

**POLITICAL STRATEGY OF THE BHARATIYA JANATA
PARTY (BJP) IN NORTH-EAST INDIA: A STUDY OF ASSAM
AND TRIPURA**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

DIPENDRA KUMAR KHANAL

MZU REGISTRATION NO: 1700098

Ph.D. REGISTRATION NO: MZU/Ph.D./1406 of 26.07.2019



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

SEPTEMBER, 2023

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**POLITICAL STRATEGY OF THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP) IN NORTH-EAST INDIA: A STUDY OF ASSAM AND TRIPURA**”, submitted by DIPENDRA KUMAR KHANAL for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**, is a research work, done under my supervision and guidance. The thesis, submitted by him has not formed the basis for the award to the scholar for any degree or any other similar title and it has not yet been submitted as a dissertation or thesis in any university. I also certify that the thesis represents objective study and independent work of the scholar.

Place: Aizawl

Prof. K. V. REDDY

Date:

SUPERVISOR

DECLARATION

I DIPENDRA KUMAR KHANAL, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

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CONTENTS

Page No

CERTIFICATE	i
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii-iv
CONTENTS	v-vi
LIST OF TABLES	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	vii-viii
ABBREVIATIONS	ix

CHAPTERS

Chapter I: Introduction	1-37
Chapter II: BJP in North East India: Historical Background	38-76
Chapter III: Ideology, Programmes, Organisational Structure and Leadership Role of BJP in Assam and Tripura	77-116
Chapter IV: Alliance Policy and Election Strategy of BJP in Assam and Tripura	117-146

Chapter V: Policies and Achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura	147-201
Chapter VI: Comparative Study of the Political Strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura	202-252
Chapter VII: Conclusion	253-271

APPENDICES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BRIEF BIO-DATA OF THE CANDIDATE

PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE

List of Tables

- 2.1 Comparing election results of various assembly elections of Assam

List of Figures

- 6.1 Gender composition of respondents in Assam
- 6.2 Gender composition of respondents in Tripura
- 6.3 Qualification of respondents in Assam
- 6.4 Qualification of respondents in Tripura
- 6.5 Occupational composition of respondents in Assam and Tripura
- 6.6 Age group of the respondents in Assam
- 6.7 Age group of the respondents in Tripura
- 6.8 Factors largely responsible for the success of BJP in Assam
- 6.9 Factors largely responsible for the success of BJP in Tripura
- 6.10 Political Strategies BJP adopted in Assam
- 6.11 Political Strategies BJP adopted in Tripura
- 6.12 BJP organisation is more effective than other political party organizations in Assam
- 6.13 BJP organisation is more effective than other political party organizations in Tripura
- 6.14 Main support base of BJP in Assam
- 6.15 Main support base of BJP in Tripura
- 6.16 State leadership in BJP's success in Assam
- 6.17 State leadership in BJP's success in Tripura
- 6.18 Role of state leadership in BJP's success in Assam
- 6.19 Role of state leadership in BJP's success in Tripura
- 6.20 People are voting for BJP in Assam
- 6.21 People are voting for BJP in Tripura
- 6.22 Profile of candidate is important in contesting election in Assam
- 6.23 Profile of candidate is important in contesting election in Tripura

- 6.24 Alliance policy helps BJP in Assam
- 6.25 Alliance policy helps BJP in Tripura
- 6.26 Alliance policy helped BJP in its victory in Assam
- 6.27 Alliance policy helped BJP in its victory in Tripura
- 6.28 Policies of BJP government played main role in attracting votes in Assam
- 6.29 Policies of BJP government played main role in attracting votes in Tripura
- 6.30 Role of Election manifesto of BJP in Assam
- 6.31 Role of Election manifesto of BJP in Tripura
- 6.32 Campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Assam
- 6.33 Campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Tripura
- 6.34 Main achievement of BJP government in Assam
- 6.35 Main achievement of BJP government in Tripura
- 6.36 Role of money power in the victory of BJP in Assam
- 6.37 Role of money power in the victory of BJP in Tripura
- 6.38 Role of media in the victory of BJP in Assam
- 6.39 Role of media in the victory of BJP in Tripura
- 6.40 Social harmony prevails in the BJP rule in Assam
- 6.41 Social harmony prevails in the BJP rule in Tripura
- 6.42 Political party that is considered the main Alternative of BJP in Assam
- 6.43 Political party that is considered the main Alternative of BJP in Tripura

Abbreviations

AASU	All Assam Student's Union
AATSA	All Assam Tea Tribe Student's Association
ABSU	All Bodo Students Union
AGP	Asom Gana Parishad
AGM	Anchalik Gana Morcha
AJP	Assam Jatiya Parishad
AJYCP	Aomm Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad
AITMC	All India Trinamool Congress
AITUDF	All Indian United Democratic Front
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BPF	Bodoland Peoples' Front
BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Area District
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CAA	Citizenship (Amendment) Act
CAB	Citizenship (Amendment) Bill
ECI	Election Commission of India
INC	Indian National Congress
IPFT	Indigenous People's Front of Tripura
IMDT	Illegal Migration (Determination by Tribunal)
KMSS	Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NEDA	North East Democratic Alliance
NRC	National Register of Citizens
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
TIPRA Motha Party	Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance
TTDAC	Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council
UPA	United Progressive Alliance
UPPL	United Peoples Party (Liberal)
RD	Raijor Dal

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter includes the introduction of topic, historical background of the BJP in Assam and Tripura along with their organizational structure, constitution of the party, aims and objectives. It also incorporates the demographic profile of Assam and Tripura, statement of the problem, review of literature, significance of the study, objectives of the study, research questions and methodology.

Introduction

A political party can be defined as an organised group of individuals with the objective of attaining and wielding political power. The present form of it emerged throughout the 19th century in Europe and the United States. Political parties are an essential component for the effective operation of democratic governments. “It is regarded as the lifeline of democracy.”¹ In the views of Maurice Duverger, “a party is not a community but a collection of communities, a union of small groups dispersed throughout the country (branches, caucuses, local associations) and linked by coordinating institutions”² According to Burke, “Party is a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.”³ The political party plays a crucial role in democracy.

In his analysis of European political parties, Maurice Duverger has classified them into two distinct categories based on their organisational structures: those with direct structures and those with indirect structures. The direct structure encompasses members who have fulfilled the requirements of paying dues, possessing membership cards, signing the membership application, and being duly admitted into the political party. Within political parties that possess a direct organisational framework, it is expected that members actively participate in local party meetings on a regular basis. Parties with an indirect structure lack direct members. However,

¹K. N. Kumar. (1990). *Political Parties in India*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. p.1.

²Maurice Duverger. (1954). *Political Parties*. New York: J. Wiley & Sons. p.5.

³ Giovanni Sartori. (1976). *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for its Analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press. p.9.

the party's support base encompasses a diverse range of parties and organisations, including labour unions and other mass fronts and associations that have aligned themselves with the party in every aspect. According to Duverger, the direct political party is characterised by the formation of the party organisation only by its members, without relying on assistance from other social groups or organisations. Parties characterised by an indirect organisational structure may be referred to as federal parties, as they are formed through the combined efforts of similar interest groups and organisations with a common objective.⁴ Duverger has given extensive ideas about various structures of political parties.

India has adopted the parliamentary form of government. The presence of a multi-party political system strengthens its effectiveness. Political parties can be classified into various types, such as national parties, regional or state parties, and local parties. The Political parties have to register under the Election Commission of India (ECI). At present, the Election Commission of India recognises a total of six national political parties. These are the Indian National Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Communist Party of India(Marxist), the National People's Party, and the Aam Admi Party.⁵ Moreover, numerous types of regional parties have been functioning across several states of India.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was established in 1980, led by prominent political figures such as Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, and Murli Manohar Joshi.⁶ At present, the party holds the distinction of being the largest in the country in terms of its representation in the national parliament and other state assemblies. Moreover, it is the largest party globally in terms of primary membership.

The BJP is commonly described as a right-wing political party that maintains strong ideological and organisational affiliations with the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). It is an important member of the family of active

⁴Maurice Duverger, *Op.cit.*

⁵“Here's the list of national parties in India now after Election Commission's rejig” *India Today*, April 10, 2023.

⁶Sumanta Banerjee. (2005).Civilising the BJP. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 40(29),pp.3116–3119.

organisations known as the 'Sangh Parivar'. It is committed to the Hindutva, an ideology articulated by an Indian freedom fighter like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. According to the BJP, "Hindutva is cultural nationalism favouring Indian culture over Westernisation, thus it extends its membership to all Indians regardless of religion."⁷ The BJP advocates for the implementation of a uniform civil code, which would apply a common set of personal laws to every citizen regardless of their personal religion, replacing the existing laws which vary by religious community. And the BJP had always favoured the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which grants a greater degree of autonomy to the Jammu and Kashmir in recognition of the unusual circumstances surrounding its accession to the Indian Union.⁸ Thus after returning to power in 2019, special provisions of Jammu & Kashmir was abolished by the Modi government. And also declared Jammu& Kashmir and Laddakh as two separate Union Territories.

The BJP on its own emerged victorious in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and formed the Government at the Centre. In the 2014 elections, it emerged victorious in seven out of fourteen Lok Sabha seats in Assam. This remarkable achievement has created opportunities for the party to consolidate its presence in Assam thereafter. After the 2016 Assam Legislative Assembly elections, the BJP established itself as a strong political force by winning 60 seats on its own and 86 seats (out of 126 seats) in coalition with the AGP and the BPF. This put an end to the Indian National Congress' 15-year rule over the state. The recent triumph achieved by BJP in the Assam assembly elections stands as a significant milestone, as the party had not secured more than 10 seats in any of the preceding assembly elections in Assam. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP has further increased its seat tally in Assam from seven in 2014 to nine seats. Incidentally the BJP has contested in 10 seats out of 14 in the state, whereas the remaining four seats were contested by its allies the AGP and the BPF. In the 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly elections, the BJP led alliance MITRAJOT which includes its alliance partners AGP and United People's Party

⁷Yogendra K. Malik & V.B. Singh.(1992). Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)?*Asian Survey*, Vol. 32(4), pp.318-336.

⁸Ramachandra Guha. (2007). *India after Gandhi: the history of the world's largest democracy*, New York: Harper Perennial.pp.250-352.

Liberal (UPPL) won 75 seats and again formed the govt for second term by defeating INC led alliance MAHAJOT.

Similarly in the Tripura Assembly elections of 2018 the BJP-IPFT (Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura) alliance was able to secure 44 (36+8) seats out of the total 60 seats and defeated the CPI(M) led Left front which was ruling the state of Tripura for the last 25 years. In the 2013 assembly elections, the BJP could not win a single seat in the Tripura Assembly. The BJP has categorically replaced the major opposition, that is INC and AITMC (All India Trinamool Congress) at first and then it successfully overthrown the Left regime from the power. The BJP won 36 seats, surpassing the magic number (30) to form the government on its own, in the assembly elections 2018, besides winning both the seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. In the 2023 Tripura assembly elections BJP-IPFT alliance won 32 seats and formed government for the second term by defeating Left- Congress alliance and Tipra Motha. This is a unique case, because BJP never had any sort of political presence there in the earlier periods. These two victories have set a landmark in the politics of North East India. Of course the party has also secured state governments in few other states in the region in recent times. Given the diverse setting in the North East India, it becomes important to study the factors responsible for rise of an ideological party like the BJP in the two states of Assam and Tripura.

According to Cambridge dictionary “strategy means a detailed plan for achieving success in situation such as war, politics, business, industry, or sports or the skill of planning for such situations”.⁹ Political strategy is about how parties, candidates and governments think and plan in order to achieve their goals.¹⁰ It is a concrete plan to establish the dominance of a political party in a state or two. And, political strategy helps the party to win and sustain formal power over major systems such as society, community or organisations. In other words, it is a plan of political action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. Accordingly, various socio-cultural and political tactics will be used as part of implementing the strategy.

⁹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/strategy>, Accessed on 20th July 2023.

¹⁰ https://flexiblelearning.auckland.ac.nz/political_marketing/22.html#10_3, Accessed on 20th July 2023.

The political strategy of BJP is quite different from that of other political parties. It is due to its commitment towards the ideology of “Hindutva” and its tendency and past track record of trying to influence the society, culture, social as well as political and non political institutions. Because the BJP operates along with the help of RSS and its affiliated organisations, unlike other political parties which want to gain power, vote share and seat share, the policy of BJP is to spread its ideology, policies and influence in every sphere of people’s life in its own way. To highlight the alliance policy of BJP is also important, because in the 1990s the BJP was almost regarded as “politically untouchable”, by other political parties and they were not interested to align with the BJP. But in the present political scenario maximum political parties seem to be interested in alliance with the BJP. So it is important to study the political strategy of BJP in North East India.

Historical Background of BJP

Shyama Prasad Mookerjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951, and subsequently merged with the Janata Party in 1977. However, the duration of it last for a limited period. A number of leaders of the Janata Party, including Raj Narayan, Charan Singh, and Madhu Limayee, expressed concerns regarding dual membership and advocated for the separation of members from the RSS, as they perceived it to be a political entity. The majority of Jana Sangh members and leaders were affiliated with the RSS. There existed an ideological similarity with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, leading to a natural affinity between the two.¹¹ Therefore, the earlier Bharatiya Lok Dal, which was a component of the Janata Party, has raised this issue and subsequently left the party.

During the period of 1977-80, the Lok Sabha elections were jointly contested by the Janata Party, which included the former Jana Sangh. Jag Jivan Ram, the leader of the Janata parliamentary party, once again brought up the matter of dual membership subsequent to the party's electoral loss in the 1980s. Because of this, the former leaders of the Jana Sangh were unable to remain in the Janata Party and were forced to go. Nanaji Deshmukh, who was the United Janata Party's then general

¹¹Hans Raj. (1981). *Indian Govt and Politics*. New Delhi: Surjeet Publications. pp. 73-74

secretary and a former Jana Sangh member, said they were proud of their affiliation with the RSS because it had instilled in them a sense of selfless devotion and patriotism. Along with them, many other notable leaders of the Janata Party who did not endorse the concept of dual membership also departed from the party and established a new political entity on April 6th, 1980, which became popular as the Bharatiya Janata Party.¹² Several notable individuals of the new party were Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, Sikandar Bakt, Shanti Bhusan, Ram Jethamalani, R.K. Hegde, and many others.

Under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani, and Murli Manohar Joshi, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was formally founded in the year 1980. Joshi.¹³ In terms of representation in state legislative assemblies and the Indian parliament, it is currently the largest political party in the nation. The BJP is characterised as a right-wing political party that maintains strong ideological and organisational ties with the Hindu nationalist RSS.¹⁴ It is well recognised as an integral part of the 'Sangh Parivar'.

Integral humanism, the philosophy of the BJP, was coined by Deendayal Upadhyaya in 1965. He defined it as advocating an "indigenous economic model that puts the human being at the centre stage."¹⁵ It adheres to the ideology of "Hindutva" as articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an Indian freedom fighter.¹⁶ For BJP, Hindutva, favours Indian culture over Westernisation, is cultural nationalism, which is extended to all Indians irrespective of religion. The BJP strongly supports uniform civil code, which will be applicable to all Indian citizens irrespective of their religion. One of the important objectives of the BJP is to abrogate Article 370, which provides special status to Jammu and Kashmir, from the Indian Constitution.¹⁷ The

¹²*Ibid.* p.74

¹³Sumanta Banerjee. (2005). Civilising the BJP. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 40(29),pp. 3116–3119.

¹⁴Yogendra K. Malik & V.B. Singh. (1992). Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)? *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32(4), pp. 318-336

¹⁵Christophe Jaffrelot. (1996). *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*. New York: Colombia University Press.

¹⁶Yogendra K. Malik & V.B. Singh, *Op.cit.*

¹⁷Ramachandra Guha.(2007). *India after Gandhi: the history of the world's largest democracy*. New York: Harper Perennial. pp. 250-352.

BJP opposes any form of special status for any state because it is a nationalist political party that believes in one nation, one rule.

Since its establishment, the BJP has obtained the approval of the Election Commission of India to use the national flower of India, “the Lotus”, as its official election symbol. The election symbol of the BJP appears to embody and promote the notion of national identity. Moreover, the BJP demonstrates a commitment to upholding the cultural values of India, which consequently characterises its political ideology as cultural nationalism. Therefore, the BJP advocates for the prohibition of cow-slaughter due to the sacred status of cows in Hinduism. Furthermore, the party also attempts to preserve the cultural unity of India, while denounced the European concept of “secularism”.¹⁸ The BJP emerged as an alternative political entity mostly due to different ideological perspectives.

Demographic profile of Assam

Assam is geographically located in the southern region of the eastern Himalayas, specifically along the valleys of the Brahmaputra and Barak Rivers, within the northeastern part of India. The total land area encompasses 78,438 square kilometres. The state shares its borders with Bhutan and the state of Arunachal Pradesh to the north, Nagaland and Manipur to the east, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, and Bangladesh to the south, and West Bengal to the west through the Siliguri Corridor. This corridor, measuring 22 kilometres in length, serves as a land connection between the state and the rest of India. Assam exhibits a diverse range of cultural traditions and practises, hence characterising it as a multicultural society. The region serves as a residence for individuals belonging to diverse religious, linguistic, and ethnic communities.

The region includes two notable valleys, namely the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley, characterised by the presence of the Brahmaputra river and the Barak river, respectively. The entire state of Assam is divided into 33 districts that

¹⁸Atal Bihari Vajpayee & Christophe Jaffrelot. (2007).*Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. New Delhi: Permanent Black. pp. 318-342.

are part of the Barak valley, Central Assam, Lower Assam, North Assam, and Upper Assam administrative divisions.

According to the 2011 census data, Assam has a population of 3,12,05,576 people, of which 1,52,66,133 are female and 1,59,39,443 are male. The literacy rate stands at 72.19 percent, with males accounting for 77.85 percent and females comprising 63 percent of the total. The population density of the region is recorded as 398 persons per square kilometre. While Dima Hasao recorded the lowest population density in the area (44 persons per square kilometre), Kamrup (Metro) recorded the greatest population density of all the districts (1,313 persons per square kilometre).¹⁹ Therefore, it is vital to understand that Assam's districts have various population patterns depending on their demographics and area.

The Demographic and religious profile of Assam shows that 61.47 percent of the population is Hindu. Then come Islam with 34.22 percent. The population percentages of other religions include Christianity (3.74 percent), Buddhism (0.18 percent), Sikhism (0.07 percent), Jainism (0.08 percent), other religion (0.09 percent), and not stated (0.16 percent).²⁰

The agricultural sector is the primary source of livelihood for a significant proportion of the state's population. It means that the economy of Assam is primarily based on agriculture. In the year 2011-12, the state of Assam had a total population of 101.27 lakh individuals living below the poverty line (BPL), almost 31.98 percent of the state's overall population.²¹ The number of individuals classified as BPL residing in rural areas amounts to 92.06 lakh that is 33.89 percent of the overall rural population and in urban areas total 9.21 lakh, representing 20.49 percent of the total urban population within the state.²²

¹⁹Santanu Kausik Baruah (ed.) (2017). *Assam Year Book*. Guwahati: Jyoti Prakashan. p.69.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p.69

²¹“32% below poverty line,” *Telegraph India*, April 11, 2017.

²²*Ibid.*

Demographic profile of Tripura

The second most populated state in North-Eastern Region, Tripura, covers an area of 10, 491.69 sq. km.²³ It shares both national and international borders that are with Bangladesh on its north, south and west and Mizoram and Assam on its east. Around 84 per cent of its total border is covered by its international border which is 856 km. NH-44 that runs through Assam, Meghalaya, North Bengal, Kolkata, and other parts of India is the major connection of the state with the rest of India. Tripura has total 8 districts.²⁴ The population pattern of Tripura is diverse among which Hindu Bengalis are the major sections along with one-third population of the Scheduled Tribes.

The state's population is 36.74 lakh, with a density of 350 persons per sq. Km, according to 2011 census. Total Population in the state has increased from 3199203 in 2001 to 3673917 in 2011 (increased by 14.8 percent) whereas total number of Households has increased from 664334 in 2001 to 855556 in 2011 (increased by 28.8 percent)²⁵

In Tripura, agriculture which is the primary sector, contributes about 64 percent of total employment in the state and about 48 percent of the State Domestic Product (SDP), remains the basis of livelihood for the people from ages. A number of Horticultural/ Plantation Crops, like Pineapple, Orange, Cashew nut, Jackfruit, Coconut, Tea, Rubber, Forest Plantations are produced in Tripura. In the present time, both the Jhum cultivation is practised in the hills along with the conventional agriculture methods in the plains. Over the years the tribal people's dependency on

²³Tripura State Portal (Official Portal of Govt of Tripura) (n.d.) Accessed on September 11, 2019, from <https://tripura.gov.in/demographics>.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵(Compared to the all India scenario (943) sex Ratio in Tripura has increased from 948 in 2001 to 960 in 2011. Out of the total population in the state, substantial number of population is consists of the Schedule Cast (17.8 percent) and Schedule Tribe Population (31.8 percent). Further 73.19 percent literacy rate in 2001 has also increased to 87.22 percent as per the 2011 Census.²⁵ By 08.09.2014, literacy rate of the state reached upto 96.82 percent. Male-Female Literacy gap reduced to 7 percent which was the highest reduction in the country during the 2001-2011 decade. In 1901 out of Tripura's 1.73 lakh population nearly 52.89 percent population were tribals in 1901. However, there was tremendous increase in the total population in 1941 that was 5.13 lakh with only 50.09 percent tribal population. Whereas by 1981 the population pattern has drastically changed. Out of total population of 20.5 lakhs, Tribal population was just 28.44 percent due to various factors.)

Jhum system of cultivation has transformed to a larger extent because of their change in lifestyle.

Party Structure

The Bharatiya Janata Party BJP is widely recognised as a significant right-wing cadre-based political party with a strong organisational structure in the current landscape of Indian politics. The party possesses a clearly defined organisational structure and a dedicated group of cadres who are driven by ethno-religious mobilisations, thereby establishing a unique and prominent position within the political landscape. The party asserts that its membership exceeds 180 million individuals, a significant portion of whom actively engage in party activities and are considered full-time members.²⁶²⁷ The party, being organised on a cadre-based structure, consistently generates effective leaders at regular intervals. Unlike other non-cadre-based political parties, there is no a vacuum-like state in terms of leadership.

