

Chapter II

SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The second chapter relating to Socio-Political Background of the ST MLAs has been prepared on the basis of the data collected through interview schedule (see Appendix 7). Due to the reluctance on the part of the politicians to interact with the researcher it was difficult to collect data covering all the ST MLAs of Assam. Therefore I have adopted the selected sample (stratified sample) method to administer my interview schedule, selecting at least one member from each political party. Thus I have covered 13 MLAs representing Congress, AGP, PDF, ASDC, United Bodo Nationalist Liberation Front and Independent candidates. Since only three ST lady politicians are found in the Assam Assembly. I have covered all the three lady politicians. The analysis has been made by giving emphasis on educational background, family profile and political life of the ST MLAs -

BHARAT CHANDRA NARAH :

Introduction : Bharat Chandra Narah represents Dhakuakhana Constituency, which is reserved for the Scheduled Tribes Community. At the time of answering to my interview schedule he was 40 years of age. Presently he is a member of Indian National Congress (I) Party.

Education : Bharat Chandra Narah started his education in the Dorge Primary School situated in the Dorge village of Lakhimpur district of Assam. Then he joined Lakhimpur Academy from which he passed High School Leaving Certificate Examination. Though he started his college career in the North

Lakhimpur College, later on he came out of Lakhimpur district and joined the famous Cotton College at Guwahati which was established by Henry Cotton 100 years ago. After passing BA Examination from this college he proceeded to Gauhati University for higher education from which he passed MA examination in Political Science with First Class.

Family Background : Narah's father Late Tuleswar Narah was a teacher and his mother Late Umeswari Narah was a social worker. They have 7 children. The brothers of Bharat Narah are teachers as well as cultivators.

Political Life : Before joining politics Bharat Chandra Narah was actively associated with the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and served the Union for six years as its Assistant General Secretary. When the All Assam Students' Union launched movement against foreign nationals, Narah used to address public meetings to mobilise public opinion in its favour and took active part in almost all the programs of AASU. Narah was a popular speaker and he was liked by all sections of the people of Assam.

Narah entered politics in 1985 when the Asom Gana Parishad, a new regional political party emerged as an offshoot of the historic Assam Movement with the objective to implement the Assam Accord. He contested general election to the Assam Legislative Assembly as a member of Asom Gana Parishad. But later on he left the regional party and joined the Indian National Congress(I) and he has remained in this national party till date.

Answering to my question as to why did he leave the Asom Gana Parishad Party Narah said that various limitations of the regional political party in solving the problem of foreign national compelled him to change the party. He firmly believes that only the Indian National Congress can solve this problem. However Narah did not spell out the limitations of the Asom Gana Parishad.

Awareness About the Tribal Problems : In a request to highlight the major problems of his own Mising community Narah pointed out that the Mising people who reside on both the banks of the mightiest river Brahmaputra suffer from the problems of flood and erosion of land. Also they do not possess land patta and speak in local dialect. Mising Agom Kebang, a literary organization is making efforts for the development of the Mising Language.

Role in Implementation of Developmental Programmes : My attempt to know about the role of Narah in the implementation of the developmental programmes enables me to understand that he takes care for effective implementation of the developmental programmes meant for the Scheduled Tribe Communities. He also raises questions for discussion in the Assembly on these issues.

Narah also stated explicitly that the Scheduled Tribes received the benefits provided by the Governments. However there may be one or two examples, to illustrate how to benefit do not reach the people.

While referring to the process of solution of the tribal problems Narah has made a notable remark that the consideration of autonomy and separate State as the only alternative solution to the tribal problem has an emotional flavor. Narah is of the opinion that undue delay in redressing the grievances of the tribals is the main cause for dissatisfaction of the tribal people and lack of land patta amongst tribals is the root cause of unemployment problem.

ANDRIAS HAJOARY :

Introduction : Andrias Hajoary hails from Bengtol of Sidli, Assam and is 38 years of age. He contested last general election to Assam Legislative Assembly from ST reserved constituency of Sidli as PDF Party candidate.

Education : Andrias Hajoary studied in the St. Joseph's Lower Primary School of Bengtol and after completing his primary education he joined Amgury Higher School of Bijni. Hajoary received college education from Kokrajhar College and passed BA examination with honours in English.

Family Background : Hajoary belongs to an agricultural family. His father Douracharan Hajoary is a cultivator and mother Mombasi Hajoary is a house wife. He has 5 brothers and sisters who are engaged in service, business and domestic activities.

Political Life : Hajoary joined politics 15 years ago and since then he is involved in the active politics of the State of Assam. A desire to serve the poorest of the society drove him to join politics. He considers himself as a wellwisher of the youth organizations, like All Bodo Students' Union and All Assam Students' Union.

