

## A Study on Bodo Politics and Women's Participation with Special Reference to Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts in Assam

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### Abstract

The present study aims to prepare a database on Bodo Politics towards Women Participation of Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts (B.T.A.D) in Assam. This study was based on Descriptive survey method. The sample consists of 50 Women Participation selected from B.T.A.D. The present paper aims to assess and compare the BTR women and Non-BTR women towards Bodo politics. The present study emphasized is completely the urgent need for effective under local community development in Bodoland Teritorial Region (BTR) towards studies in relation to gender. The present study was conducted to an unexplored the nature of politics is an important factor for the women participation in Bodo politics. However, the marital status and food processing experience do not contribute much in determining the conflict management strategies adopted by women participation. This study reveals that Bodo community women participation extensively different from others community women participation. The Bodoland Teritorial Autonomous Districts has four districts namely-Udalguri, Baksa, Chirang and Kokrajhar. Percentage of Bodo women in the government services and their political participation is quite low and does not show any sign of significant improvement. Finally, the paper is concluded with educational implications of the present findings. So that remedial measures can be taken.

**Keywords:** Bodoland, Politics, Women Participation, Territorial, Area, Districts, Community.

### Introduction:

The history of women's participation in Indian politics dates back to 1917, when a delegation of Indian women set forward a memorandum before the secretary of state Ewin Montagu demanding the *right to franchise* for them. Finally, the British government in 1920 provides the right to vote to women but it was only for the propertied class and they were not allowed to participate in legislature. In 1930 they got their much needed right to participate in the legislative procedures and Muthulakshmi Reddi became the first woman legislator. They also demanded 5% reservation for them in the legislatures under the leadership of Begum Jahanara Shah Nawaz and Radhabai Subbarayan. And finally through the Government of India Act, 1935, broadened the concept of participation through universal adult suffrage and paved the way for the formal induction of women in the political process both in reserved and general seats.

The participation of women in the decision making process initially began with the *Swadeshi* movement in Bengal (1905-8).<sup>1</sup> Joining of Gandhi in Indian National Congress resulted in grater women participation. Thousands of women joined in the salt Satyagraha, which is "generally remembered as the first time 'masses of Indian women' got involved in the struggle for Independence" (Kumar-1995). Nehru in his book "*The Discovery of India*" writes that when all the leaders were in jail, women came forward and took charge of the struggle and displayed an unimaginable state of courage and daring. Woman leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Vijayalakshmi Pandit,

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<sup>1</sup> Women and Panchayati Raj Report of the Workshop at IIC, New Delhi, 24-25 August, 1989, *Political Participation in India* by National Institute of Advanced Studies-Gender Studies Unit (NIAS). The Constitution of India.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and Aruna Asaf Ali were played a decisive role in the freedom struggle. Assamese women were not also far behind than their counterpart. Thousands of Assamese women joined the freedom struggle actively. Leaders like *Kanaklata* were shot dead by the British. However their participation in active politics is not so impressive. Only the higher caste women were involved in the politics. Despite the role played by the women in the freedom struggle there was a lack of concerted effort to bring them into the political process after independence. The space of women again drastically declined and has been limited to family connections rather than convictions and commitment. Women's are allowed only if there is no alternative choice. However, many initiatives are taken by the government to improve their conditions. Indian constitution argued that the development is possible only through establishing gender equality. However, the participation of women is not improvised. In the first ever general election their strength was only 22 (4.4%) in the House. Women's representation steadily rose in the next general election to reach 34 (6.7%) in the third Lok Sabha. But the trend reversed in the next three elections. Women's representation in the 6th Lok Sabha was a meager 19 (3.4%), the lowest ever. The subsequent elections, on the whole witnessed an upward trend except 1989 elections, when the number of women MPs drastically dropped to 27 from 44 in the previous Lok Sabha. But from 1991 elections, the number of women MPs steadily rose to touch 44 in 1998 elections, accounting for 8.07 per cent and 49 in 1999, the highest ever. However, in 2009 and 2014 it crossed its highest level.

