



Ethnic identity movement of the Misings in Assam: A study of the Takam Mising Porin Kébang (All Mising Students' Union)

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Abstract

Assam is bed of ethno-based educated youth led or student led movement. The educated youths as the students; of different ethnic groups of this state have been launching massive movements on the issues of ethno-cultural identity, socio-economic backwardness. For whatever reasons the growing sense of negligence and deprivation the emerging educated Misings youth and the elite became articulate and determined to safeguard the interest of the community. The section of newly emerging Mising youths like other ethnic group of India in general and Assam in particular decided to organize their community. The All Mising Students' Union (Takam Mising Porin Kébang) is always seen in forefront of all social and political movements molded the nature of politics of Assam and it has been as a significant aspect and a socio-political reality of contemporary democratic landscape of this region. To fulfill their dreams they have been launching various democratic agitation, submitted memorandums etc to the government. This paper, an attempt has been made on its Identity politics.

Keywords: Takam Mising Porin Kébang, Mising autonomous council

Introduction

Statement of the problem

Assam is a land of many tribal groups having different ethnic and socio-cultural identity. There are as many as nine different tribal groups as defined by clauses 1 and 2 of Article 342 of the constitution of India and they live in both Hills and Plain areas of Assam. These tribal groups are the Karbis, the Dimasas (Hill tribes), the Bodos, the Misings, the Kacharis, the Lalungs, the Rabhas, the Tiwas and Deuries (Plain tribes). The Hill tribes are inhabited in the two hill districts i.e. Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar (now renamed as (Dima Hasau). The Plain Tribes are inhabited in the plain districts of Assam, i.e. Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Tinsukia Cachar, Kokrajhar, Bagsha and Udalguri.

The Misings who are commonly known as Miris are the second largest plains tribe people of Assam after the Bodos. The total population of Misings according to the census report of 2001 is 5, 89, 054. And 12,50,000 (8,70,000 in Assam and 50,000 in Arunachal according to the individual survey done by Mising National Organisation viz TMPK and Mising Autonomous Council in the year 2011). They are mostly live in both the northern and southern parts of mighty Brahmaputra river and its tributaries such as Subansiri, Ranganadi, Dokong, Jia Bhoroli and Borai in northern part. Dihing, Dikhow, Dhansiri and Disang in southern part. The Misings are predominantly found in the Districts of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Sonitpur, Darrang, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia Districts of Assam. The Misings are the Mongoloid group of people migrated from the hills awhile North-East Frontier Areas (Now Arunachal Pradesh) long years back. The socio-economic conditions of the Misings are marked by utter backwardness. After independence, though they have thought that the National government will take necessary measures for

improving the socio-economic condition of the Misings. But no such efforts were taken. So illiteracy, poverty and infrastructural problems still persist among the Misings. According to the 1991 census report only 34.37 percent of them are literate as against the all Assam total of about 53 percent. Moreover, the recurring flood of the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries compels them to shift their habitats more frequently which resulted the socio-economic backwardness of the community. They are living in a very unhealthy environment, lacking modern amenities like better transport and communication, in adequate health facility, educational facility, electricity and other infrastructural facility. Thus the Mising is remained back ward, compare to the other section of population, of Assam. With their separate ethnic identity although they are the part and parcel of the mainstream of Assamese society yet they are not at position with the other sections of Assamese people both in economic and political fronts. Thus it is obvious the if some section of population enjoy the major benefit of resources and dominate the socio-political and economic spheres, the marginalized community like Misings would become frustrated and seek for a better deal. Having not received any prominent place either in the society. Political parties and even in governmental structures they feel that they are neglected and oppressed section of the Assamese society.

For whatever reasons the growing sense of negligence and deprivation the emerging educated Misings youth and the elite became articulate and determined to safeguard the interest of the community. The section of newly emerging Mising youths like other ethnic group of India in general and Assam in particular decided to organized their community. Since the last few decades politics in India has become increasingly besieged by the 'politics of ethnic identity'

emanating from awakening of ethno-cultural consciousness. The ethnic assertion of various ethnic groups has been articulated through language and culture which are inextricably linked with economic issues. The diverse ethnic groups inhabiting in north-east India such as Bodo, Misings, Karbi, Dimassa, Deuri, Tiwa, Lalung etc. also been motivators of social and political change in their respective societies. With a view to fulfill their political and economic aspirations, they started to assert their distinct ethnic identity. Most of these ethnic groups have been pressing ethnic for the creation of a separate state or autonomous state on the basis of their respective identities. Though initially they started their assertion with non-political issues such as the development of their language and culture, unresolved economic backwardness gave it a political shape in the subsequent period. Indeed, they have asserted their political rights and started pleading for adequate share of political power in order to maintain their identities. It is worthwhile to mention that the youth and student groups of the ethnic communities have been playing an active role in mobilizing their respective communities in support of their growing aspirations.

