

Looking For a New Order : Reinterpreting the Bodo Movement

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In the village Balagaon, one day Abo Sakuntala an active participant of the Bodo movement told me. "You will understand the religious background of a Bodo house or of a Bodo village from the food offered to you." I was new to this area of the Bodoland Autonomous Council and it was quite a convincing point for me for an enquiry. Though I did observe that there is exception to all such behaviours but I shall come to that pointer later.

Food is an age old identity marker in Indian culture. Here in this village tea is offered in every houses but not country liquor because the villagers are followers of Guru Kalicharan Bramha from at least three generations back. Kalicharan Bramha was a great spiritual leader of the Bodos in the beginning of the twentieth century. He has deep impact on the life of people of the then Goalpara, Kamrup, Borpeta, and Nalbari of Assam. His patriotism united the Bodo people within one frame. The first trilingual magazine (Assamese, Bodo, Bengali) published by the Bodo intellectuals remind us about Kalicharan Brahma and his omnipotent presence in a culture. His disciples debated on some traditional customs of the Bodo related to institution of alliances (marriage customs) and illiteracy. In particular they were critique of high bride-price, early marriage, and forced-marriage. All these customs were conceived by them as constraints to development (see Bihar 1925/1983).

Kalicharan Brahma was a product of a particular time.

This was at the beginning of the twentieth century while he was young man of a trader's family background and his community (the Bodo) was exposed to new economy, political system, religion and culture. These new events were 'permanent settlement' that created a new class of Jamindar in eastern India, tea industry of Assam, which uprooted the indigenous peasants' community from their land. Migration of people from neighbouring Bengal in connection with employments created by the different Zamindars (land lords), and tea gardens offices, and for cultivation of lands had been changing the demography of the Bramhaputra plains of Assam. Missionary activities activated the process of conversion. Earlier people used to embrace Vaisnavite religion, but during nineteenth century Jesuit missionaries pursued Christianity. Kalicharan and his followers felt those neo-religious missions and culture as alien, and grew a notion that these neo-religious ideas might break the society of the Bodo. At this hour people of this community recognize him as a real reformer for other accounts too. He for the first time gave immense importance of mass education and took initiative for spreading of education.

The Bodo was identified by Endle (1911) as a mere Hinduised tribe of lower Assam. In this relation Maniram Mochaari (1996:272), former President of Bodo Sahitya Sabha and Christian evangelist wrote. "Among the Bodos one Guru Kalicharan Bramha became a follower of Siva Narayayn Param Hangso and brought the Bramha religion. His intention was first to be acceptable among the Hindus and then to bring social reformation among Bodos". This statment of Mochaari (*Ibid*) sounds mostly political in nature as he not did discuss other contributions of Kalicharan Brahma and his deciples.

I came to the village Balagaon for altogether on a different mission almost after nine decades of visit of this great Guru. I was there in relation to my field study on the

women's participation in the social movement as it was an epicentre during the Bodoland movement. After coming at Balagaon village I came to know that this village had produced the first women leader Pramila Rani Bramha in the Bodo community. Many other contemporary leaders of ABSU, Bodo people's Action Committee, and Teachers' Association hailed from adjacent village of Balagaon. Abo Sakuntal told me about the relationship of Guru Kalicharan Bramha with this village and inclination of villagers to education that reached this village about two generations back. In any social movement epicenter has a special significance. But is it something that influences the movement? If so how? Villagers told me that their forefathers developed a library here since 1940's, which was destroyed during the Bodo movement as the library building was camp office of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) during movement and became a target of security personnel. I saw the dilapidated condition of the building with a CRPF post there. I had come to this village to meet women participants of different age-groups. And here I came to know that the word 'tribe' remained the central point of debates in conventions and conferences of Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) for at least twenty years since its proposal for a separate state (1967) for the plains tribes of Assam. The word 'tribe' or 'tribal' couldn't be meaningful word to identify a 'society' for the general mass in the Bodo community. It was here I came to know that the use of the word Bodo in the demand for the Bodoland had created a special sense of responsibility within women as this demand for the land of the Bodo could introduce the Bodo community with the world fraternity. Why the word 'Bodo' had to contest with the word 'tribe'?