Hajoary was partially involved in the Script Movement, Medium of Instruction Movement, Foreigners Movement, Autonomy Movement and Separate State Movement in Assam.

The main aim of his joining PDF Party is to restore past political, socio-economic and cultural heritage of the Bodos and other deprived and suppressed lot through this party.

Awareness About the Tribal Problems : Regarding the problems faced by his community Hajoary has pointed out land alienation, violation of the right to reservation, economic backwardness due to faulty policy, short sightedness of the people, excess in drinking habits, adoption of traditional method for cultivation of land without any technical knowhow and the use of SCA Fund as an emergency fund to run the Government.

Role in the implementation of Developmental Programmes : Hajoary expressed very painfully that he has a sense of active participation in the implementation of developmental works when the Welfare Fund for the Plains Tribals is diverted to other departments. More than 50% benefit goes to other advanced (General Castes) classes of the society, Hajoary asserted that the Funds are either diverted or not released on time. Time and again the matter had been raised in the House but till date no step has been taken by the Government to do justice to the tribal people.

He also feels that the Scheduled Caste and other non-tribals adopt a negative outlook towards the solution of the tribal problem. A proposal for the creation of a separate state of Bodoland was made on the floor of the House but no discussion was allowed till date.

SMT. REKHA RANI DAS BORO :

Introduction : Smt. Rekha Rani Das Boro, a resident of Panjabari, Guwahati, Kamrup District of Assam is representing Barama Constituency in the Assam Legislative Assembly. She is 40 years of age and belongs to Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) Political Party.

Education : The academic life of Smt. Das Boro began in the Tihu Lower Primary School and then she joined Tihu Girls' High School. After completing her school education Smt. Das Boro joined Handique Girls College in Guwahati. The college is one of the nerve-centres for women education in the entire North East India and it was established in 1939 by Mrs. Raja Bala Das with the patronage of Late Radhakanta Handique. Then she joined the Department of Philosophy of Gauhati University from which she passed MA examination in Philosophy.

Family Background : Smt Rekha Rani Das Boro is the daughter of Late Biren Das Boro, who was a member of Assam Legislative Assembly. Her mother Smt. Gyanada Bala Das Boro was a house wife. She has 7 brothers and sisters and all of them are Government employees.

Political Life : Smt. Das Boro has been associated in politics of the State since 1975 and she was inspired to do so by her father. Before joining politics Smt. Das Boro was associated with various youth and woman organizations. She was fully involved in Script Movement, Language Movement and Foreigner's Movement in Assam. She has strong faith in the regional political party. She believes that regional political party can reflect the socio-economic situation of the State of Assam and it can protect the greater interest of the people.

Awareness About Tribal problems : Smt Das Boro identified the problems of land, encroachment of tribal belts and blocks and poverty as the main problems of the Bodo community.

Role in the Implementation of Development Programmes : Smt Das Boro makes every effort to see that the developmental and welfare programmes are effectively implemented in the tribal areas. She has stated clearly that the tribal people are benefitted by the facilities provided by the Government of Assam. Scheduled Castes and other non tribal people are cooperative in their attitude towards solution of the tribal problems.

As regards the demands made by the pressure groups Smt Das Boro tries to redress their grievances from within the framework of her party regulation.

JOGMOHAN BASUMATARY :

Introduction : Jogmohan Basumatary has been elected from the Chapaguri constituency to the Assam Legislative Assembly. He has completed 50 summers

of his life at the time of filling the interview schedule. He belongs to the Peoples Democratic Front (PDF), a regional political party.

Education : Basumatary is a university degree holder in the Arts Faculty from Gauhati University, Assam. Basumatary joined Kamardmise primary school of Barpeta and then joined Baghmara High School situated in Barpeta from which he passed HSLC Examination in 1966. He spent his college life in the Bajali college, Pathsala Assam. After passing BA examination Basumatary lost academic interest and put an end to the regular academic life.

Family Background : Basumatary was the son of late Gorgeswar Boro (Barkachay) father and late Hunga Boro, mother. Gorgeswar Boro was a police constable and Barkachary's mother was a housewife. All the five brother and sisters of Basumatary are studying in various educational institutions.

Political Life : Basumatary is associated actively in politics since last four years only. He has been inspired by local people to join politics so that he can help socio-economic development of Bodo Community through "Political Self-Determination". At the beginning of his political life he was a member of Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) which was the first regional political party in modern Assam formed in 1967 at the initiative of All Bodo Students' Union. Later on he changed his political party and joined PDF. He also participated in the Roman script Movement for Bodo language and the movement for a separate Bodoland.