The membership method is extensively discussed in Article IX of the BJP Constitution.²⁸ As per the article, individuals who are citizens of India and have reached the age of 18 or older are eligible to become members of the party, subject to their acceptance of the Objectives, Basic philosophy, and Commitments outlined in articles II, III, and IV of the constitution. However, it is important to note that individuals cannot be members of any other political party. The duration of membership within the party is determined by the National Executive, and this duration may vary periodically. At the commencement of each new term, it is mandatory for all party members to complete the requisite membership forms.²⁹ Party membership can be terminated through many means, such as death, voluntary

²⁶ “BJP membership near 18 crore, only seven countries have more population: J P Nadda,” *Times of India*, Aug 29, 2019.

²⁷Yogendra K Malik & V.B. Singh. (1996). *Hindu Nationalists in India. The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party* .San Francisco: Westview.

²⁸P.C. Swain. (2001).*Bharatiya Janta Party; Profile and Performance*. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation

²⁹ *Ibid.*

resignation, or termination. An individual is limited to membership in a single location at any given moment.

The Article VII of the BJP's constitution defines the organisational structure of the BJP. At the national level, the organisational structure comprises the National President, the Plenary of Special Session of the party, the National Council, and the National Executive. The organisational structure of BJP at the state level comprises two key bodies: the State Council and the State Executive. In addition, the BJP has established other organisational bodies, including Regional Committees, District Committees, Mandal Committees, Gram/Shahari Kendra, and Local Committees.³⁰ The highest position within the party is national president and he is chosen by an electoral college. The Presidential election generally takes place when a group of at least 20 members from a state's electoral college jointly propose an individual for the position of National President. The person nominated must have a minimum of 15 years of membership and have actively served for five terms. However, such a joined proposal must come from at least five states where the National Council elections have been held. The candidate's consent is a necessary. The Party President is elected for duration of two years and is restricted from serving more than two consecutive terms in office. Any vacant position must be filled within a period of six months. However, in reality, there is hardly any election for the presidency. Usually, the selection process is determined through a consensus approach rather than through an electoral competition.³¹ The selection of a candidate is often determined by the party elders, whose decision is generally endorsed by the party's electoral college.

However, at the State level, the party possesses two organizational forums, namely the State executive and State council. The State division of the political party is led by the State President, and it operates through a group of office bearers. The State President assumes the leadership position within the political party at the State level. The State President is elected by an electoral college composed of members who are elected by the district units.³² At the state level, the State President

³⁰P.C. Swain. *Op.cit.*

³¹India Today, February 23, 1983, p. 27.

³² P.C. Swain, *Op.cit.*

assumes a crucial role as the appointment of all office bearers within the party organization are made by him/ her.

. The BJP's election symbol has a pan-Indian perspective since it respects and represents all groups within a united "Bharat," or "India". The BJP has stated that the Bhagavad Gita needs to be taught at educational institutions.³³ The party supports both cultural nationalism and believes in and promotes Indian cultural values.

Ideological Foundation

A political party uses ideology to obtain political power because it unites various kinds of people to form its support base. Ideologies are intended to create new visions, provide blueprints for a new society, a sort of utopia, and appeal to the sentiments of the masses. Politicians use ideologies and political parties to advance their personal as well as collective objectives by gaining office. For D.W. Brogan, the real world of politics is an "erroneous assumption that parties are and must be doctrinal bodies."³⁴ Ideology generates the necessary commitment to a political activist to sustain his idealism and obligation to the cause.³⁵ In the words of Sirsikar and Fernandes, "Ideology can be defined as a comprehensively articulated assessment of a given environment in terms of desirable objectives and the means whereby those objectives can be attained."³⁶ In the field of politics Ideology plays crucial role

The persistence of a distinct identity for a political party is dependent upon its ability to effectively articulate and promote its own ideological framework. The assertion that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is perceived as a party with a distinctive character implies that it promotes an ideology that is not entirely aligned with that of other political parties. The strength and impact of political parties are dependent upon their ability to appeal to ideological perspectives. A political party

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Robert Lane.(1962).*Political Ideology*. New York: The Free press of Glenco.p.15.

³⁵ V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes,*Op.cit* , p.137.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

tries to engage and educate individuals in political matters, effectively expressing and consolidating their interests based on its ideological framework.

In the words of Cambridge dictionary, Ideology means “a set of beliefs or principles, especially one on which a political system, party, or organization is based”³⁷ According to the encyclopedia of America, ideology is considered a fundamental pillar within the structure of a political party. Ideology, in broad terms, refers to the framework of pragmatic ideas that are formulated and exhibited by a collective of individuals who have shared political, economic, religious, or cultural affiliations.³⁸ Any political party's ideology serves as its foundation and guides how that party operates. The presence of well-defined ideological beliefs is of highest importance for a political party.

The BJP originated from the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) established by Syama Prasad Mookerjee in 1951. The BJS was established in Delhi on October 21, 1951, following consultations with M. S. Golwalkar, the chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). In the parliamentary elections held in 1952, the Jana Sangh emerged victorious, securing a total of three seats, one of which was also the seat held by Mookerjee.³⁹ The party aimed to promote nation-building and assimilation of non-Hindus within Bharatiya Culture. Mookerjee opposed Article 370, a potential challenge to national unity, and emphasized the abrogation of Article 370. He also opposed the decision to grant Jammu and Kashmir with a distinct flag, arguing that it is impossible for a single nation to have two distinct constitutions, prime ministers, and national emblems. Mookerjee once said "*Ek desh mein do Vidhan, do Pradhan aur Do Nishan nahi challenge*".⁴⁰ The BJS initiated a Satyagraha campaign in collaboration with the Hindu Mahasabha and Ram Rajya Parishad to eliminate detrimental provisions. Mookerjee was arrested on 11th May

³⁷ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ideology>. Accessed on 13th August, 2022.

³⁸ Encyclopaedia of America Int. edition.(1970).Vol, I, New York. p.744.

³⁹“Bharatiya Jana Sangh,Encyclopaedia Britannica,” <https://www.britannica.com>, Accessed on 13th April 2022.

⁴⁰“A tribute to Mookerjee,”*Daily Excelsior*, June 23, 2013.

1953 and tragically passed away in custody in June, 1953.⁴¹ The BJP is often seen as an advocate of Hindu Nationalism and aligns with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).⁴²

The BJP, a Hindu nationalist political party, advocates for self-reliance, conservative social policies, and free market economics. Its foreign policies are driven by a nationalist agenda and strong national defense. The party's ideology, based on Integral Humanism, aims to transform India into a modern, progressive, and enlightened nation.⁴³ The party's constitution in Article IV outlines its commitment to Gandhian approach socio-economic issues, positive secularism, and value-based politics. The philosophy of the BJP is comprised of two additional components, namely *Hindutva* and *Integral Humanism*.⁴⁴ The Party adheres to the ideology of Hindutva, as articulated by Arun Shourie. The idea of 'Integral Humanism' is comprised of the four lectures given by Deendayal Upadhyay during the mid-1960s.⁴⁵ Upadhyaya conducted a critical analysis of national politics through his lectures, examining the inherent link between individuals and society.

Aims and Objectives of the BJP

The objectives of the BJP are extensively discussed in Article II of its Constitution. Those are discussed here-

The BJP has assumed the responsibility of fostering India's development as a strong and prosperous nation, while simultaneously preserving its historic culture and values. The party is dedicated to cultivating a modern, progressive, and enlightened perspective as India aspires to emerge as a prominent global power. The BJP is

⁴¹(After Mookerjee, from 1953 to 1968 Deendayal Upadhyaya was the leader of the BJS. He was a leader with highest standards of personal integrity and dignity in public life. Upadhyaya was also a profound philosopher and earnest organisation man. Since the formation of BJP, Upadhyaya remained as the important source of moral inspiration and ideological guidance for the BJP. His treatise Integral Humanism, a holistic alternative perspective for political action and statecraft is a critique of both communism and capitalism.)

⁴²Rafiq Dossani & Henry S. Rowen.(2005). *Prospects for Peace in South Asia*.California: Stanford University Press, p. 191.

⁴³“BJP: History and ideology,” *Hindustan times*, August 25, 2009.

⁴⁴Hilal Ahmed. (2014).What is BJP's ideology? *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 03, 2014.

⁴⁵*Ibid*.

dedicated to actively participating in the international community to promote global peace and develop a just international order.

The party promised to develop a democratic state that guarantees equal rights and opportunities to all individuals, regardless of their caste, creed, or gender. Furthermore, its objectives include the promotion of political, social, and economic justice, as well as the pursuit of equal opportunities and the preservation of freedom of faith and expression. In accordance with legal provisions, Party is obliged to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to the Indian Constitution, as well as to the fundamental values of socialism, secularism, and democracy. Furthermore, the Party is committed to safeguarding the sovereignty, unity, and integrity of the nation of India.⁴⁶The inclusion of these principles and dedication to philosophical beliefs appears to be vital for the success of political parties.

Role of RSS

The RSS is a prominent and influential organisation of the BJP.⁴⁷ It gives the party strength on both ideological and organisational level. As of 2016, RSS has a total of 56,859 shakhas (branches) and more than 2500 full-time pracharaks (propagandists).⁴⁸ In the Sangha Parivar, the RSS has the centre stage.⁴⁹ It has been equated to the sun, with all other affiliated organisations revolving around it.

The RSS is widely recognised as an ideological and organisational entity aligned with the BJP. The primary source of Hindu nationalism, which serves as a unifying force for three distinct factions, is RSS. It is challenging to fully determine the roles and boundaries of the three because they are connected by a shared ideology. There exists an overlap of functions and personnel within the three entities, namely BJS, RSS, and VHP. The RSS is widely recognised as the leading

⁴⁶http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf_2012_h/constitution_eng_jan_10_2013.pdf, (Constitution and Rules of Bharatiya Janata Party)

⁴⁷Yogendra K.Malik&V.B. Singh, *Op.cit*, p.155.

⁴⁸"Highest growth ever: RSS adds 5,000 new shakhas in last 12 months". *The Indian Express*, March 16, 2016.

⁴⁹Swapan Das. (1989). "Hedgewar's Legacy: Limitation of Elitist Hinduism," *Statesman Weekly*, April 8, p. 12.

and most important organisation devoted to the revival of Hinduism. The primary purpose of the RSS is to promote a renewed sense of communal belonging and solidarity within the Hindu community.⁵⁰ The RSS was established with the aim of functioning as an educational institution with a major focus on providing training to Hindus, with the ultimate goal of promoting unity among them in order to restore India's independence status. According to Angelo Panebianco “every second office bearer of the party at both centre and state level is or has been either a full time RSS pracharak or a member.”⁵¹ Role of RSS shows how important the Hindutva ideology is in the politics of India.

Main Frontal Organizations

The BJP can be classified within Duverger's concept as a “federal party.” In addition to the two prominent non-political entities under the Sangh Parivar, namely the RSS and the VHP, the BJP has garnered significant support from several affiliated groups. These many groups significantly contribute to the political and electoral chances of the BJP. The affiliation between the individual or group in question and the BJP has been influenced by historical circumstances and ideological foundations.⁵² According to prominent figures and analysts in Indian politics, it is widely acknowledged that the BJP, RSS, and VHP exhibit substantial levels of independent organisational and operational autonomy, regardless of their close affiliation. Each entity appears to possess distinct objectives, personnel, and scope of activities. Each entity has established its own distinct supportive organisations and agencies, which serve by offering them with personnel and financial resources necessary for their operations within their particular domains.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS): The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) is a trade union in India, associated with the RSS. It holds a significant position as one of the

⁵⁰(It was established in 1925 at Nagpur by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, who had earlier been a revolutionary. He and others believed that the Hindus had lost control of their country first to the Muslims and then to the Britishers because of divisions among them. Regaining control would be difficult, Hedgewar argued, unless the Hindus perceive themselves as a community.)

⁵¹Angelo Panebianco. (1988). *Political Parties- Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁵²P.C. Swain. (2001). *Bharatiya Janta Party; Profile and Performance*, New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, p. 72.

major labour organisations in the country. The membership count exceeds three million individuals. The establishment of this organisation was motivated by the objective of reducing the effect of communism within the working class. The adoption of this phenomenon has led to positive outcomes among the white-collar working section, while also garnering significant support within the textile and transport labour sectors.⁵³ The strong base of this phenomenon is limited to the states in North India where Hindi is predominantly spoken.

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP): The ABVP is a constituent organisation of the RSS-BJP Coalition. In July 1948, Balraj Madhok, an educator, advocated for the infiltration of student societies and subsequently established the ABVP in Delhi.⁵⁴ This association aimed to foster collaboration among individuals engaged in university education, operating within the framework of the concept of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP): The Vishwa Hindu Parishad is an additional supportive organisation affiliated with the BJP. The VHP holds significant importance within the Sangh Parivar. This organisation was founded in the year 1966, in the revered city of Prayag, also known as Allahabad.⁵⁵ The primary objectives of this organisation is to unify and consolidate the Hindu community, safeguard and advance the moral principles upheld by Hindus, and build connections with Hindus residing in other global regions.

Vidya Bharati: Vidya Bharati is an educational organisation. The operation of these secondary schools in India has been undertaken by the RSS, an organisation that has established many educational institutions. More than 1.2 million students are receiving education from it, and it has employed several teachers. It is a powerful instrument for the process of indoctrination and political socialisation.⁵⁶ The Vidya Bharati educational system has gained recognition as an alternative Approach of

⁵³ Organiser. (1992). Delhi (India), October 18, p.9.

⁵⁴ Christopher Jafferlot, *Op.cit*, p.127.

⁵⁵ MP Degvekar. (1990). The origin and the growth of Vishwa Hindu Parishad. *Hindu Vishwa*, Vol. 25, (12), p.11.

⁵⁶ India Today, Jan. 15, 1993, p.35.

education. While the institution offers education in both English and vernacular languages, its primary emphasis lies on the latter. The utilisation of vernacular language as the primary medium of instruction in schools has the capacity to attract a substantial number of students across various states.

Seva Bharati: The Seva Bharati is an organisation that is affiliated with the RSS. The organisation is actively engaged in efforts aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of marginalised communities, particularly those belonging to the Scheduled Caste category. The organisation has undertaken measures aimed at improving the well-being of slum residents. It has proven successful among the less affluent segments of Indian society, including tribal and indigenous communities. Over 10,000 centres have been established. Seva Bharati furthermore provides a range of welfare and social welfare initiatives, including complimentary medical aid, cost-free educational opportunities, and vocational training programmes. Furthermore, it is promoting the principles and values of Hinduism among the populace. The services provided by the organisation were acknowledged by the Central government through the presentation of a monetary prize and a certificate of distinction.

Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram: Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, also known as the Centre for Tribal Welfare, is a non-governmental organization established in 1952 by Brahmin lawyer Ramakanta Keshav Despanda. Its goal is to protect Hinduism-adherent indigenous communities from potential conversions to Christianity. The organization has established facilities in over 31,000 Indian villages and focuses on social welfare initiatives, particularly targeting Janjatis or Scheduled Tribes in rural areas. Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram is a non-governmental organisation located in Jashpur, Chhattisgarh, which is dedicated to promoting social welfare initiatives.⁵⁷ Its divisions prioritize agriculture, healthcare, child education, and sports. The Ashram also aims to foster cultural consciousness among tribal communities and preserve their traditions and practices.

⁵⁷ P.C. Swain, *Op.cit*, p.88.

Bajrang Dal: In 1984, the VHP established the Bajrang Dal, led by Vinay Katiyar, who had previously served as the organisational secretary of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad between 1970 and 1974. to reclaim the Ayodhya site. The group has expanded its presence throughout India, focusing mainly in the northern and central regions. With nearly 2,500 akhadas, it resembles the shakhas of the RSS. The term "Bajrang" comes from the name of Hindu deity Hanuman.

Review of Literature

Relevant literatures from the books and articles have been collected as part of the review of literature. The literature review has been divided into two sections. The first part reviewed the related books and the second part reviewed some important articles. The literature review has been presented in a chronological sequence. They are as follows:

I. Books:

Partha S. Ghosh (1991) in his book, *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre*, has undertaken an analysis of the emergence and development of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism, spanning from the early stages of the Indian renaissance in the late 19th century to the contemporary day. The author argues that Hindu nationalism had significant growth during this period, amidst a dynamic interplay of various societal factors that oppose the idea of India transforming into a Hindu Rashtra. This literary book aims to undertake a critical analysis of the future potential of political Hinduism as a whole, with a specific focus on the BJP. This book facilitates comprehension of the political landscape in India by examining the development of Hindu Nationalism.

G.N.S. Raghavan(1998)in his book, *A New Era In the Indian Polity a Study of Atal Behari Vajpayee and the BJP*, explores the wisdom of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the erstwhile Prime Minister of India. This book celebrates the ideas and ideologies of Vajpayee, positioning them as a revitalization of political principles in Indian politics that had diminished the aspirations of the people throughout the freedom struggle. Following independence, these principles were required due to India's

devastation and poor navigation. Moreover, the author also discussed the significant contribution of Vajpayee within the BJP. Vajpayee played a significant influence in shaping the BJP's philosophy of promoting social equality and harmony, non-appeasement, mutual sharing in economics, Antyodaya, and Swadeshi. This book provides a partial understanding of the policies of the BJP.

Kingshuk Nag (2014) in his book, *The Saffron Tide: the Rise of the BJP*, has stated the BJP emerged as the only party, apart from the Congress, to secure a significant mandate and attain a complete majority in the Lok Sabha during the 2014 general elections. In the year 1980, following the disintegration of the Janata party, a group of politicians with a background in the Jana Sangh came together to establish the BJP. The political party possesses a nationwide presence throughout India and enjoys a significant level of support, not just within the country but also within the global Hindu Diaspora. This literary work serves as a partial help in comprehending the rise of the BJP from its humble origins as a little political entity to its current status as a formidable national political party.

Paul Wallace (2015) in his book, *India's 2014 Elections: A Modi-led BJP Sweep*, has provided an analysis of the governance of India under the leadership of Narendra Modi and his strong majority party. The 16th Lok Sabha election has resulted in a remarkable demonstration of political maturity, as seen by the smooth transition of power in terms of parties and governmental form. The author argues that the replacement of the ten-year-old Congress-led coalition government by the Bharatiya Janata Party, which enjoyed a decisive majority, can be seen as a significant outcome of what he believes to be a historic election. This book provides some assistance in analysing the phenomenon of the 2014 elections.

Manish Anand (2015) in his book, *The Enabler Narendra Modi: Breaking Stereotypes*, has traces the rise of Narendra Modi as the second Prime Minister of India, starting as an RSS pracharak (unmarried preacher). Before his tenure, Atal Bihari Vajpayee established the BJP as a dependable choice in national politics. However, the Congress party struggled to defeat Modi, and their political standing has been significantly impacted. The Congress party leaders fear that a decade under

Modi's leadership will lead to the party's erosion. To counter this, Modi and the BJP formed alliances with regional political groups. The 2014 election marked the entrance of Modi as a prominent figure in Indian politics. This book enhances understanding of the rise of the BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi, with the extensive decline of the Congress party throughout the country.

Rajat Sethi & Shubhrastha (2017) in their book, *The Last battle of Saraighat: The Story of the BJP's Rise in the North-east*, has discuss the BJP's landslide victory in the 2016 Assam legislative assembly elections, comparing it to the decisive victory of the Ahom army led by legendary general Lachit Borphukan against the Mughals in 1671. The authors argue that the 2016 election was a turning point in Assam's political history, as the BJP transformed the election into a local vs. illicit Bangladeshi Muslim contest and also a last chance to save Assam from Bangladeshi intrusion. They criticize the Federal system and overemphasize the role of RSS in the election. This book, written by insiders, provides valuable insights into the insiders' perspective on the 2016 Assam election phenomenon.

V. Bijukumar (2019) in his book (edited), *Parties and Electoral Politics in North East India: Contention of Ethno regionalism and Hindu Nationalism*, has described the political landscape in Northeast India, focusing on the trajectory from ethno regionalism to Hindu nationalism. Although most states in the region are dominated by Christianity and home to multiple ethnic communities, national political parties have played a significant role in electoral politics. The Congress party has historically been a major player in the region, but the rise of Hindu nationalism in the aftermath of the 2014 general election has reduced its influence. These articles provide valuable insights into the emerging politics of Northeast India, which will be of interest to researchers and general readers alike.

Akhil Ranjan Dutta (2021) in his book, *Hindutva Regime in Assam: Saffron in the Rainbow*, discusses the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s strategic approach in Assam, where they use cultural resources to promote the Hindutva agenda. The BJP has used the 'Rainbow Alliance' as a key tool in electoral campaigns, leveraging the emotional connection individuals have with their ethno-regional cultures. The book

also examines the BJP's political techniques, successes, and efforts to undermine consensus over the National Register of Citizens through the Citizenship Amendment Act. The author also analyzes the BJP's populist development program, focusing on grassroots activities, government policy efforts, regimes performance, and ideological goals. It highlights how BJP's strategies in Assam are unique in some ways and how similar strategies can be seen elsewhere in India.

II. Articles:

Shaila Seshia (1998) in her article, "Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata party," has critically analyzes the Bharatiya Janata Party's rise in India, focusing on its implementation of a divide and rule strategy. Author highlights the significant presence of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics, dating back to the 19th century. The BJP's rise from a marginalized political entity to a dominant force in Indian politics is attributed to its emphasis on Hindu nationalism. This article provides critical understanding of the BJP and how its policies led to polarisation in the society.

H. Srikanth (1999) in his article, "Communalising Assam: AGP's Loss Is BJP's Gain," has stated that over the past two decades, the political landscape in Assam has been characterised by the prominence of regional identity politics, which has effectively held the politics of Hindutva at distance. This article provides insights into the political expansion of the BJP in Assam, while also examining the simultaneous decline of the AGP.

Sutapa Lahiri (2005) in her article, "Jana Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party: A Comparative Assessment of their Philosophy and Strategy and Their Proximity with the Other Members of the Sangh Parivar," has analysed the intimate connection between the BJP and Jana Sangh. The paper is structured into five distinct sections. The initial segment of the paper examines the influential factors that have contributed to the development of two political parties. The subsequent section delves into the ideological affinity between the Jana Sangh and BJP. Following this, the third section explores the similarities in the organisational structure of the Jana

Sangh and BJP. Lastly, the fourth section of the paper scrutinises the electoral mobilisation strategies employed by both the Jana Sangh and BJP. The final section's conclusion briefly discusses the key findings and conclusions primarily drawn from earlier research. This article provides a partial understanding of the ideology and organisational structure of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Sandhya Goswami (2004) in her article “Mixed Verdict,” has highlighted that The 2004 Lok Sabha elections in Assam saw the Congress party win, while the AGP resurgence was also evident. The election involved three major parties: Congress, BJP, and AGP. The Congress party maintained support among minority communities, while the linguistic Hindu minority supported the BJP. The indigenous population supported the AGP. The BJP's success in Assam is not solely due to its organizational strength. The Congress government has a responsibility to rectify its shortcomings and regain its social base, despite its overall success. Amendments are needed to achieve this.

