

ROLE OF MISHING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AUTONOMY MOVEMENT IN ASSAM

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INTRODUCTION: The Mishings are one of the major sections of tribal population in the Brahmaputra valley. They are ethnically belongs to Tibeto-Burman groups who were originally hill tribes. They inhabited in the range of Miri- hills in between the present Siang and Subansiri Districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Mishings inhabited mainly in the Districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Majuli, Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat. They also inhabited East Siang. Lower Dibang Valley and Lohit Districts of Arunachal Pradesh. Their folk literature suggest that the Mishings had migrated to and settle mainly in both the banks of the Brahmaputra river about many hundred years ago. The Mishings have their own traditions. Customs. Religious, beliefs, practices and languages. The Takam Mishings Porin Kebang (TMPK) is a Students organization of the Mishings Community of Assam. The Takam Mishings Mime Kebang is a lady's organization of the Mishings Community of Assam . The Mishings Bane Kebang is a parental organization of the Mishings Community of Assam and the Mishings Agom Kebang is a Literary Organization of the Mishings Community of Assam.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER :- There are various Ethnic groups in Assam. The Ethnic groups are demanding Autonomy. The Ethnic groups are the Mishings , the Rabha – Hasong, the Tiwa, the Deoris and the Sonowal Kacharis etc. So, Autonomy Movement is a burning problem in Assam. The objectives of the paper are as follows :-

1. To highlight the factors of the Autonomy Movement in Assam.
2. To find out the role played by the various Mishings Organizations in the Autonomy Movement.
3. To know the steps taken by the Government to solve the problem.

Methodology:- Methodology is the important part of any research paper as well as research study. In this study historical cum analytical approach will be followed. This study would be largely based on the primary sources such as memorandum submitted to the Government by the Mishings Organizations, proceedings of different meetings and conferences of the socio-cultural organizations, relevant volumes of Assam Legislative Assembly debates.

BACKGROUND OF MISHING AUTONOMY MOVEMENT

During the British rule, like other non- dominant ethnic groups, the Mishings remained backward educationally, socially, economically and even politically. Hence, they want to develop their community culturally, economically, politically and socially for maintaining their own distinct identity.

In spite of this fact, the Mishing elite feel that they are markedly different from the rest of the Assamese society, particularly the caste Hindus. They have been the dominant community in Assam. Against historical background of limited socialization and scarce job opportunities, the attitude of the Mishings people towards the dominant section of the Assamese is likely to be governed by mutual suspicion and mistrust they felt the need of a common platform among them to fight for the upliftment of tribal communities in Assam. Hence in 1929, Mishing Bane Kebang (MBK) in 1933 ' Takam Mishing Porin Kebang (TMPK) came into existence.

Even after independence it appeared to the Mishing elite that Mishings are being exploited and neglected by the dominant section of the Assamese society. It appears to them that they are much more backward than other sections of the Assamese society in many respects. Having failed to occupy any prominent place in the society as well as in the governmental structure they feel humiliated and oppressed by the advance section of the Assamese society. For this reasons, the growing sense of negligence and deprivations among the Mishings led to develop a sense of distinctness and gradually they became articulate in the pursuit of preserving socio-cultural identity which is culminated in the formation of socio- cultural organizations such as Mishing Agom Kebang (1972), Mishing Dirbi Kebang (1980).

Role of Mishing Organizations in the Autonomy Movement in Assam

In the middle of the eighties, the TMPK started movement for a autonomous state on the plea that the constitution of India makes a special provisions for the administration of Tribal areas of Assam. Obviously, the creation of a autonomous district and region in the hills inspired them very much. The TMPK asserts the plain Tribal's of Assam such as the Mishings, the Bodos, the Deoris etc. H ave been deprived of special privileges or status enjoyed by other tribal people in the hills in spite of the constitutional provisions. Towards the later part of the language movement, the TMPK started demanding full autonomy which they thought would provide the plain tribal's the adequate opportunities to develop their