In terms of North East India, one of the basic features of its society is diversity. Diversity as a social fact always existed in the world at a large but it becomes a problem mainly when it exists in the name of gender inequality. It becomes a problem when the gender differences become the basis of group inequality or when the different groups perceive one another as threat to their identity or a challenge to their status. We are talking about women empowerment but how much we concern about their political participation. Compare to the male candidates in the past elections, the number of women candidates were very less. Here in this study I am going to discuss only the participation of Assamese women in the mainstream elections (Lok Sabha elections during the period of 1977 to 2009 and state assembly elections especially in 2006 as a competitor and voter.<sup>2</sup> Empowerment of women appears to be a much publicized concept of this century. The media talks about it, the local politician's talks about it, the national leader's talks about it, policy maker's talks about it, the international community talks about it. All over the world the year 2001 was celebrated as the "Year of Empowerment of Women." Modern age is the age of democracy. Democracy stands on the basic principles of equality and justice. As women constitute more than half the population of the world, their equal participation in all the spheres of society including economic and political field is necessary to make democracy successful.<sup>3</sup> For this efforts will have to be made at every level and in every sphere. Some aspects of the women participation as follows:

- 1. Medical:** Medically, women should be provided good and easily approachable medical facilities especially during pregnancy and infancy to ensure their life and health.
- 2. Education:** Educationally, women would be armed with the tool of proper education which awakens them and makes them conscious of their rights and equal status in society. This will be in the greater of, the society at large and will have far reaching and lasting impact, because women as mothers are called the first educators of their children.
- 3. Social:** Socially, in most of the places, at least in practice, if not formally women have only secondary status to man. Social norms and values will have to be transformed to ensure that women are not discriminated against only on the basis of sex.
- 4. Political:** Women's participation in politics has to be ensured, at every level to make them politically strong so that they can facilitate proper legislation for protecting rights of women. This can be done through 'Progressive Reservation Policy.'
- 5. Legal:** Women should be given adequate legal education to make them capable of descending their own rights, then, their legislative dues. This is essential as without legal knowledge and activism all the formal constitutional arrangements made by the state become redundant.
- 6. Economic:** Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line, they

<sup>2</sup> Election Commission of India's.

<sup>3</sup> The comprehensive History of Empowerment.

should be given equal economic rights to achieve the goal of gender equality. There will be improved implementation of programmes which are already women oriented with special targets for women.

**7. Moral and Cultural Aspect:** In such a situation they cannot even imagine that they will ever fight for their status or rights. Their mindset is so controlled that they do not even think of protesting against inhuman discrimination on any grounds. By developing these entire aspects one can create an appropriate environment in which their rights, status and dignity will be ensured or they will be 'empowered'.

Panchayati Raj is a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic units of administration. It has 3 levels: Village, Block and District. The term 'panchayat raj' is relatively new, having originated during the British administration. Raj literally means governance or government. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj, a decentralized form of Government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's political system. This term for such a vision was "Gram Swaraj" (Village Self-governance). It was adopted by state governments during the 1950s and 60s as laws were passed to establish Panchayats in various states. It also found backing in the Indian constitution, with the 73rd amendment in 1992 to accommodate the idea. The Amendment Act of 1992 contains provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to the panchayats to both for preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and for implementation in relation to twenty-nine subjects listed in the eleventh schedule of the constitution. The panchayats receive funds from three sources-(i) local body grants, as recommended by the central finance commission, (ii) funds for implementation of centrally-sponsored schemes, and (iii) funds released by the state governments on the recommendations of the state finance commissions.

