculture. They are not commodity producers and their economy is minimally connected with the market. Historically they lived closer to the forested areas along the foothills of the lower Himalayan range. Here the quality of soil is not suitable for paddy production. They could not produce surplus crop. They often involved in exchange of dry fish for rice with Bhutias and other communities. Their dependence on forest based products enabled them to play the role of mediator between the hill and the valley based communities (Saikia, 2012, pp. 15-16) The Muslim peasantry who were occupying the low lying sedentary area on the other hand practiced largely cash crops like jute. Their economic conditions were determined by fluctuation of prices in the market. Until the major part of the twentieth century these two communities were hardly interdependent given their distinct economic practices. This also facilitate distinct settlement pattern in rural geography. However, post 1930s, as jute prices started falling; the Muslim peasantry began to turn to paddy cultivation. It pushed them towards the upper reaches of the valley where paddy could be grown. They often purchased such tracts of land from the Bodos. Over the years the reclaimable areas in the valley, Western Assam in particular started declining. Throughout the 20th century the Government also reaffirmed its control over the forest land. Moreover, the transition of the Bodos to the permanent settlement is a slow phenomenon. Like many other tribal group the Bodos hardly get any land available for agriculture. Added to this, the increasing peasant immigration had accentuated the process of demographic pressure. This has strained the pattern of geographical distribution and ecological dependence between the two communities. It means the two agrarian communities producing differently came to share similar natural resources (Saikia, 2012). After being a part of Ahom kingdom for more than six hundred years Assam came into the ambit of British colonial rule at the end of the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1826. With British rule there
came first of all redrawing of the boundaries of Assam for administrative convenience without paying any heed for cultural and historical contexts. Many new initiatives and policies were taken for the governance of the areas whose hidden purpose was to serve British commercial interests. They created division between hill and plain people and brought radical socio-economic transformation of the Assamese society by setting up a particular kind of primitive capitalism on the basis of tea plantations, allow migrant workers from different states, new form of land rights etc. All these initiatives have the effect of changing the prevailing social meaning of land and property (Motiram Sripad, 2014 ). Under the colonial regime of recorded land rights some of the tribal peoples were ended up being illegal in their own land because they lacked proper land documents. Moreover the plantation economy of British resulted in large number of outsiders coming to the hilly terrain and finally settled there. Later on, the available waste lands were opened up for settlement by the cultivators from East Bengal. When these large scale land alienation of the tribals began to manifest itself in large scale political unrest, the Britisher initiated policies like Line System that was supposed to protect tribal lands from settlement by outsiders and the immigrants. But such system was not effective to a large extent. Gradually such policies were found to be instrumental in the growth of exclusive homeland consciousness among the tribal people (Sanjib, 1999, p. 190). Towards the late 1940s, following the Hockenhull report the Congress Ministry headed by Gopinath Bordoloi had initiated certain measures aimed at protecting the land rights of the tribal people. But these measures did not restrain permission for new settlement to both Assamese and the immigrants (Misra, 2012, p. 36).

Once Gopinath Bordoloi government resigned in order to launch civil disobedience movement, Mohammad Saadulla entered into an agreement with All India Tribal League that was formed by Rupnath Brahma and Bhimbar Deuri to demand for separate representation for the Bodos. But later on Saadulla Government’s pro-immigration policy created mistrust and miscommunication between the Government and the tribal groups. Under the ‘grow more food’ campaign and the development scheme, the forests and the grazing lands were virtually opened up for resettlement to the immigrants from East Bengal in the post 1942. It created great panic among the Bodos and other communities in the state. Further, as Sanjib Barua pointed out the inadequate share of the Bodo populace in the modern occupation has added to the economic deprivation of the people. Bodo activists have attributed the cause behind such conditions to the discrimination by the ethnic Assamese (Sanjib, 1999, p. 191).