During my stay at Balagaon village and in Kokrajhar town Abo Latika Hajoary the then president of All Bodo Women's Welfare Federation (ABWWF) invited me to her home town Dudhnoi of Goalpara. Mira Basumatory and

she, two active members of the Bodo movement, hailed from that place. The place Dudhnoi and its adjacent areas were identified by Upendra Nath Bramha, the father of the Bodo movement, as the centre of culture for the Bodo. This was reminding me of some other social history. During 1950's this place was one of the active centres for followers of Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). Bishnu Prasad Rabha, one of the popular leaders, later who was more projected as a popular writer in the Assamese and the Bodo community, and many others of that above mentioned party made their shelter here. This was hometown of another active leader of the Bodo – Aniram Basumatory, earlier member of RCP, who till his last breath aspired for a nation of the tribes of the North-east India.

During my second visit to Dudhnoi, Abo Latika took me to the house of the activist writer late Anirman Basumatory at Kharalalpara, where he had written popular drama, composed mass songs to awaken the people of his own community. Abo Latika told me of Aniram Basumatory, whose compositions were quite popular among the Bodo people during 1960s and he is the first person to organize Bodo songs broadcast through radio regularly. He trained children to perform these programmes. Latika and Praban Borgoiary took initiative to preserve writings of Aniram and Praban published the drama *Gambhari Chikhla* of Aniram which is now taught in the post-graduation syllabus of the Bodo language of Guwahati University. She further told that Dudhnoi was one of the centres of Brahma Samaj at Goalpara, where the followers of Sadharan Bramha Samaj of the then Calcutta used to come during the first half of the twentieth century.

These areas were creating a new dimension in my study, where I was feeling relatedness of episodes of social unrest with one another and at the same time limitations in conceptualizing a social unrest as a discrete phenomenon, as if each of these activities of Kali Charan Bramha, RCP,

PTCA, ABSU, are some phenomena ideologically different from one another but must be classified and compartmentalized for better understanding. Experiences of Abo Sakuntala and Latika projected some other realities, those of accumulations of experiences passed on from one generation to another. Abo Latika had chances to hear Aniram Basumatary. Latika came to contact Aniram Basumatary at his old age. Both of them were residents of Kharalalpara but met each other in the meetings of Bodo Sahitya Sabha (The Bodo Literary Society). For her it was an outstanding life time experience, which inspired her always during her active participation in the Bodo movement. Though she was not a follower of the same ideology, Aniram had.

Mohanlal Ganguly (1989 : 120) another active leader of the RCP in his autobiography referred Aniram Basumatary as a very active communist leader. The former found a good organised, courageous, intelligent, articulate leader in the latter. Ganguly (*ibid*) remembered a dream of Aniram who had connections with leaders of Bhutan, present Myanmar, Tibet and wanted to establish a sovereign socialist nation for the people of Assam. He identified India as a nation of capitalist, Gandhiji as a representative of capitalists, and the parties like CPI as follower of capitalist and CPI(M) party as a representative of the Bengalees. He had dreamt for armed struggle too to help independence of a nation for the people of Assam. In the year 1953, RCP organised a two week convention at Basugaon of Kokrajhar district of Assam and after this RCP activists had stopped their underground activities. In the same district Korajhar, Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) and All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) were established in 1967. A few RCP members like Samar Bramha Chaudhury and Charan Narzary (Members of Parliament from Janata Party in 1970s) were there in PTCA from the very beginning. Such background raised certain questions within myself. Why people were disillusioned with the activity of RCP? Why communist

leaders suddenly lost their ground they prepared through share croppers' struggle? Whether they lost it or had changed their strategy ?