#### **Origin of the Problem:**

In India women representation is very low either in parliament or in state legislatures. Various efforts are made by reformers and national and International organization for changing the direction of the current and attracting the attention of all concerned to enable women community to share the power structure and get rid of domestic fetters. The recent 73rd and 74th amendment to the constitution of India are really courageous and precise worth efforts of the government of India to provide opportunities to women of all castes and communities to take part in the political and development affairs at local levels which is very foundation of the democratic structure of the country. In India, seats are reserved for women at the village level, 'Panchayats' and the city level "Municipal Co-operations". However, the bill to reserve 33% seats in the Parliament could not go through due to opposition from some of the political parties. Women in India now participate in all activities such as politics, education, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology etc. Through the Panchayati Raj Institutions, over a million women have actively entered political life in India. As per the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendment act, all local elected bodies reserved one-third of their seats for women. Although the percentage of women in various levels of political activity has risen considerably, women are still under-represented in governance and decision making positions. Women are still facing significant barriers to their full and equal participation in the structures and institutions which govern their lives. The main problem of the investigator is, "Bodo Politics and Women's Participation". This study is women's political participation in the rural areas with special reference to Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts is one of the districts of Assam. It is a rural based district. In Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts also the political participation of women is not high. But in spite of these amendments the women participation in politics is not satisfactory in Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts. The political participation of Bodo women is to empower and enable women and inter-disciplinary relevance of women's civil and political participation refers to women's ability to participate equally with men, at all levels and in all aspects of public and political participation is not now-a-days limited to purely political aspects. The study reveals that development process in the state is not gender neutral; women enjoy quite inferior status as compared to the average women in India. Percentage of Bodo women in the government services and their political participation is quite low and does not show any sign of significant improvement.

#### **Terms Used:**

Bodoland is the gateway to the beautiful North Eastern Region of India, which is demanded to be created very recently by carving out some area of eight districts of Assam namely Kokrajhar, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darang and Sonitpur within the state of Assam. It is

an autonomous Administrative unit constituted under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India covering an area of 8795 km<sup>2</sup> (Provisional). The administrative unit has been created with a mission to accomplish development in the area of economic, education, preservation of land right, linguistic aspiration, Socio-culture and ethnic identity of Bodos and above all to speed up the infrastructure development of communities in the BTC area. The actual functioning of council was started on 7 December 2003 by constituting the 12 members of the Council provisionally. After the Council Election on 13 May/2005 and subsequent bye election in November/2005 all the 40 Members of Legislative Council has been formed to look after the development works in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts. The remaining 6 (six) members are nominated by the Governor of Assam from the unrepresented Communities. Thus, altogether 46 M.C.L, as represented in the Council from all communities of BTC Area for area development. As per Memorandum of Settlement in the tripartite talks in the year 2003, 40 (forty) subjects have been entrusted to the BTC Authority for all round development of the people in this area.

Bodos are to be blamed most than pointing fingers on Assam government. They should first analyse where they stand and what ability they have to develop, instead of blaming and demanding Bodoland. Hence, the investigator selected a problem on study of Bodo Politics and Women's Participation.

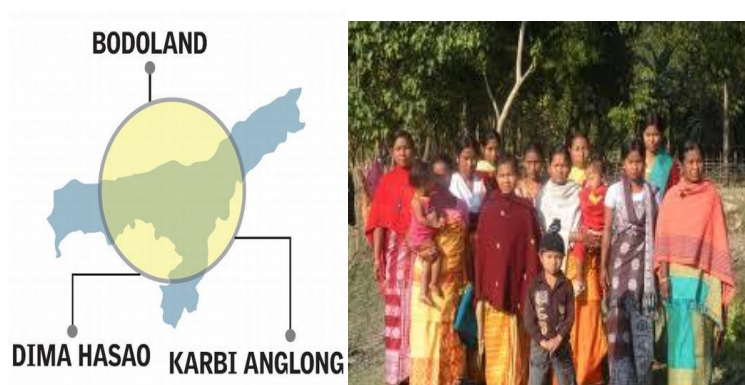
Since Bodoland movement in 1987 it has seen mixture of both one side is politics other side is politics of gun. Lots of violence is taking place since 1987 and as a result of this violence Government of India came into an agreement and created what you call BAC (Bodoland Autonomous Council) in 1993. That time Bodos were not given a kind of territory; a council was created without any territory for the welfare of these Bodo people. Government of India signed that agreement with a student body called ABSU (All Bodo Students' Union) in 1993.