The terms youth implies the groups of men and women in the age group of 15 to 30 years. The concepts of youth. However, tends to yet identified with students. The students and youth are considered to be a powerful force in any society. In fact this group forms the largest reservoirs of human resource because of its energy and potentialities. Thus it may be considered as a source of power which can inspire a nation if it channelized properly.

Reasons for the selection of the study

The ethnic student and youth movements in recent years gaining momentum in the political process of the states have been greatly affecting and influencing the polity of the states. So it needs in depth study and that is the reason for the selection of this subject for study.

Objectives of the study

Main objective of the study is to understand the Politics of ethnic identity and its impact on Misings of Assam. The community has been in the state of transition from tribal to modern way of life. They are no longer living in isolation from the advanced societies and culture. They are living in the midst of non-tribal population and striving for development following the footsteps of the developing and/or developed castes and communities. In the process the educated section of the community realizes importance of political identity.

More specifically the following are the major objective of the present study:

1. To discuss the origin and development of the tribal student and youth movements in general and TMPK in particular.
2. To analyze the socio economic backwardness of Misings.
3. To study the organizational structure.
4. To discuss the phases of movement launched by the TMPK.
5. The conclusion.

Scope of the study

This is fact that tribes have been in the process of transition

from preliterate to literate stage involving changes in different aspects of life but not necessarily in the same rate or pattern. Drastic change has been going on in economic and political. The Misings are a major section of Tribal population (next to Bodo) in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam with their distinctive identity. They are ethnically and linguistically belong to the hill tribes. After independence although the Misings along with some other ethnic groups of Assam thought that the national government will take initiative for their socio-economic development but to their utter surprise no such measures were taken by the government of independent India. Hence the Misings and a few other ethnic groups in Assam remained backward, economically, socially, educationally and even politically. Hence, the educated elite of the Misings began to feel that they are markedly different from the rest of the Assamese society. Particularly the caste-Hindus who have been the dominant community in Assam. So they felt the need of a platform to fight for the uplift of the community. Hence in 1924, "Mising Bane Kebang (MBK)" and in 1996 "Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK)" were came into existence.

Even after decades of independence their lot has not been changed. They increasingly feel that they have remained backward than other section of Assamese society. In view of this, the emerging missing elite started to organize the community with a new vigor which culminated in the formation of a number of socio-cultural organization among them such as "Misings Agom Kebang. 1972 (Mising Sahitya Sabha). Mising Dirbi Kebang. 1980 (Mising Cultural Organisation), Mising Mime Kebang, 1996 (Mising Women Organisation), and so on. The Takam Mising Porin Kebang (All Assam Mising Students' Union) a wing of the Mising Youth came into existence in 1971 and it became very active in mobilizing the people of the community in order to generate a sense of identity consciousness among them. The study, therefore, seeks to examine the youth and student activism of Assam with special reference to TMPK.

Research questions to be addressed

1. The present study will address the following questions:
How far the TMPK is committed to the cause of the community?
2. To what extent the student and youth leaders are sincere for the fulfillment of the declared objectives of the organization?
3. Do they utilize the organization platform for building their future political career?

In view of the growing importance of the student and youth movements in northeast India in general and Assam in particular these questions need scholarly investigation. In order to examine these questions, however this study is limited to understand the role of the "All Mising students Union (Takam Mising Porin Kebang- TMPK) in mobilizing Mising Community.

Review of literature

However, reviews on the all the movement emerged in North-East India so far reveal the following facts-

1. Basically the goals of the movements are related to

development and preservation of cultural identity. The tribal communities need development according to their genus and at the same time protection and preservation of their own culture for sake of identity.

2. The idea of development emerged among the tribal only after close contacts with the people of advanced cultures.

A good number of works have been done so far by different scholars on various aspects of the Tribals in general. But the works on the Tribal student and Youth movement particularly of Misings are still scanty. So the studies available have been reviewed in the following pages:

S. Phukan Gogoi in her research work on "The politics of ethnic identity in Assam" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis) analyzed the socio-economic background, Organization and interest articulation of the Misings. He also discussed about the identity movements leading to the demand for autonomy of the Misings.