4.2 ASSAM MOVEMENT: 1979-1985

Despite being the perceived discrimination from the ethnic Assamese, the organized representative of the Bodo student politics that is All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) have actively participated with the All Assam Students Union (AASU) led Assam movement during 1979-1985. They supported it because one of the central issues of the anti foreigner movement was recovery of land occupied by the illegal immigrants. But at the end of the day when Assam Accord was signed by the leaders of the Assam movement with the Indian government, certain clauses of the accord became the root of contention between the Bodo people and the Ethnic Assamese. Sanjib Barua in this regard has pointed out two such clauses of the accord: First one was clause 6 of the accord that promised to defend and protect the interests of ‘the Assamese people’. This term was not clearly defined and therefore subjected to different interpretations. Although there was every possibility that the term symbolize composite indigenous population of Assam but given the context in which Bodos suffered deprivation in their land and their concern for differentiating themselves from the ethnic Assamese; they were apprehensive of such clause. This clause did not explicitly mention the protection of the ‘Bodo’ people as such. They were fearful of the fact that acceptance of this clause will give legitimacy to the imposition of Assamese language and culture over the Bodo people. Another clause that Bodo leaders objected was the promised evictions from the public spaces. In this case also the leaders of the Assam movement could merely think about the illegal immigrants that might settle in such spaces. They could hardly think about the Bodo people who were the worst sufferers of British introduced permanent land system. As already mentioned, being habituated with community oriented agricultural practice; they could not produce proper land records of their land. During the first Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) regime that come to power with the pledge to implement Assam accord, attempted to evict illegal settlers from the protected forest land. It had resulted in the eviction of some Bodos and this in turn provided spark to the movement for Bodoland.

4.3 REVERSING ASSIMILATION: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF BODO SUB NATIONALISM

The central theme that drives Bodo cultural politics is to repudiate the unequal terms of assimilation into the Assamese sub national formation and to assert their differentiation from and equality with the ‘ethnic Assamese’. This term as articulated by Sanjib Barua that became popular since the Assam movement. The emergence of the term reflects a process of culturally invisible elite group’s conscious and deliberate attempt to become culturally visible. Such necessity emerged in the context of growing challenge to their authority from other groups in speaking for Assam and its people. Two contextual factors that hasten the Bodos assertion for differentiation from this group are: The division of Assam into separate states that has been happening time and again might have influenced the imagination of the Bodo leaders in projecting a political separation. The experience of socio-economic and political transition during the period of British colonialism. The tribal people of North East were attracted more towards the activities and propaganda of Christian missionaries. Therefore the urge for mobility to the Assamese socio-economic system had been declining. They were no more influenced by Assamese Vaishnavite institution like Xotra. (Sanjib, 1999) Because of the feeling of unequal assimilation, the consciousness of being a distinct and separate cultural entity started developing among the Bodos. They started reviving and asserting their traditional cultural practices. They started giving new meanings to their socio-cultural practices that were already in existence. They revived the worship of ‘Bathou’ as the supreme god and the cactus as the emblem of that god. They preferred
burial over cremation which works as a symbol of differentiation from the Hindus who practiced cremation. The politics of cultural differentiation was sharply visible in the politics of language. The Bodos were demanding for Roman script instead of the Assamese. However, Sarat Chandra Sinha Government opposed it. Moreover, All Assam Students Union (AASU) demanded for terminating the policy of reservation for Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribe during the time of anti alien movement. Such responses have resulted in the complete loss of faith of Bodos in the Assamese Government as well as majority Assamese community (Nath, 2003, p. 536). However, the Bodo Xahitya Sabha (Bodo Literary Society), a cultural organization have again raise the demand for Roman script for the Bodo language in 1974-75. Earlier they were using Assamese script, as Bodo was not a written language. Ultimately in 1998, Assam government accepted the demand for Roman script to be used for writing Bodo in officially sponsored publications. Finally, the Bodo assert their distinctiveness in the domain of food and dress. Their traditional dress is “dokhona” for Bodo women instead of the Assamese “mekhela-chador” or the Indian sari; and for men they use traditional Bodo scarf, the “arunai”.

5. THE DEMAND FOR BODOLAND: A BEGINNING

The demand for a separate homeland for the plain tribes of Assam by the name ‘Udayachal’ began in 1967. It was an organized demand by the Plain Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA). However, the PTCA withdrew its demand for a separate homeland once it joined the Janata government in 1978-79. This period was followed by the Assam movement from 1979 to 1985. The AGP Government that was formed by ex-AASU leaders after signing the Assam Accord (1985) could not bring Bodo leaders like Upendranath Brahma to a consensus. Brahma also realized the difficulty of mobilizing the tribal people of Assam for the cause of a tribal homeland that is ‘Udayachal’. Brahma gave up that demand in favour of a more concrete and well defined demand for a full fledged state of ‘Bodoland’ for the plains tribes that was to be realized through division of Assam into 50-50 as the slogan went (Nath, 2003, pp. 534-536).