Awareness About the Tribal Problems : While answering to the question whether he will be kind enough to highlight in brief about the problems of the Bodo Community, he has pointed out specifically the land problem only. However, he has mentioned the demands of the community as Statehood of Bodoland as a political solution, socio-economic development, provisions for

infrastructure for the implementation of developmental policies, inclusion of Bodo language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, establishment of Central University for general education and agricultural education, establishment of Forest college, Veterinary college, IIT, Medical college and other Institutions necessary for economic development.

Role in Implementation of Developmental Programmes : Basumatary is not satisfied with the status of implementation of the developmental policies in the ST areas. To him more than 50% of the fund allotted to the ST Developmental activities goes to other heads.

He has already brought it to the notice of the Government through Question Hour and discussion in the State Assembly of Assam. He has regretted that the attitudes of the Scheduled Castes and general people of Assam towards the solution of the tribal problems is not sympathetic.

Basumatary has brought the demands of the pressure groups to the floor of the House but no discussion has been allowed till today..

BANENDARA KUMAR MUSHAHARY :

Introduction : Banendra Kumar Mushahary hails from Gauripur of Dhubri District. He has completed 41 years of age at the time of interview. He represents Gauripur Constituency as A.G.P. M.L.A..

Education : Banendra Kumar Mushahary started his student life in the Baghbari Lower Primary School. He passed HSLC Examination from Sapatgram. He studied at Pramathesh Baruah College of Gauripur up to Pre-University level in the Arts faculty. After passing Pre-University examination he discontinued his study.

Family Background : Mushahary's father Hitendra Nath Mushahary is a farmer and his mother Sukashree Mushahary is a co-worker in the field with his father.

Political Life : Banendra Mushahary started his political career in 1987 and since then he is participating in politics actively. He was born in a very interior place of Bodoland Autonomous Council Area and for a long time he observed the pitiable condition of the Bodos which compelled him to join politics with an aim to provide education, communication, economic development and to satisfy the fundamental needs of the people.

Before joining politics he was a member of the Advisory Board of All Bodo Students' Union, Dhubri District, General Secretary of Regional Tribal Youth Association and Volunteer of Nehru Yuva Kendra, Dhubri. He took part in the Script Movement, Foreigners Movement and Separate State Movement in Assam.

Discriminatory attitude of the national political parties towards the people of Assam compelled him to join Asom Gana Parishad. At the beginning he joined Youth Congress(I) as its Vice-President. But the internal conflicts in the party and the unrealistic ideology of it discouraged him to remain in the Youth Congress(I) for a long time. Meanwhile Bodo Autonomous Council was formed and he shifted to Bodo People's Party (BPP) under the leadership of Prem Singh Brahma. Since the BPP had no hold throughout Assam he contested election to the Assam Legislative Assembly as an independent candidate and after being elected as member of the Assam Legislative Assembly he joined Asom Gana Parishad, a regional political party.

Awareness about the Tribal Problems : The Bodo people are constrained by economic backwardness. Bodo dominated areas are deprived of facilities for higher education and vocational training system.

Bodo cultivators are still depending on traditional methods of cultivation. The Government has provided modern equipment to some Bodo cultivators, but due to lack of required training these are lying without being used. Excepting a handful of educated Bodo youths, rest have no desire to undertake any business or commercial activities due to apathy and lack of helping attitude of the administration. The people of the area are still struggling for the development in the fields of education, finance and social life.

The small scale industries on which the local people depends to a great extent are not taken care of by the Government. It causes serious economic backwardness of the Bodo Community. Further the villages and towns of Bodo dominated area lack good roads, hospitals, water supply and other communication facilities.

Role in the Implementation of the Developmental Programmes : Mushahary takes immense care to see that developmental programmes are fully implemented. Majority of the tribal people are constrained by economic poverty even now. Therefore he always insists on adherence very strictly to the reservation policy as regards the employment in different services. He raises his voice on the floor of the House whenever he finds an opportunity to do so.

Mushahary feels the need of collective effort of all the people of Assam irrespective of the communities they belong to, for the solution of the tribal problem. He raises issues in the Assembly as desired by the pressure groups to fulfil their demands.

DR. DEVA KANTA RAMCHIARY

Introduction : Dr. Deva Kanta Ramchiary is a resident of Routa, Darrang district of Assam. He contested general election to the Assam Legislative Assembly as PDF candidate from Udalguri constituency. He is 38 years of age.