language and culture in addition to all round developments of the community. They wanted a autonomous state within the federal structure proposed by the government of India in 1984. Way back in 1960s, no sooner had the Assam Chief Minister, Bimala Prasad Chaliha announced the imposition of Assamese as official language in Assam, then all the plain tribal leaders in Assam became agitated and consequently formed the ' Plains Tribal Council of Assam'(PTCA) in February 1967. Since then a section of the tribal elite began to felt in order to establish their community into a rightful place, they must be politically powerful and assertive. For this purpose emerging educated Mishing elite organizing their people under the banners of Takam Mishing Porin Kebang (TMPK) and Takam Mishing Mime Kebang (TMMK). The TMPK (All Mishing Student's Union) became more articulate and organized capable of challenging the dominant position of the ruling Assamese elite and bargaining for adequate share of administrative jobs and political power. Besides the TMPK claims that the Mishings who constituted a major block of Indo- Mongoloid ethnic group of North -East India, and they had been living for centuries back in the Brahmaputra valley. From then very point of Mishings have the birth right to claim the valley as Mishing dominated areas. Hence in the autonomous movements launched by the TMPK had got greater support from various Mishing organizations viz. The Mishing Bane Kebang (Mishing People's Conference), Mishing Mimag Kebang (Mishing Action Committee), Mishing Mime Kebang (Mishing Women's Organization) etc. They have been raising the political demand such as the creation of the Mishing Autonomous State under the article-244 (A) of the Constitution of India. Therefore, in a democratic process, the TMPK has been lighting its political aspirations but the Government has been turning a deaf ear to it. Moreover, the TMPK believe in democratic means which is on the contrary to the Central and State Governments as the Governments negotiate only those organizations who involve in violence. The pro- violence tactics of the Government is only to extinguish the tribal's. The TMPK urged the Chief Minister to invite the TMPK separately tripartite talk to solve the political demands so as to avoid the path of agitation facing which the TMPK start vigorous movement. Moreover, the TMPK asserts that every man and Government in power in all times has been neglecting the demands of autonomy of the Mishing people which may create repercussions among the peace loving tribal people of Assam. Now, the burning problem relating to autonomy need prompt initiative and action of the State Government for immediate solution. Therefore, all the Mishing Student's Union submitted a memorandum

to the honourable Chief Minister of Assam with the demand of autonomy and creation of Autonomous administrative units for the plain tribal's including the Mishings of Assam.

Thus, the Mishings educated youths and students had been playing a leading role in organizing the Mishing community in to a rightful place. They submitted a memorendum with a view to fulfillment of their hopes and aspirations of the Mishings. Although the Takam Mishing Porin Kebang is essentially a student organ of the Mishings, they perform their duties in political field also. The TMPK had organised a Mishing national convention at Jiadhhal in Dhemaji District of Assam in the month of September 1989. The main purpose of the convention was to draw a consensus of the Mishings to gear up the agitation for achieving the Mishing Autonomous state. The convention also to deemed it necessary to constitute a common platform so as to accommodate all section of the Mishings in the movement in addition to the students and youths. Hence, the Mishing Mimak Kebang(Mishing Sangram Parishad) was founded with a representatives of various Mishing organisation(such as MBK, MAK, MDK, TMMK) which came to be known as Mishing national organisations. Now the TMPK and the MMK are the main organisations spearheading the demand for the Mishing Autonomous state.

The Mishing Mimag Kebang is essentially a political organ of the mishing of the Assam. The central committee of the Mishing Mimag Kebang and the Takam Mishing Porin Kebang have submitted a proposal to the government of Assam for giving autonomy to the Mishing dominated areas of Assam. They have started a process of discussion from their central committee to the grass root level primary units and interactions with various expert, intellectuals, teachers, employees etc on the proposal. They are studying Bodoland Autonomous Council act 1993 and the sixth schedule of the constitution of India as a comparative models of autonomy. Therefore , a written proposal given to Government of Assam for giving autonomy to the Mishing dominated areas of the firm opinion that for the social, economic, educational and cultural advancement of the Mishings administrative and financial power may be delegated to them in order to exercise direct responsibility and authority in regard to their development and local problems.

In the face of these proposals, the agitational programme such as bandh, picketing, mass mobilisation started by various Mishing organisations in support of autonomy demand. The joint meeting of the central executive committee of the Mishing Mimag Kebang and the Takam Mishing Porin Kebang (All Mishings Students Union) held in june 5, 1993 at

Dhemaji had chalked out an agitational programme in support of their demand for creation of a Mishing 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 to be observed from 5.00 am to 5. pm on June 23, 1993 in the areas of the proposed Mishing Autonomous State. The bandh call was supported by seven other tribal organizations united under the banner of autonomy demand co-ordination committee. Considering the growing popularity of the autonomy movement, the Government of Assam led by ' Hiteswar Saikia' the then Chief Minister of Assam announced grant of autonomy to the Mishings and invited Takam Mishing Porin Kebang (TMPK) and Mishing Mimag Kebang (MMK) for negotiation. The Government gave a written proposal to create an Autonomous Council named as Mishing Autonomous Council (MAC). Which said that there shall not be any definite boundary and compact area for the MAC. Revenue villages having 50% or more Mishing population would be identified and included into the MAC. The MAC will not have any legislative power; it will have only executive power on 34 subjects enlisted under 11th schedule of the Constitution of India. Incorporated after the 73rd amendment. Fund to the MAC would be provided only from the Tribal Sub Plan of the State. The MAC would be created under the state act and not under any provision of the Constitution.