The movement that demanded for a tribal homeland got a turning point with the demand for Bodoland during AGP Government in 1987. It was because of the dissatisfaction created among the Bodo student leaders by the Assam movement. They were fully participated in the course of the movement, but found themselves to be insecure and cheated by the outcome of the movement that is Assam Accord. The Assam accord therefore gave momentum to the movement. The student led Assam movement was successful to a large extent. The Assam movement work like a reference point for other movements to follow as articulated by Monirul Hussain. Coming to the technique of the movement, the Bodo leaders made use of socio-cultural and historical symbols to mobilize the popular support. The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) came up with 92 point agreement that included various economic, social and cultural demands along with the justification for a separate state of Bodoland. The original Charter of demands can be divided into three political demands. These are as follows: 1. The setting up of separate state of Bodoland. 2. The setting up of District Council on the south bank of Brahmaputra River. 3. The incorporation of Bodo Kacharis of Karbi Anglong in the six schedule of the Constitution. However it was not easy to accept such demands given different complexities. Some of the difficulties in the formation of a separate state of Bodoland have been pointed out by Barua. These are: 1. Population: The demand for Bodoland is energized by the reminiscence of early Bodo kingdoms and of a remote history when Bodo culture was flourished purely without any contamination by the Assamese culture. To realize and regain that purity again, they are demanding for the creation of a separate Bodo homeland. However the populations that at present constitute Bodo speakers are only 1.1 million, or 11.5 percent of the population in the north bank of the Brahmaputra, where the Bodos want their homeland. 2. Territorial Contiguity: Even though there are Bodo majority villages and areas where they are more concentrated but they do not comprised a contiguous area that could be turned into a singular territory that is Bodoland without much difficulty. 3. Context: The Bodo demand has emerged in the background of resurgent Assamese sub nationalism that resents Assam’s past divisions at the command of New Delhi and resist any further territorial dissection of Assam. Although constitutionally speaking our weak federalism would have permitted the same, but no Government would be prudent enough to anticipate that Assam could be divided with the ease of the 1960s and early 1970s without the assent of the Assam state Assembly. In the context of growing violence in the post 1990s the Indian Government was compelled to sign an accord with the Bodo activists in February 1993. It provided for the creation of an elected body called Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). However this accord did not adequately address the question of territorial boundary. It entailed that the territorial boundary of the BAC will expand to the contiguous territories between river Sankosh and Mazbat. But it was difficult to implement as the areas between these two extremes were not necessarily inhabited by only Bodo people. It included people from different communities along with Bodos. As per as 2001 census, the BTAD comprise of 29.2 lakhs out of which the ST population is around 52%. Amongst the tribal population Bodos, Rabhas and less quantity of Garos inhabit in this area out of which Bodos will be 90%. The other communities include Ransibanshis, Sarania who are claimed to be originated from the Bodo group. Besides Tea and other Ex-Tea tribes including Santhals, Orao have been living there along with other general communities like Bengali, Assamese Nepali and few numbers of Hindi speaking people (Bodoland.gov.in).

This shows that Bodos are not the absolute majority in the BTC. Non Bodo communities taken as a whole comprise equal majority. In order to carve out a contiguous area some of the villages with less than fifty percent of Bodo people were added to the proposed BTC. Government of Assam unilaterally demarcated and declared the boundary of the BAC in the later period of 1993. It created dissatisfaction among certain groups. The ABSU and BPAC (Bodo Peoples Action Committee) discarded the boundary. Although the proposed BTC was created with the nominated members but there was failure in holding the election. Therefore, the first Bodoland accord resulted in failure. It created the context for the rise of militant phase of Bodo politics. Two militant groups: the Bodoland Army and
the Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) emerged. They did not recognize the proposed Bodoland Autonomous Council.