S. Chutia is his research work "change and continuity among the Misings of Assam". A comparative study of two Mising villages of Dhemaji District of Assam" (An unpublished Ph. D. thesis) discussed the tradition and changes that took place in socio-economic and political spheres of the Misings.

R. Pegu in his article entitled "Autonomy Movement of the Mising" Published in the book "The Misings : Their history and culture" edited by Dr. J.J Kuli analyzed the causes and various phases of movements of the Mising Community. He also highlighted the role of the leaders of various organizations including the TMPK in the movement for autonomy.

J. Mipun in his book "The Misings (Miris) of Assam: Development of a new life style "Discusses the socio-economic and socio-cultural development or changes of the Misings. He also made a sociological investigation of the origin and migration of the Mising community.

P.S. Dutta in his book "Autonomy Movement in Assam", compiles the memorandums submitted to the government by different Autonomy movement groups of Assam since 1973. The author also discusses the factors of autonomy movement and their consequences.

In the book "Politics of Identity and Nation building in Northeast India". G. Phukan and N.L Dutta (ed). (1997) discusses the search for identity of diverse groups of Northeast India and their demand for the creation of a separate state on the basis of their lingo-cultural identities or for special constitutional safeguards for their respective identities.

B. G. Verghese in his book "India's North East Resurgent (Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development (1970) discusses some fundamental issues of governance, development and changes in North East India with reference to the privilege of constitutional safeguard under sixth schedule and highlights the basis problems and role of the local body to solve these.

Dr. J. J. Kuli in his edited book, "Misings: Their History and Culture" having narration on the origin their migration, political movement and socio-cultural life of the Misings.

One reliable publication reviewed for this book is the "LÍLANG"(The Mouth piece of Takam Mising Porin Kébang), which gives a vivid picture of the Misings in respect of land system, their habitation, modes of living their

historical origin and background of autonomous movement. "Ethno nationalism in India" edited by Prof. Sanjib Baruah, Professor of Political Studies at Bard College and "Autonomy Movement In Assam" (Document)by P.S Dutta.

Royal Pegu, "Mising Janagoshtir atmanyantran andulan aru rajniti", a collection of articles on Mising Autonomy movement and contribution of various organization in the community.

Besides these works, various articles and research papers relating to the subject have been reviewed for the study.

Methodology to be used

In this study both the historical and analytical methods will be used. The historical method will help us to know the historical facts pertaining to the study. The analytical method will be used thought the study to critically analyses the various data collected for the study. Besides, the structural functional approach will be used since the working of the TMPK and other youth organization towards the achievement of their objectives will the discussed in this study.

Sources of data

For this study both the primary and secondary sources will be exploited. However, the study will be primary based on primary sources such as leaf-lets pamphlets, mouth-pieces and other literatures published by TMPK. Besides, Presidential addresses, proceedings of meetings of TMPK, memoranda submitted by TMPK of different authorizes. News Paper, Census Reports and other relevant documents will be widely consulted. The secondary data will be collected from the books, Journals, published and unpublished works.

Expected contribution to be made to the field of knowledge

The proposed study will help the government decision makers, Policy makers to frame policies and take decisions for the upliftment of the socio-economic politically backward tribal communities in general and Mising in Particular.

1. The Misings: Legacy of socio-economic backwardness

One of the basis causes of ethnic assertion has been the socio-economic backwardness. The widespread politics of ethnic identity in Assam has assured to greater political importance. The political of Assam has been increasingly besieged by the movements of various ethnic groups for maintaining distinct ethnic identity. Since the demographic composition of the states is diverse with various ethnic groups having different languages, cultural in nature. In a bid to maintain distinct lingo-cultural identity most of the ethnic groups of Assam has been demanding either autonomous or separate states or their demands have been conceded creating news states from the original states of Assam. But the demand for either separate or autonomous states on the basis ethnic identity has not ended yet. Thus the ethnicism continues to be a major factor on molding the nature of politics of Assam.