Education : Dr. Deva Kanta Ramchiary started his student life in the M.V. School of Barmochari in 1972. Then he joined Kamrup Janata Bidyaloi in 1978 of Barmochari. In 1981 he came to Kokrajhar HSSMP School in 1981 for higher secondary education. After completing his study in that school he joined Gauhati Medical College in 1982 from which he passed MBBS examination. Dr. Ramchiary also passed Hindi Bishard Examination in 1978.

Family Background : The father of Dr. Ramchiary Sabharam Ramchiary is a cultivator and his mother Smt. Sonari Ramchiary a house wife. He has five brother and sisters.

Political Life : Dr. Ramchiary started his political life in 1996 when he contested election as PDF candidate to the Assam Legislative Assembly. He preferred to serve the people as Doctor through Private Clinic than through Government service. In 1990 he started a private clinic in Guwahati. Later he shifted his clinic to Barama. During the Bodo Movement differences of opinion arose between him and the Movement Leaders and ultimately he was harassed by the supporters of the PTCA, a regional political party. This situation compelled him to leave Barama for Roudra, where he opened his clinic. Under such compelling circumstances he conceived the idea of joining politics.

Before joining politics he served the All Assam Tribal Students' Union as its General Secretary from 1984 to 1988. He resigned from the position due to some personal reasons. He was also associated with the Roman Script Movement, Foreigners' Movement and Separate State Movement.

He took initiative to form the PDF realising the immediate need of solving the problems of the Bodo community and later on he became a member of this newly formed political party and since then he is remained in this party.

Awareness About the Tribal Problems : Bodos are facing several serious problems since Independence of India. To Dr. Ramchiary non-scheduling of the plains tribals of Assam is one of the reasons for making the tribal problems more complicated. Land is the major problem of the Bodo community. They consider the formation of Bodoland, a separate state is the only answer to all the problems.

Role in the Implementation of the Developmental Programmes : Dr. Ramchiary is very inquisitive to know about the efforts of the Government to implement tribal developmental programmes. He has found that the Central Government provides grant to the State Government for welfare of the Schedule Tribes and this grant is routed through ATDA, APTDC, WPT and BC offices of the Government of Assam to the tribal areas. The MLA has no opportunity to take initiative in the decision making process. The concerned Ministers and the bureaucrats generally take all the decisions. Furthermore to receive fund from NSPDC the State Government must be the Block guarantor. Since the State Government is not in a position to play this role, the financial help from the Central Government does not reach the tribal communities to the desirable extent.

Scheduled Tribes are not benefitted fully by the facilities provided by the State Government because of the fact that most funds are diverted to other heads by the State Government. Besides, there are allegations regarding the misuse of public fund by the State authorities. He has requested the Government on the floor of the House to constitute Enquiry Committees to look into these cases but the Government has not responded positively so far.

Referring to the outlook of the Scheduled Castes and non-tribals towards the solution of the tribal problems Dr. Ramchiary stated that their attitude was positive. But the outlook of some extreme nationalist organizations is very destructive. Also the apathy of the bureaucrats cannot be neglected in this regard.

He is trying to raise the issues relating to the tribal problems on the floor of the House in conformity to the Rules of Precedence and Conduct of the House but no favorable environment is created by the Government for this.

THANESWAR BORO

Introduction : Thaneswar Boro belongs to AGP and is, at present, a member of the Cabinet in the Government of Assam headed by Prafull Kumar Mahanta as Chief Minister. Mr. Boro hails from Gurmou village of Rangia in the Kamrup district of Assam. He is an elderly person of 61 years of age.

Education : Thaneswar Boro spent his school life in his village where he joined Gurmou Sevashram Primary School and then preceded to Gurmou M.V. School and Rangiya High School.

Completing the school education in the village Boro came to Guwahati for higher education and joined Cotton College as a student of Pre-University class. He passed BA (Honours) Examination from this college in 1962 and in the same year he joined the Department of Education of Gauhati University as a student. In 1964 he passed MA Examination in Education from Gauhati University. Also he has NCERT training from Agartala B.T. College of present Tripura.

Family Background : Boro belongs to an agricultural family. His father late Harkhola Boro and mother late Pritha Bala Boro were cultivators. He had seven brothers and sisters of whom three expired. All of them were cultivators.

Political Life : Boro started his political activities in 1983 and since then he is in active politics. He took active part in the Foreigners' Movement since its inception in 1979. During the course of the Movement a regional party known as Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad (PLP) was formed and he joined the party. Later,

when the regional political party, viz Asom Gana Parishad was formed in a national convention held at Golaghat he shifted his membership to this regional political party.

