

NIRU HAZARIKA

**PROFILE OF
YOUTH ORGANISATIONS
IN NORTH EAST INDIA**

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PROFILE OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS IN NORTH EAST INDIA

Volume I
ASSAM



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PREFACE

My long association with the youths of Assam and other North Eastern States as teacher in Political Science and warden of two girls' hostels, Gauhati University, Assam and the existing socio-political scenario of this region convinced me that a fresh effort to analyse the youth problems is an urgent need of the day. To understand the youths and their problems in the contemporary modern society one must have a searching look to the organisational activities of the youths. Very often it happens that the admirers and sympathisers tend to identify the youths with virtue, morality and courage utilised for community service without looking into viciousness, immorality and emotionalism in them. On the other hand members of the opposite block tend to identify the youths with viciousness, immorality and emotionalism overlooking virtue, morality and courage in them.

On 1st August 1998, I express my idea to the youth members of the IMSaR and they welcomed my idea and after a short discussion we arrived at a decision that the IMSaR will give top priority on the youth problems in its research activities in North East India. This book on "Youth Organisations in North East India" is the result of that discussion.

Accordingly I undertook the task of preparing the book and planned to prepare the book on three volumes. The volume I is on Assam and II and III will be on Youth Organisations in rest of North Eastern States. About 45 youth organisations were identified in Assam by a research study sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi, few years back. This book contains profiles of 23 youth organisations only of the State, for the following main reasons:-

- A. Increase in the number and the basic nature of different ethnic based organisations;
- B. Paucity of time;
- C. The voluminous activities of some youth organisations like

All Assam Students' Union, All Bodo Students' Union, Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad etc. had to be taken care of.

The remaining organisations of Assam may be incorporated in the rest of the two volumes of the book. The author will try her best to cover each and every organisation of the youths in North East India in the future academic exercise.

This book contains the profile of the youth organisations highlighting the following areas--

Head Office

Date/ Year of Establishment

Emblem and Flag

Motto

Preamble to the Constitution of the Organisation

Aims and Objectives of the Organisations

Organisational pattern

Membership

Grievances and Demands

Specific Issues highlight by the Organisations

Achievements

Solution to the Problems as Suggested by the Organisations

Obstacles faced by the Organisations

The last part of the book contains a comparative analyses of the grievances and demands including the redressal measures provided by the youth organisations with certain comments on them by the author.

INTRODUCTION

One can not have a complete view of the youth power of North East India from its agitational role alone, because it overshadows the other side of the youth power. The youths of North East India are well-known for its constructive activities also. The role of the youths of our country during Freedom Struggle in India is highly appreciable. They took active part in the Freedom Struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and several others. The youths of this region also marched equally with the youths of other parts of the country and played an important role in the Movement.

The concepts of "Youth Power" and "Youth Service" are rooted in the social culture of the North Eastern Region of India. In the traditional societies of this region the youths rendered selfless service to the village communities under the able leadership of the village headman or village elders. In this connection mention may be made of the "Dormitory" system in the traditional tribal societies, which was a very strong device to utilise the youth power for the greater interest of the village communities. Thus the youths were integrated in the process of community service. The societies in the plain areas were also known for this kind of youth service under the direct control or regulation of the village headman. This role was very well manifested in the celebration of community festivals, at the time of village defence, distress etc. In this regard the North East India occupied a unique position in the country. Further, the traditional villages in this region worked as democratic institutions within the framework of the customs and traditions of the society having wide authority over every aspect of village life in which the youths played prominent roles in diversified activities of the society.

However, in the process of development and modernisation of way of life the mechanism of control or

allowed them to integrate themselves in the process of development and nation building according to their own conveniences. Further, the customs and traditions of the societies are changing along with the changing needs and demands of the modern men, due to the impact of science and technology and modernisation of way of life. The process of development also does not permit us to retreat to the old system of control over the youth power. The educational institutions and the families which can play very effective role in regulating the youth power are suffering from motivational crisis. Under this situation there emerge clashes in different forms and at different levels.