It appears that proposed Mishing Autonomous Council is being constituted in the same line as that of the Bodo Autonomous Council, the Mishing Autonomous Council constituted with revenue villages having 50% or more Mishing population would be identified and included. The TMPK-MMK insisted that 'Autonomy without boundary' was an absurd proposition and was not acceptable. They strongly demanded that the existing ' Tribal Belt and Block' and the tribal sub plan areas in Mishing dominated areas should be included into MAC and that the MAC should be provided with power and functions similar to Bodoland Autonomous Council. The MAC has been entrusted with Executive power over 34 subjects. The Mishing Autonomous Council will not have any Legislative power.

Besides the Interim Mishing Autonomous Council formed in July 14, 1995 has not been replaced by an elected body. But, the Government of Assam refused to concede TMPK-MMK's. Nine rounds of discussion were held between the Government of Assam and the leadership of TMPK and MMK. The leaders of TMPK and MMK complained that the Government of Assam hatched a conspiracy to divide the Mishing people instead of creating a congenial atmosphere for functioning of the Autonomous Council. Thus, Mishing

Autonomous Demand Committee (MADC) under the patronisation of the Government came into direct conflict with the TMPK & MMK. Besides, the Government tried to use the 'Mishing Bane Kebang (MBK) against the struggling Mishing people. As desired by the Government, the Mishing Bane Kebang and Mishing Autonomous Demand Committee agreed to accept the boundary less farce Mishing Autonomous Council and organised the 32nd General Conference of the Mishing Bane Kebang on 21, 22, 23, April 1995 at Bilmukh under Dhakuakhana police station and invited the Chief Minister of Assam, Hiteswar Saikia to formally declare the constitution of Mishing Autonomous Council. This move sparked strong resentment among the Mishing people and the TMPK and MMK vowed to resist the conference. In view of this 60 hours bandh was called. On the first day of the conference, about five thousand Mishing people took out a heroic protest march at Bilmukh and when the procession was advancing towards the venue of the conference to resist their protest, CRPF and Assam Police opened indiscriminate fire killing two persons namely, Mohananda Medok and Naresh Taid. Hundreds of people were injured, as sixty hours of bandh continued, Police atrocities started in almost every Mishing inhabited areas.

Police atrocities continued and more than five hundred activists of TMPK-MMK including all the top leaders were in jail and when most of the TMPK-MMK leaders were in jail, the Govt. signed a Mishing Accord. The ruling Congress (I) Govt. in the state signed a memorandum of settlement described as the Mishing Accord to set up a Mishing Autonomous Council to provide maximum possible autonomy under the constitution. The Accord was signed on 14th June 1995 with the signature of the chief secretary of state government and representatives of Mishing Autonomous Demand Committee in the presence of the Chief Minister and other senior Ministers and officials.

With the signing of the memorandum of settlement (MOS) between the government of Assam and some Mishing organizations to set up a Mishing Autonomous Council with a view to granting the Mishing adequate autonomy under the constitution the process of granting autonomy to the major tribes of Assam has been completed.

The TMPK-MMK, however, continued their agitation against the boundaryless Mishing Autonomous Council and successfully prevented the leaders of MADC and MBK from entering into Mishing villages. The Mishing villagers gave punishments to many persons involved with MADC and MBK by imposing social boycott, shaving of head and

parading through villages. At many places, violent places took place between supporters of TMPK-MMK and MADC-MBK.

Although, the TMPK-MMK has sign an MOU, they describe the MOU as an interim agreement with time bound programme. They are neither calling off their struggle nor giving up demand autonomy under the 6th schedule of the constitution.

CONCLUSION : The ethnic movement of the various ethnic groups has a burning problem in the region of Assam. The groups belonging to Mongoloid, Dravidian and Austric origin contributed their respective shares in the formation of a greater Assamese society. The Mishings are one of these groups who had made immense contribution towards the formation of the composite Assamese society. As an aboriginal groups they are deprived of their due share, what the emerging elite felt. As such, they thought that their backwardness was due to the negligence of the upper caste Assamese. Perhaps for this reason, they became increasingly conscious of their miserable plight and organized themselves for its solutions. In view of this the emerging educated Mishing elite started to establishing a number of organizations like Mishing Bane Kebang, Mishing students Union, Mishing Mimag Kebang, Mishing cultural organization to remove their socio economic backwardness.

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