The people of Rangiya may be considered as a source of inspiration for his joining politics of Assam. Before starting his political life Boro was a member of All Assam Chatra Sanmilen which existed prior to the formation of All Assam Students' Union. He was the General Secretary of the Rangiya High School Unit and participated actively in the Refinery Movement launched in Assam. He also led the Bodo Sahitya Sabha as its Vice-President. Further he rendered social service in the rural areas in different capacities.

Thaneswar Bodo took active part in the Script Movement, Foreigners' Movement and Oil Refinery Movement in Assam.

He has forwarded arguments in favour of joining Asom Gana Parishad political party by saying that he feels the whole of North-East India is economically backward, neglected and deprived. However, Assam in particular and North East India in general are rich in natural resources. For putting an end to the regional disparity and for regional development, a regional political party is the only answer, Boro argues. Boro was a member of the Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad before he joined Asom Gana Parishad in 1985.

Awareness About the Tribal Problems : Thaneswar Boro has viewed the tribal problems as identical with those of the nontribals of Assam. However Bodo peoples are socially and economically more backward. They are highly dissatisfied with the Government of Assam.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the Bodo community. But there is acute shortage of cultivable land. Furthermore flood and land erosion are the two

major challenges to this community causing serious financial crisis to the cultivators. Besides, transfer of land to the illegal migrants is a common sight amongst the Bodos. According to Boro lack of cultivable land and unemployment are the fundamental problems of this community.

Role in the Implementation of the Development Programmes : Boro has been satisfied with the implementation of the tribal developmental programmes. As a legislator he supervises and cooperates with the authorities in the process of implementation of the policies. In addition, the tribals are benefitted by the welfare programmes of the Government of Assam. However, there may be one or two lapses, which are removed whenever these are brought to the notice of the concerned authorities.

The Scheduled Castes and non-tribals are sympathetic and cooperative in solving the problems of the tribals.

Since Boro was a member of the Assam Ministry headed by Prafulla Kumar Mahanta during the period from 1985-1990 he took the advantage of taking care of the demands made by the pressure Groups. Again, he is in the cabinet since 1996 in the Mahanta Government. Besides, taking care of the Pressure Groups as member of the Treasury Bench in the House he had the privilege of serving these groups as a member of the Opposition party in the Assembly during the period from 1991-1995 when Congress party formed the Government under the leadership of late Hiteswar Saikia as Chief Minister.

He carried out his responsibilities for the development of the tribal people of Assam as and when necessary.

DERHAGRA MUSHAHARY

Introduction : Derhagra Mushahary is a resident of Patacharkuchi of the Nalbari district of Assam. He is a man of 55 years of age and represents Tamulpur General Contituency. He belongs to United Bodo Nationalist Liberation Front (UBNLF) political party.

Family Background : Derhagra Mushahary belongs to an agricultural family. His father late Maguram Mushahary was a cultivator and mother Smt. Malishree Mushahary a house wife. Agriculture is the main stay of all the five brothers and sisters of Mushahary.

Political Life : Mushahary entered into politcs in 1983, realizing the grave situation of the country and the nation he came forward to take active part in the democracy.

He served different organizations as below -

- In 1963 he was the General Secretary of “Shillong Bodo Citizens”
- In 1977 he was the Joint Secretary of the All Assam Tribal Employees Union.
- In 1978 he was the General Secretary of the All Assam Tribal Solidarity Council.
- In 1978 he was the General Secretary of the Tribal Information Guild.

Mushahary offered moral support to the Foreigners’ Movement though he could not play an active role in the Movement. Also played a passive role in other Movements of Assam.

He has sugnificantly pointed out that ‘son of the soil’ of Assam must bear the heavy responsibility of safeguarding Assam. Therefore he joined the United

Bodo Nationalist Liberation Front, a regional political party formed to protect the interest of the indigenous and the 'son of the soil'.

In the greater interest of the Community he changed his party membership from United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front to UBNLF and presently he is serving the party as its General Secretary.

Awareness About the tribal problems : Unlike other respondents Mushahary does not accept that Bodos are socially backward people. He emphasised that the Bodo people are not only the sons of the soil of Assam but also decendants of king. Though the Constitution of India enlisted the Bodo Community as Scheduled Tribes, originally they belonged to Mongoloid Group and they contributed significantly towards the development of the civilization of Asia.

However, he admitted that the Bodo community is economically backward. The plans and programmes formulated for economic, educational and other developments have not been executed fruitfully so far. Interestingly he is against the use of the phrase "Scheduled Tribes".

Role in the Implementation of the Developmental Programmes : The facilities provided by the Government do not reach the Bodos. He asserted that he was not a tribal by birth, so he demanded recognition as a man "Bodo Mongoloid of the soil of Assam." He raised this issue on the floor of the House in 1999 in a one day session.