Radhika Ramaseshan (2013) in her article “The BJP and RSS: Family Squabbles Turn Intense,” provides an analysis of the intensified dynamics within the relationship between the RSS and the BJP. According to the author's explanation, the BJP is consistently under the influence of the RSS. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that significant changes have occurred in the dynamics of the RSS and BJP during the past two decades. In recent times, the incumbent RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat, has shown a preference for "regional" leadership inside the party as opposed to leaders stationed in Delhi. The period leading up to the Parliamentary elections of 2014 will serve as a determining factor in assessing whether the BJP will assert its distinct political identity or if the RSS will endeavour to re establish absolute authority. This article provides insights on the correlation between the BJP and the RSS.

Nani Gopal Mahanta's (2014) article “Lok Sabha Election in Assam, Shifting of Traditional Vote Bases to BJP,” has outlined the situation in Assam following the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. According to Mahanta, there has been a significant transformation in the electoral landscape of the state during the parliamentary elections, with BJP emerging as the dominant political force. The author further

contended that the BJP effectively garnered the backing of several social groups. This article systematically outlines the circumstances behind the emergence of the BJP and examines the potential implications associated with its ascent. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP managed to regain its previous electoral setbacks by garnering the backing of various social, ethnic, and tribal groups within the state of Assam. The majority of the Tea Tribes (Tea garden workers) population, Assamese Hindus, and Tribals demonstrated their electoral support for the BJP during the previous election. The primary factors contributing to the failure of Congress include internal factionalism, widespread corrupt practises, and inadequate governance at the state level. Although the BJP increased its seat count in some other regions, it suffered a defeat in Barak Valley, a Bengali-dominated area that served as its early stronghold. The author has made a crucial claim that Assam has become religiously divided, which will harm Assamese identity and may further re establish the Assamese-Bengali divide through this Hindutva politics. The Assamese identity itself could be the first victim of Hindutva politics in Assam.

Sandhya Goswami and Vikash Tripathi (2015) in their article, “Understanding the Political Shift in Assam: Withering Congress Dominance,” highlighted that Assam, which was once considered a stronghold for Congress, has undergone significant political changes in recent years. The Bharatiya Janata Party has made significant inroads, winning the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and subsequent victories in the Bodoland Territorial Council and urban local bodies. It provides a deeper look into this trend and its implications for the upcoming state assembly elections in 2016. As Assam's political landscape continues to evolve, it will be fascinating to see how these changes shape future of the state.

Udayon Mishra (2016) in his article, “Victory for Identity Politics, Not Hindutva in Assam,” asserts that in the context of the 2016 Assam assembly elections, there was an exaggeration of the role of RSS, with the intention of creating the perception that the Assamese people had ultimately embraced the Hindutva ideology. This perception lacks substantiation from the prevailing circumstances of the majority of victorious candidates of the BJP, as well as the broader voting trends

observed inside the state. The primary emphasis of this election was clearly placed on safeguarding the identity and culture of the indigenous population, as there was a significant demographic shift due to illegal migration from Bangladesh. It is important to note that the promotion of Hindutva ideology was not a prominent aspect of the election. This outcome may be attributed to factors other than a Modi wave. Instead, it was the outcome of the BJP's success in forming alliance with regional parties like the AGP, the BPF, and the Rabha, Tiwa, and other plains tribal groups. This article provides insights into the 2016 victory of the BJP and highlights the significance of identity politics rather than the Hindutva agenda.

V. Bijukumar (2016) in his article "BJP's Mobilization and Consolidation in North East India," discussed that the BJP adopts a multiple mobilization strategies in the North Eastern States. The BJP does not put emphasis on the Hindutva agenda, rather it stresses on the issues of development, security, corruption, illegal migration, youth empowerment. Besides, the BJP stresses on cultural aspects also for mass mobilization strategy. The BJP projects itself as upholder of Srimanta Sankadev's legacy in Assam who was a medieval saint.

Malini Bhattacharjee (2016) in her article "Tracing the Emergence and Consolidation of Hindutva in Assam," examines the genesis of the RSS and the broader activities of the Sangh Parivar in the state of Assam. The RSS has been operational in Assam since the year 1946. It has successfully developed social networks and constructed a diverse range of educational institutions. Additionally, it provided assistance to those affected by the earthquake in 1950 and offered support to the Assam movement. It also presented the views, ideals, and contributions of Saint Srimanta Sankardev. This article holds significance as it highlights the distinction between Assam and the states of "Hindi Heartland" in terms of their acceptance to the politics of Hindutva. Considering the inherent demographic complexity of this region, characterised by the presence of diverse races, ethnicities, beliefs, customs, and cultures, along with various others challenges. Finding a common ground for any ideology based on cultural nationalism has become incredibly challenging due to its complexity. This article aims to explain the

challenges faced by Hindu nationalism in its institutional and ideological establishment within the social and cultural landscape of Assam.

Ronojoy Sen (2016) in his Article “Assam Assembly Elections: BJP has momentum,” In his article titled” provides an analysis of the political landscape prior to the election results. The author highlights the advantageous position of the BJP and its alliance partners, namely the AGP and BPF, in comparison to the ruling Congress and AIUDF. Moreover, he explained that the BJP's position in Assam was strengthened by various factors, including the announcement of Sarbananda Sonowal, a former AGP leader and a member of the ST community, as the Chief Ministerial face. Additionally, factionalism within the Congress, the BJP's emphasis on the issue of illegal migration, and the significant increase in voter turnout all contributed to the strengthening of the BJP's position in Assam.

Akhil Ranjan Dutta (2017) in his article, “BJP’s Electoral Victory in Assam, 2016: Co-opting the Khilonjiyas” has highlighted the interpretation of the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in the 2016 Assam assembly election is a subject of debate. Some see it as a consolidation of Hindutva forces, while others view it as a result of the BJP's alliance with regional-ethnic partners and its campaign for the protection of indigenous rights. However, it is important to note that the construction of 'indigenous' as an exclusionary category during the election did not prioritize substantive rights, such as the 'right to self-determination' or 'rights over resources', emphasized by international declarations on the rights of indigenous people.

Radhika Ramaseshan (2018) in her article “What the Tripura Victory signifies for the BJP,” has highlighted that the Bharatiya Janata Party is ecstatic by its victory in the 2018 Tripura assembly elections. But she has critically discussed about the fact that it might be relatively easier for BJP to gain grounds in Tripura and Assam whereas it won't be that much easy to get hold in other north-eastern state. The politics of these states pursue the line of “mainstream” India. While the BJP is trying to build peaceful relation with the regional political parties or other regional groups and compromise up to an extent in their Hindutva-specific agenda. This

directly help the central government to suspend and deliver incentive to state from time to time.

Vikash Tripathi, Tamasha Das and Sandhya Goswami (2018) in their article, “National Narrative and Regional Subtext: Understanding the Rise of BJP in Assam,” discusses that it's important to carefully analyze the growth and consolidation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam, especially considering their unprecedented mandate in the 2016 Assembly elections. The party's rise in the state can be attributed to a shift in its social base, which has moved away from the Congress in recent years due to various factors such as the decline of Congress dominance and political stagnation of the AGP.

V. Bijukumar (2019) in his article, “Nuances of the Left Debacle in Tripura,” has discussed that the political landscape in the state of Tripura has undergone significant changes, with the left suffering a defeat in the general elections. This development stems from long-term social transformations and the exploitation of discontent among the tribal population. The Bharatiya Janata Party has successfully used ethnic sentiments and development rhetoric to gain the support of the dominant Bengali community and appropriate the tribal king, which has led to the erosion of Communist Party of India (Marxist)'s base. Although there was some strain in the relationship between the tribal communities and the BJP over the issue of CAB, the left failed to capitalize on the political environment and reclaim its position.

Shubhrajeev Konwer (2019) in his article, “BJP and Coalition Politics: Strategic Alliances in the States of Northeast,” has stated that the Bharatiya Janata Party's increasing influence in Northeast India has been a subject of study and analysis. Despite some inherent contradictions between its goals and those of regional parties in the region, the BJP has formed strategic alliances and emerged as the fulcrum party in Northeast India. This can be attributed to various factors such as anti-incumbency, the emergence of NEDA, assembly floor management, and the growth of RSS. The BJP has also co-opted regional leaders and implemented a linear relationship model that determined center-state relations. However, the rise of the BJP in the region has also brought with it certain challenges and contradictions that need to

be addressed. This paper explores the reasons for the BJP's growth in Northeast India and analyzes its complex relationship with regional parties in the region.

Tarun Gogoi (2019) in his article, "North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) and Political Change in Northeast India," highlighted that The BJP's dominance in Indian politics has been marked by a series of impressive victories, including their landslide success in the 2019 general election and several state assembly elections since 2014. The party's remarkable adaptability in the northeast region has been particularly notable, with the formation of North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) playing a key role in their rise to power. Despite the impact on regional parties, the BJP has effectively used the NEDA as a platform for territorial expansion and political consolidation, further strengthening their position in the region. This article explores the significance of NEDA in the BJP's rise to power in Northeast India.

Suhas Palshikar, Manjesh Rana, Dhruba Pratim Sharma and Vikas Tripathi (2021) in their article, "Hindu consolidation pays off for BJP" have highlighted that the recent Assembly election in Assam saw the BJP retain the State, thus consolidating its eastern footprint. The party's ability to consolidate Hindu votes in a State with multiple ethnicities has been a key factor in its success. While the Lokniti-CSDS post-poll survey data indicate relatively high satisfaction with both the Central and State governments among voters, the role of religious identity as a determinant for electors remains a moot point. The Congress's tie-up with the 'Muslim party' AIUDF may have helped the NDA keep Hindu voters firmly on their side and wean away a small but sizeable chunk of Assamese Muslim voters. The two local parties, the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Rajjor Dal (RD), had a limited impact, and their influence remained confined to Upper Assam. In sum, consolidation of the Hindu vote and as a corollary, consolidation of the Muslim vote, too, added more strength to religious polarisation in the State.

Vikash Tripathi and Dhruba Pratim Sharma (2021) in their article, "After Gogoi Congress and Its Challenges in Assam," highlighted that the passing away of senior Congress leader and former chief minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi, has left the Congress party facing three formidable challenges ahead of the assembly elections in

April 2021. These challenges include resolving leadership crisis and organizational revamping, forging a social coalition, and ensuring a consensus over a new ideological middle ground among diverse political parties and factions in the state to challenge the dominance of the Bharatiya Janata Party. These challenges are deeply intertwined and primarily owe to religion overpowering the ethnic and linguistic barriers of political mobilization in the state. It's crucial for the Congress to address these challenges and come up with a cohesive strategy to compete with the BJP in the upcoming elections.

Vikash Tripathi and Dhruva Pratim Sharma (2022) in their article, “Religious Polarisation Outweighs Ethnic Mobilisation: Explaining NDA’s Victory in Assam,” highlighted that the recent Assam assembly elections have shown a clear trend towards deepening religious polarisation in the state. The Bharatiya Janata Party's alliance strategy has helped them retain their hold over the ethnic base that had shifted to the party in 2016. The NDA's victory in the 2021 Assam assembly elections was due to several key factors, including religious polarisation, positive perceptions about the performance of state and central governments, and pro-incumbency. The BJP's dominance in Assam is unprecedented, as it has deepened the dependency of regional forces on religious polarisation, overtaking region, language, and ethnicity as markers of political mobilisation. This dependency momentarily works in favour of the NDA, making it numerically strong. However, in the long run, it shrinks autonomous electoral space for regional parties in elections. The Congress, on the other hand, failed to forge an alliance with prominent regionalist parties and factions in upper Assam, and its inability to project a leadership face made it vulnerable in the elections. The Mahajot was unable to counter the narrative about the protection of cultural identity of Assam, and the alliance failed to penetrate the Hindu bases that had shifted to the BJP in 2016.

V. Bijukumar (2023) in his article, “Dissecting the Verdict of Tripura Assembly Election 2023,” has stated that the recently concluded Tripura assembly election saw the Bharatiya Janata Party secure a renewed mandate with a slim majority. Despite a strong resistance put up by the Communist Party of India

(Marxist)–Congress alliance, the emergence of the Tipra Motha Party as a third political force, advocating for the safeguarding of indigenous identity, dashed the opposition's electoral prospects. The election verdict is going to pave the way for consolidation of the BJP under its second consecutive government in Tripura, while the CPI (M) and Congress will form an enduring alliance for joint action against the government. Additionally, the Tipra Motha Party's mobilization for separate statehood for tribals will continue, and the All India Trinamool Congress will strive to secure political space in the Bengali-dominated state.

The literature review indicates that extensive study has been conducted on the emergence of the BJP in India. But, very few works have covered the details on the political strategies of BJP in the North Eastern states like Assam and Tripura. Unlike the other political parties, the BJP has adopted unique political strategy in the case of North East India. The profile of North East India, both demographic and otherwise is distinct and thus the party had to operate differently in different states. Therefore, the research work is to focus on the political strategies of BJP in the North East India and also to make a comparative study of Assam and Tripura.

Statement of Problem

The Rise of BJP in the North East India is a recent phenomenon. A party with rigid ideological stand and with the ideology of Hindutva establishing itself as a major political force in North East India is not an easy task. The BJP has successfully overthrown the INC in Assam and the CPI (M) led Left front in Tripura in the last assembly elections. The party has used the politics of identity along with its ideology of Hindutva in both the states and was able to end the long rule of Congress and Left from their bastion. The socio-cultural pattern of Assam and Tripura are very different from that of the Hindi heartland. Because in these two states, identity and ethnicity seems to have played a major role than that of religion. But mobilizing diverse ethnic communities into one platform and gaining the trust of people has made it an important discourse in academic discussions. Further, the BJP has successfully used the local ethnic sentiments in its favor. Therefore, this study aims to highlight the

factors responsible for the rise of BJP in North East, particularly in Assam and Tripura.

The BJP emerged as an anti-congress force, as a result of the gradual erosion of AGP's support base in Assam's political landscape. The rise of the Muslim population is another reason that has drawn supporters of the Hindu nationalist BJP. This tendency became evident starting in 1998, and further solidified during the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. In this election, the BJP secured one Lok Sabha seat, followed by two seats. On the other hand, the Asom Gana Parishad, which was the dominant party in the state at the time, failed to secure any seats. Subsequently, the BJP continuously consolidated its presence in Northeast India. On the contrary, the leaders of the AGP were involved in internal conflicts, resulting in multiple divisions within the party. Consequently, this resulted in a decrease in the popularity of AGP and a gradual erosion of its support base. The BJP effectively addressed the political vacuum. In addition to Assam, the BJP undertook efforts to create organisational presence in other North Eastern states, particularly following the results of the 2014 general elections and the formation of the second NDA government.

. The BJP won the 2016 election in Assam on the issue of "JATI, MATI, BHETI," which stands for the preservation of indigenous peoples' land, identity and culture. The Immigration issue remains the most prominent issue in Assam for the last four decades. The BJP came to power by championing the cause of indigenous populations, while also capitalising on public issues like inflation, corruption, and misrule under the Congress government. In order to address these issues and to bring change and development, the BJP-led coalition won eighty six (86) seats out of One hundred twenty six (126) in the Assam Assembly Election 2016. BJP formed the government for the second time in Assam in the year 2021. In the 2021 assembly elections BJP led *MITRAJOT* which includes AGP and UPPL were victorious in seventy five (75) seats and defeated the INC led *MAHAJOT*. In the elections, BJP has focussed on the issue of Development and Hindutva which they termed as the

“*Savyatar juj*” (Clash of Civilisation) and protection of identity and culture also remained important.

Apart from 25 years of anti-incumbency against the Left regime in Tripura, the massive outreach campaign by BJP and RSS and the work done by the RSS affiliated organisations in the health and education sectors particularly in tribal areas also greatly helped the BJP in gaining ground. The alliance with IPFT has also helped BJP in coming to power for the first time in Tripura. Joining BJP by the Leaders across the political parties (mainly Congress and Trinamool Congress) has also boosted the BJPs strength. Moreover, the BJP has also taken the opportunity of the vacuum in the opposition.

The BJP has given the slogans like “CHALO PALTAI” which means “Lets Change”, which became very popular among the masses. The BJP was successful in choosing peoples issues like Road, connectivity, unemployment, implementation of 7th pay commission (because in Tripura government employees were provided salary under 4th pay commission). These issues altogether helped the BJP-IPFT alliance to win 44 seats out of 60 and defeated the Left front in its stronghold. In the 2023 Tripura assembly elections BJP-IPFT alliance win 32 seats and formed government for the second time in Tripura. In a triangular contest it defeated Left- Congress alliance and Tipra Motha. During elections, the BJP has focussed on issues like development and fulfilment of many of its electoral promises. Further, It has been seen that the division of opposition votes between Left-Congress alliance and Tipra Motha also played a vital role in BJP’s victory in Tripura.

The study focused on the emergence of BJP as a strong political force in the North East India and its effort to become the ruling party in key states like Assam and Tripura. Focus is given to assess the identity, social base and leadership role, besides its ideology, programmes and policies in these two states. Unlike other parties, BJP operates differently when it comes to electoral field. For instance, alliance policy, its election manifesto, campaign method are different. This makes the BJP and its political strategies unique and different from those of other parties. The electoral performance of the BJP in Assam and Tripura is very significant. The

study is essential as it analyses the strategy and growth of BJP in the North East India and particularly in Assam and Tripura in recent times.

Objectives

1. To study the factors responsible for the rise of BJP and its political strategies in the North East India.
2. To analyse the ideology, programmes, organisational structure and leadership role of the BJP in Assam and Tripura.
3. To study the role of alliance policy and election strategy of the BJP in these two states.
4. To analyse the policies and achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura.
5. To make a comparative study of the political strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura.

Research Questions

1. What factors are responsible for the rise and growth of BJP in the North East India?
2. What are the Ideology, programmes, organisational structure and leadership component of the BJP in Assam and Tripura?
3. What is the role of alliance policy and election strategy of the BJP in the two states?
4. What are the policies and achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura?
5. What are the similarities and differences in the political strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura?

Methodology

Basically, this study is about political parties and their growth. And so, it is partly theoretical, but largely empirical. Since the study deals with the genesis and growth of BJP in North East India, quantitative dimension assumes significance. However,

its political strategy is qualitatively different from other parties. Hence qualitative dimension is also important. Thus, study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It is both descriptive and analytical. As descriptive research includes surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different types. On the other hand, in analytical research after collecting data, available facts and information is used and critically analysed. In order to collect requisite data both primary and secondary sources are used. Books and articles are very limited regarding the BJP's role in Tripura and Assam, so primary data plays a crucial role. Secondary data includes a variety of sources, including government documents like the Gazette and Election Commission data, as well as assembly proceedings, books, newspapers, magazines, journals, election manifestoes, and party records.

Primary data is collected by using structured questionnaire, which contains close ended questions and is useful to collect requisite data from the respondents. In order to collect requisite data, respondents are selected based on representative character. Keeping in view of significance of this study, 200 respondents is contacted as part of field survey. 100 respondents were selected from each state, who can give their feedback on the subject under study, belonging to various walks of life in Assam and Tripura. Some of these respondents include political activists and civil society leaders, employees, students and youths. Besides, teachers, lawyers, farmers and workers were also approached during the course of study. Meanwhile, it is dependent on the character of study areas. For instance, in case of Tripura, tribal and non-tribal representation is given proportionately, whereas in Assam, it is about communal and linguistic classification that became significant.

Chapterisation

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter includes the introduction of topic, historical background of the BJP in Assam and Tripura along with their organizational structure, constitution of the party, aims and objectives. It also incorporates the demographic profile of Assam and

Tripura, statement of the problem, review of literature, significance of the study, objectives of the study, research questions and methodology.

Chapter II: BJP in North East India: Historical Background

The second chapter studies the electoral politics of the BJP in North East India and particularly of Assam and Tripura and in the last two decades how it gradually strengthened its organisation, popular support, vote share and seats share in successive Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

Chapter III: Ideology, Programmes, Organisational Structure and Leadership Role of BJP in Assam and Tripura

Third chapter incorporates the study of ideology, programmes, organisational structure and the role of leadership of BJP in Assam and Tripura. This chapter also discusses the programmes of the party, its organisational structure and also about which major community or ethnic group is providing the leadership in the state level.

Chapter IV: Alliance Policy and Election Strategy of BJP in Assam and Tripura

The fourth chapter discusses the alliance policies and the election strategy of the BJP in Assam and Tripura. This chapter also discusses how the alliance formation, and its political strategy helped the party to come to power in the state of Assam and Tripura.

Chapter V: Policies and Achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura

The fifth chapter includes the policies and achievements of BJP governments in the states of Assam and Tripura. It studies the performance of BJP governments in both the states in various fronts.

Chapter VI: Comparative study of the Political Strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura

The sixth chapter studies the political strategy adopted by the BJP in Assam and Tripura to strengthen its organisational base at various levels and to win various elections.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

The concluding chapter incorporates the summary of the study. Major findings of the study are also incorporated in this chapter.

Conclusion

To conclude, political parties play a crucial role in building a robust democracy. Political parties play a crucial role in the parliamentary form of government, serving either as the governing party or the opposition party. After the formation of BJP led government at centre in 2014, in the political sphere of Northeast, the BJP has been a ruling party in the states like Assam and Tripura. This has changed the political dynamics in these states. The growth of BJP in these states over the years has led to the emergence of new ideological support base in the form of Hindutva which has marked a significant shift in the society and politics of Assam and Tripura. This draws the attention of people in the region at large towards BJP. A significant number of populations seem to support BJP due to several factors which were earlier absent in the politics of North East. Therefore it becomes crucial to study the political strategy of BJP in Assam and Tripura. The role of RSS and other Sangh Parivar organisations also played a crucial role in the strengthening of BJP in these states.