From Kokrajhar I went to another epicenter of the Bodo movement that is Mushalpur area of district Nalbari. The earlier name of this area was Baska. Here I had a chance to meet two young women who worked for underground organization of the Bodo movement and stayed in camps. One of them told me that she is inheriting blood of activist like who is her maternal uncle. This was an important name in the share croppers' movement of Mushalpur. Under his leadership sharecroppers' of this area demanded equal share of production and cultivable lands for landless peasants. Sital Chandra was an active member of RCP. He wrote (1994:14) that after 1929-30 the landless Bodo people came and settled in this area from different places of Goalpara, Kamrup of Assam. The pioneer among them was Lakshmiram Mandal, who was a converted Vaisnavite. He and many other families migrated here, reclaimed forest lands and transformed these lands to cultivable lands. During 1930's they took initiative to bring these lands under the records of land settlement and put their names on records. The British Government took care of it, though some vested lands of these were recorded as grazing reserves for cattle. By 1940s new settlers had established school, primary health centre for the people of this area. Followers of Kalicharan Brahma were quite active here. They organised the Bodo traders to be united to resist dominance of traders from neighbouring districts. The followers of Kalicharan Brahma established an organization of traders at Mushalpur market, constructed shops, building, to encourage local people to participate in petty trading. During 1945 onwards people of this area became united under the leadership of RCP members to establish rights over land. Movement for opening of grazing reserve of Jopadong for landless peasant was a historic success for people. Under the leadership of

Sital Chandra Basumatory (1955-1963) about 4500 Bigha of land of the Subankhata private grazing reserve (Jopadong) were distributed among landless tribal people of Assam. Most of them belong to the Bodo community. Sital Chandra had to take continuous initiative for this work. From his personal communications (letters), writings, it is understood that he kept regular communications with sitting M.L.A (s) of Assam. This area was a strong ground of PTCA and people took time to extend their support to the ABSU and its women's wing (All Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Association).

THE CONCEPT TRIBE, POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES AND THE BODO

Through establishing Tribal League (1933) and converting it to Tribal Sangha in 1990s the Bodo leaders had weaved two new aspirations in the mind of people of plains of Assam. One initiative is for establishing rights of sons of the soil and the second is articulating voice for establishing a new national/community (Bhatercharjee 1996 :75) identity using scientific knowledge (see Grierson, 1903 : 1-10), that is conceptualizing a social group on the basis of linguistic, morphological, and cultural similarities of different so-called tribal groups, like, the Bodo Kachari, Dimasa Kachari, Lalung, Hajong, Hojai, Mishing, Mech, Rabha, Tippera, and many others (identified by the European administrative writers, missionaries, and travellers as tribes of Assam, and Tripura). This proposed identity of 'plains tribe' talked about possibilities of formation of a larger and powerful social group of the Bodo, where they were minority in terms of economy and population size (see Narzary 1993). Submission of memorandum to the Simon Commission by Tribal Intellectuals demanding justice for plains tribes and political representative in the state legislature of Assam (1929) indicated unequal status of indigenous people of this region and justified their cause of demand. As a result, the Commission prohibited force recruitment of tea garden labourers from the Bodo community. The Bodo people

identified these dominant indigenous communities around them in their writings since 1925 (see Bibar). Though side by side Aniram says, the Bodo people sold landed property to employees /outsiders who came from other parts of India. In later period, the plains tribal communities participated in 'civil' disobedience' movement of 1942 (Basumatory, 1994), 'share croppers' movement of 1948-1953 (Sen Deka, 1993, Basumatory, 1994), electoral politics of Congress, CPI, CPIM during 1960s (Bhattacharjee, 1996) and gathered experiences of the hill tribal leaders of District Councils and All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC), who aspired for a hill state for tribes during early 1960s (Chaube, 1973/1999). Ethnicity or other reform movements and urge for fulfilment of aspirations of the people sometimes led to identity shift thus further contributing to the process of fusion and fission. Demand for Bodoland and Jharkhand, Pan-Naga or Pan-Mizo identity, and creation of tribe dominated states in North-East India are important illustrations related to ethnicity in tribal India (Danda, 1986 :19). For me reasons of assertion of ethnic identity or making a platform for their own were not the same for all. Communities of plains of Assam like Bodo, Kachari, Rabha, Mech, Lalung, Hajong, were mostly peasant communities while they were identified and defined as tribe (Endle, 1911, Shyam Chaudhury, 1973). At that time many families belong to these communities were landless, exploited mass and had economic reasons to prefer a new concept like 'tribe' to identify the 'self as the 'exploited'/'minority'. This is different from 'others' the 'exploiter' / 'dominant'. Such cognition of people and their leaders invariably identify a kind of choice as necessity, mass people wanted to reorient their existing position, while they were flexible in delineation of their ethnic identity, the leaders did not hesitate to use the word 'tribe' to refer to a social group consisting of population of different tribal background. Next example for establishing rights of above mentioned