Referring to question relating to the attitude of the scheduled castes and non-tribals towards the solution of the tribal problem he, is of the opinion that as a sufferer of the problems, Bodos must try to understand their own problems. He used to receive various demands from the pressure groups.

SMT. PRAMILA RANI BRAHMA

Introduction : Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma is a resident of Bagamsali of Kokrajhar district, Assam. She contested election to the Assam Legislative Assembly as independent candidate. She is 50 years of age.

Education : Smt. Brahma began her student life in the Deorgaon primary school situated in Kokrajhar District. Later she joined Kokrajhar Girls' High School. She completed her BA (Honours) from Kokrajhar College.

Family Background : Smt Brahma's father Late Kamakhya Prasad Brahma was a business man and her mother Late Tageswari Brahma a house wife. Smt. Brahma has six brothers and all are in business.

Political Life : Smt. Brahma started her political life in 1992. Since 1986 she served the Assam Tribal Women's Welfare Council as its President and remained in that capacity till she joined politics in 1992. She participated in the Bodo Movement for a Separate State launched by All Bodo Students' Union. During that Movement she came very close to late Upendra Nath Brahma, then President of ABSU. Besides taking active part in the Movement for a separate state she played an important role in mobilising public opinion in favour of the need to spread of education and equal treatment to both the girl child the and boy child. She also took leadership in closing down wine shops in Assam.

As member of the Assam Legislative Assembly she considers demand for separate state as her primary goal. She also gives priority to the rights of woman and the tribals. Though she is an independent candidate she is associated with all the Bodo Organisations.

Awareness About the Tribal Problems : Smt. Brahma remained silent regarding the tribal problems in the State of Assam.

Role in the Implementation of Developmental Programmes : Smt. Brahma works as a watch woman regarding the grants provided by the Central Government for the welfare of the tribals. She complained that in each department relating to the Tribal Welfare Programmes there is a non-tribal as the administrative head and the welfare facilities do not reach the tribals, Violation of the principles of administration is the rule of the day. The tribals are deprived of the facilities provided by the Government, according to Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma.

PRADAN BARUAH

Introduction : Pradan Baruah, resident of Amritpur village, Chilapathar of Dhemaji district. He has been elected as AGP candidate from the Jonai Constituency to the Assam Legislative Assembly. He has completed 36 years of age at the time of interview with the researcher.

Education : Pradan Baruah spent his school life in the Dhemaji district. He studied in the Phulbari Lower Primary School and Chilapathar Residential Higher Secondary School. Then he proceeded to Dibrugarh and obtained Diploma of Mechanical Engineering.

Family Background : Late Mathura Baruah was the father of Pradan Baruah. He was a Primary School teacher. Pradan Baruah's mother Smt. Bhagyawati Baruah is a house wife. He has five brothers and sisters.

Political Life : Baruah's political life began in 1982. The six year long Assam Movement launched by the All Assam Students' Union enabled him to come in contact with different movement leaders, politicians, social workers and academicians of Assam. He started taking active part in different phases of the Assam Movement and later he was encouraged by the local people to join politics

actively. Under this circumstances, he joined politics as a member of the Asom Gana Parishad political party. Before entering into politics he was serving the All Assam Students' Union as a member at the district level.

Baruah preferred Asom Gana Parishad mainly for three reasons –

- a) Asom Gana Parishad party was easily accessible to Baruah.
- b) He maintained relationship with AGP before he thought of entering into politics.
- c) He accepts, by and large, the philosophy of the AGP party.

Awareness About the Tribal Problems : Baruah has pointed out that his community i.e. the Sonowal Kacharis' suffers from educational, social, political, economic problems. The serious aspect of it is the lack of unity and integrity within the community. Religious diversity may be considered as a noticeable feature of the Sonowal Kachari Community. The social culture of the community is gradually disappearing.

Role in the Implementation of the Developmental Programmes : Baruah has played his role in the process of implementation of the developmental policies in the tribal areas. This community is receiving benefits provided by the Government. However, the grants provided for construction of roads, establishment of hospitals, water supply, etc. are not adequate

Further, there remains lack of unity amongst different ethnic groups, non-spread of education, non-appointment of right person in the right job and scarcity of able politicians in the state have aggravated the problems of the tribals.

Non-tribals and Scheduled Castes people are indifferent or they are not willing to associate themselves in solving the problems of the tribals, according

to Baruah. Further they are not making any attempt to realise the gravity of these problems.

He is also putting forward the economic, social and cultural demands of the pressure groups on the floor of the Assembly House.