It may be mentioned that the Misings subsist primarily on agricultural economy based on production of rice, mustard seeds black pulse and vegetables. The rice is product mainly for domestic consumption where mustard seeds and pulses are produced for commercial purposes. However, the main source of income for an average Mising family is livestock namely

fowls, pigs, goats etc. Economically, they are one of the weakest sections of the Assamese population. They hardly subsist from one the next. They are always exposed to floods and erosions which cause extensive damage to their land, crops and other properties. This is one of the chief reasons of their poverty and economic backwardness. With the growing process of population, employment is various field other than agriculture is negligible during post independence period. The greatest economic problem of the Mising is the inadequate protection of their land. Encroachment by the immigrants and non-confide Indians deprive the Misings of their plot of Land which has been the only means of their subsistence. In fact, settlement of the outsiders in their land has devastated the economy of the Misings. More importantly, large scale Mymensinghia immigration who settled on the Mising areas Land created disequilibrium of various kinds in socio-economic life of the Misings. Many of them have fallen into the hands of the non-tribal craft traders, businessmen and money-lenders during last few decades. In effect, many of them have lost their land and turned into daily wages earners. It appears that different Kébangs (organizations) which initially pleaded for socio-economic concessions for the community subsequently put forwards cultural and political demands as well since the late sixties of the last century, the Mising elite have been mobilizing the community with a new vigour to achieve what they call, Legitimate share the administration of the state. They realized that development of the Mising has been largely dependent on the extend of share in the political process of the state they could enjoy. For this reason they want to be political powerful and assertive to bargain with the ruling elite to realize benefit for the community.

2. The organizational structure and interest articulation of the TMPK

The emerging Mising educated elite strongly feel the necessity of maintaining their distinct socio- cultural identity. For this purpose, they have become organized and articulate which culminated in the formation of different socio- cultural organization among them, such as *Mising Ba:né Kébang*' (Mising People Conference) 1924, '*Takam Mising Porin Kébang*'; (All Mising Student Union) 1993, '*Mising Agom Kébang*' (Mising Sahitya Sabha) 1972. *Mising Dirbi Kébang*' (Mising Cultural Organization) 1980, '*Mising Mimang Kébang*' (Mising Sangram Parishad) 1986, *Mising Mime Kébang*' (Mising Women Organization) 1990 and so on. These organizations have been playing a significant role in arousing identity consciousness among the Mising in a bid to articulate their interest.

In 1935, the students' wing named as '*Assam Miri Chatra Sanmilan*' was formed. Subsequently, it was renamed as *North Bank Mising Student Union*'. In 1951, another unit of Mising student union was formed in Murkong Selek transferred area and was named as *Murkong Selek Transferred Area Mising Student Union*. After independence another Mising student union was formed in the name of *South Bank Student Union* in 1959.

In 1971, all these groups were united by forming Assam NEFA Miri Chatra Sanmilan. In 1974, this Sanmilan was renamed as *All Assam Arunachal Mising Students Union*.² The

session of this union was held in 1978 at Dergaon and the name was again changed to *All Assam Mising students Union*. The second conference of union was held in September 1982 at *All Assam Miri High School, Matmora, Dhakuakhana*, and in this session a resolution was passed demand Autonomy for the Mising under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Finally, in a general conference of the TMPK held on 22, 23, 24th February 1985, at Jangraimukh, Majuli the 'Union' was permanently named as *Takam Mising Porin Kébang* (All Mising Student Union, TMPK). The constitution of TMPK was adopted and enacted on the 30th October 1972. The name of this organization came to be known in English as *All Mising Student Union*.⁴ The jurisdiction of the Kébang were extended to the state of India where the Mising people are inhabiting.⁵ The aims and objectives of the TMPK was declared as: 'uplift of the Mising nationality in respect of culture, language, literature and social justice.'⁶ preamble of the constitution clearly reveals the desired aim and objectives of the organization and it maintained.

An attempt has been made to discuss the constitutional structure, objectives, growth and development of TMPK. Which have certainly added a new dimension in the politics of Assam. The TMPK is a four tired organization. It is hierarchically organized in four different levels. These are village level committee,, Regional committee, District committee and Central Committee. In the organization structure of TMPK, the Central committee constitutes with the members elected or selected from different district committees of the TMPK in the general conference democratically. The central committee has two executive bodies' i.e. (i) Central executive committee and (ii) Central cabinet or steering body.¹⁰ 1.President (1), General Secy(1), Vice-President(2), Assistant Secy(3), Literary Sec(1), Cultural Secy(1), Office Secy(1), Organising Secy(4), Executive Member(13), Advisers(2), Propaganda Secy(4) in numbers. The TMPK is a four tired organization. It is hierarchically organized in four different levels. These are village level committee, Regional committee, District committee and Central Committee. In the organization structure of TMPK, the Central committee constitutes with the members elected or selected from different district committees of the TMPK in the general conference democratically. The central committee has two executive bodies' i.e. (i) Central executive committee and (ii) Central cabinet or steering body.¹⁰ The next organizational structure of the TMPK is the District Committee. A District Committee constituent within a sub-division of a geo-political district. Below the district committee there is the Regional committees of the TMPK. It constitutes within certain areas or towns as per convenience of the concerned district committee. Such organizations create some unit in educational institutions such as University, College or High School.