communities in *Adhier* (share croppers') struggle of Assam and Tebhaga of West Bengal and present Bangladesh, substantiate the same fact that these people wanted to establish a new social order (Sen Deka, 1993; Basumatory, 1994; Singha Roy, 1991; Kamal and Chakrabarty, 2001; Boro, 1994). Decision to postpone the *Adhier* movement in convention of RCP at Basugaon (1953) and establishment of Plains Tribal Council of Assam in the year 1967 at Kokrajhar, the agenda of this organization for the state 'Udyachal' for the tribal people of Assam apparently do not manifest any relationship but these two organizations, both directly and indirectly, had influenced each other.

According to Aniram Basumatory, "In 1946, I established All Assam Peasant Association at Beltala. This organization was able to make network with peasants of other parts of Assam within a short time. From the beginning it was a radical organization and members were influenced by radical philosophy of communism. This movement compelled the then Assam Government to codify law to protect rights of share croppers over land and production. We received direct support of Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP). But I had differences of opinion with them on the question of Independence of Assam. I was determined to make Assam independent from India. I received direct support from Bishnu Prasad Rabha whom I considered elder brother. For that I had organised all ex-military men and established an association for them. Late Deban Khakhalary of Dibrugarh was the secretary and a whole-timer of this organization. This was the first organization of army men in Assam. I was the supreme in-charge so I was travelling over whole of northern India to organize all ex-military men and cantonments again to study defense mechanisms. My senior, Bishnu Prasad Rabha also traveled with me to some places. Both of us had pseudo names while we were travelling different districts of present North Bengal.... On 31st May 1945, I was arrested at Sat

Gaon of Guwahati. I was injured at that time. Police had field cases of looting and snatching rifles, ammunitions, from army men and carrying and keeping explosive and fire arms against me. So I had to spend a long time in jails as under trial and as penalized prisoner. I was free from jail on 14th November, 1954 from Tezpur jail." (from the collection of unpublished writing of the author).

This document from Aniram Basumatory clearly talks about some radical inclinations of leaders and their aspirations. Aniram and his group members wanted to establish a new nation for people who were oppressed. He identified many national leaders as representatives of capitalists. Even side by side it is to observe that leftist parties like CPI, CPI(M), had lost relevance to the tribal people of Assam. Many a times CPI(M) and Bangiya Sahitya Parishad (Literary Society of Bengalee) were referred as two sides of the same coin. CPIM was suspected as an organization silently working for spreading of Bengalee dominance, through encouraging activities of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad (from the unpublished writing of Aniram Basumatory). Sital Chandra Basumatory in his autobiographical writing also maintain similar notions. He mentions, "During 1956-57, about 150 families forcibly occupied a portion of land of Subankhata private grazing reserve under the leadership of Arabinda Ghosh of CPI. They constructed temporary huts there. But the local administration evicted these families very soon" (Basumatory, 1994:27).

Plains Tribal Council of Assam, the first regional party for the tribals of the Bramhaputra valley was quite popular among the Bodo since its beginning. It had incorporated all tribals of the area in its fold. Persons from different political ideologies joined this association. A few former RCP members were among them. From the beginning PTCA was quite popular among the Bodo. It had submitted memorandums for the establishment of Udyachal (as an