6. MIGHTLY PHASE OF THE MOVEMENT
The militant phase of the Bodo movement can be interpreted with the help of the term ‘contentious politics’ used by Baruah (1999). It refers to sustained interaction between the authority and collective activity for the cause of particular populace that have been suffered unjustly over the years. The violent phase has been coexisted with piecemeal demands and activities on the parts of different political parties, student group and civil society movements. Violence emanate from the failure on the part of conventional groups to draw the attention from the concerned authorities and to fulfill their demands (Mahanta, “Politics of Space and Violence in Bodoland”, 2013, p. 52). The failed 1993 Bodo Accord acted as a landmark in this regard with immense significance. One of the reasons behind the failure of the accord was inability to draw a Bodo majority contiguous geographical boundary. As a response to this, perhaps the militant section of the movement found it urgent to prove the Bodo majority in the demographically diverse land. They become more suspicious towards the growing settlement of groups such as Muslim of Bengali descent, Hindu Bengalis and Santhal immigration because of the contention that some of the immigrant groups with the Government officials’ acquiescence have settled in those areas like tribal blocks or forest land where there is ambivalence regarding the legality of their right to settle. It is because of this contention and in an effort to prove their majority; some of these groups become the target by the militant factions like NDFB and BLT. Apart from striking out at those groups of the Bodos who were not in favour of the division of Assam, they started sending quite notices to the non- Bodo people in order to carve out a homogenous Bodo inhabited area. Such ethnic cleansings were not one sided as there were also vengeance killings of Bodos by Santhals or the Bengalis. Moreover the underlying activities of the militant outfit, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) for the secession of Assam act as a reference point for the Bodo militant outfits. For them, the political leaders in Dispur (capital of Assam) and New Delhi would not pay attention to the voice of non- violence. Moreover electoral politics also catalyzed the process of violence because of the fear among the rebel leaders that the people from the region, specially the immigrant communities would not vote in ethnic lines. Rather they were suspected of voting for candidates not supported by the militant leaders. These fears and contentions ultimately ended up in major episodes of ethnic violence. In analyzing the militant trend of the movement, the participation of militant faction in the democratic process becomes apparent. While on the one hand they are fighting for the secession of Bodoland from the Indian state; on the other hand they are increasingly participated in the electoral process in order to propagate their agenda by putting up candidates of their choice. In this way, they indirectly control the administration by entering their men in the administration. It is apparent in the creation of the Bodo State Movement Council (BSMC) by a number of Bodo groups with active support from the militant outfit BLT (Bodo Liberation Tigers Force or BLTF). It was followed by the creation of the People’s Democratic Front (PDF) by the hardliners of ABSU and Bodo Security Force. Subsequently PDF and BSMC won seats. Since then the participation of the militant groups in the election process of Bodoland becomes a common phenomena (Mahanta, 2013, p. 52). The militant's engagement in the electoral politics reflects the particularity of the movement with respect to the moderate versus extremist groups. There is a thin line that differentiates the non-violent political groups from the violent extremists group. The post 1985 period experienced the creation of new groups and reorganization of the existing ones. The BSF was subsequently reorganized as the Bodoland Army and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) was established as a political wing in Udalguri (a district in Assam, now part of BTC) on 3rd of October 1986. Currently the NDFB has been divided into two factions: NDFB (progressive) and NDFB (Ranjani Daimary). Along with the NDFB, the Bodoland Liberation Tigers (BLT) emerged as the most violent and dangerous armed group with the objective of creating a separate state of Bodoland on the Northern bank of the Brahmaputra. Gradually fratricidal fights started emerging between the NDFB factions and the BLT. Among other reasons as articulated by Subhir Bhaumik religious difference bears a significant reason behind such clashes with the adherents of Bathou faith and Hinduism largely among the BLTF and neo-convert Christians largely among the NDFB. Due to organizational strength and armed struggle, the BLT became the de facto guardian of the Bodo movement (Nath, 2003, p. 538). It was after large scale violence that indiscriminately killed and displaced large sections of people that BLTF declared ceasefire on 14th July 1999 under the consistent effort of the BJP government.