HALIRAM TERANG

Introduction : Haliram Terang, a person of 44 years of age is a resident of Satgaon village of Karbi Anglong district. He represents Baithalangu Constituency from ASDC, another regional political party.

Education : Haliram Terang began his student life at Satgaon Primary School of Karbi Anglong district. He secured 1st Division in Higher Secondary Examination from Nagaon Government Higher Secondary School. The he came down to Guwahati to join Cotton College from which he passed BA Examination with honours.

Family Background : Late Lahan Singh Terang, a Mouzadar was his father. His mother Late Kanag Ingty who was a house wife. He has five brothers and sisters.

Political Life : Terang entered into the political world of Assam in 1984 and was inspired by a member of CPI(ML) Party.

Before joining politics Terang served the Karbi Students' Association, Karbi Cultural Society and Karbi Anglong Sangram Parishad constituted during Foreigners' Movement in Assam as General Secretary. He took active part in the Foreigners' Movement, Refinery Movement and Autonomy Movement in Assam.

Regarding his choice of the political party, Terang stated categorically that since he considered ASDC as the best party he could not resist the temptation

of joining the party. He didnot think of changing his party membership quite sometime. But recently he has left the party because of internal party dissentions.

Awareness About the Tribal Problem : Terang has not spelled out the problems of Karbis in detail. He simply stated that the Karbis are extremely backward people.

Role in the Implementation of the Developmental Policies : Haliram Terang makes every possible effort both within and outside the Assembly for the progress of the Karbi Society. He strongly feels that the Karbis are deprived of the facilities promised by the Government.

Terang is of the opinion that though most people are opportunists, there are people who play a significant role in the solution of the Tribal problems. He extends all kinds of help with his limited capacity to the pressure groups whenever they approach him.

KUMUD CHANDRA DAS

Introduction : Kumud Chandra Das, who is a resident of Mahaliapara of Tangla, Darrang district, Assam represents Paneri Constituency from PDF Regional Political Party. He is a person of 38 years of age.

Education : Kumud Chandra Das began his academic life at Dergaon Government Primary School. At the end of primary education he proceeded to Dergaon Higher Secondary School from which he passed HSLC Examination and then he joined Mangaldai College, to study upto Pre-University level. After passing the Pre-University examination he discontinued his study.

Family Background : Das belongs to an agricultural family. His father Hawa Ram Das is a farmer and his mother Smt. Usha Rani Das is a house wife.

Political Life : His public life began with his support to the All Assam Students' Union. He was also associated with the National Development Committee born in 1986. In 1987 he was associated with the All Assam Tribal Students' Union.

The beginning of the political life of Das may be associated with the birth of the UDF in 1993. He did not feel comfortable to disclose that he changed his party from UDF to PDF regional party with a view to have a common platform for the political activities.

Awareness About the Tribal Problems : To Kumud Chandra Das, the Bodo people are socially, educationally, and economically backward. They are yet to achieve economic independence. Even now the Bodos are exploited by other sections of the society. They also have serious land problem.

Economic backwardness is the main cause of educational backwardness. The only remedy to these problems is a separate state for Bodos.

Role in the Implementation of the Development Programmes : According to Kumud Chandra Das, the MLA has a very insignificant role in the process of implementation of developmental policies. However, he is a member of the ATDA Governing Body and in this capacity he can look after the distribution of fund from the Government. He has frankly stated that the tribals receive minimum amount of facilities provided by the Constitution of India. The lion's share of these facilities go to the Ministers and the bureaucrats. The common people of the Tribal communities are not all benefitted by these facilities. He also lamented that the principle of reservation is violated by the concerned authorities. For a solution of these problems the good will of the Government is the fundamental requirement and the separate state is the only device through which development can be achieved.

It is unfortunate that the Scheduled Castes and non-tribals do not possess a sympathetic attitude towards the ST people. They look down the tribal people. He has raised several issues relating to the demands made by the pressure groups of his community on the floor of the House.

GANESH KUTUM

Introduction : Ganesh Kutum, resident of Gohpur, Sonitpur district of Assam represents Gohpur constituency as a member of Asom Gana Parishad in the Assembly. He is 56 years of Age and lone ST MLA to be the Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly.

Education : Ganesh Kutum started his student life in the Kutumgaon Primary School of Lohitmukh from which he proceeded to Kalabari High School. After passing HSLC examination he came to Guwahati to join Cotton College as a student of higher secondary class, but after completing higher secondary, he returned to Lakhimpur and joined North Lakhimpur College, affiliated to Dibrugarh University, as a student of TDC class. He passed BA (Honours) examination from that college and again came to Guwahati to join Gauhati University as a student of Political Science. He passed MA examination in second class from Gauhati University.