Union Territory) for the plains tribe. From the beginning of the formation of this party, it was dominated by the active members of the Bodo community background. The convenor and first secretary of ABSU, Kanakeswar Narzary was convenor of PTCA. This party did not continue the agenda of Aniram Basumatory but wanted a state for plains tribal communities. From the beginning, this political party of the plains tribes received active help of Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) and ABSU. BSS from its beginning (1952) worked actively for the development of one language, which was identified by Grierson (1903) as a language, spoken by the largest population group among plains tribe. Since the publication of *Bibar* (1925), *Olamber* (1930s), two magazines the Bodo intellectuals were trying to develop the language through publishing writings. The president of the 33rd Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952, under the chairmanship of Satish Chandra Basumatory, editor of *Bibar*, and a life long social worker organised an all India conference of Bodo leaders on 16th November at Basugaon (the place, where RCP decided to discontinue their programmes) and took a decision for the preservation and promotion of Bodo language and literature. The said decision was a national decision of the Bodo people and this decision gave birth to the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. It was a turning point in the history of Bodo language and literature. (Mochary, 1994). This organization has played significant role in the Bodo nationality formation. It has through its sincere efforts compelled Assam government to introduce this language as medium of instruction at primary level, middle school level, secondary level, at university level as a modern Indian languages (in Gauhati University) and Associate State Official Language within the span of 45 years (*ibid* 1993:2-8). Secondly, this organization united the Bodo people who were divided. It has provided a common platform to the Bodo Bramhas, Christians, and Bodo Bathous to work for the development of language and literature. According to

Maniram Mochary (*ibid*:3), "The birth of this Sabha brought a ray of hope for the Bodo people for survival as a people with self identity. It also brought them the sense of unity and integrity to work together for their own development and preservation of their self identity, a spirit of determination to become equal and useful citizen of the country so as to be able to contribute to the unity, integrity and welfare to their great country, India."

ABSU at the time of raising slogan "divide Assam fifty-fifty" (1987) got a strong foundation. Their slogans were woven with experience, so they could easily chorus, 'Bodo hari Khoise ja' (children of the Bodo be united) and 'Bodo hari geder hari' (the Bodo race is a great race). In fact they also admitted contribution of their predecessors. PTCA leader were severely criticized for their participation in the electoral politics and compromising stands for portfolios in parliament. They criticized Asom Gana Parishad for its opportunist stand. At the time of launching movement, ABSU stated in press release that even share croppers' struggle also could not provide far reaching solutions. And 60 percent Bodo population are landless. It further claimed that the Bodo settlers were forced to occupy forest lands.

The agenda of RCP for landless peasants across the community and cultural boundary, the agenda of PTCA for tribal or oppressed minority communities could not solve problems of the largest tribal community. Moreover, after some time leftist parties and their leaders were also identified as regional in their agenda. Political activism of the Bodo people of twentieth century innovated and added new traditions within their culture. These recent traditions re-oriented cultural activities.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT AND INVENTION OF TRADITION

"Inventing traditions, it is assumed here, is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by reference to the past, if only by imposing repetition. The

actual process of creating such ritual and symbolic complex has not been adequately studied . . . (Hobsbawam, 1983/1994:4). He has classified (*ibid*) mass generation of traditions primarily into two subjects. 'Political –primarily in or by states or organised social or political movements, and the later we call it 'social' — mainly by social groups not formally organised as such, or those whose objects were specifically or consciously political, such as clubs and fraternities, whether or not these also had political functions. The distinction is one of convenience rather than principle. It is designed to draw attention to two main forms of the creation of tradition in the nineteenth century, both of which reflect profound and rapid forms of transformation of the period.'" (1993:263). In the third conference (*mahasannmilon*) in 1929 the followers of Kali Charan Bramha adopted certain strong measures to get rid of the ills that were prevailing in the society. They fix the amount of Bride to Rs.51/- (Bhattacharjee, 1996:73-74). The reason of lowering bride price was to stop a few related customs that were conceptualized by them as impediments for social development. These are customs of 'marriage at early age' and 'marriage by capture'. Those who compel a boy or a girl to get married at immature age they compel them to discontinue study at school. The Bodo intellectuals since the first decade of twentieth century were campaigning against these customs. They wanted to secure more freedom for women and youth by banning such customs. This decision had a long lasting effect on the society. It has indirectly controlled polygyny, another custom which was in practice among the rich persons of the community. Custom of high bride-price compelled poor parents to sell their daughters to rich men. Sometimes daughters were exchanged for repaying loans. To control all these, and to free young generation they lowered bride price. To implement ban on a few marriage customs and high bride price, Kalicharan took special initiative and invited youth