The central committee is the highest organ of the TMPK. It meets at least once in every two years at a please as decided by the last general conference. The general conference is to discuss the reports of the last general conference and frame the policies. The central executive will sit at least four times in a year and two third members of the central executive of the TMPK will make a quorum. The steering committee will meet before any executive sitting on in any emergency situation to formulate policy. All decision in the executive committee

carried on by simple majority and any bill passed in the central executive will be the final.¹¹ The implementation of all the decisions of the general conference is bestowed upon the central executive. Therefore it is clear that the central executive of TMPK is directly responsible to the general conference. It takes powers from the grass-root level in an orderly manner i.e. the hierarchical order. Democratic centralism is the main guiding organizational principle of the organization viz. Minority is subordinate to the majority. Individual is subordinate to the organization. Lower committee is subordinate to the higher committee and all committees are subordinate to the central committee^[12].

The central executive is the higher decision making body. It decides all the policy matters and all important course of action. The organizational units are bound to follow the policy and decision taken the central executive as well as general conference. Important resolutions are normally adopted in the open session of the conference.

Thus Articles III (3) of the TMPK constitution clearly mention the aims and objectives of the organization. The primary aims and objectives of the organization are based on upliftment of the Mising nationality in respect of culture, language, literature, political, social and justice. As such in pursuance of the constitution the important aims objectives of the TMPK included: (I) struggle to achieve the just and constitutional rights through democratic process. (II) Settle the issues relating to the political crisis that many arise among the Mising people threatening the national existence of their future generation. (III) Propagate among the masses the need of importing education through the mother tongue ; (IV) Improve the Mising language through literary works ; (V) Develop and safeguard the culture of the Mising ; (VI) Develop the Misings economically by adopting innovation from the time to time. (VII) Fight for all around security and if the above goals are denied and ignored, the union further will not refrain even & from struggling for political self-determination. (VIII) Support the principal of socialism for economic emancipation. (IX) Raise the voice for Human and civil liberties and develop socio-cultural relation among the Mising nationality of the country. (X) Struggle for the survival and all round prosperity of the Mising to the extent of advance nationalities of the country.⁸ From the above objective it appears that the TMPK was about the all-around development of their community since its inception. This organization pleaded for constitutional safeguards for maintain their respective socio-cultural identities. For this purpose the TMPK has been spreading the movement on the demand for Autonomy and formation of Autonomous states for the Mising within Assam. In the next chapter an Endeavour has been made to understand the Issue and the phases of movement launched by the TMPK.

3. The emerging pattern of leadership and their role in socio-economic development of the community

Like many other contemporary tribal societies the Misings have also formed some socio-cultural organizations for development of their social life. Accordingly they have first formed a national organisation called All Assam Miri Sanmilan in 1935 which was re-named as Mising Ba:né Kébang in 1956 to work for their socio-economic development.

The kébang raise grievances of the community from time to time with the government and demand for solving them. It also creates awareness among the common people of the community about importance of education, social reformation, cultural development etc. the Kébang raises demand for proper and speedy implementation of the developmental programmes. For development of language and culture two more organisations namely Mising Agom Kébang (Mising Literary Forum), and Mising Dírbí Kébang (Mising Cultural organisation) have been set up. The students have also from a union name Takam Mising Porin Kébang (TMPK) to work for development of the education, socio-economic development in the community. A women based organisation established for over all development of the women folk in the community and a political organisation named as Mising Mimag Kébang (Mising Struggling Force) has also been formed to protect the political rights and interest of the community.

As time passes, new generation has taken the charge of the organisation and with their dynamic leadership they laid down agenda keeping importance in the field of socio-economic development of the community. Takam Mising Porin Kébang took firm pronouncement to work in those fields for upliftment of the community.

