

Non-Territorial Autonomy: Problems of Statutory Autonomous Councils in Assam

❖ **Rinkumoni Das**, Department Of Political Science, Gauhati University, Assam, India

❖ **Barnali Kalita**, Department Of Sociology, Gauhati University, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

After independence, government of India has provided statehood and sixth schedule provisions to hill tribes of northeast India. Therefore, plains tribes of Assam felt deprived and negligence from governing body due to not getting any autonomy provision within India. So, they stated autonomy movement and, Bodo the largest Plains tribe of Assam got sixth schedule provision and other tribes are so small and residing in various parts of Assam, therefore non-territorial autonomy is granted to them, and they has formed statutory autonomous councils to administer their affairs. This paper will mainly discuss what non-territorial autonomy provision is and how statutory councils are suffering due to this provision.

KEYWORDS: Plains Tribes, Statutory Autonomous Councils, Territorial Autonomy, Non-territorial autonomy.

INTRODUCTION

The India's northeast part is inhabited by many tribal and non-tribal people. Tribal communities are called hill tribes and plains tribes. Hill tribes are lives in the hilly areas of the region, for example: naga, mizo, arunachalis etc. But the plains tribes are living in the plains areas of Assam. Those tribes are very small in their population and have district traditional life styles with own beautiful cultures. Due to changing society and polity of the region, they are fear of losing their traditional identity and culture from rest of the mainstream society. Besides, they are backward in comparison to other communities of the state. Therefore, they have been fighting for long to get own autonomy provisions. To fulfill their aspirations, the central government of India has provided sixth-schedule provision under constitution for welfare of them. Bodo , the largest plains tribe of Assam also able to acquire this provision. But other plains tribes of the region got statutory autonomous councils. This paper will discuss all, about the statutory autonomous councils in Assam.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study about provision of autonomy is as important as to granting autonomy to needy peoples. Because, it will be fruitful, when in actual terms the communities can enjoy it for their development and welfare. This paper is significant, because it going to analyze about statutory autonomous councils and their exercise of autonomy provision which is non-territorial

autonomy, the recent matter of the state's political scenario. It will help governing body and policy makers to know the result of their devolution of power.

OBJECTIVES

- To study about non-territorial autonomy
- To study about the problems faced by statutory autonomous councils in Assam

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on qualitative method. Secondary sources are collected from some books, websites, articles etc. The paper is analytical and descriptive in nature.

NON-TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY AND STATUTORY AUTONOMOUS COUNCILS

The Autonomy means in northeastern states, the internal power sharing aimed at preserving cultural ethnic variety within India by respecting the unity of the state. The Autonomy provision has its two types: territorial and non-territorial. In territorial autonomy, the state gives to the community or tribe, the autonomous administrative body with its definite areas whereas in non-territorial autonomy, though autonomous body is here but territories are divided in different parts of the region. The main reason behind this, that the minority plains tribes are spreading here and there in the state of Assam.

Now in Assam, there are seven statutory autonomous councils are created in different stages of time. Those are provided for social, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural advancement of ST communities living in core areas as well as in satellite areas covering many districts of Assam. Those councils have been provided with executive powers and functions on 34 local subjects and takes different development related programs covering these sectors for upliftment of ST peoples in different councils areas.

Mising Autonomous Council, RabhaHasong Autonomous Council, Tiwa Autonomous Council is given to Mising, Rabha and Tiwa community in 1995. Secondly, Deori Autonomous Council, SonowalKachari Autonomous Council, ThengalKachari Autonomous Council created in 2005. Recently, Kamatapur Autonomous Council is formed in 2020.

As non-territorial autonomy is exercised, these statutory councils can't demarcate their constituencies, for which election can't be held. Secondly, village councils are not able to cooperate peoples living in different areas which impacts unity and integrity of the community by creating emotional attachment problems. Thirdly, problem arises to implement policies and programs to different areas properly under the council. Governing body blamed by the villagers for their unequal priorities. Fourthly, evidences shows that authorities are practicing corruption. Fifthly, they are not getting equal welfare opportunities in comparison to sixth schedule provisioned autonomous councils, though they are also the same plains tribes like Bodo tribe. Sixthly, other tribal communities along with non-tribal under the council are not happy due to suppression and oppression of that specific tribe to which council is given.