to create volunteer groups. He received good response. Another custom that was identified as a custom against development is brewing and drinking liquor at home regularly. Usually the followers of Bramha had stopped brewing liquor at home but this system remained among non-Bramha families. During 1987-88, women activists again took initiative to stop brewing and selling. Once Hirabai Narzary commented on middle class families, "Habits of drinking liquor every day create an atmosphere at home which differs thoroughly from those families who do not brew and consume. In the former type of family father's evenings are his own. Occasionally, he interacts with his children and look after children's study. In case, other families' evenings are different, many a times it is observed that parents are more attentive, and regularly attend and interact with children. Children of such families perform better in comparison to former type." (Fieldwork: 1997). Initiatives of Bramha and his followers for establishment of school, boarding house, introduction of the concept of mass education and technical education, encouraging rich people to introduce scholarship for meritorious students and awards for them created a conscious intellectual group of youths within two decades. Editors of magazines in the Bodo language, writers, and poets among them came from this background; some of them are Satish Chandra Basumatory, Promode Chandra Bramha, Rupnath Bramha, Jadabchandra Khakhlary. His followers were members in Simon Commission, Tribal League, and Bodo Mahasanmelon.

Women were invisible in these series of intellectuals. Except one or two writers of *Bibar* women's names were not there. Brahma and his followers took initiative for women's education, established schools and encouraged girls to join the schools, encouraged parents to send daughters to the school but at the same time gender bias was noticed in the framing of programmes for students

(see *Bibar* 1925). Report of the Enquiry Committee of Freedom Fighters, Published by Government of Assam (1979), enlisted names and addresses of the 18 Bodo women martyrs of 1942 who participated in civil disobedience movement. Bodo women actively participated in the peasant struggle (share croppers' movement of 1948-1953) of Assam and we know name of martyr Rajni Boro. Bodo women leaders of the present generation and women activists worked for the Bodoland were substantially and actively visible in the Bodo Sahitya Sabha which organised Roman Script movement of 1974. They were mostly in the higher classes of schools and participated in that protest very actively. This generation of women leaders of ABSU and AATWWF had condemned polygyny and introduced the concept of high compensation in case of divorce due to extra-marital affairs. They participated in such cases ignoring village elders (where earlier women were not allowed in political organization), and negotiated for deserted wife and children and imposed high compensation (Sen Chaudhuri, 2004). Political experience brought people of different communities of plains of Assam closer to each other. Such a situation influenced people in other way round. Inter-community marriages among tribes of erstwhile district Kamrup increased during 1960s. Such marriages were considered progressive. I had a chance to meet such couples at Mushalpur of present Nalbari district, where the husband belong to Bodo Kachari community and wife Dimasa Kachari of North Cachar. I met couples at Arabari and Baruabari villages of Block Dimoria, Kamrup, Assam, who are from Bodo Kachari, Tippera, Tiwa and Karbi communities. Most of these marriage were held after 1960s, and a few marriages were negotiated through friends and elders. In any case such marriages were a few in number and these couples did not receive any negative sanctions from their respective societies. These couples shared their

views by saying that the attitudes of present generations are differing from their attitudes. Inter-community marriages are not seen as it was before.

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha has immense contribution to imbibe the tradition of writing in the Bodo community. It can be judged through a small evidence. Only in 1994 the BSS had published 52 books in the Bodo language, basically to cover syllabus of the Bodo language post-graduation course of the Gauhati University. These Bodo writers covered a wide range of topics in creative, fictional writings, poetry, collections, drama, literary compositions on cultural and political aspects, historical writings, biographical writings, published magazine, republished old magazines (List of publication of the BSS, 1944). A section of intellectuals devoted to writing dictionaries, history of the community. Each district committee of ABWWF published magazines separately apart from central committee publications. There are new generation of writers and poets, who write regularly and people wait for their publications. In this phase, BSS is publishing books on religion and a section of intellectuals are projecting "Bathou religion" as an identity marker for the Bodo culture. This project form of practice is an amalgamation of both traditional and Bramha. In this the traditional concept the significance of five elements of nature is acknowledged through ritualistic expressions introduced by Kalicharan Bramha. I had a chance to observe one such expression in the venue of 33rd BSS, held at Bathoupuri, Kamrup, Assam.

