

# Terrorism In Assam: An Analysis

Dr. Lohit Hazarika

HOD & Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Anthropology, Lakhimpur Girls College

---

## ARTICLE DETAILS

---

### Article History

Published Online: 10 December 2018

---

### Keywords

Terrorism, ethnic and Assam.

---

---

## ABSTRACT

---

North Eastern Region of India consists of eight states and is inhabited by many ethnic and religious groups. The ethnic and religious groups came to this region by different routes at different times. Before the advancement of the British, the North Eastern region of present India was not under one governance. Some were governed by tribal customary laws and some other by kings with small kingdoms. Their culture was totally different. The British brought them under one umbrella. It was compulsion for them. When India got independence North Eastern Region was made a part of Indian nationality. There is a big difference between NER and other part of India in respect of culture, history, topography, economic condition, demography, educational status etc. The Constitution of India has incorporated many provisions to bring the people of the region to the mainstream of India. But some section of citizens does not feel it sufficient and is taking different ways leading to terrorism. There are more than fifty insurgent groups in Assam. This paper tries to comprehend the root causes of terrorism in Assam and find out probable solution.

---

## 1. Introduction

Geographically, Assam is a shadow of its earlier physique. Earlier the whole of North-East India was called Assam (except former princely states of Manipur and Tripura). Assam has been reduced to almost one-third of its original size. Now, North Eastern part of India is grouped as North East India comprising eight states. Among them Assam is the biggest state covering 78,438 sq. km area (1991 census). Before the arrival of the British the greater Assam was inhabited by small tribal groups with their unique culture and feature with the Assamese cast people. The process of assimilation was going on. Personalities like Sankardeva, the Ahom and Koch Kingdom influenced to a great extent to make Assam a social and political unit. But when British came, role and grant self-governing (independent) to the people of India, almost all groups projected their unique identity to get the benefit of self-role. The constitution framers of India felt this reality and made some provisions to incorporate their aspirations. Provisions like OBC, SC and ST status, District Autonomous Council, Territorial Autonomous Council, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> schedule and States with legislative power is incorporated. In the post independence period different groups of people are fighting for different status to enjoy the constitutional benefit. Many of the OBC and MOBC group of people are fighting for ST status, many ST groups are fighting for Autonomous Council, tribes with Autonomous Council are fighting to be included in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> schedule and many others are fighting for statehood. Few groups are fighting for sovereign state. Now almost all the movements are taking extreme ways to fulfill their demands leading to terrorism. The demands are not coming from vacuum. If we look to the grounds of this terrorism we will find some common grievances akin to other tribes or communities of the country and some unique to Assam only. This will help to find out the permanent solution to the problem.

There are three types of insurgency problem in Assam. Demand for sovereign nation, statehood within the Indian Union and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Some section of the greater Assamese nationality demands sovereign state, the Bodo, the Karbi (Mikir) and

Dimasas demand separate state and smaller tribes like the Mising, the Rabha demand inclusion in the Sixth Schedule. If we look to the reason of the demands we will see two types. One is against the Indian Union and other is against the state government. Some section of the greater Assamese nationality is fighting against Indian union for sovereignty and others are fighting against the state of Assam and Indian union.

## 2. The Separate History:

Culturally, politically and economically, Assam was never a part of India. Assam had their self-governing pattern of administration till the annexation of Assam by the British colonial rules in 1826. After Independence Government of India have reviewed the entire policy of the British Government and formed a committee under the chairmanship of Gopinath Bordoloi. As per recommendation of the Bordoloi Committee, eight autonomous district councils were constituted under the sixth schedule. But some of the tribes are not satisfied with that and fighting for statehood. As originally, the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India is made provision for hill tribes only, the plain tribes were not able to take the benefit of it. So the Bodos demanded a separate state. After the amendment of the Sixth Schedule, the Bodos are granted with Sixth Schedule status, some section still demands separate state taking the path of violence. The Bodos have more than one strong insurgent group. Some section of the greater Assamese nationality feels that, to preserve their culture and history they need sovereignty and form United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in the eighties of last century.

## 3. State reorganization in India:

After independence of India the organization of states was a big problem. The Government of India formed a State Reorganization Commission (SRC) headed by Shri S.F. Ali to reorganize the states. The issue of language, culture, the wishes of the people, feasibility of administration from geographical point, economical sufficiency of the state was some of the major concerns of the commission to recommend for a state. The Commission recommended 16 states without

any distinction and 3 Union Territories. In NE Assam was in the list of states and Manipur was in the list of UT with a recommendation to merge it to Assam later on. Recommendations were not implemented as there was a big protest from all round the country. But later on the Indian Union was reorganized many times to form new states. The North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act 1971 created three new states in NE. After that in the year 1986 and 1996 more two states were created in NE. So different insurgent group fighting for self role got strength to their demand for separate state leading to terrorism.

#### 4. Underdevelopment:

The overall development in Assam is not up to expectation. In the year 2013, Assam ranks in nineteenth position in case of development. The state of Assam is full of problems. They feel lack of initiative from the power holders to solve the problem. These deprivation and deep feeling of discontentment since long have acted as a catalyst to throw them in to the vortex of the movements. Insurgency in Assam is a product of the inner contradiction in the socio economic and political system.

Deprivation or dissatisfactions very often leads to insurgency problems. Poor and slow economic development, unemployment, insecurity, exploitation of leaders is determining factors for developing a sense of identity formation among the ethnic groups leading to terrorism. The paternalistic attitude of the Colonist rulers and even of planners and administrators of post Independence period contributed largely to insurgency problem.