North East India which is situated in a corner of Indian Union may be called as miniature society with wide topographical, climatic, economic, social and cultural diversities. It is a region in which more than hundred tribes live, people speak more than hundred languages and the ways of life differ very prominently from one community to another. But the region has certain common features. A little more than 80% workers of the region are engaged in agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. Under this circumstances it is evident that the solution of the rural problems in this region has direct linkage with the effective land utilisation, land protection and land distribution policy. Secondly the whole region is also well-known for the useful and fashionable articles made out of cane, bamboo, wood etc. which are very popular even in the modern society. The state of Assam is known in the world for its natural resources like tea and oil. Another common feature of this region is that women in the rural areas are experts in weaving. Mulberry, Muga and Endi worms are domesticated insects of which women generally take care. But this region does not have sufficient trained woman power to develop industries or natural resources available in it. Lack of educational institutions on vocational line may be considered as a serious hindrance to provide self employment based on indigenous natural resources, to the youths.

Since Independence, the Governments of North Eastern States, specially in Assam, concentrating their attention to crisis management spending huge amount of money, caused by violent activities of the youths. Hundreds of youth, civil and army personnel sacrifice their lives due to the violent / insurgent activities in this region. The cost analysis of the Government policies for crisis management will show

a big gap between the target achievement and the involvement of man power and money.

The impact of youth power on the politics of Assam can not be denied in this context. The historic Assam Accord signed on 15th August 1985 after a struggle for 6 years against foreigners in Assam launched by All Assam Students' Union gave birth two regional Political Parties- Asom Gana Parishad and United Minorities Front : Asom Gana Parishad formed Governments in 1985 and 1996. The movements launched by All Bodo Students' Union, Mising Students' Union, Rabha Students' Union, Tiwa Students' Union resulted grant of separate Autonomous Councils to them.

The North East India is a compact geographical unique having international boundaries. The SAARC countries- Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal etc. contiguous to this region. All the SAARC countries represent a region which is experiencing serious socio-economic constraints affecting the political system and the process since the countries of the region gained independence. The conflicts and tensions in this South Asian region originated during the British rule itself. After Independence with the political developments and social changes there emerged different forms of tensions, insecurity causing deterioration of the socio-economic situation of the whole region.

This region of South Asia may be considered as one geographical and economic entity situated in South Bank of the Himalayas and bounded by Arabian and Indian Ocean. The people living in this region of South Asia constitute a significant portion of the poorest under underfed population of the world. As a result almost all the sections of the people started searching for alternative paths for satisfying their own aspirations and redressing their grievances in which the involvements of the youths has become inevitable.

The initiatives undertaken by the youths of North East India in general and Assam in particular in identifying and solving the problems of the region provided effective clues to understand the youth power as well as to have a fresh look to the problems of the North East documented by them. For example, the problem of infiltration caused launching of Movement in Assam for six years after which the Assam Accord was signed by the Governments and the leaders of the Movement. In that Movement many people had to sacrifice their lives

in Assam and 855 persons were declared as Martyrs by the Government. This problem is a serious concern not only of the Governments of the North Eastern States but also of Government of India, Nepal, Bangladesh in the interest of unity and integrity of the nations and healthy international relations or cooperation. In addition to this the problems like socio-cultural identity, land reform and land utilisation, of indigenous raw materials for providing opportunities for self employment of the youths and economic developments of the region have relevance in this context.

The solution of any problem has mainly three important phases-

- A) Identification of the problem
- B) Documentation of the problem
- C) Exploration of the best alternative device for solution.

The youths of Assam are actively involved in all the three phases- they have identified the problems of the State, documented the identified problems in their Memorandums submitted to the Governments for solution by exploring ways for solution to the problems which they considered best.

The number of talks held between the leaders of the youth organisations and the Governments both in Delhi and in Guwahati, visits of central leaders and the appointment of Expert Committee may be considered as the indicators to measure the gravity and genuineness of the problems identified by the youths.

Nobody can deny the fact that diagnosis and documentation of the problems and to search for effective solution to the problems is not an easy task in a plural society like ours in which each and every section of the society is constrained by deep rooted feeling of deprivation and exploitation, frustration, suspicion in the honesty of the leadership, feeling of insecurity etc. In this context it may be mentioned that any act of distortion and suppression of grievances and problems of the people is a self defeating technique and may be a threat to the unity and integrity even amongst the members of a particular ethnic group whatever may be its size.