Family Background : Late Numalia Gam was the father of Ganesh Kutum and he was a cultivator. Kutum's mother Late Magoni Gam was a house wife.

Political Life : Ganesh Kutum is in active politics since last 28 years. He was born and brought up in the political environment in the family, which enabled him to come in close contact with the political leaders of Assam. The environment encouraged him to join politics.

From the school life Kutum was associated with different Youth Organisations and Social services before he began his political life. He took active part in the Language Movement, Movement against Foreign Nationals and Oil Refinery Movement in Assam.

The main reason of his joining Asom Gana Parishad is that he is the firm believer of regionalism in politics and as an individual he wants devolution of more power to the State from the Centre. The Asom Gana Parishad is protesting since its inception against exploitation, regional disparities and misrule. He is demanding for more power to the States. His fear that Assam would be full of refugees from Bangladesh, prompted him to participate in the Movement launched by AASU and to join AGP. At the beginning he was associated with a national political party. Later he felt that the national political party would fail to satisfy the needs of the people of Assam and therefore he shifted to regional political party.

Awareness about the Tribal Problems : To Ganesh Kutum flood and land erosion are the major problems of the Misings as they live on the bank of the rivers. Flood and land erosion cause homelessness, landlessness and economic backwardness.

Role in Implementation of the Developmental Programmes : Responding to the question relating to his role in the implementation of the developmental programmes, Kutum said that he is representing a constituency which is not reserved for the STs. In other words he has to play a crucial role and bear very heavy responsibility as an MLA. He always tries to create awareness amongst the resident of his constituency about the rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

The facilities provided by the Governments do not reach satisfactorially the beneficiaries. The administrators, and other agencies take advantage of the gaps

and flaws in the rules and regulations. He feels the need of evaluation of the developmental policies formulated and implemented by the Government.

Though Kutum did not answer directly to the question relating to the attitude of the Scheduled Castes and the other people towards the solution of the tribal problems, he pointed out the historical facts that united all sections of the people of Assam together irrespective of caste, creed, religion and place of birth who constitute the big Assamese Society. The great religious leader Saint Sankaradeva could establish unity and integrity in Assam by making Garos, Nagas, Mising, Koch, Kalita, Muslims etc. his disciples during the Ahom rule. After independence, the political influences affected the Assamese Society and destroyed its former thread of unity and integrity.

As a Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly he is trying his best to contribute towards the solution of problem of Assam.

I have interviewed thirteen ST MLAs of Assam, of these, four belongs to the PDF political party. They are Andrias Hajoary, Jogmohan Basumatary, Dr. Deva Kanta Ramchiary and Kumud Chandra Das. Six members, viz Smt. Rekha Rani Das Boro, Banendra Kumar Mushahary, Pradan Baruah, Thanesar Boro and Ganesh Kutum belongs to Asom Gana Parishad. The Congress(I) party has one MLA from the Mising community. He is Shri Bharat Chandra Narah. Rest are Derhagra Mushahary of United Bodo Nationalist Liberation Front and Haliram Terang of ASDC. Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma is the lone woman candidate to win election as an independent candidate.

Out of the thirteen ST MLAs interviewed by the researcher two are ladies and both of them belong to the Bodo Community. Interestingly enough there are only three ladies from the tribal communities who are active in politics of Assam. They are Smt. Rekha Rani Das Boro, Smt Pramila Rani Brahma and Smt. Anandi Bala Rabha (see Appendix 8).

Looking at the educational background of the MLAs, all of them except Derhangra Mushahary had school education in the rural areas. Derhangra Mushahary does not have formal education. Four members are Post Graduate degree holders- Thaneswar Boro is MA in Education, Bharat Chandra Narah is MA in Political Science, Sri Ganesh Kutum is MA in Political Science and Smt. Rekha Rani Das Boro has been awarded MA degree in Philosophy. All the four studied in Gauhati University. Bharat Chandra Narah secured First Class in the MA examination. Andrias Hajoary, Jogmohan Basumatary, Pramila Rani Brahma and Haliram Terang BA are degree holders. Deva Kanta Ramchiary is a Doctor and Pradan Baruah has a diploma in Mechanical Engineering.

One notable point is that all of them started their political career by joining regional political parties. Bharat Chandra Narah, who is a member of the Assembly also began his career in a regional political party i.e. Asom Gana Parishad.

The family background of the thirteen MLAs show that Bharat Chandra Narah's father was a teacher, father of Smt. Rekha Rani Das Boro was a member of the Assam Legislative Assembly and Jogmohan Basumatary's father was a police constable and rest belonged to agricultural families.