Observing those conditions, the TMPK had decided to execute the following policies- 1. To form an agricultural oriented struggling force in demanding the farmers legal demands. 2. Joint movement with others organisation to make consideration of the flood problem in Assam as national problem. 3. Make pressure on govt to provide an alternative agricultural practices in flood affected areas in Assam.

In this present situation both organisation and the movement cannot strictly confined only o development activity of a single community viz. Misings. But it has to extend to the upliftment of overall down trodden communities of the state and the spheres. Keeping this sort of righteous motto TMPK re-constructed their revolutionary propaganda, policies and resolved not to limit their activity singly on achieving the Autonomy under the provision of sixth Scheduled. Their aim ran in the direction to unite the whole society into a common umbrella. They extended their propaganda and decided to march with those progressive, democratic oriented organisations in the country through negotiation, and keeping inter-relation with them. Their role in the socio-economic development of the community are described below-

4. The phases of movement launched by the TMPK

Ever since its inception the TMPK has been putting forward various demands before the governments of the Centre as well as the State seeking their redresses for the all round development of their community.

During the first phase the TMPK started movement demanding on their linguistic right. Because in a situation, when the tribal elite used language, regional, ethnic history and other cultural resources to mobilize the respective groups in order to achieve certain economic and political end. The government of Assam declared Assamese has official language of the states in 1960, ignoring the multi-lingual and multi-ethnic characters of the states. It injured the emerging tribal identity and its resultant sentiment. Consequently, they became more organized in a bid to maintain their own lingo-

cultural identity.

The movement of first phase, of identity assertion among the Misings belonged to *Mising Agom Kébang* (Mising Sahitya Sabha) premier literary organization of the Misings which came to the fore in 1972. This phase is marked a preponderance of issues related to language and scripts as the driving force of the Mising identity assertion. The principal demands of this phase were the introduction Mising language is School in Mising dominated areas. The Language movement of the Mising passed through various stages. The M.A.K. has been since its inception devoted itself to the cause of the language strength was added to this by the TMPK. The two organizations along with the 'Bane Kébang' worked hand in hand in finally establishing the Mising language as a subject of study in III and IV classes of primary schools. Besides, the TMPK started movement demanding the creation of an Autonomous state for the Mising. The session of the union was held in September, 1982 at All Assam Miri High School, Matmora, Dhakuakhana and it was in this session that an Unanimous resolution was passed to demand autonomy for the Mising under the provisions of the sixth schedule of the constitution. The TMPK argues that the constitution of India makes special provision for the administration of tribal areas in Assam for the protection and identity and all round developments. TMPK demanded full autonomy mainly for the Mising dominated areas of the Northern-reaches of the Brahmaputra up to the foothill of Arunachal Pradesh.

As the autonomy movement grew stronger and popular a new batch the Mising educated and students has been playing a leading role in organizing the Mising community politically. It may be noted that although the TMPK is essentially a student organization it had been playing a significant political role. In May 1988, a delegation of TMPK submitted a Memorandum to the President of India reiterating its demand for an Autonomous State. Similarly memorandum was also submitted to the governor of Assam. The TMPK had organized the first Mising National convention at Jiadhoh in Dhemaji district of Assam in the month of September, 1989. The main purpose of the convention was to draw a consensus of the Mising to gear up the agitation for achieving the Mising Autonomous state. The convention deemed it necessary to constitute a common platform so as to accommodate all sections of the Mising in the movement in addition to the students and youths. The convention vehemently criticized the government for ignoring the political aspiration of the Misings. Hence the Mising Mimang Kébang (Mising Sangram Parishad) was founded with representatives of various Mising organizations such as MBK, MAK, MDK, and TMMK which came to be known as Mising National Organizations. Now, the TMPK and the MMK are the main organization spearheading the demand for the Mising Autonomous state. As a first phase of the movement the conventions submitted on ultimatum to the state and central government for taking up the process of discussion regarding the political demands of the Misings i.e. demands for an Autonomous state.