In the year 2016, the BJP formed its first government in Assam and in 2018 first BJP government was formed in Tripura. The party secured seven seats in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 prior to assuming power in Assam. The 2016 assembly elections were significantly influenced by factors such as anti-incumbency sentiments towards the Congress government, allegations of misrule and corruption, and the increase in the Muslim population. The BJP emerged victorious in the 2016 assembly elections with the formation of a rainbow coalition, which included regional parties such as the AGP and BPF, as well as many smaller political groups.

In the assembly elections of 2021, BJP has focussed on the issue of Development and Hindutva which they termed as the “*Savyatar ju*” (Clash of Civilisation) and also told about the protection of Culture. In the 2021 elections AGP and UPPL were the alliance partners.

In 2018 Tripura assembly elections, BJP has used the anti-incumbency against the Left regime, and also focused on people’s issues like road, connectivity, unemployment, and implementation of 7th pay commission for the state government employees. The massive outreach campaign by BJP and RSS and the work done by the RSS affiliated organisations also helped the BJP in gaining ground in Tripura. The alliance with IPFT and joining of BJP by the Leaders across the political parties also helped the party in coming to power for the first time in Tripura. In the 2023 assembly elections BJP returned to power in Tripura for the second time. Issues like development and fulfilment of many of its electoral promises helped BJP in coming to power. Further, division of opposition votes between the Left-Congress alliance and newly formed the Tipra Motha also helped BJP in returning to power. Thus, it can be said that over the years BJP has emerged as a significant political player in the politics of Northeast India. Hence it is important to study the political strategy of BJP in the Northeast India and particularly in Assam and Tripura.

Chapter II: BJP in North East India: Historical Background

The second chapter studies the electoral politics of BJP in North East India and particularly of Assam and Tripura and in the last two decades how it gradually strengthened its organisation, popular support, vote share and seats share in successive Lok Sabha and Assembly elections.

Electoral Politics in Assam

Electoral politics measures political awareness, expression, and participation in decision-making.¹ In the context of a participatory democracy, the significance of electoral politics is crucial as it serves as the primary means through which citizens are mobilised. The concept of electoral politics includes the principles and activities involved in the election of individuals to hold positions of authority within a democratic state. It is widely recognised as a crucial component in the effective operation of a democratic system.² Hence, electoral politics assumes a significant part in the governing process of democratic nations.

Election plays a crucial and indispensable part in the functioning of a democratic system. Periodic elections are conducted to enable individuals to exercise their right to choose representatives based on their personal preferences. In the present situation, it is possible to make reference to the right to vote, which fundamentally constitutes an individual entitlement since it grants individuals the ability to select candidates based on their own preferences. Hence, a strong correlation exists between the study of politics as a whole and the analysis of electoral processes in specific. The significance of the community, association, group, ideology, resources, language, symbols, communication, mobilisation, and local issues becomes apparent in this context.³ Elections serve as a means to establish communication channels between various entities within a political system, including

¹V. Grover.(1982). *Elections, Electoral Mechanism and Behavior*. New Delhi:Deep&deep Publications. pp. 479-480.

²*Ibid*.p.480.

³Bishnu N Mohapatra &DwaipayanaBhattacharyya.(1996). Tribal-Dalit Conflict Electoral Politics in Phulbani.*Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XXXI.(2& 3). p 160.

the polity and society, the elites, and the masses, as well as individuals and their government.⁴ These factors play a crucial role in the dynamics of political socialisation and participation in politics.

In the electoral politics of any democracy, political parties are essential. Political parties play a significant role in democratic nations such as India. There are many important national, regional, and local political parties in India. One of the prominent political parties in contemporary Indian electoral politics is the BJP, which holds a dominant position. The gradual expansion of the BJP across the country, including its recent victory in Assam after continuous 15 years of the Congress rule draw the attention to study the electoral politics of BJP in Assam. Rise and growth of the BJP in Assam can be studied in three phases.

First Phase: 1991-1999

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) failed to garner the support of Assamese Hindus as early as 1991. However, the party achieved considerable success in establishing a strong presence in the Barak Valley, which is predominantly inhabited by Bengali-speaking people. This was seen in its victory in both the Silchar and Karimganj parliamentary constituencies.⁵ Moreover, the substantial arrival of Bengali Hindu refugees after the partition, along with the significant Muslim population, played a crucial role in establishing a solid base for religious politics. The BJP significantly increased its support among the Hindu Bengalis in the Barak valley during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, which coincided with the anti-Bengali riots in the Northeast. Therefore, in the 1996 assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party secured a few of seats from the Barak valley. During the 1996 assembly elections, the BJP emerged victorious in four out of the 117 contested seats (out of 126), thereby

⁴N. Palmer. (1976). *Elections and Political Development*. New Delhi: K P Bagchi & Co. p 54.

⁵In the 1991 assembly elections the BJP contested in 48 seats and won 10 out of 126 seats and secured the vote share of 6.55 per cent (16.68 per cent votes in seats contested). Jaideep Mazumdar . (2016). "BJP's Emergence In Assam: A Short History," *Swarajya*, April 27, 2016.

attaining a vote share of 10.41 percent.⁶ During this time, the BJP increased its vote share and established itself in other regions of Assam.

The BJP established its influence in the Brahmaputra valley following the parliamentary elections of 1998. The BJP gave an appealing package to the entire North-East region in its electoral manifesto. The BJP also discussed the risks of illegal immigration and vowed to expel illegal immigrants. It also promised to find already-residing illegal immigrants and remove their names from the electoral roll. The BJP's election manifesto included repealing the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) "IM(DT)" Act and strengthening the current immigration laws and regulations. It further pledged to issue identity cards and to providenational register of citizens (NRC) to all the legitimate and legal citizens of Assam. By making these promises, the BJP effectively garnered the backing of the Assamese middle class Hindus, specifically those residing in urban areas.⁷ As a result, the BJP performed far better in urban areas during the parliamentary and municipal elections.

The BJP experienced a notable gain in its vote share within the state during the parliamentary elections of 1998, reaching 24.5 percent. However, it was able to secure victory only in the Silchar constituency. In contrast, the BJP's future chances are indicated by AGP's failure to gain even one seat in the 1998 parliamentary elections. But at that time, the intellectuals overlooked this new political growth in the state that directed in a different path.⁸ They were unable to follow the BJP's slow but steady rise into political landscape of Assam.

Additionally, the national leadership of the BJP played a significant role in expanding the party's support base in Assam alongside the state leadership. Upon assuming power at the centre in 1998, the NDA government directed particular focus on the state of Assam. Reference may also be made to the Central Government's approval of around 90 crore rupees for Assam to curb immigration, as promised by the BJP during the election. In addition to this, a significant measure was undertaken by the former Governor of Assam, Lieutenant General S K Sinha, to bring attention

⁶H.Srikanth, *Op.cit.*, pp. 3412-3414.

⁷JaideepMazumdar, *Op.cit.*

⁸H. Srikanth, *Op.cit.*

to the mounting problem of illegal immigration in the region. In a 42-page study addressed to the Home Minister and published in 1998, it was disclosed that the demographic composition of Assam has undergone change as a result of persistent unlawful infiltration.⁹The Governor additionally proposed the elimination of the IM(DT) Act and the designation of all identified illegal immigrants as stateless individuals, thereby depriving them of voting and property rights.¹⁰He also expressed support for using practical measures to address the issue of illegal immigration. The report received a positive reception from organisations such as AASU, who had been advocating for measures to address the issue of undocumented immigration. Following the submission of the report, the former home minister made a commitment to implement suitable measures aimed at addressing the immigration issue.¹¹

Furthermore, it is observed that all of the above described developments created a favourable environment for the expansion and development of the party.¹²The BJP attempted to establish its influence among the Hindu voters subsequent to garnering backing from people within the state. Furthermore, it is significant that the Ram Janmabhoomi movement exerted a significant influence on the political standing of the BJP in Assam, as it played a pivotal role in mobilising Hindu voters. Initially, the BJP garnered limited backing from Hindu Bengalis residing in the Barak valley. Over time, however, the party expanded its support base to include various different groups of society. The BJP established a dominant

⁹(The report also showed a serious picture that how it became a national security issue as well as a threat to the identity and culture of the indigenous Assamese people. It was feared that influx of Bangladeshi nationals in the large numbers may lead to the demand for merger of certain areas of Assam with Bangladesh. Namrata Goswami. (2010). "Bangladeshi Illegal Migration into Assam: Issues and Concerns from the Field," *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, January 11, 2010.)

¹⁰*Ibid*

¹¹H. Srikanth, *Op.cit.*

¹²(It is noticed that the illegal immigration issue remained instrumental in generating political support for the BJP among people of Assam. It was the time when the major regional party like the AGP started losing its ground. However, there was a mixed reaction among the people of Assam when the NDA government collapsed at the centre in April 1999. While a section of people was sympathised to Vajpayee, some other sections are against it. A feeling of patriotism was growing among the people of Assam after the Kargil War, when some soldiers from Assam also lost their life. It was against the backdrop, the ULFA articulated the feeling among people of Assam that Assam was an Independent state, completely separate from India. But, after the Kargil War the wave of patriotism has completely rejected ULFA's standpoint. The Kargil war aided the state BJP leaders in projecting Vajpayee as a national hero, who was capable of dealing with infiltrators.)

presence within the societal and political landscape of Assam, thereby emerging as a significant determinant in the state's electoral politics.

The politics of Assam were hardly influenced by communal politics, with the exception of a small group of religious minorities. In this context, the parliamentary elections of 1999 may be referred up because the Congress Party was able to keep all 10 of its seats with the support of minority votes. However, during that election, the BJP had a defeat in the Silchar parliamentary constituency as the Congress party effectively garnered support from minority voters through successful polarisation tactics. However, after winning both the Guwahati and Nagaon parliamentary seats, the BJP made progress in the Brahmaputra valley for the first time. It resulted in a notable gain in the vote share of the BJP, rising from 24.5 percent in 1998 to nearly 30 percent in the elections held in 1999.¹³ Following the election, the BJP emerged as a formidable competitor to the Congress party in a majority of parliamentary constituencies.

The BJP experienced significant expansion in Assam primarily due to factors related to immigration, communal politics, and the shortcomings of regional political parties. The rise in the Muslim population and the inability of regional forces such as the AGP to effectively address immigration problems fostered an increased feeling of distrust. Additionally, the Congress party's inclination towards appeasing the Muslim community and displaying leniency towards Bangladeshi immigrants further contributed to the decline in Congress's popularity within Assam's electoral landscape. These several factors had a crucial role in facilitating the rise of the BJP in the realm of electoral politics in Assam.

Second Phase: 1999-2014

The Bharatiya Janata Party in Assam began its second phase in the 2001 Assembly elections, forming an alliance with the AGP. The BJP won eight seats, securing a 9.35 percent vote share and 26.31% of votes in its contested seats. In 2004, a triangle

¹³ "Election Results: Full Statistical Reports", 1998 and 1999 Parliamentary Elections, Election Commission of India.

electoral competition emerged in the Lok Sabha elections, with the Congress party gaining support from the minority Muslim community, the BJP from the linguistic Hindu population, and the AGP from the indigenous population. The Congress party secured nine seats, while the BJP retained two seats. The AGP secured two seats, a significant improvement from its previous representation of zero. The 2004 elections resulted in the restoration of seats for the AGP and the BJP.

In the 2006 Assembly elections, the BJP contested 125 out of the total 126 seats. Ultimately, the party emerged victorious in 10 seats, thereby obtaining a vote share of 11.98 percent. During the 2011 Assembly elections, the BJP contested 120 out of the total 126 seats. However, their electoral performance was quite modest, as they were successful in securing victory in only five seats. Additionally, the BJP managed to garner a vote share of 11.27 percent.¹⁴ It is clear that there hasn't been much improvement when compared to the BJP's past vote share.

During the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the Asom Gana Parishad and the Bharatiya Janata Party formed a strategic alliance in order to prevent a division of opposition votes. The anticipation was that the alliance would secure a majority of the seats in Assam, due to the consolidation of Hindu votes. However, the outcome did not align with these expectations. The BJP had a rise in their parliamentary representation, with the number of seats won increasing from two to four. However, the party's vote share experienced a decline, dropping from 30.8% in 2004 to 16.21%. The AGP, contested in the electoral race for six constituencies, although managed to secure victory in only one seat, garnering a vote share of 14.60%.¹⁵ Together, the BJP and the AGP won five seats as a result of their seat-sharing during this election, changing the political dynamic in Assam.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has experienced a substantial increase in its vote share since the 1991 elections, followed by a decrease in the parliamentary elections

¹⁴"Election Results: Full Statistical Reports", 2006 & 2011 Assam Assembly Election, Election Commission of India.

¹⁵Sandhya Goswam, *Op.cit*, pp. 159-163.

of 2004 and 2009. In the year 2009, it fought the elections in coalition with AGP, garnering a vote share of 14.60%. The political party benefitted from its collaboration with the AGP during the 2006 assembly and 2009 parliamentary elections, resulting in a significant increase in profits. The support base of the AGP, comprising Assamese Hindus, Assamese Muslims, and tribals, has gradually changed its allegiance to other parties. The BJP has eventually taken over the AGP's main political issue, which includes its opposition to illegal immigration and call for their deportation, over the past 20 years.¹⁶ This factor also proved beneficial for the BJP in garnering public support.

In the assembly elections of 2011, the BJP made illegal immigration a key issue. Therefore, it suffered politically in the Barak Valley, a region predominantly inhabited by Bengali speaking people, where the party has maintained a significant presence. The Hindu Bengali people, traditionally aligned with the BJP, exhibited a shift in voting behaviour by favouring the Congress, resulting in the latter's failure to secure any of the five available seats. In the Barak valley, the Congress party was victorious in 13 out of the total 15 seats, while the other two seats were won by the AGP and AIUDF respectively.¹⁷ Due to the BJP's emphasis on addressing the issue of illegal immigrants, its support base underwent a shift towards the Congress, resulting in the emergence of the Congress as the dominant political party in Barak valley.

From 1999 to 2014, the BJP experienced significant growth in its organisation and support base, strengthening its position as a viable alternative to the Indian National Congress in Assam politics. During the second phase, the party had an increase in both its vote share and number of seats, which may be attributed to its successful handling of regional issues such as illegal migration from Bangladesh. This efficient response to regional problems played a significant role in expanding its support base.

¹⁶NaniGopal Mahanta, *Op.cit.*,pp.19-22.

¹⁷*Ibid.* p. 22

Third Phase: 2014-2021

The 2014 parliamentary elections in Assam marked a significant milestone in the political development of the BJP in the region. It won the highest number of constituencies' in the election. The emergence of considerable anti-incumbency against the Congress-led UPA government may be attributed mostly to factors such as misgovernance, misrule, and corruption. Along with this, a pro-Modi wave swept the nation, and the BJP's calls for reform were so effective at mobilizing a sizable portion of the electorate to support the party.

In the parliamentary elections held in 2014, the BJP emerged victorious in seven out of the total 14 seats in Assam, thereby obtaining a vote-share of 36.86 percent. The BJP successfully recovered from prior electoral setbacks during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections by garnering the backing of numerous social, ethnic, and tribal groups within the state of Assam. Indeed, the BJP had an increase in support within the tea tribe populations. The tea tribes (tea garden workers) experienced a sense of alienation from the Congress party due to their prolonged deprivation of job prospects, access to education, and healthcare facilities.¹⁸In the Dibrugarh parliamentary constituency, the BJP has attained the highest proportion of votes in each of the nine legislative assembly constituencies, which are predominantly inhabited by the tea tribes (tea garden workers). The BJP has successfully secured the Tezpur and Jorhat parliamentary constituencies, which are predominantly inhabited by the tea tribes traditionally aligned with the Indian National Congress. In addition to garnering support from voters residing in tea garden areas, it also experienced an increase in popularity among the Assamese Hindu community and the tribal population of the state. However, the parliamentary seat for the Autonomous District (ST) was predominantly secured by the Congress party, despite the presence of the Karbi, Dimasa, Kuki, ZemeNagas, and other tribal communities. The indigenous communities, such as the Mishings and to a certain extent the Bodos, expressed their support for the BJP throughout the election.¹⁹ It is evident from the

¹⁸Udayon Mishra, *Op.cit*, pp.20-23.

¹⁹V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit*.

above context that the BJP was able to garner the support of many tribal communities in the state of Assam.

The BJP faced defeat in the Silchar constituency in 2014 in the hands of Congress, but maintained its position as runner-up in the Silchar and Karimganj constituencies of Barak Valley. The BJP did not hold a dominant position in lower Assam. However, it secured second and third positions in Barpeta and Dhubri parliamentary constituencies, respectively, populated by Muslim communities.²⁰ In the 2015 municipal elections, the BJP won 21 municipal boards and 24 town committees, a significant improvement from 2009's five boards and 11 town committees.²¹ By the 2016 Assembly elections, the BJP established itself as a viable alternative to the Congress.

In the 2016 assembly elections, the BJP emerged victorious in 60 out of the total 126 seats, garnering a vote share of 29.51 percent. Other alliance partners the AGP, secured 14 seats, while the BPF obtained 12 seats, with respective vote shares of 8.14 percent and 3.94 percent. The victory of BJP in Assam was remarkable. The BPF, previously aligned with the INC, shifted its allegiance towards BJP with the aim of promoting growth of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The BPF terminated its coalition with the Congress party, prompting the Bodo community to express opposition towards the illegal influx of Bangladeshi Muslims by highlighting perceived concerns around the presence of migrants. Nevertheless, during the assembly elections of 2011, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) managed to obtain a total of 12 seats and subsequently formed a coalition with the Indian National Congress to establish a government. However, this alliance between the BPF and the Congress was terminated in 2014.²² Furthermore, the BJP benefitted from the anti-Muslim feeling that emerged in the Bodo-dominated regions of Assam, which was characterised as being against the Muslim community.

²⁰NaniGopal Mahant, *Op.cit.*

²¹V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

²²*Ibid.*

The BJP and its coalition partners, including the Asom Gana Parishad and Bodoland People's Front and other smaller groups formed government in Assam in the 2016 assembly elections, ending the 15-year Congress party's rule. The BJP has become the ruling political party in any northeastern states for the first time. The BJP won 60 out of 89 constituencies, with a 29.51 percent vote share, while the National Democratic Alliance secured total no. of 86 seats.

The ruling Congress party secured a total of 26 seats, representing a vote share of 30.96 percent. The AIUDF, recognised as the political party representing Muslims of East Bengal descent, secured 13 seats in the election, garnering a vote share of 13.05 percent. In the 2011 Assam assembly elections, the BJP secured a total of five seats, while the incumbent INC emerged victorious with a significant majority, winning a total of 78 seats. The AGP, the AIUDF, and BPF secured 10, 18, and 12 seats respectively. The AGP has consolidated its political standing in the assembly elections through the establishment of a strategic alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party.

In the 2019 general elections, Assam played a significant role in the BJP's impressive victory in the North East. Out of the 14 seats, the BJP won nine, while the Congress secured three, and one each was won by the AIUDF and an independent candidate. In 2014, the BJP had only won seven seats, while the Congress and the AIUDF had secured three each, with one seat going to an independent candidate. Interestingly, the BJP's alliance partners like the AGP and the BPF drew a blank in both 2014 and 2019. The BJP contested in ten constituencies and emerged victorious in nine, including Karimganj, Jorhat, Guwahati, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Mangaldoi, Silchar, Autonomous District, and Tezpur. It was defeated only in Nowgong by the Congress. On the other hand, the Congress contested in all 14 seats but could win only three, including Nowgong, Barpeta, and Kaliabor. The AIUDF could win only Dhubri, where its leader and two-time MP Badruddin Ajmal defeated the AGP. The BPF contested in only one constituency, Kokrajhar, won by independent candidate Naba Kumar Sarania. In Assam, the BJP secured 36.05 percent votes against the

narrow margin of 35.44 percent of the Congress. The AGP secured only 8.23 percent, while the AIUDF and the BPF got 7.80 percent and 2.48 percent, respectively.²³ Thus BJP creased its tally from 7 seats to 9 seats in Lok Sabha from Assam.

The 2019 Lok Sabha polls showed that the BJP was a dominant player in Assam, winning nine out of the state's 14 seats. In the 2021 assembly elections, the NDA continued its dominance, winning 75 seats out of 126 with around 45 percent vote share. Of the 75 seats won by the NDA, the BJP won 60 seats, while its allies the AGP and UPPL, returned nine and six seats, respectively. The Congress secured 29 seats, while the AIUDF's performance was phenomenal, securing 16 out of the 20 seats it contested. The BPF won 4 out of the 12 seats it contested. The BJP's vote share surged by around 4 percent, while the Congress's vote share declined by one percent. Compared to 2016, the NDA gained a 7 percent vote share, while the Mahajot suffered an erosion of around 5 percent vote share, indicating a comfortable and decisive victory in favour of the NDA. The AJP secured a 4 percent vote share and one candidate supported by Rajjor Dal won a seat.²⁴ Though there was a tough contest in the initial phase but BJP led alliance emerged victorious.

Table No: 2.1: Comparing election results of various assembly elections of Assam

Political Parties	Year of Election					
	2011		2016		2021	
	Vote Share	Seat Share	Vote Share	Seat Share	VoteShare	Seat Share
BJP	11.47	5	29.51	60	33.21	60
INC	39.39	78	30.96	26	29.67	29

²³V. Bijukumar. (2019).North East India: Development Rhetoric, Ethnic Anxieties. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LVII(25). pp 18-21.

²⁴Vikash Tripathi &Dhruba PratimSharma.(2022). Religious Polarisation Outweighs Ethnic Mobilisation: Explaining NDA's Victory in Assam.*Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LVII(26& 27). pp 31-34.

AGP	16.29	10	8.14	14	7.91	9
AIUDF	12.57	18	13.05	13	9.29	16
BPF	6.13	12	3.94	12	3.39	3

Source: Election Results: Full Statistical Reports. 2011, 2016 & 2021 Assam Assembly Elections, Election Commission of India.

Moreover, it is evident that during this particular phase, the BJP has emerged as a significant political entity in the realm of Assam's politics. The BJP achieved success in the parliamentary elections of 2014 by securing seven seats. This electoral victory led to the establishment of the first ever BJP led government in the state of Assam, marking a significant milestone not only for Assam but also for the broader North-East region of India. The BJP has established a significant presence in both the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. It became victorious in the assembly elections, securing seats in various regions of the state, including both hill and plain areas. The BJP's formation of a rainbow alliance with the AGP, BPF, and Rabha and Tiwa groups significantly contributed to the BJP's success. The Bharatiya Janata Party BJP was able to garner support from various groups, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds.