The discord among different groups defined by their ethnicity or race claiming redrawing the politico-administrative map has become a very prominent and sensitive question in today's Assam. The socio-cultural pluralism is manifested in the existence of sixteen major

Scheduled Castes (Basphor; Bhuinmali, Mali; Brittrial Bonia, Bonia; Dhupi, Dhobi; Dugla, Dholi; Hira; Jalkeot; Jhalo, Malo, Jhalo-Malo; Kaibartta, Jaliya; Lal Begi; Malhara; Mehtai, Bhangi; Muchi, Rishi; Namasudra; Patni, Sutradhar etc. according to the Basic Statistics of North Eastern region published by NEC, Shillong 1987). The same source tells that the Autonomous Districts of Karbi Anglong and N.C. Hills of Assam shelter fourteen major tribes namely; Chakma; Dimasa Kachari; Garo; Hajong; Hamar; Khasi; Jaintia; Synteng; Pnar; War; Bhoi; Lymngngam; Kukis; Lather; Man (Tai speaking); Mizo (Lushai); Karbi; Naga; Pawi and Synteng. The Kukis may be sub-divided into 37 sub-groups. The rest of Assam shelters 9 major Scheduled Tribes- Barmans; Boro; Deori; Hojai; Kachari, Sonowal; Tiwa; Mech;Mising and Rabha. Further divisions of the society are based on caste, language and religion. However, this pattern of social pluralism is not a new phenomena in this region.

The disappearance of the British rule from India on 15 August 1947 could not make the nation out of danger caused by socio- cultural pluralism. This question of North East India appeared as a very significant issue in the Constituent Assembly Debates resulting the formation of a sub-Committee under the Chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi on 27 February 1947. The sub-Committee examined the problem of North East Frontier (Assam) Tribal and Excluded Areas and submitted its report on 25 July 1947. On its recommendations the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India was provided by the Constituent Assembly as a solution to the problem of the hill people in the North East. Most probably it was the best politico-administrative strategy to be adopted in a country searching for 'Unity in Diversity' without destroying the multi-colour culture of the nation. Interestingly enough during this period of 50 years of Independence of India different sections of the society are searching for 'Diversity in Unity'.

Further, instances are available in the State of Assam of making efforts for redressing the grievances of the people by demanding the measures like, Declaration as Scheduled Tribes, Introduction of Inner Line system, Separate Homelands etc.

The whole situation is arising due to several factors such as -

a) the deep rooted feeling of negligence, deprivation, exploitation and the sense of insecurity;

b) most problems relate to land, language and labour (employment) issues;

c) push and pull of youths by the political parties to gain power;

d) poor analysis and evaluation of Government policies in the context of pre-determined objectives;

e) dyfunctions of the institutions like family, educational institutions, political parties, administrative departments;

f) lethargic pace of the administrative process to stop emerging problems moving towards more complicated situation.

On the other hand while demonstrating the problems the emotionalism element of the youth power is reflected in various ways. The use of words and phrases such as 'Bloody', 'Assamese Chauvinism', 'Assamese Government', 'Betrayal' etc. in the memorandum submitted by the Youth Organisations to the Governments indicates the presence of 'emotionalism' in them. However, one must admit that this is a human weakness. This may easily be ignored, but the notable point here is that these are the worst forms of expression of loss of mutual trust and mutual understanding in connection to the relations between the public and the administration and among the various sections of the society. The loss of mutual trust is a serious ailment causing threaf to the peace and social harmony in any human society.

Lack of mutual trust affects healthy communication system in the society. Communication is no doubt a system of flow of information, but it is a very strong device to promote trust and confidence between the administration and youths. On the other hand mutual respect and trust may provide effective communication system and their emerges the mutual dependence or cooperation and it provides opportunities for exchange of ideas and inter-change of opinions. It helps acceptance of reality which is a remarkable threshold to be crossed in the process of solution to any problem. Any attempt towards this direction makes a person practical incalcing in him / her the sense of time factor, selfishness and humanism.



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