Agitators then demanded a territory, a state of Bodoland, (and gave the slogan) "Divide the state 50/50." Statistically that is not possible. Divide state 50/50 means leave 94% one side and 6% gets the rest. Later on Bodo Security Force was divided into two groups - National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT).

During this movement there was lot of violence that was taking place. The place where they wanted to create Bodoland, Bodos were not in majority and that was the problem. The insurgent group therefore took the responsibility in a silent way to create a majority for the Bodos in that area as a result they engaged in lot of ethnic cleansing, beginning with the killings of a large number of Santhals, who had come from Jharkhand long back, and then gradually on Muslims and they attacked Assamese, all the people. Non-Bodos population suffered at the hands of Bodo insurgents.

Significantly while 1994 accord was signed with a student body and next agreement in 2003 was signed with between an insurgent group BLT and this is a serious matter. You can see the emergence and consolidation of the insurgent group where they could negotiate and government in turn gave them an autonomous council and asked them to run the autonomous council. And they were supposed to surrender all their arms, but everyone in Assam knows they have not surrendered all their arms. So, 2003 officially after surrendering, what the government calls mainstreaming and coming into negotiation one group has become a part of the council and they started ruling over the entire population in the Bodoland area. Even in Bodoland they do not constitute more than one-third of the total population. This one-third population, as per the new rule was given the power to rule over 70% of the population for the interim period. So, Bodo women play important role in the Bodo movement and Bodo politics as well. Therefore, it is very essential to see the political role of the Bodo women and also analysed their social and economic role. Hence, this study focuses on Bodo women and political value of Bodoland districts among the participation in Assam. So, their political role in developing the society in all its aspects is no less significant than that of men. Man and women must work in close cooperation in all spheres of life for development. So that remedial measures can be taken. Bodoland is an area located in the north bank of Brahmaputra river in the state of Assam in north east region of India, by the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh; inhabited predominantly by Bodo language speaking ethnic groups. Currently the hypothetical map of Bodoland includes the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD) administered by the non-autonomous Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The map of Bodoland overlaps with the districts of Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri in the state of Assam. The Bodo people seek an independent state.





Whether the creation of BTC (BTAD) addresses the issues of Bodo self-determination remains an open question. The Bodoland (Assam) Violence and the Politics of Bodoland: The Burden of History. Participation of Women in the Electoral Process of India:



#### Review of the Related Literature:

The survey of related literature is a critical aspect of the planning of the study and the time spent in a survey invariably is a wise investment. As per the review of related literature, Bodoland is an area located in the north bank of Brahmaputra river in the state of Assam in north east region of India, by the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh; inhabited predominantly by Bodo language speaking ethnic groups. Currently the hypothetical study of Bodoland includes the Bodoland Territorial Areas District (BTAD) administered by the non-autonomous Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The map of Bodoland overlaps with the districts of Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri in the state of Assam. The Bodo people seek an independent state. Marginalisation of women as a particular species in the male dominated societies has put women on the footing with inherited handicaps. Women all over the world are regarded as secondary and are subordinated in family which in turn extends their subordination in the wider society, economy and polity. Vhote (1988) studied on a sample of female teachers of primary schools and conducted that more effective teachers had problems of adjustment due to social factors while with less effective teachers emotional problems were dominant. Narzary (2013) The Bodo belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family of Mongolian race. It is widely accepted that the Bodos were the aboriginal or earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley. Numerically, the Bodos are the largest tribal group in entire Northeast and the eight largest tribe in India. The Bodos include Dimasa, Rabha, Deori, Lalung, Tiwa, Madani, Mech, Saraniya, Hojai, Garo, Koch, Chutiya, Sonowal, Moran, Hajong, Tippera, Mahalia, Barman etc. They are geographically concentrated in different location, namely, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. They have their own distinct language, culture and belief system. But the Bodos launched many movements for their justice and to preserve identity in the post-independence period. According to George (1994), the Bodos constituted 49 per cent of Assam's population in 1947, but decline to 29 % due to quick demographic change in the postcolonial Assam. The base of the Bodo economy is land, and while 90% of the Bodos and almost 70 per cent of them are landless today due to indebtedness, poverty, and above all the entry of outsiders into essentially tribal areas (Singh, 2008). The aboriginal Bodo people were squeezed rapidly towards the north bank of the River Brahmaputra over the past years. Narzary