Organisational Growth and development of BJP

Appropriating Sankardev by RSS- Currently, the extensive network of the Sangh Parivar covers a number of areas of Assam's society and politics.²⁵ The Sangh Parivar demonstrated an active involvement in the process of appropriating Sankardev, a widely recognised personality in Assam known for his contributions to socio-cultural and religious reforms. During the 15th and 16th centuries, Sankardev emerged as a prominent figure in the *neo-Vaishnavite* reform movement, aiming to streamline the complexities of Hinduism. This movement, known as “*Ekasaraniya*

²⁵Malini Bhattacharjee, *Op.cit*, pp. 80-87.

Nama Dharma,”²⁶It sought to simplify the religious practises and beliefs within the Hindu faith. He founded the *Sattras*, which are monastic institutions, across the region of Assam. The *Sattras* emerged as significant socio-cultural and religious hubs, facilitating the coordination of communal worship, dissemination of religious teachings, and the staging of cultural performances such as *Bargeet* (devotional songs), *Ankiya Naat* (a sort of play), and *shravana-kirtanas*. The *Sattriya* dance, a dance form, was also established by him. The institution of *Sattras* emerged as a hub of egalitarianism, as their simplicity attracted individuals regardless of their caste, class, or religion.²⁷The *Sattras*, *Sattriya* culture, and the institution associated with Sankardev hold a prominent and esteemed role within Assam's social framework.

The Sangh Parivar extensively utilised the popularity of Saint "Sankardev" in their activities. The elementary education wing of RSS, known as Shishu Shiksha Samiti, was created in the year 1979. In Guwahati, during the same year, a school was founded on the occasion of Sankardev's birth anniversary and designated as Sankardev Shishu Niketan. The timing, name, and medium of instruction in Assamese have been thoughtfully chosen. The primary aim was to attract a significant number of Assamese students. Within a brief period, these educational institutions gained significant popularity. Conversely, within regions predominantly inhabited by Bengali speakers like as Barak Valley, the primary language employed for educational instruction was Bengali. Numerous *acharyas*, or teachers, affiliated with these educational institutions are *swayamsevaks*, or volunteers, of the RSS, hailing from diverse regions across the nation. However, it is noteworthy that these individuals possess a high level of proficiency in the respective local languages. The curriculum of these educational institutions is identical to that of the *shishu mandirs* operated by the RSS across the nation. The syllabus encompasses a range of subjects, namely Sanskrit, Vedic mathematics, geography, history, and science. In addition to the recitation of Saraswati Vandana, Shanti path, and Gayatri mantra, the principles

²⁶H. Deka. (2006). The Assamese Mind: Contours of a Landscape. *Where the Sun Rises When Shadows*

Fall. G Sen. (ed.) New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

²⁷U Misra. (1999). "Identity Transformation and the Assamese Community: Illusion and the Reality," *Dynamics of Identity and Intergroup Relations in North East India*, K S Aggarwal (ed), Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study. pp. 98–116.

espoused by Sankardev were also integrated. The schools also adhere to the mandatory observance of Borgeet singing and commemorative ceremonies in honour of the birth and death anniversaries of Sankardev. In addition to the RSS founders such as Hedgewar and Golwalkar, a depiction of Saint Sankardev was also included among the shown images, alongside representations of Bharat Mata. Currently, there are a total of 490 educational institutions operating in Assam under the auspices of the Shishu Shiksha Samiti.²⁸ As an Assamese (vernacular) medium school, these schools are very popular in various parts of Assam.

The Sankardev Sangha, a prominent association of Vaishnav devotees, extends invitations to influential leaders from the RSS and Sangh Parivar to participate in their events.²⁹ The Sangha Parivar extends invitations to *sattradhikaris*, who serve as the chiefs of the *Sattras*, at Hindu *sammelans* (assembly) organised by the VHP. These organisations frequently express worries on the issue of illegal infiltration of Muslims from Bangladesh, as well as the conversions facilitated by Christian missionaries. Indeed, it is worth noting that certain *sattradhikaris* possess affiliations with the VHP and play a vital role in effectively conveying a sense of robust Hindutva ideology within these institutions. According to reports, Borduwa Satra has experienced significant encroachment by illegal immigrants, and must therefore be saved.³⁰ The study published in the "Organiser" highlights the significant contributions of Saint Sankardev in assimilating various tribal communities into the realm of Hinduism.³¹ Consequently, efforts have been made to engage with the people and foster a sense of rapport by means of embracing indigenous customs and shared ideological tenets.

It is crucial to acknowledge that Mahapurush Sankardev was an advocate of Hinduism and had a significant role in preventing the conversion of tribal

²⁸Source: VidyaBharati website: <http://www.vbassam.org/docs/schools/List%20of%20Schools.pdf>, accessed on 20 September 2018.

²⁹H. Gohain. (2003). Sangh Politics in Assam. *Communalism Combat*, No 88, available at <http://www.sabrang.com/cc/archive/2003/july03/spreport3.html> accessed on 26 January 2012.

³⁰"18 Sattras in Assam encroached by illegal Muslim Bangladeshis," *Time8*, Exclusive, May 23, 2018.

³¹Organiser, (2006a): "Bangladeshi Infiltration: Borduwa, Shankar Dev's Seat of Vaishnavism in Assam, under Siege," 21 May.

communities to Christianity.³² The influence of Neo-Vaishnavism in the region is evident in its efforts to mitigate and, in some cases, eliminate discriminatory or prejudiced traditional customs and rituals within Hindu society and the caste system.³³ Therefore, overall, Assam is mostly devoid of social vices such as communalism and casteism.

Therefore, right from its inception, proponents of Hindutva have employed distinctive strategies to navigate the complexities of the region and incorporate it inside the cultural and political consciousness of the people, recognising its unique nature in comparison to other regions of the country. In Assam, the Sangha Parivar has adopted indigenous cults and symbols associated with the Kamakhya and Sankardev Sattras traditions, deviating from their conventional approach of public mobilisation through appeals invoking Hindu deities such as "Lord Ram" or the "Ram Mandir of Ayodhya". Additionally, it strengthens its support base and acceptability by providing welfare services in the areas of education, health, and cultural development by other Sangh Parivar organisations. The Sangh Parivar has strategically utilised local icons as a means of effectively establishing connections with the people.

Hindutva: The Role of various socio-cultural organisations of Sangh Parivar

The analysis of the Bharatiya Janata Party's rise in the state necessitates acknowledging the influence exercised by many socio-cultural organisations affiliated to the Sangh Parivar in propagating the ideology of Hindutva. The rise of the BJP and RSS in Assam, along with the founding of the AIDUF in 2005, has played a significant role in the transformation of the Assamese-Bengali divide into a Hindu-Muslim divide. Various RSS affiliated groups have also utilised the threat of illegal immigration of Bangladeshis as a means to mobilise the people.³⁴ They effectively addressed this important matter and managed to establish trust among the public.

³²Malini Bhattacharjee, *Op.cit.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*

The positions taken on the subject of immigration by the Sangh Parivar and other regional organisations like the AASU and the AGP are very distinct. The RSS consistently upholds a differentiation between Hindu Bangladeshi and Muslim Bangladeshi. For RSS, Hindus are regarded as refugees while Muslims are perceived as infiltrators.³⁵ Both the AASU and AGP support the expulsion of illegal immigrants or Bangladeshis, regardless of their religious affiliation.

The RSS effectively maintained influence over the leadership of BJP in Assam, particularly those who did not have a background in the RSS. The extraordinary nature of the BJP's victory in Assam is attributed to this factor. The BJP achieved significant victory in Assam, as its presence was negligible and only prior to the 2016 assembly elections it started gaining popularity. Hence the credit for this also goes to the RSS pracharaks, karyakartas and the persons who made such political strategies. The feeling of Hindutv in the region was inculcated by the RSS. The Sangh Parivar supported the popular Assam movement and also worked on changing the ethnic and identity base politics of Assam to an anti-Muslim aspect.³⁶ By using anti Bangladeshi card, it prepared a fertile ground for the BJP.

The BJP formed a new alliance with the BPF and other smaller tribal organizations. The party has welcomed skilled and popular leaders from the AGP and Congress who had no prior ideological alignment with the RSS. In Assam, this has led to the emergence of new leadership, ignoring the ideological component.³⁷ This new leadership in Assam has expanded the BJP's influence in various regions.

The discussion above has made it very evident that the RSS and other Sangh Parivar organizations have played a crucial role in establishing a strong support base for the Bharatiya Janata Party.³⁸ They have utilized political appeals and socio-

³⁵ Malini Bhattacharjee, *Op.cit.*

³⁶ "How the RSS plans to win Assam for the BJP," rediff.com. April 11, 2016.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ (The threat of marginalization from the infiltration of "Bangladeshis" and the presence of a large number of Muslims has worked in favor of the RSS in the region. Apart from this, alliance with the regional organizations that protested and led people's movement against the "Muslim Bangladeshis" also worked in favor of the RSS and the BJP. Further, the conversion process going on in the tribal

cultural sensibilities to engage individuals and secure public trust for the party's prosperity. The RSS has made preliminary efforts on behalf of the BJP using its affiliated organizations and diverse methodologies.

Support Base of BJP in Assam

The rise of BJP in Assam is significant. The party recognised the potential for its expansion and progress in Assam due to the existing split and conflict between the Assamese-speaking Hindu community and the Muslim population of East Bengal origin. Despite having significant differences with Assamese, the hill and plain tribes can come together on the subject of "*Aboidha Bideshi*" or "Bangladeshi" or illegal immigrants. The Congress governments at the Central and state level never placed a high priority on addressing the problem of illegal infiltrators and expelling the immigrants. There have been allegations that the Congress party has consistently utilised the illegal immigrants as a means to secure votes and supported them. Following the publication of the 2011 census data, the growth of Muslim population has emerged as a significant concern.³⁹ The Assamese people are concerned about a "Tripura-like situation," in which foreign immigrants outnumber native tribal people.⁴⁰ BJP successfully used the anti-Bangladeshi sentiments in Assam.

The BJP gained support from many majority communities, including the Assamese Caste Hindus, tea tribes (tea garden workers), as well as the hills and plain tribes. However, East Bengal origins Muslims have aligned themselves with the AIUDF as a means of safeguarding their interests. In Assam, Congress was commonly perceived as a longstanding guardian of the Muslim community.⁴¹ Prior to the 2006 assembly elections, the Supreme Court nullified the IM (DT) Act of 1983, a development that caused significant concern within the Muslim minority in the state. The INC attempted to address the concerns of the Muslim community by

areas of Assam from the colonial days also provided ground for them to play the anti-Christian card. These issues all together helped the RSS and the BJP to make its stronghold.)

³⁹“Census 2011: Assam records highest rise in Muslim population,” *Times of India*, January 22, 2015.

⁴⁰Nani Gopal Mahanta, *Op.cit.*

⁴¹(With the Supreme Court scrapping of the IM (DT) Act in 2005 and later with the rise of BJP in Assam, the Muslims of Assam had shifted their allegiance to the AIUDF, which is primarily a Muslim based political party and almost abandoned the Congress.)

implementing the Foreigners (Tribunal for Assam) order in 2006, however their efforts proved insufficient to meet the community's expectations.⁴² The AIUDF was established in October 2005 following rulings by the Supreme Court. The Congress party was effectively replaced by AIUDF in regions with a significant Muslim population during successive assembly and parliamentary elections.

According to the Census 2011 data, Assam experienced the most significant increase in its Muslim population since 2001. Due to concerns regarding the potential consequences of the report, the UPA government opted to postpone its release for a duration of two years and the NDA government similarly chose to delay its publication for one year. The date of the data release by the BJP led NDA governments was of significant importance. Following this, the BJP, along with other political parties and civil society groups, took the census report up and accused the state's current Congress government's failure to stop the influx of Bangladeshis. The release of the census report occurred a few months before to the assembly elections. This issue was brought up even during the 2016 assembly elections.⁴³ The BJP has extensively utilised the census data on the increase of Muslim population in their electoral campaign.

In the previous 15 years, the Congress has lost its base among the tea tribes (tea garden workers), whereas BJP has earned the most support. The BJP sought to establish a presence among the tea tribes (tea garden workers), recognising their significant influence in the electoral process. Simultaneously, it is important to mention that the tea tribes or tea garden workers community is advocating for the recognition of Scheduled Tribe status.⁴⁴ Political parties and student organisations do not consider them as immigrants, despite their well-documented migratory history from the undivided Bengal, Bihar, and present-day Jharkhand. During the height of the Assam movement in 1979, the AASU and the All Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA) issued a joint statement asserting that tea tribes, or workers

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Uddipta Ranjan Boruah. (2015). Winds Of Change In Assam's Politics: Advantage BJP? – Analysis. *South Asia Monitor*, September 13, 2015.

⁴⁴Maitreyee B Chowdhury. (2016). "How The BJP Is Steadily Growing In Assam, *Swarajya*," April 04, 2016.

employed in tea gardens, were an inseparable component of the Assamese community due to their assimilation into the local society.⁴⁵ The Tea tribe community in Assam is not considered to be outsiders.

In the 2016 assembly election, the issue of illegal immigration remained central and was crucial. Over the past four decades, the issue of illegal immigrants has significantly influenced electoral processes in Assam. However, this issue assumed greater importance in the 2016 assembly elections. The BJP, together with its alliance partners, the AGP, has prioritised the issue of illegal immigration and has pledged to address the matter by implementing measures against illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh. In the contemporary context, the development of the AIUDF as a significant political entity in Assam, along with the growth of the Muslim population, has resulted in a perceptible apprehension of marginalisation within the Assamese Hindu people. Hence, the BJP is capitalising on the prevailing sense of fear among the people. During the 2016 assembly elections, it effectively played the Hindu card as a political strategy.⁴⁶ Thus the BJP tries to appease Hindu Bengali population.

The BJP has shifted its focus from national issues to regional issues like illegal migration and deportation of immigrants, which were previously addressed by the AGP. The BJP primarily focuses on illegal immigration of Muslims, with Hindu Bengalis of Assam being its primary support base. National President Amit Shah has pledged to provide all support to Hindus who came to India due to religious persecution and promised Indian citizenship if the party wins the 2016 Assam Assembly elections.⁴⁷

The rise of the BJP in the political landscape of Assam can be attributed to the prevailing sentiment of anti-incumbency against the 15-year rule of the Congress party, as well as the erosion of support for the AGP among the general people. The AGP gradually declined with the passage of time and the decline of regionalism.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

⁴⁷ Maitreyee B Chowdhury, *Op.cit.*

During the Assam movement, there was a significant surge in regionalism and a heightened sense of regional identity. Additionally, it led to the establishment of the AGP in 1985, which subsequently formed government following the assembly elections of the same year. The AGP achieved power by capitalising on the issue of "Illegal immigration," although the regional party proved unable to fulfill its commitments, leading to a gradual disillusionment among its supporters. This presented a significant opportunity for the BJP. The BJP has strategically prioritised the issue of illegal immigration of Muslims in Assam as a means to broaden its support base. Moreover, the electoral collaborations between the BJP and the AGP in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections have proven advantageous for the BJP. The political vacuum resulting from the absence of the AGP was subsequently occupied by the BJP. Several notable leaders from the AGP made the decision to join the BJP prior to the Lok Sabha and assembly elections, hence providing advantageous outcomes for the party.⁴⁸ The BJP has effectively replaced the AGP as a prominent non-Congress political party.

The above paragraphs underscore the observation that the BJP's focal points, namely "Illegal immigration" and the increase of the Muslim population, Development and the preservation of "Jati Mati Bheti," along with the BJP's achievements in garnering support from many groups and ethnic communities, have facilitated the party's mobilisation efforts. Moreover, the disillusionment of individuals with the Congress party, coupled with the political vacuum resulting from the AGP, has also contributed to the consolidation of support for the BJP in Assam.

Factors responsible for the growth of BJP in Assam

The significant factor behind the expansion of the BJP in Assam may be attributed to the decline of the Congress party, which was primarily caused by internal factionalism, widespread corruption, and inadequate governance within the state. The Education and Health Minister at the time, Himanta Biswa Sarma, a prominent leader of the Congress party, along with a group of 45 MLAs, undertook a concerted

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

effort over a period of two years to oust Tarun Gogoi from his position as Chief Minister. However, his endeavour was unsuccessful. The dissidence inside the Congress had a significant and detrimental impact on the party's performance in three parliamentary constituencies, namely Tezpur, Lakhimpur, and Barpeta. Congress faced another setback when Sarma(NEDA chairman), defected to the BJP along with nine MLAs and several prominent party leaders. Sarma, a former cabinet minister in the previous Congress government and current convener of the NEDA, is widely recognised as a significant influence in the political landscape of Assam. During Sarma's tenure as Minister of Health and Education, notable advancements were observed in both departments.⁴⁹The influence of Himanta Biswa Sarma had major consequences for the Congress party, ultimately benefiting the BJP to a considerable degree.

Moreover, the extensive electoral campaign conducted by Narendra Modi, the prime ministerial candidate of the BJP, focusing on matters such as illegal migration, big dam construction, and border fence, along with his dedication to resolving these concerns, has naturally garnered support from the people of Assam, leading them to vote in favour of the BJP. The election outcomes of the 2014 Lok Sabha demonstrated a definite inclination of the electorate to vote against the Congress, hence resulting in a favourable outcome for the BJP. The performance of the INC during its third term under the leadership of Tarun Gogoi was met with dissatisfaction among the public. The occurrence of significant ethnic and community conflicts that occurred in different regions of Assam during the Congress administration can be cited. The four districts of BTAD area, Darrang, Karbi Anglong, and Dima Hasao, have been subjected to frequent instances of communal conflicts resulting in significant loss of life and property.⁵⁰ The conflict in the BTAD mostly included the Bodo community and the Muslim community. The failure of the Gogoi administration to effectively manage the growing enmity between groups and promptly provide rehabilitation to the affected individuals was the primary factor

⁴⁹UddiptaRanjan Boruah, *Op.cit.*

⁵⁰NaniGopalMahanta, *Op.cit.*

contributing to this outcome.⁵¹ Hence, a sense of discontentment emerged among the public against the Congress party in the BTAD.

The rise of the BJP in Assam is a topic of considerable academic interest. The party shown a notable ability to adapt and integrate within the local and regional environment. Sarbananda Sonowal, the BJP's candidate for Chief Minister in the 2016 assembly elections, was selected to contest from Majuli. Majuli holds significant cultural and religious importance as it is recognised as the hub of Vaishnav *Sattras* (monasteries), in Assam. Additionally, Majuli is often referred to as the *Sattra* Nagari, emphasising its prominence in the realm of these religious institutions. Furthermore, the presence of *Sattras* in Assam has been endangered due to the encroachment of land by illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.⁵² Another significant association pertaining to the *Sattra* revolves on the ideology of Hindutva. The contest of the election in Majuli by the Chief Ministerial candidate of the BJP conveys the party's intention to address the issue of encroachment on *Sattra* land and demonstrate their commitment to safeguarding the *Sattras*.

The significant victory of the BJP in the Assam assembly elections is remarkable not just due to its substantial margin but also because to the aspirations it symbolises. The first victory of the party in Assam, as well as its broader success in the North East region, was significant in scope. The alliance led by the BJP emerged victorious in 86 out of the total 126 seats, securing an overall vote share of 41.5 percent. The mandate constituted a robust response to the 15-year tenure of the Congress party in power. The prevailing sentiment of optimism and elevated aspirations among the people was reminiscent of the 1985 assembly elections, during which the newly formed AGP emerged victorious against the Congress party by capitalising on the issue of identifying and expelling "Illegal immigrants," predominantly from Bangladesh. Despite the passage of three decades since the Assam Accord, the issue of illegal immigrants remains unresolved. Hence, the BJP prioritised addressing the issue of illegal infiltration and foreign nationals during the election campaign. Additionally, the party pledged comprehensive development for

⁵¹V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

⁵²Maitreyee B Chowdhury, *Op.cit.*

the state, known as Sarbangan Vikas. Sarbananda Sonowal and the Campaign Committee convener, Himanta Biswa Sarma, were considered to be prominent figures for these two poll promises. Sonowal gained recognition for his legal battle in the Supreme Court's decision to repeal the IM (DT) Act in 2005, as the act was widely perceived as a significant obstacle in the resolution of the foreigner-related problem.⁵³ In contrast, Sarma gained recognition for his accomplishments while serving as the Minister of Health and Education in the Congress government.⁵⁴ Sonowal and Sarma collaborated effectively to defeat the Congress, which had already been weakened by internal divisions within the party. The BJP strategically utilised the sentiment of anti-incumbency and approached the elections with a focus on the themes of development and identity. The party made an appeal to the general public, urging them to exercise their voting rights with the objective of protecting their "*jati, maati, and bheti*" (referring to their national identity, land, and hearth).⁵⁵ The BJP effectively employed identity politics in the state of Assam.

Competing Coalitions

During the 2021 Assam assembly elections, the BJP campaigned on several issues, including the protection of cultural identity of Assam, implementation of welfare schemes of both the state and central governments, including targeted direct beneficiary schemes, development of infrastructure and the grant of autonomous and development councils for ethnic communities as additional issues for ensuring its electoral victory. They also focused on negotiating pay hikes and implementing welfare schemes for tea plantation workers, a significant community in the region. Additionally, the party emphasized COVID-19 management as an important issue. The NDA, which included the BJP, AGP, and UPPL, won a decisive victory, securing 75 seats out of 126 with about 45 percent vote share. The Congress won 29 seats, while the AIUDF secured 16 out of the 20 seats it contested. The BPF won four out of the 12 seats it contested. Overall, the NDA gained seven (7) percent vote share compared to the 2016 elections, while the Mahajot suffered a five(5) percent

⁵³“IMDT Act is the biggest barrier to deportation, says Supreme Court,” *The Hindu*, July 14, 2005.

⁵⁴“Inclusion plus development,” Editorial, *The Hindu*, May 23, 2016.

⁵⁵Udayon Misra, *Op.cit.*

erosion in vote share.⁵⁶So, the performance of state government as well as religious polarisation helped the BJP gaining power.