#### 5. Unemployment:

Unemployed youths fall easy prey to the anti-national and terrorism activities. Increasing unemployment is raising the social tensions and it is easy to involve the idle and unemployed youth in terrorist activities. Many of them even don't know the aim and agenda of the organizations but deeply involved with terrorist activities only for their livelihood.

#### 6. Terrorism of Assam is also a byproduct of international terrorism:

In contemporary time it is observed that the interaction with other insurgent groups encouraged asserting terrorism. Many insurgent group of Assam take training and buy arms and ammunition from the other insurgent group of outside Assam.

#### 7. Immigration:

Demography plays important role in everywhere, be it economy, politics, culture, society etc. The Assam is facing the problem of immigration leading to change the demography of Assam to a great extent. British Government had introduced the Line System demarcating areas beyond which immigrants were debarred from entry. But the system did not work as land settlement with immigrants increased from 481 thousand acres

in 1930-31 to 5967 acres in 1940 on over a period of 20 years settlement of land with immigrants rose to 14,669 thousand acres in the Assam valley (Census of India, 1951).

Immigration from Eastern Bengal started as early as 1911. The demographic pattern of NE India was completely changed and the fear of losing own land was gradually increased. The government took different steps to check the land encroachment but was failed for various reasons.

The partition of India gave a new dimension to the already overburdened population of Assam created by the influx of immigrant population from East Bengal. Refugees from East Pakistan entered Assam. As Assam had to provide shelter to them on humanitarian grounds in order to provide accommodation including their economic support many areas of fellow lands, waste land, grazing reserves and forest lands of tribal Belts and Blocks were opened for them. So to protect their land and forest from the outsider, some tribal group formed insurgent group.

#### 8. Assamese Language acts 1960:

Every tribal group has their own dialect or language and distinctive culture. They voluntarily accepted Assamese language not only for expressing ideas to the others but also for educating their children through Assamese medium. But on October 10, 1960 the then Chief Minister of Assam brought the Assam Official Language Bill in the Assembly causing much tension to the ethnic groups of the state. The Assam official language Act of 1960 brought a rift to the ethnic groups as they did not like forceful imposition of Assamese language. So they revived their own language to maintain their ethnic identity. In this situation they feel the need of more political power. So some insurgent group gained ground for their activities.

#### 9. To solve the problem permanently the following steps may be adopted:

1. Quicker development to the region.
2. Grant Autonomy to the tribal areas under the provisions of Indian Constitution.
3. Hold election of the Autonomous councils (satellite) on time.
4. Stop mishandle of development fund.
5. Implementing Aadhaar.
6. Don't encourage formation of new state on the basis of ethnicity and language.
7. Join various tribal groups to mainstream organizations. (Asom Sahitya Sabha, Assam Natya Sonmilon, Sankordev Sangha, give due position in political parties etc)
8. Introduction of upper house in state legislature for proper representation of almost all groups.

#### References

- [1]. Baisya, P. 1977, "From Tribal Belt to Autonomous Council: Genesis of the Leap in Autonomous District Council", L.S.

Gassah Ed, Autonomous District Council, Omsons publications, New Delhi.

- [2]. Biswas, P.C. 1997, "Autonomous District Council: The Sixth Schedule, Autonomy and Development (Meghalaya)" in Autonomous District Council by L.S. Gassah Ed, Autonomous District Council, Omsons publications, New Delhi.
- [3]. Barth, F. ed., 1998, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.
- [4]. Bhagabati, A.C., 2004, " The Tribe as Social Formation: The Case Study of the Thangsa of Arunachal Pradesh, in A. Basu, B.K. Das Gupta, J. Sarkar Ed., Anthropology of North – East India A Reader. Kolkata: Pub, by Indian National Confederation and the Academy of Anthropologists, Indian Anthropological Society, National Museum of Mankind.
- [5]. \_\_\_\_\_, 1992, "Tribal Transformation in Assam and North East India: An Appraisal of Emerging Ideological Dimension", In B. Chaudhuri ed. Tribal Transformation in India, vol. III, New Delhi: Inter India Publication.
- [6]. \_\_\_\_\_, 1982, "Emergent Tribal Identity in North East India", in B. Chaudhuri Ed. Tribal Development in India, Inter – India Publication, New Delhi.
- [7]. Bhattacharjee, C., 1996, Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement (Case of Boro – Kacharis of Assam), Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.
- [8]. Bhuyan, B.C. Ed., 1989, Political Development of Northeast, vol. I, Omsons, New Delhi.
- [9]. Bhuyan A.C. Ed., - 1980 – Political History of Assam, Part – III, Government of Assam.
- [10]. Bhuyan, K. 2008. Sixth Schedule in North East India, D.V.S. Guwahati.
- [11]. Bose, N.K., 1967, Problem of National Integration, Simla, Indian Institution of Advance Studies.
- [12]. Choudhuri, S.S., 2004, Bodo Movement and Participation of Women, Mittal Publication, New Delhi.
- [13]. Deogaonkar, S.G., 1992, "Tribal Movements" in The Tribal Transformation in India Ethnopolitics and Identity Crisis edited by B. Chaudhury, Vol – III, Inter India Publication, New Delhi.
- [14]. Edward, Lyford. D., 1927, The National History of Revolution, Chicago University Press, U.S.
- [15]. Elwin, V., 1959, India's North East Frontier in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Bombay (Reprint), Oxford University Press, Madras.