In the face of these proposals, agitation programme such as Bandh, Picketing, and Mass Mobilization was started by various Mising organizations in support of autonomy demand. The joint meeting of the central executive committee of the MMK and the TMPK held on June 5, 1993 at Dhemaji had

chalked out an agitation programme in support of their demand for creation of a Mising autonomous state within the state of Assam under provision of article 244 (A) of the Indian Constitution. According to its programme a 12 hour bandh was observed from 5 a.m to 5 p.m. on June 23, 1993 in the area of the proposed Mising autonomous state. The Bandh supported by seven other tribal organizations united under the banner of autonomy demand coordinator committee. The Autonomy movement has been growing day by day. Considering the growing popularity of the autonomy movement, the government of Assam led by Hiteswar Saikia the then Chief Minister of Assam announced the grant of Autonomy to the Misings and invited the TMPK and MMK for negotiation. The government gave a written proposal to create an Autonomous Council (MAC) which stated that there shall be no definite boundary. But the compact area for the MAC Revenue villages having 50% or more Mising population would be identified and including into the MAC. The MAC will not have any legislative power; it will have only executive powers on 34 subjects enlisted under 11th Scheduled of the Constitution of India incorporated after the 73rd amendment. Fund to the MAC could be provided only from the TSP (Tribal Sub-Plan) of the state. The MAC would be created under a state Act and not under any provision of the constitution. It appeared that proposed Mising Autonomous Council, 1995 was being constituted in the same lines as that of the Bodo Autonomous Council (1993).

The then Chief Minister Late Hiteswar Saikia addressing a press conference after the signing of the Misings Accord said that with the agreement, the ruling Congress- I has kept its election promise of fulfilling the aspirations of the tribal people without dividing the state. They were really to give all powers by keeping the territorial integrity of the states intact. He further asserted that the Autonomous Council set up for the Rabha, Tiwa and the Misings are on similar interest.

The Mising people for the first time in their history, participated in the general election of 1996 with the demand for autonomy. The Mising Mimang Kébang (MMK) fielded candidates in Jonai, Dhemaji, Dhakuakhana, Majuli, Lakhimpur, and Bokakhat Assembly constituency and in Lakhimpur parliamentary constituency. However, none of them could win a single seat. The Mising people are not in majority in these constituencies except Jonai. As they contested election under the banner of MMK, a Mising, non-Mising polarization took place resulting in defeat of the minority Misings. However, the MMK polled more than one lakh votes in these constituencies. After the 1996 election, Assam Gana Parishad came to power in Assam defeating Congress -I. The TMPK-MMK, with the strength of one lakh people's support, demanded immediate dissolution of the interim Mising Autonomous Council and holding of fresh talk for a permanent solution of the Autonomy issue. But AGP failed to recognize the aspiration of the Misings and neglected the issue.

On the other hand, the matter of dissolution of the interim Mising Autonomous Council got mired in a legal battle in Guwahati High Court. Finally, on 10th March, 1998, the Guwahati High Court vacated a stay order issued earlier against dissolution and Assam government dissolved the interim MAC on 11th March, 1998 following which

negotiation started with TMPK-MMK for an acceptable solution. After a series of discussion, the TMPK- MMK along with TMMK have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Assam Government on 28th April 1998. The April 1998. The MAU, describes the previous MAC as force, ineffective and defective.

Conclusion

Ethnicity is a widely prevalent worldwide phenomenon today. It is found operating at international, national, regional and local levels. The northeastern region of India is no exception to it. The identity assertion of various ethnic groups has been very Much acute in this region. The groups inhabiting in this region have been pressing either for the creation of separate or autonomous state on the basis of their lingo-cultural identities or for special constitutional safeguard of their respective identities. Though at the beginning some of them started their assertion with non-political issue such as the development of their language and culture, the unresolved economic problem has given it a political direction in the subsequent period. Indeed, the emerging ethnic have become assertive of their political right and started pleading for adequate share of political power. More importantly, some of them have gone even to the extent of demanding sovereign independent state. It is interesting to note that the youth of the ethnic communities have been playing an active role in mobilizing their respective groups.

The youth and student activities in Assam may, however, are traced back to the colonial period. The students wings of the most of the ethnic groups such as the All Assam Students' Union, All Bodo Students' Union All Tai-Ahom Students Union, All Tea- Tribes Students; Union and so on, became very active in mobilizing their respective communities in order to generate a sense of political consciousness. The movement launched by All Bodo Students Union resulted the Bodo Land Accord in 1993 and information of Bodoland Autonomous Council and the recent Accord provides for a Bodo Territorial Council. Similarly Formation of Mising, Tiwas and Rabhas Autonomous Councils in 1995 is the result of their reprehensive students and youth movements. The Mising are the second largest tribal in the plains of Assam. The Mising were originally a hill tribe who migrated to plains of Assam prior to the advent of the Ahoms. During the rule of the British, the Mising failed to take advantage of economic avenues created by the imperialist administration. The Assamese caste Hindu elite who held important positions in the bureaucracy obviously, could occupy important positions in the government and commercial undertaking under the British rule. Therefore, they became dominant community in Assam both culturally and politically due to their caste status and economic upliftment. On the other hand, the tribal's including the Misings could not reap any meaningful benefit from the British administration. As a result, they became backward educationally, socially, economically and even politically.