At last I will discuss revival of tradition during pack period of the Bodo movement. It was told by women members of ABWWF, who worked as a sister organization of ABSU, that the members of both the organizations were equally active. To boost up the underground members, these organizations re-introduced an age-old tradition of weaving 'Aronai', a colourful comforter with particular motifs/designs of the Bodos, as a cloth, which protect the user

from enemy and death. In fact this is revival of an age-old tradition that says, in the past before going to war wife or mother of the Bodo warrior used to weave Aronai for him within one night. That was again following secretive procedures so that no body knew that they were weaving cloth for the warriors. In the changed version of this ritual, young members of above mentioned organization had woven Aronai for underground members. The activists received these comforter at alters (Bathousali) of villages through some rituals.

These social phenomena mentioned here are recent in origin. All these were introduced in the process of protest movements, remained so and acted upon other social traits and behaviours. Such newly emerged social traits are equally referred and practiced like old traits. Here a brief statement of Sital Chandra Basumatory may be appropriating, "I proceed the journey in the name of Bramha" (Basumatory, 1994), at the time of going to Shillong, the than capital of Assam to plead for the landless peasants. Here one aspect to be noticed that he did not mention name of any traditional god and goddess like Bathou or Maineo. He rather named a spiritual leader of recent origin. References of activists frequently mentioned influences of prominent personalities; discussions cited positive and negative sides of different protests, and heroic activities of seniors where past is symbolically presented in literature to consolidate the unity.

DISCUSSION

The social phenomena of the Bodo were identified as protests, social unrest (Guha, 1975), reform movement (Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 1983), emerging 'ethnicity' an 'integration process in pluri-cultural set up' (Danda 1991), 'social formation' as an important event of transformation (Bhagabati, 1992), the role of the emerging elites of the small ethnic formation, referring to tribal political movements

(as Roy Burman refers Navalakha, Chaube, Bipan and Bose 1992) different phases of movements for autonomy, those are first phase (upto 1966), the second phase (1967-1987), the third phase (1987-1992). Again the third phase is classified into peaceful phase and militant phase (Bhattercherjee, 1996). Events identified in the above mentioned studies were protests of Kachari tea garden labourers in nineteenth century against low wages, emergence of spiritual leader and innovative social works of his followers and him as reform movement, the Mizo, the Naga, the Bodo ethnicity formation on the emergence of socio-political organizations and their activities, reasons of social formation and transformation, role of elites in such social formation, formation of organization like, Tribal League, Tribal Sangh, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA), All Bodo Students' Union, Plains Tribal Council of Assam-Progressive (PTCA-P) United Tribal National Liberation Front, United Bodo National Liberation Front (UBNLF), and movements for the formation of Udyachal, Nilachal, Mishing –Bodoland, Tribal Land, Bodoland, (Paul 1989), Mukherjee (1993), Bhattacharjee (1996), Sen Chaudhuri (2004).

At this background this study as a cross section of the continuous process (with spatial dimension of it at a particular time) says, epicenters' in a social movement have some deep meanings. Epicenters in social movement shape local issue and mind of participants. This study will remain incomplete without a comparative study to be taken upon another epicenter of the movement — Odalguri, Mongoldoi, which emerged as epicenters for the NDFB social movement for separate nation for the Bodo people. But at present I am unable to present any data in this regard. In this presentation all these above mentioned social phenomena were addressed by informants, who were active participants in the ABSU organised Bodoland movement. They correlated contributions of the previous generations' leaders to give

the shape of the present tradition despite differences in ideologies of those leaders. It further highlights backgrounds of cultural construction of the concept tribe in post-colonial perspective, which has incorporated ethnic minorities to a single category, conceptualizing them as exploited/deprived section of people at the backdrop of Marxist struggles. New traditions emerged as a consequence of such social movements, accumulated in social systems, are identified as traditional behaviours of people after certain time, in fact are outcome of an essential dynamic process, which are not discrete phenomena.

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