7. THE 2003 ACCORD
The BLTF’s ceasefire was followed by the Memorandum of Settlement for the creation of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The tripartite meeting was held on 10th of February 2003 in New Delhi between the representative of the Union Government, Assam Government and a BLT delegation. It came to be known as the 2003 Accord. The goal of the accord was to formulate an autonomous self – governing body known as the Bodoland Territorial Council and to extend constitutional safeguard under the sixth schedule. Such self governing institution will work to accomplish the economic, educational and linguistic interest and the conservation of land rights, socio-cultural and the ethnic identity of the Bodos as well as the infrastructural improvement of the region. In order to fulfill such objectives, the institution was vested with the executive, legislative and judicial powers. The accord of 2003 seemed to be more comprehensive than the failed accord of 1993. In terms of territorial boundary it delineates 3082 villages that will comprise Bodoland Territorial Council over which its jurisdiction will extend. These villages were to be carved out of four contiguous districts after the reorganization of the existing states is done. The BTAD was to comprise of four new districts, viz., Kokrajhar, Baska, Chirang and Udalguri. Most important part is that it provided for a definite time period of six months within which the process of territorial delineation has to be done. This manifests the intention of the Government to resolve the problem of territorial demarcation in a time bound manner. It is because territoriality is central to autonomy arrangement.
The failure to do the same resulted in the inability to implement the 1993 Accord. In terms of composition of the Council, unlike the earlier accord, the new one has provided a clear idea of the Executive Council of the BTC. It has to be comprised of 12 members including a chief and a deputy chief with sufficient representation to the non-tribal people. In terms of legislative power also, the new accord has defined the jurisdiction more clearly with 40 subjects of legislation. The landmark change that characterized the new accord was the inclusion of BTC in the sixth schedule of the Constitution. Earlier this schedule was restricted only to the hill tribe people; while for the first time by constitutional amendment it has been extended to the plain tribe like Bodo. Thus the Bodos got autonomy arrangement under Articles 244(2) and 275 (1) of the sixth schedule. Another important modification of the new accord lies in its inclusion of a detailed arrangement for the non-tribal people in the multicultural demographic composition of Bodoland. Without such arrangement perhaps the process of creating sub national autonomous arrangement in this part of Assam would not have been possible, although later on many drawbacks started appearing. Some of the important provisions include: scope for relatively greater representation of the non-tribal people in the BTC; provide safeguard for the settlement right, transfer and inheritance of property rights etc. Although not specified, the new accord proposed for inclusion of non-tribal people in the Executive Council of the BTC. It also provided for two women to be nominated by the Governor from the unrepresented communities.

8. PEACE ACCORDS

Peace accords have played a significant role in bringing the rebel groups to a workable consensus. Das defined peace accords as a sort of agreement between the state governments and its adversaries that involved in some form of discord with the purpose of achieving peace between them. It is a kind of balancing act that requires some form of compromise on the part of both the discordant group and the government (Das, 2005). The signing of the Memorandum of Settlement in 2003 become possible only because of the declaration of ceasefire by the terrorist outfit Bodoland Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) in 1999 which have earlier been continuously engaged in indiscriminate killing and displacement of the people. Their action was facilitated by the consistent effort of the Government in power that showed willingness to come into terms with the rebel group by persuasive and procedural means and not by violence. At the same time Government was pressurized to take such course given the fact that the movement for Bodoland has taken a violent turn with its militant phase. In the context of democratic federal polity of India, it was not possible for the Government to use the most undemocratic means to suppress the movement given the fact that there are certain genuine concerns that Bodos have been raising from very long period. However the fact that accords are mostly preceded by discords or a series of violence does not mean that every form of discord will result in the signing of accords. Accords are means by which the state gives legal and political recognition to the discordant group, the doing of which ensure some sort of autonomy on the part of the discordant group. These accords entailed the institutions and practices that will ensure some sort of autonomy on the side of discordant group and will help the state with adequate means to govern the discordant group after going through some compromises and conciliation on both sides. Accords act as the instruments of the state in the project of nation building by which it accommodates and gives institutional recognition to difference within the constitutional and legal framework. It is a sort of renegotiation that the state sorted out with the different discordant groups by making certain modifications and amendments in the constitutional and legal documents in a way that will ensure them legal entitlement of some sort; at the same time not deviating from the basic principles. The 2003 Accord was followed by the amendment of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India by the passing of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2003 that provided for the extension of sixth schedule to grant autonomy arrangement for self-governance of Bodos in the BTAD through the creation of Bodoland Territorial Council. It required the amendment of the Constitution because Sixth Schedule was meant for the self governance of only the hill tribe while Bodos are plain tribe. Accords are also seen as “strategically deployed” means through which the state deploys a mixture of force and coercion to dominate the adversaries. It involved use of both force and coercion on one hand and negotiation, consensus building on the other hand. According to Singh, the use of accords in both the ways has the objective of achieving stability in otherwise asymmetrical and diverse social framework. However we have to be cautious of the fact that a peace accord does not automatically lead to granting of autonomy. The peace accord will first of all disarm the discordant groups as well as the state that initially use force to suppress the group and by doing this it will establish peace. Also it entails certain provisions in the accord that will be a framework agreement for future, the implementation of which will result in the granting of autonomy. But most of the accord failed in the later sense of the term, because once peace is restored there is a tendency on the part of the state to relegate the issue to sidelines. In this way accord play a role in relegating autonomy into governmental technology. Governmentality refers to the modifications of norms and practices in a way that will make certain groups amenable to govern who involved in certain form of conflict. This is done through interplay of granting autonomy at some point of time and suppressing autonomy at some other point. (Das, 2005) Monjib Mochahari pointed out four specific reasons behind the not so successful record of peace accord in bringing peace. These are: Important stakeholders are often left out of the peace process, deliberately or accidently. A signatory organization can split with dissenters forming other groups. An accord may address the concerns of one group at the expense of another. Accords have a demonstration effect that prompts other communities and groups to demand the same privilege. (Mochahari, 2014)