As a result, the challenge faced by opposition parties in Assam, especially Congress, was to control the narrative surrounding the cultural identity of state by forming a comprehensive counter coalition. The BJP's dominance in Assam made a state-wide counter-coalition seem practical, and all opposition parties were strongly against the CAA. The BJP's success in elections was due to its stable alliance with regional parties, internal divisions within Congress, and the opposition's inability to unite. In the assembly elections, the opposition struggled to choose a chief ministerial candidate to lead their campaign. They were unable to form a state-wide counter coalition or reach a consensus on their candidate, resulting in two major alliances: the Congress-led *Mahajot* and a regionalist alliance. The *Mahajot* included Congress, the AIUDF, left parties, Anchalik Gana Morcha, and the BPF, and was expected to perform well in Muslim-dominated areas. The regionalist alliance of the AJP, supported by AASU, and Rajior Dal, backed by the left oriented KMSS, aimed to limit BJP dominance in upper Assam. Both alliances aimed to reverse the CAA, but they were unable to form a comprehensive counter-coalition for the entire state. It has been found that opposition failed to unite anti BJP votes and it failed to utilise CAA issue properly.

During the campaign, Congress made several promises, including addressing rising unemployment, providing minimum wages for women, increasing minimum wages for tea plantation workers, and tackling price hikes. The Congress-led *Mahajot* had more support in the Barak Valley and lower Assam, while the regionalist parties' alliance had a stronger presence in upper Assam. The Congress-AIUDF alliance had an advantage in minority-dominated areas but struggled to gain ground in upper Assam, which has diverse ethnic and religious communities. Overall, the ruling coalition held a dominant position, while the opposition remained

⁵⁶Vikash Tripathi &Dhruba Pratim Sharma, *Op.cit.*

fragmented and lacked strong leadership during the elections.⁵⁷ It resulted in the victory of BJP.

In summary, multiple factors contributed to the consolidation of the BJP's influence in the state of Assam. The rise and growth of the BJP in Assam may be attributed to several factors. Firstly, there was a significant anti-incumbency sentiment against the Congress government. Additionally, the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh, corruption, and the strategic efforts of the RSS and BJP to expand their support base through various techniques played a crucial role in this development.

Another narrative

The narrative around the BJP's victory might change. When analysing the issue from an alternative standpoint, additional factors may emerge that contribute to the win of the BJP. One may claim from the previously mentioned part that the Hindutva issue is primarily what drove the BJP's rise and expansion. However, in contrast to the rest of India, the promotion of Hindutva was not the exclusive factor. In addition to Hindutva, there was also a significant focus on the preservation of the identity and culture of the indigenous population of the state.

An alternative perspective states that the 2016 assembly election predominantly revolved around the theme of identity. Hence, the Hindutva ideology did not constitute the exclusive determinant in shaping the outcome of this election. The primary emphasis was placed on the conservation of the identity and cultural of indigenous people. The primary factor contributing to the observed demographic shift over time can be attributed to the illegal infiltration from Bangladesh. The publication of religious data from the 2011 census in August 2015 revealed a Muslim population of 34.02% in the state. This information has generated concerns among the indigenous community, increasing their perceived existential threat.⁵⁸ A number of student and civil society organisations have expressed apprehension regarding the

⁵⁷*Ibid.*

⁵⁸Census 2011, *Op.cit.*

potential for continued marginalisation of local inhabitants in state politics. The AGP was a significant regional party that was nearly irrelevant in the current situation. The topic of identity and culture has become more prominent as a result. Recognising the prevailing political dynamics, the BJP formed alliances with regional political entities. The strategic collaboration between regional groups and the BJP has emerged as a game changer.⁵⁹ Yet the absence of an alliance between Congress and the AIUDF might be attributed to the apprehension of Congress regarding potential loss of support from the Hindu electorate.

The strategic decision made by the BJP to form an alliance with the AGP proved to be advantageous for the BJP. Following its underwhelming performance in the 2011 assembly elections and the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, during which it secured a mere nine seats and failed to secure any, individuals who believed that the AGP had completely lost its popular support failed to grasp the enduring public sentiment towards the regional party. Despite failing to get a parliamentary seat in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the AGP managed to amass a significant number of votes over five lakh in the entire state. Moreover, despite its inability to secure additional seats, the regional party continues to maintain its organisational presence across several regions within the state. Significant transformations ensued following the formal establishment of an alliance between the BJP and the AGP. In the context of the assembly elections, the detrimental impact of the concentration of opposition votes on the Congress party was evident. The separation of opposition forces and the subsequent fragmentation of anti-Congress votes consistently worked in favour of the Congress party. As a consequence, the AGP secured a total of 14 seats, achieving notable triumphs for some of its prominent leaders.⁶⁰ After a 15-year gap, as an alliance partner it regained power.

The BJP's collaboration with AGP facilitated a secular perspective, hence enhancing the overall comfort of the alliance. Several former leaders of the AGP participated in elections under the banner of the BJP, while maintaining their support for regionalism. A significant proportion of leaders within the state BJP are

⁵⁹Udayon Misra, *Op.cit.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

comprised of individuals who had previously been associated with the AASU and AGP. Sarbananda Sonowal, a former leader of the AASU and AGP, emerged as a CM candidate for the BJP owing to his clean reputation and widespread acceptance across diverse segments of Assamese society. He is a prominent advocate for the rights of indigenous communities and a staunch opponent of the illegal migration of Bangladeshis.⁶¹ Sonowal served as a representative for the Asom Gana Parishad in the Assam assembly from 2001 to 2004 and in the Lok Sabha from 2004 to 2009. During this period, he was widely recognised as a prominent advocate for regionalism.⁶² Sonowal was also regarded as a main factor behind joining of many AGP leaders.

The issue of development, or Vikash, emerged as an important issue during the assembly elections of 2016. However, the election placed significant emphasis on the matter of safeguarding the land, identity, and culture of indigenous peoples. The name "Last battle of Saraighat" or "*Saraighator Shesh Ron*" was often invoked by the Bharatiya Janata Party during elections, symbolising the final confrontation against illegal infiltrators. The election brought attention to the common themes of identity, land, and language.⁶³ Memories of the "antiforeigner movement" or "*Bideshi kheda Andolan*" or Assam agitation of 1979-85 was also renewed.

In addition to the AGP, the BJP's collaboration with the BPF, as well as the Rabha and Tiwa organisations, contributed to the party's building of a favourable perception among tribal communities. The coalition formed by the BJP was beneficial not just in the regions of Bodo, Rabha, and Tiwa, but also in the hill tribe territories of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. The BJP came close to replacing the INC in constituencies where the latter had been consistently victorious for several decades. The BJP's association with the AGP has effectively mitigated its communal image, while its alliance with the BPF has facilitated the party's ability to garner support from Bodo voters throughout the state, particularly in light of the BPF's triumph in securing 12 seats in the BTAD region.

⁶¹V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

⁶²Udayon Misra, *Op.cit.*

⁶³*Ibid.*

Upon the announcement of the alliance between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Asom Gana Parishad, initial opposition emerged from workers affiliated with both parties in certain regions such as Sivasagar, Sonitpur, and Bongaigaon. However, the leadership of both political parties effectively resolved this disagreement subsequently.

Assam is commonly recognised as the gateway to the Northeast India. Over the past two decades, the leadership of the BJP has been closely monitoring the political developments in the state and attempting to address the vacuum left by the AGP.⁶⁴ The Bharatiya Janata Party's entry into Assam not only facilitated the party's departure from its perception as a party rooted in the Hindi-heartland, but also solidified its status as a truly national political party.⁶⁵ Following the establishment of the government in Assam, the BJP has successfully expanded its influence across the nation.

The infiltration of Bangladeshis into Assam has emerged as a significant concern within the realms of society and politics. Illegal immigration has significantly altered the demographic composition of the state, resulting in profound and enduring effects on the political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of the people.

The Supreme Court repealed the IM(DT) Act in 2005, yet its significance in Assam's current politics cannot be ignored. The Congress consistently faced allegations of engaging in appeasement, so giving rise to a significant national security risk. The BJP asserted that the substantial influx of illegal infiltration in Assam has resulted in demographic alterations and significant long-term consequences.⁶⁶ In the 2014 Lok Sabha election, BJP included in its Vision manifesto a commitment to address the issue of illegal immigration by implementing a three-step approach known as the "three Ds": Detect, Delete, and Deport.⁶⁷ This

⁶⁴V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

⁶⁵WasbirHussain.(2016). India Election Analysis 2016: Assam –Analysis. *Eurasia review news and analyses*, May 21, 2016.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷BJP (2014). Vision Document, 2014.

approach aimed to identify and apprehend those who had illegally entered Assam, remove their presence from official records, and then expel them from the country. The Vision document presented during the 2016 assembly elections included promised to address the issue of infiltrators and implement a comprehensive sealing of the Indo-Bangladesh border.⁶⁸ The political party also pledged to implement stringent measures against individuals or entities that engage in the employment of illegal immigrants.

Beyond Indigeneity

The assembly elections of 2016 and the Lok Sabha elections of 2019 showcased the BJP's ability to form and maintain coalitions with regional parties that had distinct social bases. This enabled the party to hide religious polarization and win votes from a wide range of society, with the exception of a large section of Muslim voters. In 2021 assembly elections, however, the BJP changed its strategy and positioned itself as the protector of Hindu civilization and the cultural identity of Assam. The party saw the current political moment as a cultural war between two distinct civilizations, with issues like the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) being reduced to mere background noise. The BJP exhorted the Congress-AIUDF alliance as cultural onslaughts on the civilizational identity of Assam. The campaign was anchored in overt Hindutva politics, infusing religious meanings and symbols deeply into the idea of cultural identity of Assam.⁶⁹ Himanta Biswa Sarma eventually became the chief minister of Assam, representing a well-marked strategy of naturalizing Hindutva politics in the state at a time when religion has taken over ethnicity and language as the most significant marker of political mobilization.

Electoral Politics in Tripura

The Leftist political slowdown in Tripura began in the 2018 assembly election, which marked the end of 25-year rule of CPI(M) in the state. Victory of the BJP in

⁶⁸Wasbir Hussain ,*Op.cit.*

⁶⁹Vikash Tripathi &Dhruba Pratim Sharma.*Op.cit.*, pp. 8-14.

that election represented an ideological contestation between the Marxists and the Hindu nationalists. It seems that the BJP's desire for power in the relatively smaller state of Tripura goes beyond mere capture of political power.⁷⁰ It remains to be seen how this shift in the political landscape will affect the state's future.

The BJP's campaign slogan of "Chalo Paltai" (Let's Change) had a significant impact on both the dominant Bengali and indigenous tribal communities in Tripura. The party was able to capitalize on the dissatisfaction of both groups and appeal to a wide range of society. With 60 constituencies in the state - 30 for the general population, 20 for the Scheduled Tribe, and 10 for the Scheduled Caste - the BJP's message seemed to resonate with many voters.⁷¹ Thus it can be said that the BJP was successful in utilising the anti-incumbency sentiment.

In the 2018 election, the BJP contested in 50 seats and the IPFT in nine seats. The Congress contested 51 seats, the CPI(M) put up candidates for 57 seats, and the TMC for 24 seats. The BJP won 35 seats, securing an absolute majority in the election verdict, while the ruling CPI(M) could only secure 16 seats. The IPFT, which had a pre-poll alliance with the BJP, secured eight seats, and the Congress did not win any seats. Despite the BJP's significant victory, their vote share was only marginally higher than the CPI(M)'s, with the BJP's vote share at 43 percent and the CPI(M)'s at 42.7 percent.⁷² In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won both the constituencies of Tripura, defeating the CPI(M) which had been consecutively winning from these seats since 1996. The election witnessed a multi-cornered contest between the Congress, BJP, CPI(M), and the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT). In Tripura as a whole, the BJP emerged as a strong political force, securing 49.03 percent of the votes, while the Congress, CPI(M), and IPFT secured 25.34 percent, 17.31 percent, and 4.16 percent of the votes respectively.⁷³ BJP gained more seats and vote share in Lok Sabha election and assembly elections compared to previous elections in Tripura.

⁷⁰V. Bijukumar. (2019), Nuances of the Left Debacle in Tripura. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 54(42).

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²V. Bijukumar, "North East India: Development Rhetoric, Ethnic Anxieties" *Op.cit.* p.77.

⁷³Statistical Report. Election Commission of India. 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

The state of Tripura was ruled by the Left Front government for several years, with their first government being formed in 1977. They had been able to maintain their rule through several elections, with the most recent being in 2013. However, during 1988-93, the Congress party ruled with the support of Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti. In 1998, Manik Sarkar became the chief minister, defeating the anti-incumbency wave. During the 25 years of communist rule, the state was able to bring peace to the once trouble-torn region, transforming it from militancy to normalcy. The Left Front was able to consolidate its mass base by implementing welfare policies and strengthening the public distribution system. Despite their popular support mainly coming from the Bengali community, the communist regime maintained social harmony between the Bengali and indigenous tribal communities. It is noted that most of the state's population were Bengali-speaking Hindus who migrated from Bangladesh. The Left in Tripura is based on support from the Bengali community, unlike the Left in Kerala which is rooted in the social reform movement, and the Left in West Bengal which is rooted in the trade union movement.⁷⁴ So shifting of Bengali Hindu communities towards the BJP has weakened the Left in Tripura.

Simmering Tribal Discontent

The defeat of CPI(M) in the assembly election was due to the decline in social harmony between the tribal communities and Bengalis in Tripura. The tribal community, which makes up around 20% of the state's population and is dominant in around 20 constituencies, has felt marginalized by the communist regime's perceived favouritism towards the Bengali community. This sentiment has been fuelled by issues such as the denial of employment opportunities and the transfer of tribal lands to non-tribals. The IPFT often raised the issue of systematic marginalisation of the indigenous communities at the hands of the Bengalis. The Tripura Land Reforms and Land Revenue Act was passed in 1960 to address land alienation, but the influx of

⁷⁴V. Bijukumar, "North East India: Development Rhetoric, Ethnic Anxieties" *Op.cit.* pp. 16-46.

migrants has complicated the situation.⁷⁵ Overall, it is important for the government to ensure social harmony between all communities in Tripura.

The tribal's in Tripura faced multiple challenges, including the issue of non-tribal moneylenders giving loans against land at high interest rates. This added to their worries and material deprivation. Additionally, there was a growing sense of cultural impoverishment due to illegal migration. To counter this, the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti was formed on 10 June 1967 to revive the tribal's' traditional cultural symbols and practices against Bengali culture. However, the demand for a separate state called "Twipra" for the tribal's has been ongoing since 2009, with the aim of carving out the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) from Tripura. Unemployment also emerged as a significant problem during the Left Front rule, particularly among the tribal community.⁷⁶ In 2017, the state witnessed violent activities like blockade and bandhs by tribal organizations to press their demand for employment.

During the 2018 assembly elections in Tripura, the BJP campaigned on the issue of insensitivity towards the condition of tribal's in the state. They were able to mobilize the discontent of the tribal's in their favour by creating a misconception that the Bengalis mostly benefited at the cost of the tribal's during the 25 years of CPI(M) rule. The BJP adopted a pragmatic strategy striking a political balance between the Bengalis and the indigenous tribal communities in their mobilization strategy. They championed the cause of tribal community without antagonizing the interests of the Bengali community. They promised special economic zones for food processing, bamboo, textile, and information technology sectors. The BJP made use of identity politics by utilizing both ethno-regionalism and Hindu nationalism to achieve political power. They were able to secure the support of state employees by promising the implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission. The BJP strategically used the state's demographic composition to firm up its foothold in the state.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*

⁷⁶ <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/explained-all-about-the-demand-for-greater-tipraland-raised-by-pradyot-kishore-1614069691-1>, Accessed on 10th September, 2022.

Appropriation of Tribal King

The installation of a 184-foot bronze statue of Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman Manikya Bahadur, the last tribal ruler of Tripura's Manikya Dynasty, by the Modi-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government was a strategic move by the BJP to appropriate him into the Hindu fold. The BJP criticized both the Congress and the Left for not giving enough recognition to the king's contributions to the development of Tripura. The Manikya Dynasty had ruled Tripura for over 300 years, making the king an important historical figure in the state's history.⁷⁷ The BJP tried to utilise the cult of the tribal king in its political favour.

Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Debbarman Manikya Bahadur was a significant historical figure in the history of Tripura. He ruled the state from 1923 to 1947 and is commonly known as the architect of modern Tripura. His contributions to the development of the state are noteworthy, as he initiated land reforms, reserved land for the indigenous Tripuris, set up schools and colleges, and constructed an airport. Unfortunately, his premature death at the age of 39 caused political uncertainty in the state, as his son was too young to become the king. His mother, Kanchan Prava Devi, became the Regent and ruled on behalf of her younger son. In fact, the Regent signed the agreement of accession on 13 August 1947, and on 15 October 1949 Tripura merged with the Indian Union.⁷⁸ Thereafter, Tripura became an integral part of Indian Union.

Community Divide

The 2018 assembly election saw a significant victory for the BJP, with leaders like Ram Madhav, Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Sunil Deodhar playing a crucial role. The Congress, on the other hand, suffered a significant decrease in vote share and

⁷⁷“The challenger: In Tripura’s bipolar politics BJP is the new key player” *The Indian Express*. June

26, 2018.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

assembly tally compared to the 2013 election. For example, the Congress's vote share decreased from 36.5 percent in 2013 to 1.8 percent in 2018, with its assembly tally reducing to zero from 10 in the previous election. The vote share among the general community, SCs, and STs also decreased dramatically.⁷⁹ Despite this, it's important to acknowledge the collective efforts of all political leaders and parties in a democratic process.

The 2018 assembly election saw a shift in vote share towards the BJP, which seems to have impacted the CPI(M)'s vote share as well. It appears that the BJP was able to make inroads among the reserved communities like SCs, and STs, while the CPI(M) experienced a decline in its vote share across all communities. The CPI(M) had a reduced vote share of 42.6 percent compared to its 2013 tally of 48.11 percent, indicating that the BJP could have taken some of the CPI(M)'s pie. Decline in vote share of the CPI(M) was visible among the tribal's, SCs, and the general community.⁸⁰ The BJP's victory in the 2018 assembly election was not a sudden occurrence, but rather the result of a systematic campaign and mobilization in the state. While the CPI(M) had been the dominant force in state, the BJP has been making inroads in rural areas over the years. This is evident from the percentage of votes secured by the BJP in the CPI(M)-ruled state in the past. Although there was a slight decline in the percentage of votes secured by the BJP in the 2014 general elections, subsequent trends proved that the BJP had not abandoned its electoral ambition in the region. In fact, in the TTAADC election held on 3 May 2015, the BJP secured 7.87 percent of the votes.⁸¹ Within a few years in Tripura, the BJP's vote share has grown continuously.

In the by-elections for two assembly seats in June 2015, the BJP received 23.33 percent of the votes, but the CPI(M) managed to hold onto both SC-reserved states. Subsequently, in the 15 July 2014 gram panchayat poll, the BJP won 141 seats out of 6,111 and won a majority in five-gram panchayats for the first time. Interestingly, the CPI(M) often accused the Congress and TMC of being responsible

⁷⁹“From Zero In 2013 To 43 Seats 2018, How Did BJP+ Overthrow Manik's 'Sarkar' In Tripura” *Outlook*. March 04, 2018.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹<https://twocircles.net/2015may07/1431010130.html>., Accessed on 13th September 2023.

for the BJP's rise in Tripura. A closer look at the 2018 electoral outcome reveals that the BJP's remarkable victory over the communists was due to a range of factors. Its mobilization and strategy went beyond mere political gains. In essence, the BJP's emergence in Tripura was the consequence of its long-term multifaceted approach, which included creating a counter narrative among the tribal communities and stoking tribal sentiments against the dominant Bengali community. Simultaneously, in its appeal to the Bengali community, the party emphasized the developmental stagnation, increasing unemployment issues, and inadequate salary conditions of government employees. Furthermore, the opposition parties, such as the TMC and Congress, were in disarray, leaving room for the BJP.⁸² Both of these parties experienced frequent political defections among their legislators and were often the target of the BJP's poaching strategy.

The political situation in Tripura seems to have been marked by sporadic violence since the BJP's rise to power in March 2018. This has resulted in demoralization of the left, which has alleged that the ruling party's cadres intimidated its candidates and snatched their nomination papers, leading to the BJP's sweeping victory in the panchayat polls. However, the Congress has emerged as a potential alternative to the BJP in the state, despite some of its leaders leaving the party to join the ruling dispensation. It remains to be seen how this political vacuum would be filled in the coming days.

The Left-front debacle in Tripura seems to be the result of a long-standing social and political upheaval that had been taking place in the state for quite some time. It appears that the BJP's political agenda of appropriating tribal culture and constructing counter-narratives, as well as appealing to the dominant Bengali community through development rhetoric, has not only uprooted the Left's stronghold but has also solidified the BJP's position in state. Despite the BJP's strained relationship with tribal communities over the issue of CAB, the Left was unable to capitalize on the political climate and regain its former dominance in the general elections. In fact, the BJP's calculated efforts in North East India are inching

⁸²*Ibid.*

closer to achieving their goal of a "Congress-free North-east", and their actions have resulted in a "left-free Tripura"⁸³ Thus BJP made its presence so dominant and strong that ultimately led to the weak presence of opposition.

The 13th Tripura assembly election 2023 in witnessed a high-voltage triangular contest between the BJP–Indigenous People’s Front of Tripura (IPFT), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI[M])–Congress and TipraMotha Party (TMP). The BJP-led alliance managed to retain power for the second consecutive term in the state, winning 32 seats with a vote share of 38.97 percent in the 60-member assembly. While its ally, IPFT, could only grab the Jolaibari seat in southern Tripura, CPI (M) secured 11 seats with a vote share of 24.62 percent. Congress, on the other hand, managed to wrest three seats with a vote share of 8.56 percent. However, emergence of the newly formed TMP as the second-largest party, winning 13 seats with a vote share of 20.10 percent, is noteworthy. The party won all the 13 seats in the Scheduled Tribe (ST) constituencies, thereby replacing the prominence of the IPFT as a tribal party. With a voting turnout of 89.8 percent, the recent assembly election has certainly been interesting. The 2018 assembly election in Tripura saw a significant victory for the BJP, which secured an absolute majority of 35 seats, while the CPI(M) could only manage to secure 16 seats. The BJP formed a pre-poll alliance with the IPFT, which secured eight seats, and the Congress failed to win any seats. The BJP's victory was due to the effective use of discontent among the tribal population and the divide between tribal and Bengali communities, leading to the erosion of CPI(M)'s base. The difference in the percentage of votes between the BJP and CPI(M) was marginal, with the BJP securing 43 percent of the votes and the CPI(M) securing 42.7 percent.⁸⁴ Thus it shows how the minimum difference in vote share created a huge difference in the number of seats.