In view of this, the elite of the Mising information of students' organization among them. The TMPK has been one of the most powerful student organizations in Assam Ba:né Kébang, Mising Dirbí Kébang (Mising Cultural Organization), Mising Agom Kébang, (Mising Sahitya Sabha), Takam Mising Porin

Kébang (All Mising Students'Union) and so on.

In fact, with the spread of education, the students and youths of the Mising community, became organized and articulate which culminated, in the information of students' organization among them. The TMPK has been one of the most powerful student organizations in Assam. It has been endeavoring for the uplifting of the Mising community since its inception. It is originated from "Assam Miri Chatra Sanmilan" which was formed in 1933.

To pressurize the government TMPK took agitation programmers, such as Bandh, Dharna, submission of memoranda in different phases. A series of discussion were held in different times between Central as well as state government with TMPK on their demands such as recognition of Mising language as medium of instruction; creation of Autonomous Council under the article 244 (A) of the Indian Constitution and removal of their socio-economic backwardness and so on. Although some of the demands are fulfilled yet many other longstanding demands including the demands for 'Autonomous District Council of Misings, yet to be fulfilled.

At any rate, the TMPK is hierarchically organized, consisting of different levels. These are villages' level committee and Central executive. The Central executive is the highest body of the Organization. The principle of democratic decentralization is followed in the decision making process of TMPK. It makes friendly ties with other minded students organizations of the region. It is one of the members of confederation of Tribal Students Organization in Assam.

The TMPK started a vigorous movement for a Mising Autonomous State within the state of Assam under the article 244 (A) of the Indian Constitution to be constituted in the Mising inhabited areas of upper Assam. It may be reiterated that the Sixth Scheduled and the Fifth Schedule of Indian Constitution provides specials prevailing which the TMPK leaders very often complained that the plains tribals of Assam such as the Misings, Bodos, Rabhas, Tiwas, Deoris have been deprived of special privileges enjoyed by other tribal's in the hills.

The declared objectives of the TMPK reveal that it is a non-political student organization. But in practice, it has directly or indirectly involved in politics of the state. In spite of their declared non-political character many of its important leaders showed strong desired to jump into politics. For example, in the general election of 1996 and the 2001, the leaders of TMPK like Ranuj Pegu, Bhupon Pegu, Purusuttam Doley and many others has contested election under the banner of Mising Mimag Kébang (MMK) in Jonai, Dhemaji, Dhakhuakhana, Majuli, Lakhimpur and Bokakhat Assamby constituency. However, no one could Win a single seat. The involvement of student leaders in election politics clearly indicates that they seek to capitalize the emotion and sentiment of the Mising in the game of power politics. As a matter of fact, the like any other student leaders of Northeast, the Mising youth and students leaders represent the interest of Mising nascent middle class. They conveniently project their own interest as the interest of the downtrodden section of the larger Mising community. This is evident from the fact that there has been mushroom growth of organizations among the Misings. Conflict of interest among the youth and students leaders of

the Misings and impact of political parties on them shows that they are more concerned with their individual benefits rather than fulfillment of the interest of the Mising community as a whole.

In the said election the leaders from the TMPK and sister organisations viz. Mising Ba:né Kébang, Mising Mimag Kébang filed nomination under Sanmilitha Gana Sakti, Asom(formed prior by these organisations) and fortunately the party could manage 30 nos of seats out of 36, gaining highest majority. Four seats went to the Congress (I) party in the poll. On the basis of their result in the election, the Sanmilitha Gana Shakti, Asom formed the council with the leadership of Dr Ranuj Pegu.

From the above discussion it may appear that the leadership of TMPK is conscious of overall development of the people of the Mising community, but inherently, they are much concerned with their political ends. Their involvement in youth and student activism clear their path for entering into party politics under the pretext of fulfillment of interest of their community. This leads us to the conclusion that the students leadership of Misings appears to be concerned with their personal benefits rather than the welfare of the community as a whole. It implies that explicit objectives of TMPK are subverted by the implicit one. It is a continuous process emanating since a long past. Thus this study establishes a new thesis which may also be tested in the context of other student organizations of the state.

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