(2010) argued the forceful acquisition of tribal lands by the Assam government was another factor that Bodos resist the state policies. Burman (2010) argued that almost 40 per cent of forests in Bodoland areas are already encroached by migrant populations, the poor-poverty ridden Bodo people were adversely affected by government's policy and politically Bodo women participate.

**Significance of the Present Study:**

Education is an important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. The educational achievement of women can have ripple effect within the family and across generation. The women of any country have an important contribution in the progress of that country. It is the women who are capable of building such children who may lead the country to the path of progress and prosperity. Educated women make the family and the society cultured. The Bodos belong to the Tibeto-Burman linguistic family of Mongolian race. Women should be given adequate legal education to make them capable of defending their own rights, then, their legislative dues. This is essential as without legal knowledge and activism all the formal constitutional arrangements made by the state become redundant. Since women comprise the majority of the population below the poverty line, they should be given equal economic rights to achieve the goal of gender equality. The present investigation has broad in to light some interesting fact and a significant relationship existing between Bodoland Politics and Women Participation of (B.T.A.D). Therefore, a broad frame work and perspectives for empowerment of women exists at the policy level in BTAD of Assam. Even this study will not try to explore the meaning of social movement in details of women participate with especial reference to Bodoland. The present study emphasized is completely the urgent need for effective Bodo women's politics system and this field is relatively unexplored in Assam. The purpose of this study is to know the impact of women participation in the rural politics or rural development of Bodoland Districts in Assam. Thus, participation in politics and decision making is the best means for women's empowerment. In the light of the above discussion of the significance of the study, the title of the study has been fixed as, "A Study on Bodo Politics and Women's Participation with special reference to Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts in Assam". The present study emphasized is completely the urgent need for effective Bodo Participation system and this field is relatively unexplored in Assam. The purpose of this study is to know the impact of women participation in the rural development of Bodoland Districts in Assam.

**Statement of the Problem:**

The problem under investigation entitled is, "A Study on Bodo Politics and Women's Participation with special reference to Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts in Assam"

**Objectives of the Present Study:**

The present study was conduct keeping the following objectives in views:-

1. To find out the women of participation in the Bodo politics.
2. To analyze women's rights in the present changing social setup.
3. To see the role of political parties in case of women's rights.
4. To identify the areas of B.T.A.D. of women's political rights.

**Limitation of the Study:**

In the present study were delimited with regard to the following:

- 1) The present study will be confined to the women participation.
- 2) The study has conducted in only 4 district namely- of B.T.A.D in Assam.
- 3) The study was restricted only women of participation in the Bodo politics only.

**Methodology:**

In this study, the methodology or research techniques are determined by the theory underlying the problem of the study, the objective of the study, resources of the investigator etc. This study was based on Descriptive survey method. The Primary and Secondary sources such as documents classified as primary sources are constitutions, characters, laws, courts rulings, official records, autobiographies, letters, diaries, contracts, deeds, wills, licenses, declarations, certificates, First bills, receipts, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, maps, inscriptions, diagrams, books, pamphlets, films, pictures, paintings, recordings and research reports. The Secondary sources consisted of the study of the relevant books, the reports and information of local veteran people from which some secondary data have been collected and developed and also by Interview, Questionnaires, Field

works, Verbal reports and some reports of existing political leaders from Bodo politics as well. Most of the history books and encyclopedias are examples of secondary sources towards “Bodo Politics and Women’s Participation of BTAD.