In the 2023 Tripura assembly election, there was an alliance between the CPI(M) and Congress, with seat-sharing arrangements, to take on the ruling BJP. The CPI(M) contested 43 seats, Congress 13, and one seat each by the Communist Party

⁸³V. Bijukumar, “North East India: Development Rhetoric, Ethnic Anxieties” *Op.cit.* pp. 4-12.

⁸⁴V. Bijukumar. (2023). Dissecting the Verdict of Tripura Assembly Election 2023. *Economic and Political Weekly, Vol LVIII*(15). pp 16-19.

of India, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Forward Bloc, and independent candidates. It's worth mentioning that the CPI(M) and Congress were once political enemies, but they joined hands for this election. However, the CPI(M) lost seats and votes compared to the 2018 election, while Congress gained an unexpected advantage, securing three seats with an 8.56 percent vote share from the earlier 1.79 percent. Out of the 60 constituencies, 20 are reserved for the STs and 10 for the Scheduled Castes, which have traditionally favored the CPI(M).⁸⁵The BJP was able to gain support among Bengali voters, but the TMP won the tribal voters, leading to the decline of the CPI(M)'s electoral fortunes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, political parties assume a significant role in the electoral politics of a well-functioning democracy. Hence, the importance of the BJP's electoral politics in Assam is significant. The BJP began to gradually establish a presence in the political landscape of Assam following the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in 1991. From the inception of Ram Janmabhoomi campaign, the BJP commenced establishing a significant presence in the Barak Valley region of Assam, which is predominantly inhabited by Bengali-speaking communities. Subsequently, the BJP began to make progress in other regions of the state, namely in the Brahmaputra valley, which is predominantly inhabited by the Assamese community. Over the course of time, there has been a notable gain in both the vote share and seat share of the BJP. The continuous decline and disintegration of dominant regional party, the AGP, has resulted in a void in the opposition landscape within the state's political sphere. The BJP strategically enhanced its organisational structure. Additionally, other organisations affiliated with the Sangh Parivar have played a significant role in establishing a solid foundation of support for the BJP. The increase of Muslim population, resulting from illegal immigration from Bangladesh and the politics of appeasement by the Congress party, has played a significant role in bolstering the support base of BJP. Furthermore, the Congress party's 15-year rule has resulted in a significant sentiment of anti-incumbency, which has been advantageous for the BJP.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*p.19

During the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP emerged victorious in seven out of the 14 seats, indicating a significant establishment of the party's presence within the state.

Additionally, leaders from several political parties joined the BJP both prior to and subsequent to the Lok Sabha elections, therefore expanding the party's support base. The BJP emerged as a viable political option for the people of Assam, providing an alternative to the Indian National Congress. In order to address the issues of misrule, corruption, and misgovernance associated with the Congress party, majority of the people of Assam cast their votes in favour of the alliance led by the BJP. The BJP was able to strengthen its position by forming alliances with the AGP, the BPF, and Rabha and Tiwa organisations. These alliances played a significant role in consolidating the votes against the Congress. Moreover, people across the communities cast their votes in favour of the BJP led rainbow alliance. The BJP achieved a significant milestone by forming its first government in the state of Assam, marking its first foray into the political landscape of the North East India. The BJP government, in collaboration with its alliance partners, the AGP and the UPPL, secured a consecutive term in office following the 2021 assembly elections.

In the 2018 Tripura Assembly election, the BJP-IPFT alliance defeated the Left regime which ruled Tripura continuously for 25 long years. BJP's victory was shocking for many as BJP didn't have any member in the 2013 Assembly elections in Tripura. The 2023 Tripura assembly election was characterised by intense competition, marked by significant events that were expected to establish new patterns and influence the political landscape of state. Despite the significant financial and political influence of the BJP, the CPI(M) managed to give a formidable challenge and successfully transitioned a state characterised by ethnic volatility and extremism into a state marked by peace and stability. The verdict signifies the rise of Tipra Motha as a significant political entity, supplanting the IPFT which was established in 2021 through the merger of the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) and the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT). The outcome of the election also shattered the aspirations of AITMC to establish itself as a significant

political entity. The recent verdict in Tripura politics is expected to strengthen BJP as it forms its second consecutive government. Additionally, there is likely to be an enduring alliance between the CPI (M) and the Congress party, aimed at jointly opposing the government. Furthermore, Tipra Motha is expected to intensify its efforts in mobilising support and advocating for separate statehood for tribal communities. Lastly, the Trinamool Congress is making desperate attempts to gain political influence in the state, which is predominantly Bengali-dominated.

Overall, the BJP has consolidated its political strength and emerged victorious in the elections held in Northeast India following its success in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections at the national level.

Chapter III: Ideology, Programmes, Organisational Structure and Leadership Role of BJP in Assam and Tripura

The third chapter incorporates the study of Ideology, programmes, organisational structure and the role of leadership of BJP in Assam and Tripura. This chapter also discusses the programmes of party, its organisational structure and also about which major community or ethnic group is providing the leadership at the state level.

Members of society often develop certain beliefs and behaviours concerning the nature of state, basis of political authority, and the government's goals. These values and norms of behaviour control the citizens and encourage their compliance with laws and regulations. Alexis de Tocqueville said, "in order that society should exist the minds of all the citizens must be rallied and held together by certain predominant ideas".¹ Any society inevitably forms patterns of thought, behavioural norms, and beliefs regarding the state, political authority, and government aims. These patterns are frequently utilized to regulate citizens and guarantee adherence to laws.² Ideologies play a significant role in shaping a political culture. Whether native or imported, they gradually become ingrained in the fabric of society and influence how people behave, live, and respond to the demands of their environment.³ As society evolves, so do its ideologies, reflecting the changes happening within it.

Political parties often use specific ideologies to gain political power. These ideologies act as a unifying force, binding diverse groups of people together under a common cause. By promising to create new visions and blueprints for a better society, politicians can appeal to the emotions of masses and gain support for their personal and collective goals. It's important to recognize how these ideologies shape the political landscape and to align with those that reflect the values and principles. One might thus agree with D.W. Brogan that, in practise, it is a "erroneous

¹Alexis de Tocqueville., *Democracy in America*, New York, Alfred and Knoffinc, 1945, vol.2, p.12.

²Robert Lane., *Political Ideology*, New York, The Free press of Glenco, 1962, p.15.

³*Ibid.*p.16.

assumption that parties are and must be doctrinal bodies." ⁴Therefore, ideology is crucial to a political party's success.

An ideology can be a powerful force in the life of a political activist. It can generate the necessary fervour and sustain idealism and commitment to the cause. This is why it is important to carefully consider and align oneself with ideologies that reflect personal values and principles. By doing so, individuals can be sure that they were working towards a better society in a way that is true to their beliefs.⁵ Ideology is "a comprehensively articulated assessment of a given environment in terms of desirable objectives and the means by which those objectives can be attained," as put forward by Sirsikar and Fernandes.⁶ When it comes to ideology, it's about more than just having a theoretical perspective or framework of analysis. It's also about offering a practical problem of action, where concepts are put into practice. This is why a political party needs to have a distinct ideology that would set it apart from other parties. For example, the BJP is known as a party with a difference because other parties do not fully share its ideology.

It's important to understand the ideology of a political party in order to grasp its nature and structure.⁷ This is especially true for the BJP, where ideology is held in high regard. Ideology offers a wide range of ideas and values that affect a party's policies, determine organizational objectives, and provide legitimacy to the

⁴M. Duverger., *Political Parties*, New York, John Wiley, 1954, p.5

⁵Working group report. *Ideological, Org., Agitational, Constructive, Electoral views*, presented to National Exe., Bhopal, 20 July 1985, p.14.

⁶V.M. Sirsikar and L. Fernandes., *Indian Political Parties*, New Delhi, Meenakashi Parkashan, 1984, p. 137.

⁷The success of a political party is heavily dependent on its ideological appeals. A party needs to appeal to and socialize the people politically, articulating and aggregating their interests in the light of its ideology. Character of any political community is primarily determined by those who control the economic resources of that community. This is why the ideology regarding ownership of means of production is important in determining whether a political party is Leftist, Centrist, or Rightist. A Leftist ideology advocates for the socialization of means of production, while a Rightist ideology champions the cause of privatization of means of production. A Centrist's ideology takes a more moderate approach and combines a mixture of socialization with privatization. It's clear that a political party's ideology is crucial to its success and influence.

behaviour of party members.⁸It gives party members a sense of direction, sets broad parameters, and legitimizes the party and its platform among the masses.

It's interesting to note that the term ideology has been a point of contention due to its somewhat ambiguous nature. Despite its frequent usage, its meaning and implications can be challenging to understand. Originally, it was intended to refer to a philosophical discipline that examined the foundations of all sciences and guaranteed their impartial application.⁹However, its current usage has become increasingly obscure, making it difficult to use for scholarly purposes

The term "ideology" has evolved and is subject to various interpretations. It is important to explore its meaning to understand its relevance to study better. The Encyclopaedia of America suggests that ideology was a crucial component of a political party. In essence, it refers to the set of beliefs and values held by a group that shared common bonds such as political, economic, religious, or cultural affiliations.¹⁰ It is important to understand the principles behind an ideology to effectively work towards achieving its goals. This involves a commitment to a particular social and economic philosophy and a collective effort towards its realization. The ideology encompasses fundamental economic, social, and political values and outlines an action plan for societal transformation.¹¹By keeping these principles in mind, one can strive towards creating meaningful change.

Robert E Lanes has mentioned that ideology was the conversion of ideas into social levers. For the ideologue, the truth arises in action and meaning is given to experience by the transforming moment.¹² Webster's third New International Dictionary defines the term ideology as "extremist socioeconomic programme or philosophy constructed wholly or in part on fictitious or Hypothetical basis."¹³It is true that the ideology of a political party was crucial for its functioning. It represents

⁸J.S. Brar., *The Communist Party in Punjab: The Politics of Survival*, New Delhi, National Book Publishers, 1989, p. 115.

⁹Lieber H.T. and Bulow H.G., *Ideology in Marxism, Communism and the Western Society: A comparative Encyclopaedia*, by CD. Kering (ed) Herder and Herder, New York, 1972, vol. III, p.200.

¹⁰Encyclopaedia of America Int. edition., vol,I, New York, 1970, p.744.

¹¹Padel Ford and Lincoln., *The Dynamics of International Politics*, p.59.

¹² Robert E. Lanes., *Political Ideology*, New York, 1967, p. 14.

¹³Webster's New International Dictionary., cited in op.cit., p.76.

the principles and policies that the party advocated for and strives to achieve. This is especially evident during elections when the party releases its manifesto. The Bharatiya Janata Party also has its own ideology, which is an important aspect of its identity.

Ideological Position

The Bharatiya Janata Party has a rich history and has evolved over time. In its early years, it aimed to shed its Bharatiya Jana Sangh image and identify itself with Gandhian economic ideas. The party's founding president, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, emphasized the importance of mobilizing support from all sections of society to provide a national alternative. Vajpayee presented five principles at the party's first National Convention in 1980, which he believed could be the basis for creating a national consensus.

These principles were known as "Our five commitments."¹⁴—

First, Nationalism and National Unity.

Two, a firm belief in and support of democratic principles.

Thirdly, positive secularism.

Fourth, the socialist ideology of Mahatma Gandhi.

Fifth, Politics that is built on core values.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee had a vision for the Bharatiya Janata Party to be more liberal, democratic, secular, and egalitarian. He encouraged fellow party members to take inspiration from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaja's leadership and Mahatma Jyotibha Phule's commitment to social justice. To understand the party's ideology, it is necessary to analyze each of these five commitments thoroughly:

¹⁴Our Five Commitments, New Delhi, BJP Publication, pp.4-6.

I. Nationalism and National Integration

The first principle is Nationalism and National Integration.¹⁵ The Bharatiya Janata Party believes that the welfare of the people largely depends on national efforts and that the defence of national interests should be a primary concern for every Indian. They recognize that India was a nation of many faiths, ideologies, languages, and interests, and believe that people of different backgrounds should be able to coexist in peace and harmony. The party is committed to nation-building and aims to build a strong, prosperous, and modern India that drew inspiration from its ancient culture and values. They believe that Hindutva had the potential to strengthen and discipline the nation for the task of nation-building and can inspire patriotism to transform the country to greater levels of efficiency and performance.¹⁶ Thus it can be seen that BJP recognizes the importance of Constitution of India and is dedicated to maintaining national integration.

II. Commitment to Democracy

The BJP upholds the importance of democracy and believes that it was rooted in the people's desire for equality and freedom from exploitation. The party's founding members were actively involved in various movements to strengthen and protect democracy. The BJP's election manifesto of 1998 reflects the party's democratic spirit, which recognised the just rights of all individuals, groups, and communities by establishing relevant institutions and commissions.¹⁷ The BJP is committed to establishing a democratic state that provided political, social, and economic justice to all citizens regardless of their caste, color, creed, or sex. The party believed that the strength of democracy was directly proportional to the strength of the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. However, these institutions have been weakened by decades of misrule and misuse. Corruption and the inability to make tough choices have eroded people's faith in the government.

¹⁵AMzaidi., Annual Register of Indian Political Parties, New Delhi, S. Chand and Gompny, 1981,p.675.

¹⁶"Article 11", Gonstitution and Rules, Bharatiya Janata Party, New Delhi, BJP Publication, 1994,p.1.

¹⁷K.Chaudhary., "BJP's Changing View of Hindu Muslim Relations", Economic and Political weekly, August 17, 1991, p.1901

III Positive Secularism

Third, Bharatiya Janata Party believes in the policy of Positive Secularism based on moral values.¹⁸ It is important for political parties to uphold the principles of democracy and work towards strengthening it. Unfortunately, communalism and the use of communal vote banks have become a cancer in Indian politics that threatened national integration and nationalism. The BJP is committed to fighting this issue and ensuring the protection of minorities' life and property. The party believes in a positive concept of secularism, which includes distilling common moral values from different religions and civilizations. This idea of secularism is essential for a democratic state and serves as the bedrock of democracy. It is unfortunate that the Congress had been distorting secularism for many years by formulating policies that appeased narrow communal and sectional interests. It is time for political parties to prioritize the principles of democracy and work towards positive change.

As A.B.Vajpayee eloquently stated, a truly secular state in India can only be established if every citizen, regardless of their religion, caste, region, or language, feels a sense of Indianness.¹⁹ This sense of Indianness is based on a value system derived from Indian culture and traditions, which has been developed through the synthesis of diverse experiences over centuries. It is crucial that this process of synthesis and harmonization continued, with all religions in the country contributing towards making our citizens better and Indians better human beings. Upholding these principles of unity and diversity is essential for the growth and prosperity of our nation.

In a secular state, religious ideals should be instilled in citizens, without rejecting any religion. India's cultural heritage, which includes Hindutva, should be the foundation for a truly secular state. Political parties can prioritize these principles to strengthen democracy and protect minorities. Positive change is necessary.²⁰ There are several definitions of Hindutva. Its central argument is that Hinduism is the

¹⁸A.M.Zaidi., *Op. Cit.*,p.676.

¹⁹A.B. Vajpayee., New Delhi, Bharatiya Janata Party Publication, p.2.

²⁰Debashis Chakravarty., "The Bharatiya Janata Party's Newspeak : Fraud of Positive Secularism", *The Statesmen*, January 11, 1991.

bedrock of India's national identity since Hindus are the country's largest religious group and "nations are built on the basis of common culture and ideology."²¹ To the Bharatiya Janata Party, a genuine concept of Indian nationhood should incorporate the Hindu heritage along with the traditions, practices, and beliefs that would flow through the country's ancient history. The Bharatiya Janata Party constructed this concept negatively by creating fear in the minds of Hindus that in the near future, Muslims, who were invaders to the country, would destroy Hindu culture by demolishing Hindu temples. The majority community would be outnumbered in their land. Due to this strategy, the Bharatiya Janata Party easily roped a large segment of the Hindu population.

The idea of Hindutva ideology adopted by the BJP leadership was to persuade the public that secularism in India was Islamised and is just another way of bashing Hindus. According to the BJP, no other political party has seriously acknowledged that secularism should not be protected at the expense of Hindu interests while safeguarding the Muslim minority.²² It is important to consider different viewpoints when discussing the issue of secularism in India. L.K.Advani believes that a Hindu should take pride in their religion, while also recognizing that non-Hindus belong to India.²³ He clarifies that the term "Hindu Rashtra" refers to a unified Indian nation, not just Hinduism. The BJP upholds the principle of positive secularism, which promotes equal treatment of all religions without special provisions for minorities. It is important to balance protecting Hindu interests and upholding secularism, without marginalizing any group.

The Bharatiya Janata Party claims to differentiate between genuine secularism and pseudo-secularism. According to their leadership, their emphasis on "Hindutva" as the basis of Indian Nationalism is not anti-secular, as the term 'Hindu' refers to every inhabitant of India. They believe Christians, Muslims, and Parsis

²¹Yogendra K.Malik and V.B.Singh., "Bharatiya Janata Party: an alternative to the congress (I) ?", *Asian Survey*, vol. XXXII, No.4, April 1992,p.321.

²²Lalit Uniyal., "Is BJP the party of the Future", *Mainstream*, vol XXX,No.35, June 20, 1992, pp.19-23,

²³P.C. Swain and S.C. Hazary., *Indian Party System: A Study of the BJP*, S.S. Publications, Bhubaneswar, 1991, pp.51-52.

living in India are also Hindus. This interpretation of the term 'Hindu' is based on geographical nationalism and has nothing to do with the Hindu religion. The BJP's approach to secularism is positive, which means equal treatment of all religions without any special provisions for the minority.

The BJP's stance on secularism has been criticized for reconciling Hindu Nationalism with it.²⁴ The BJP has conflated the concept of 'Bharatiyata' with 'Hindutva', effectively isolating Indian culture from its vast array of diverse cultural elements and narrowing it down to a purely Hindu-centric ideal.²⁵ In the initial days BJP followed the ideology of positive secularism.

IV. Gandhian Socialism

The Bharatiya Janata Party has adopted 'Gandhian Socialism' as a key ideology of the party, which emphasizes the fulfillment of both material and spiritual needs for all individuals. This approach prioritizes the values and principles that had been historically evolved and tested by human society. It's also interesting to see the BJP leadership rejecting Marxism and violent means while advocating for economic decentralization based on ethical and moral principles. The idea of decentralization is particularly noteworthy, as it allows for the existence of two parallel systems of political institutions and processes, one being the institution of representative democracy and the other being the institution of participatory democracy.²⁶ This approach may foster a sense of inclusivity and promote unity among all individuals in the society.

The guiding principles of Gandhian Socialism aspire to supplant the prevailing systems of capitalism and stateism, with a model of co-operative governance and trusteeship across all spheres of economic activity. Such an approach places significant emphasis on the judicious employment of right or reasonable means, in order to achieve a gradual transformation of society towards the realization of a co-operative commonwealth, thereby effectively putting an end to all forms of

²⁴ H.K. Paranjape., "Secularism: Real and Pseudo," *Mainstream*, vol. XXIX, No.30, May.18,1991, p.B.

²⁵ D.Chakravarty., "Myth of Hindutava", *The Statesman*, March 29, 1991.

²⁶ P.C. Swain., *Op.Cit.*, p.94.

exploitation. The BJP's campaign to adopt Gandhian Socialism as a third alternative, which seeks to reconcile freedom and equality, can be viewed as a significant step towards creating a society that valued inclusivity and promotes a sense of unity and oneness among individuals. It is noteworthy to mention that within the framework of Gandhian Socialism, there existed ample room for diverse ideologies, ranging from large to small, so long as they do not debase human dignity, or serve as instruments for exploitation or neo-colonialism. The harmonization of science and religion, which is also a crucial tenet of this ideology, can contribute to fostering a sense of balance and harmony in society.

V. Value Based Politics

According to A. B. Vajpayee, one of the core commitments of the Bharatiya Janata Party is to pursue value-based politics. He expressed concern over the moral crisis plaguing the country, where political manipulations have replaced moral values, leading to self-seeking and power-lust. Vajpayee emphasized the need to establish a political system based on ethics and values, rather than a pure power game. Such a system would not only ensure the welfare of all individuals, but also foster a sense of unity and oneness among them.²⁷ It is concerning to see the degeneration of public life in India due to various unethical means adopted by those in power. The use of such means during the elections of 1969, the Declaration of National Emergency in 1975 to cling on to power instead of focusing on security, serious crimes like hijacking, collusion of politicians with anti-social elements, and incitement of communal, casteist, and regional feelings during the 1980 elections have all contributed to this degeneration.²⁸ The double standards of morality further add to the process of decay. Sadly, this moral decay has affected the entire Indian society, including bureaucracy, industry, and trade. The erosion of moral strength has made it challenging for the nation to face its challenges.

²⁷A.B.Vajpayee.,*Op.cit.*, p.3.

²⁸*Ibid.*p.4.

The BJP strived to build up such a value-based politics and thus seek to cleanse the filth surrounding in public life.²⁹The party prioritizes values like tolerance, contentment, simple living, hard work, and brotherhood in order to build a better society. The party focuses on implementing policies and approaches advocated by great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jai Parkash Narayan, and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. It's important to launch a struggle to organize and empower the poor, peasants, workers, dalits, tribals, and other exploited sections of society to create a new society that is free from exploitation, discrimination, and inequality.³⁰One must establish credibility with the people and let them know we're different from the self-seeking politicians dominating the political stage. The policies can be based on certain values and principles that would benefit the people.

The Bharatiya Janata Party, under the leadership of Vajpayee, made a conscious effort to reject certain ideologies to become a meaningful and stable national political party. However, it is important to examine all responses and suggestions regarding the main ideological thrust of the party, including establishing a society free from exploitation and based on equality. Extreme suggestions were to be avoided, and all policies were based on certain values and principles that would benefit the people. Political parties can prioritize values such as equality, modernism, and the application of science and technology to eradicate poverty and uplift the downtrodden.

Examining how diverse versions of nationalism had played out in various contexts, like in India, can be quite fascinating. During the struggle for independence, political leaders and intellectuals engaged in crucial discussions about the nature of state and national identity. While Indian nationalism aimed to embrace all cultures and religions, Hindu nationalism emerged as a response to it.³¹It is crucial to comprehend the intricacies and complexities of political ideologies and their effects on society.

²⁹Geeta Puri., "A Question of Identity ", Seminar, No.362, Oct. 1989, p.28.