CONCLUSION

This paper tries to examine the present status and problems of statutory autonomous councils of Assam under non-territorial autonomy provision, which is granted by Indian government within it. Overall, the study shows that due to lack of proficiency in administration the council authorities are facing problems in accommodating the needs and aspirations of people. They should be trained politically. Besides, government should strictly examine their works for reduction of corruption. More special protections and opportunities should be given to other communities within the council. Government should take initiatives to bring those backward communities towards mainstream Indians not direct them to the path of segregation for the cause of creating unity and integrity among the citizens of India.

REFERENCES

1. Sarmah, Jayanta Krishna(2014). *“The Autonomy Paradox (Interrogation of Autonomy movement and Autonomous Councils in Assam)”*,Purbanchal Prakash, Guwahati.
2. Das, Dhrubajyoti(2018). *“Autonomy movement of the Rabhas: A Study on Territorial and Non-Territorial Dimensions”*, thesis, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University.
3. Ahuja, Ram (2012). *Research Methods*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
4. Chakrabarty, Bidyat (1990). *Centre-State Relations in India*. New Delhi: Segment Book Distribution. p-29.
5. Rao, M.S.A (2016). *Social Movements In India*. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors.
6. Baruah, S.L (1995). *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. ISBN 812150015X. MunshiramManoharlal Publishers.
7. Beneditkar, Thomas (2009). *The World’s Modern Autonomy Systems: Concepts and Experiences of regional Territorial Autonomy*. Bolzano, EUR.AC Research.
8. Baruah, Sanjib. (1999). *India against itself: Assam and politics of Nationality*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
9. Sarmah, Jayanta Krishna (2014). *The Autonomy Paradox: Interrogation of Autonomy Movement and Autonomous Councils of Assam*. Guwahati: PurbanchalPrakashan.
10. Chaube, S.K. (1973). *Hill Politics in Northeast India*. New Delhi: Orient Lengman.
11. Rabha, Rajen (2002). *The Rabhas*.
12. Rabha, Dhaneswar (2005). *RabhaHasongorSamuItihas*. Kamrup: Manalisa Offset. P.13.
13. Das, Bhuban Mohan (1960). *Ethnic Affinities Of the Rabhas*. Publication Department, Gauhati University.
14. Borah, Dr. Khireswar (2013). *Satellite Autonomous Councils of Assam and Tribal Law (S)*.
15. Hazarika, Niru. (1998). *“Profile Of Youth Organizations in North East India”*,p. 245. Published by V.V. RAO ISTITUTE OF MICRO STUDIES AND RESEARCH , Guwahati:Assam:India.
16. RabhaHakacham, Upen (2010). *Focus on the Rabhas-Language, Literature and*
17. *Culture*. Guwahati : Cambridge India. P.19.
18. Dutta, P.S (1993). *Autonomy Movements in Assam*. Omsons Publications. p-5,6.
19. RabhaHakacham, Upen (2010). *RabhaSamajaruSanskriti*. Guwahati : NL Publications.

20. Rabha, Tankeshwar (2018). An illustrative hand book of the fifth year of completion of the first elected body of rabhahasong autonomous council (Dudhnoi). A brief note on rabhahasong autonomous council.
21. Baruah, Apurba K.,(2001), Communities and Democracy: A North-Eastern Perspective, in (ed.), North-East India Studies, Shillong, Vol.1, no.1, pp.13-10.
22. Pathak, Suryasikha (2010).Tribal Politics in the Brahmaputra Valley: 1933-1947. EPW. March-6, Vol XLV, No.10.
23. Das, Bitasta(2014). The Bodo movement and situating identity assertions in Assam. Journal of Human Sciences,vol II(2,June). P 173-184.

CITATIONS

1. <https://www.politis.it>
2. <https://assam.gov.in>