#### Procedure:

The investigator’s subject was to study towards the Bodo Politics and Women’s Participation of the Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts. Therefore, the investigator selected simple random sampling method for the present study. For selection of random sample the investigator visited BTAD Districts and selected from Bodoland Teritorial Area Districts of Assam respectively.

#### Size of Sample:

In the present study a representative entire sample of 50 consists in BTAD for the analysis of the result as pre-requirements of the grouping of the leaches forming the sample of the investigation. This study is also focus in the facilities provided for women empowerment and rural development in different parts of BTAD districts in Assam. Women Participation of Bodo Movement:



#### Major Conclusions:

This study makes a critical review of related literature to the study. Major concepts and variables involved in this investigation are discussed and their relationships examined with a view to expanding the frontiers of human knowledge. In case of their at present the Bodo Women of participation in the politics of BTAD Districts namely- Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and Udalguri district discussed with neighboring villagers about the preservation of valuable forests were found significant difference between them. Women teachers, lack of progress, and tended to judge their efficacy as higher satisfied and more adjusted and the relationship between the Bodo Politics and Women’s Participation was found not significant with special reference to B.T.A.D in Assam. Therefore, objectives 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> were retained.

It is observe that the main cause of the failure of this movement was the lack of leadership which was accelerated by the opposition of the Assamese intellectuals and by the unyielding attitude of the state Government. The movement has clear cut cultural overtones both in terms of its declared goal and in terms of the efforts of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha to preserve, revives and developed Bodo literature and other aspects of their culture.

All the prominent leaders belonging to the Bodo community had to go underground in order to evade repressive police actions. Many of the leaders of the BSS and the PTCA were arrested by the police and put behind the bar. In conclusions, therefore the research worker in the filled of women political participation needs to acquaint himself with the specific publications and other items to which he may term for collecting relevant of information for in this study. The study reveals that development process in the state is not gender neutral; women enjoy quite inferior status as compared to the average women in India. Percentage of Bodo women in the government services and their political participation is quite low and does not show any sign of significant improvement. The investigator adopted survey method for the purpose of the study as it is concerned with the present aims of determining the status of the phenomenon under investigation. This methods widely used method in field of research. It analysis the existing situation and makes generalization on every important aspect of the prevalent phenomenon. As the present study tries to find out the impact of modern education in the Women of rural areas and compare the woman of general and SC or ST communities of BTAD rural areas, it falls under the descriptive survey category of present research. This study will also focus in the facilities provided for women empowerment and rural development



in different parts of BTAD districts in Assam. Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts is a newly created council with the jurisdiction of Assam as a result of the mass movement of the Bodo people living in the undivided districts of Darrang, Kamrup, Nalbari, Barpeta, Bongaigaon and Kokrajhar in 10th February, 2003. The Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts has four districts namely- Udalguri, Baksa, Chirang and Kokrajhar.

#### **Suggestions:**

Keeping in view the above obstacles the following suggestions are forwarded to increase the extent of challenges and opportunities influenced. The following suggestions may guide in making fields more authentic. The focus in this issue is on putting education in values and for character building on the national agenda for Women of rural areas and compare the woman of general and SC or ST communities of BTAD rural areas. There has been limited to BTAD in Assam, where public awareness about the profession is not very high. To get precise and correct picture of the profession study covering other areas may be necessary. Therefore, a further study to cover more variables and more sample should be urgently needed. The above programs, carried out for the uplift of women, formed the basis for the uplift of the entire society and mankind. Last but not the least, lack of leadership which was accelerated by the opposition of the Assamese intellectuals and by the unyielding attitude of the state Government.

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