9. THE POST 2003 SCENARIO IN THE BTAD

However despite being granting constitutional arrangement for exercising autonomy to address the sub national Bodo question, the situation in the post 2003 western part of Assam where BTAD exists have shown no remarkable difference with respect to peace and development compared to pre 2003. The first militant violence occurred...
in 1993-94 directed against the Bengali Muslims. Later in 1996 and then in 1998 they targeted the Adivasis the descendents of tribes from east central India as laborers to work in tea garden that were killed and displaced to a large extent (Srikanth, 2015, pp 18). Such trends have been continuing in recent period also. Since 20th July, 2012 the riots in the four districts of BTAD and neighboring Dhubri district have claimed about ninety lives and displaced over four lakhs people. In a situation of suspect and fear among different communities as developed throughout the history of the Bodoland movement, any small incence can spark violence in the region. Such was the case in the 2012 incidence when killing of two Muslims on 6th July 2012 followed by retaliatory killing of four Bodo tribals and then the incident took a larger shape with conflict between the two communities that led to such huge level of internal displacement and killing (“Assam Riots: Preventable but not prevented”, 2012). It was followed by conflict and violence during the Lok Sabha election of 2014 where for the first time a non-Bodo independent candidate from the Kokrajhar constituency have won the election. Added to such mutual suspicion between different communities to each other, the absence of clear cut policy among the various ethnic militant outfits regarding the other groups have made the situation more complex and worse (Gohain, 2014).

10. CONCLUSION
The historical analysis of the Bodo movement has shown the course in which the movement has found a settlement with the creation of an institution that is BTAD. The creation of the institution reflects first of all a bargaining and consensual process between the rebel groups, the Government of Assam and the Central government. In a country with deep level of diversity, such arrangement becomes possible due to the democratic, multicultural federal political system of the country. Such arrangements are driven by the mandate of the Preamble of the Constitution that incorporated unity and integrity as the basic principle. In this light, the creation of such self-governing autonomous institution have manifested accommodation of multicultural diversity within the nation with the larger goal of restoring unity and integrity of the nation state. However, in the case of BTC such settlement is neither comprehensive nor an end. It is not comprehensive in the sense that such solution has not been worked out in agreement with all the stakeholders involved in the movement. Many dissident groups have remained unrepresented the outcome of which are manifested in the growing violence even after the creation of the BTAD. The movement for the separate homeland has been continued, although in a dormant stage that sometimes burst out with heinous violence. Also the movement has not dead with the creation of autonomous institution. In other words, it has not taken a final shape. There has been growing sense of disaffection regarding the autonomy arrangement among the ruling body. Also neither Bodo nor non-Bodo people have been satisfied with the working of the present administrative set up. In the context of the evolving nature of the movement, it appears necessary to address certain other aspects like the working of the BTAD, certain structural issues of India’s political system within which such system operate. Understanding of these issues will be a subject matter of the next chapter.

References