³⁰A.B.Vajpayee., *Op.cit.*, p.5.

³¹Charles II, Heimsath, Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reforms, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1964, p. 139.

The concept of 'Hindu Nationalism' has its roots in the social reform movements of 19th century, which aimed at incorporating western values and re-interpreting Hindu sacred texts. Jawaharlal Nehru, an influential political figure in India, developed an alternate model of Indian Nationalism after the first World War based on rational ideas and norms of behaviour that transcended religious beliefs and practices. He believed that such an ideology could help Indians overcome narrow caste, communal, and regional loyalties, which were deeply ingrained in the psyche of average Indian. Nehru also recognized that economic factors played a significant role in exacerbating social and religious conflicts in India.³² Nehru believed that if traditional societies, such as India, were to centre their development around science and technology, it could lead to the normalization of secularism in politics.³³ Thus, Nehru was a believer of secularism.

Nehru and his associates recognized the synthetic nature of Indian culture and did not reject Hindu the cultural ethos. They aimed to promote cultural and ideological consensus among all people in India, regardless of their race, religion, or place of birth. This approach led to the introduction of liberal democratic institutions and became the dominant ideology in post-independent India. However, the revival of Hindu Nationalism in the 1980s had led to the rejection of Nehruvian concept of secularism and a re-definition of Indian National identity. The Hindu nationalists claim their goal is to "remake India in the western image," which contrasts the Nehruvian vision of a diverse, inclusive, and democratic India.³⁴ Thus they had rejected Nehru's vision of secular and democratic India.

The Hindu Nationalism promotes a cultural identity rather than just a religious one. The proponent of this ideology believes it would lead to a stronger nation and promote a single national identity, rejecting the idea that India was a multi-national state. Historically, Hindus refer to people living east of the Indus River, regardless of

³²Jawahar lal Nehru., *Discovery of India*, New York, Doubleday, 1946, Chapter 1.

³³Support for this view is found in the writings of Western theorists such as Leonard Binder, Lucian Pye, James Coleman, Sidney Verba, Myron Weiner, etc. *Crisis and Sequences in Political Development*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1971.

³⁴Girilal Jain., "A Turning Point in History", *Manthan*, vol.13. No. 1-2 (May-June 1991), p.20.

religion.³⁵ The term Hindu has cultural implications beyond just a religious identity. H.V. Seshadri, a Hindu Nationalist Ideologue, believes it represents India's national way of life. He states that anyone who is committed to the unity and sanctity of country looks up to the great forebears as national heroes, and values the cultural traditions of India, can be considered a Hindu.³⁶ This perspective highlights a broader definition of the term and its importance in promoting cultural identity in India.

Hindutva or Indianness is a constantly evolving concept that represented the unique qualities, values, and attitudes of the people of India. It encompasses moral values and a particular mindset.³⁷ Hindus have an unbroken, unique civilization, cultural history, and identity shaped by their indigenous heritage and evolving traditions.³⁸ However, critics of Hindu Nationalism argue that it was a narrow concept that sought unity only among those who adhere to specific values and norms of behaviour. This is exemplified in the key concept of Hindu National Ideology, Hindutva.

There is no significant change in the party's ideology since its inception, except the working group(report) that recommended a shift from "Gandhian Socialism" to "Integral Humanism."^{39,40} Many feel uneasy about using the word Gandhian due to its

³⁵Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh., Hindu Nationalists in India, Vistaar Publication, New Delhi, 1995,p.13.

³⁶H.V. Seshadri., et.al. Why Hindu Rashtra? New Delhi, Suruchi Prakashan, 1990,p.33, and also C.P. Bhisikar, Pandit Deen Dayal: Ideology and Perception, Part V, Concept of Rashtra, New Delhi, Suruchi Prakashan,1988, Chapter 1-5.

³⁷*Ibid*

³⁸A.K. Ray., "Hinduism: A Geographical Cultural Concept", Manthan, vol.13. No.1-2 (May-June, 1991) p.27

³⁹*Ibid* Also Prabha Dixit., "The Ideology of Hindu Nationalism" in Thomas Pantham and Kenneth L. Deutsch (eds). Political Thought in Modern India, New Delhi, Sage Publication, 1986, pp.122-141.

⁴⁰(It is believed by the leaders of BJP that in order to create a national alternative to address the crisis of Indian society, the party's existing commitments need to be updated to reflect contemporary socio-political situations. A working group was formed to develop an alternative ideology that could be used to launch a national movement capable of resolving the multidimensional crisis facing mankind today. The group believed that an Integral approach, later known as "Integral Humanism", was necessary to address the unprecedented crisis engulfing mankind in all aspects of human life and the environment. The crisis has affected all nations of the world, resulting in problems such as unequal distribution of income, loss of faith in values, traditions and institutions, monetary disorders, unemployment, rise in crimes, violence, alcoholism, and drug abuse. Despite the use of sophisticated tools and techniques, human efforts have been unable to offer solutions to these problems.)

negative connotations in some circles.⁴¹ Within the Bharatiya Janata Party, there have been disagreements about the role of socialism in the party's goals. Some hardliner members of the party have expressed opposition to including Gandhian socialism as a key tenet of the party's platform.⁴² But it was adopted due to A B Vajpayee and other liberal leaders of the party.

It is noted that a working group of the party had rejected the suitability of socialism in Indian conditions. Instead, the party has emphasized the Gandhian approach to socio-economic issues and had elevated "Integral Humanism" as the basic philosophy of Bharatiya Janata Party. The primary focus of Integral Humanism is the development of human personality, a concept originally introduced by Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. To understand the ideology of the party, it is necessary to study and analyze the concept of Integral Humanism.

Integral Humanism

On July 20th, 1985, the party's working group presented its report to the National Executive in Bhopal, and subsequently the National Council of the party met in Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat. The report was considered and recommended that 'Integral Humanism' should form the party's basic philosophy. The party also decided that the Gandhian approach to socio-economic issues should be emphasized over Gandhian Socialism to establish an egalitarian society free from every type of exploitation. The party reaffirmed its goals to transform India into a powerful country that is inspired by India's ancient cultural ethos but also thoroughly modern, progressive, and enlightened. These changes in the ideological thrust and orientation of the party were meant to enthrall supporters who were rooted in the political moorings and ethos of the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya believed that a political philosophy attuned to the nature and tradition of Bharat was necessary for the all-around progress of the nation. He named the philosophy Integral Humanism, which he believed, with its roots in

⁴¹Indian Express, Delhi, July 22, 1985.

⁴²"Beware of BJP, "Organizer, February, 1981.

India's glorious achievements, would provide universal nourishment to curious minds. Integral Humanism is the only remedy for the imbalance created by modern industrialization that had pushed humanity to the edge of a precipice. The philosophy re-establishes man's place in the right perspective and aims to develop him as a complete personality. The concept of Integral Humanism was well-known to the vast masses of the party and was given a detailed philosophical and political exploration. The constitution of party was amended to incorporate Integral Humanism as its basic philosophy.⁴³ It ensures the integrated development of human personality. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya once said, "Body, mind, intelligence, and soul comprise an individual. But these are integrated; we cannot think of each part separately."⁴⁴ Deen Dayal Upadhyaya believes that man's progress is tied to the simultaneous progress of the body, mind, intellect, and soul. He referred to this as integrated human development of human personality. He believed it was crucial for individuals to strive for this type of development to contribute to a larger, integrated development of society. Upadhyaya even went so far as to suggest that a nation itself was a prominent human society with its own soul, which is a fascinating perspective to consider. He clearly placed great importance on the interconnectedness of individuals and society, and his words serve as a powerful reminder of the value of nurturing all aspects of our being.

The BJP's Integral Humanism philosophy encompasses political, socio-economic, religious and developmental ideas from a humanitarian angle. It recognizes the importance of 'Dharma' in guiding individuals towards moral and material progress and spiritual salvation. The party considers this doctrine to be in consonance with ancient Indian ethos, and as a part of Indian philosophy, it aims to build a new social order that was capable of resolving modern conflicts and eliminating exploitation in society. This approach establishes a symbiotic relationship between society as a whole and the individual parts. The philosophy recognizes the natural urge for freedom on the part of both individuals and nations, and democracy is seen as a device to uphold people's rights in all spheres, including economic and social. Each constituent participates equally in sustaining the system, and individuals

⁴³"Bharatiya Janata Party in Retrospection", New Delhi, BJP Publications p.14.

⁴⁴V.V. Nene, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya., Ideology and Perception Part II Integral Humanism, New Delhi, Suruchi Prakashan, 1988, p.11.

enjoy various fundamental rights.⁴⁵ Upholding the principles of 'Dharma' is crucial, as it allows for the prosperity and spiritual salvation of the nation.

In the state of Assam, the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) approach involves incorporating Core Hindutva elements while still acknowledging the region's distinct aspirations. They aim to create a socially inclusive order that benefits all individuals and communities. They have combined politics of identity and ethnicity with the principles of Hindutva.

Programmes of BJP in Assam

The BJP's success in Assam can be attributed to their organizational activities and the manifestos they presented in the 2016 and 2021 assembly elections. These manifestoes served as a roadmap and action plan for the party, outlining their vision for the region and the steps they planned to take to achieve it. In 2016, the BJP's manifesto was titled Assam Vision Document 2016-25, which outlined their plans for the next decade in the region. This focus on clear goals and strategies contributed to the party's victory in these elections, to some extent.

Provisions of Assam Vision Document 2016-25

In the 2016 Assam Legislative Election manifesto, BJP promised the following "Assam Vision Documents 2016-25".⁴⁶ In this document, "State Security" has been given primacy, and here are the detailed discussions on the document and its various provisions-

- I. The vision document of the BJP in Assam prioritises addressing the longstanding challenges of insurgency and terrorism that have afflicted the region. In order to address these issues, they intend to establish essential infrastructure and public facilities in regions susceptible to insurgent actions. In addition, the party's objective is to enhance law enforcement and implement stringent actions against insurgent factions that have declared war

⁴⁵Deen Dayal., "Our Direction", in Deen Dayal, Guruji Thengadi, The Integral Approach, New Delhi, Deen Dayal Research Institute, 1979, p.24.

⁴⁶Assam Vision Document 2016-25. BJP, 2016.

on the government. Additionally, they enforce a strict policy of zero tolerance against any individual or group that attempts to disturb or undermine societal order. In order to enhance collaboration between the general public and the police, the party intends to implement measures that promote and nurture this alliance. Additionally, ensuring the well-being of surrendered militants and providing government aid to the families impacted by terrorism and associated violence was also of utmost importance. The party's objective also includes offering support and rehabilitation to the families of the Assam Movement's martyrs. In these issues BJP government is largely successful in Assam.

- II. The main objective of the BJP's Vision Document for Assam is to fully carry out the 'Assam Accord' and provide Constitutional, legislative, social, and cultural safeguards as outlined in clause 6 of the 'Assam Accord'. The party aims to protect "Sattras" (monasteries) and other religious, cultural, and ecological places from unauthorised occupation. Individuals with doubtful citizenship who have illegally set on public property will be expelled by force, in compliance with the law. The primary concerns throughout the campaign revolved around establishing a strong collaboration with the central government to ensure safeguarding of the Indo-Bangladesh border and conducting thorough verification of the citizenship of all individuals suspected of residing in the state, in accordance with the revised National Register of Citizens. The manifesto acknowledged the persistent issues of terrorism and infiltration across borders in the region. To address these concerns, it pledged to enhance border security measures and leverage innovative technology. Eviction in the government land is carried out throughout state, but implementation of Assam accord is still a distant dream for the people of Assam.

- III. The BJP in Assam has pledged to create employment opportunities in both the public and private sectors by exploring new paths in various industries, in addition to government positions. This initiative helped the young in the state to access enhanced employment prospects. Furthermore, the party had

pledged to implement a 'Direct Benefits Transfer' programme aimed at reducing poverty, which would provide advantages to individuals throughout the entire state. The manifesto prioritises the enhancement of youth skills and entrepreneurial mindset by emphasising the partnership between academia and industry, the establishment of cutting-edge cultural centres, IT clusters, and the promotion of tourism. These initiatives seek to foster self-sufficiency among young people and diminish reliance solely on the government sector. In last 7 years of BJP government various 'Direct Benefits Transfer' and poverty alleviation programmes are taken by the state government, but in the industrial sector no change is visible.

- IV. The BJP in Assam has outlined strategies to enhance the state's infrastructure through diverse endeavours encompassing housing, roads, rivers, aviation, railroads, electricity, and renewable energy. Additionally, the party has placed great importance on granting land patta to every landless family in the state, which is a notable feature of their manifesto. The objective of these endeavours is to enhance the general living standards of the residents of Assam and foster economic development in the area. Land reform initiatives were taken via schemes like 'Mission basundhara' and development in the road infrastructure is seen.
- V. The BJP in Assam has promised to substantially improve the healthcare infrastructure of the state. Their commitment includes the establishment of a comprehensive network of blood banks across the entire state, as well as the provision of at least one medical facility in every census tract that offers round-the-clock treatment and specialises in many fields. In addition, they pledged to ensure round-the-clock availability of ambulances, construct nine new medical colleges in Assam, and establish a comprehensive health insurance scheme covering the entire state. The party's dedication to enhancing healthcare in Assam is demonstrated via these initiatives. The BJP government has set up AIIMS in Guwahati and many medical colleges in various districts of Assam.

- VI. The BJP in Assam has a comprehensive plan for the state's development, with a particular emphasis on Human Resource Development. Their goal encompasses endeavours in education, sports, labour, and the promotion of indigenous languages and culture. The party is dedicated to delivering high-quality education and fostering possibilities in diverse sports, which includes the establishment of a Sports University aimed at promoting youth engagement. The party has additionally pledged to guarantee the enforcement of the Minimum Wages Act and expand social security coverage, including life insurance and health insurance, to the working class of Assam. These projects demonstrate the party's focus to the holistic welfare of the people of Assam. From 2016 onwards a sport university, a cultural university and upgradation of many colleges to University level is seen in the state.
- VII. The BJP's vision document and their promise to attaining sustainable development goals have prioritised Water Management, Environment and Forests, and Flood and Erosion Control. These areas are essential for securing a more promising future for all individuals. It is reassuring to learn that they made a commitment to supply uncontaminated and secure drinking water to every household in Assam and expand the area of cultivable land with irrigation. This demonstrates the party's vision to placing the welfare of the people of Assam as a top priority, while also striving for sustainable development. But in the ground no major development has been seen in this regards.
- VIII. The BJP's vision document outlines a comprehensive welfare program for various groups in Assam, including senior citizens, tribal communities, religious minorities, the tea community, women, employees, children, differently abled citizens, Gorkhas, and Adivasis. The party promises healthcare, shelter, and security for senior citizens, recognition for every tribe, and protection of cultural, religious, and political autonomy for indigenous minority groups. The document also calls for the improvement of the Tea Tribe Community and the empowerment of women, with a 50% quota

for women in local bodies and a 35% quota for women in government jobs. The party also promises education and employment opportunities for differently-abled citizens, and provides Rs 5000 per month for families with differently-abled children. The party also promised to address land problems for Gorkhas in Sixth Schedule areas and to resolve the D-Voter issue faced by the community and ensure adequate representation in Assam's statutory bodies. Some issues related to Tea community, Gorkhas and Tribals were resolved, but many issues are still pending and no concrete steps were taken for the social security of senior citizens.

- IX. The BJP's manifesto outlines strategies for comprehensive rural development in Assam. The initiative pledged to provide land to each household in Assam and ensure access to clean drinking water for every rural household, which is a vital measure in meeting the people's need. Ensuring round-the-clock access to power and establishing connectivity between every village and State Highways and/or key district roads would contribute to narrowing the gap between rural and urban areas. The initiative to offer microfinance to rural enterprises and give LPG connections to every home through the Pradhan Mantri Ujwala Yojana was a favourable decision. Furthermore, the appointment of Rural Development Officers in every village within the state was a positive measure aimed at enhancing the empowerment of rural regions. Supply of electricity has improved throughout the years and LPG connections were also given to poor households, but some other promises are yet to be materialised.
- X. The urban development goal outlined in the BJP manifesto for Assam is noteworthy. The proposal to transform Guwahati into a Smart City and enhance the drainage infrastructure across the entire state would significantly contribute to improving the overall livability of the cities. The incorporation of cutting-edge technology in the design process of road and traffic management systems, along with the subsequent implementation of enhanced safety measures to deter vehicular crime, is praiseworthy. The initiatives to enhance public amenities such as parks, playgrounds, public gardens, bus stations, sidewalks and bathrooms are commendable. The state government's

aim to provide buses, minibuses, maxi cabs, radio taxis, and autorickshaws to all cities and villages in the state is commendable and inspiring. Additionally, it sought to enhance interstate commerce by establishing urban trading hubs in every state. Infrastructural development is visible in Guwahati and other urban areas in Assam, but others promises yet to be implemented.

- XI. The BJP manifesto outlines its strategies for enhancing urban development in Assam, with a specific emphasis on revitalising Guwahati city. This include revising the Master Plan and implementing cutting-edge technologies to mitigate the occurrence of flash floods. The laudable dedication to mitigating traffic congestion was demonstrated by the construction of new highways, expansion of existing ones, and implementation of tunnel routes where deemed required. The focus was placed on restructuring the waste management system in accordance with the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and safeguarding the hills, hillocks, and water bodies in and around the city. In last 7 years of BJP govt in Assam, overall change in Guwahati is visible.
- XII. The BJP's vision document for Assam pledges comprehensive progress in sectors such as Agriculture, Food and Agro Industry, Horticulture, Sericulture, and Pisciculture. This plan aims to enhance these areas and guarantee their continuous expansion and advancement.
- XIII. The BJP, in its vision plan, pledges comprehensive advancement across multiple industries. The plan encompasses the objectives of enhancing tourism, bolstering handloom, handicraft, and cottage industries, advancing the tea industry, and fostering the cooperative sector. The objective of these endeavours is to guarantee continuous expansion and advancement for the populace of Assam. In the promotion of Tourism sector the initiative taken by state government is seen and the reforms in tea industry are also visible.
- XIV. The BJP's vision document pledges to prioritise land reforms, enhance civic life, advance information technology, and improve communication in order to achieve good governance. The objective of these endeavours is to guarantee

consistent expansion and advancement for the residents of Assam, while concurrently fostering comprehensive growth throughout many sectors. The initiative pledges to pursue judicial reforms with the objective of enhancing good governance through the enhancement of the justice system and the guarantee of equitable and effective delivery of justice to the residents of Assam. E-services in various government departments have helped people at large in the state.

- XV. The BJP's vision document pledges to establish means of finance for the state, with the aim of attaining consistent economic growth and advancement, while fostering comprehensive development across multiple sectors. This endeavour aims to enhance the well-being of the inhabitants of Assam and secure a more promising future for future generations. In last few years collection of revenue has been increased.

In the Assam assembly elections 2021, BJP which was in power since 2016 had promised the "Atma Nirbhar Assam" manifesto. The 10 Sankalps of the manifesto include the launch of Mission Brahmaputra to end devastating floods, empower women through the 'Orunodoi' scheme, strengthen Namghars and protect their rights, and launch Mission Bala Unnayan to provide free education for every child in state government-run institutions. The correction and reconciliation of entries in the National Register of Citizens (NRC) is crucial for protecting citizens' rights and maintaining the integrity of citizenship processes. A Delimitation exercise is also planned to safeguard political rights of the people of Assam. The Assam Aahar Atma Nirbharta Yojana aims to make Assam self-sufficient in the production of essential food items, including fish, poultry, piggery, dairy, and horticulture products within five years. The program will provide technology, financial, and administrative incentives to achieve this goal. The BJP plans to provide two lakh government jobs and facilitate eight lakh livelihoods in the private sector, with one lakh government jobs provided before 31st March 2022. This initiative aims to help the youth of Assam find meaningful employment and contribute to the state's

economy. The Swami Vivekananda Assam Youth Employment Yojana (SVAYEY) aims to make Assam the most entrepreneurial state of India by creating 10 lakh youth entrepreneurs. The distribution of land pattas to landless Indian citizens with requisite rights can provide them with the opportunity to secure their land.⁴⁷ It is seen

⁴⁷(Manifesto for Atma Nirbhar Assam 2021, In the Assam Assembly Election 2021, BJP has promised the following thing in its manifesto named the “Atma Nirbhar Assam” Here are the 10 Sankalps for Atma Nirbhar Assam-

- Launch of Mission Brahmaputra: This initiative aims to put an end to the devastating floods that had been wreaking havoc in the region every year. With a multi-pronged approach, including dredging the river and building reservoirs to store excess water, it is expected to eliminate all losses to lives, livelihoods, and property. The government is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of its citizens, and this is just one of the many steps they are taking toward achieving that goal.
- Empowering women in the region through the 'Orunodoi' scheme: The amount disbursed will be increased to Rs. 3,000 per month from the current Rs. 830 in phases. This would benefit 30 Lakh deserving families and provide them with financial assistance to become more self-reliant and improve their quality of life.
- Strengthen *Namghars* and protect the rights of *Sattras*: The proposed task force is to recover lands of *Sattras* and places of worship of the tribals from illegal encroachments and provide grants of up to Rs. 2.5 Lakhs to all *Namghars* and places of worship of the tribals in the state. It is important to preserve and protect cultural heritage and places of worship. These measures would go a long way in ensuring that the communities were empowered, and their rights protected.
- Launch of 'Mission Bala Unnayan' in Assam: This aims to provide free education for every child in state government-run institutions. This initiative can go a long way in ensuring that every child had access to education, regardless of their financial background. Moreover, the provision of free bicycles to all school students from Class 8 onwards can will help increase access to schooling, especially for those who live in remote areas.
- The correction and reconciliation of entries in the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in a structured manner: This is a crucial step in protecting the rights of citizens of Assam and ensuring that genuine Indian citizens were safeguarded while illegal immigrants excluded. It is essential to maintain the integrity of citizenship process.
- The political rights of the people of Assam to be protected through a Delimitation exercise: It is important to ensure that every citizen's political rights were safeguarded; this initiative would help achieve that objective.
- Make Assam self-sufficient in the production of essential food items: The Assam Aahar Atma nirbharta Yojana can provide technology, financial, and administrative incentives to achieve this goal. This program was expected to lead Assam towards self-sufficiency in essential food items, especially fish, poultry, piggery, dairy and horticulture products within the next five years.
- Take concrete steps towards job creation for the youths: It also plans to provide two lakh government jobs and facilitate the provision of eight lakh livelihoods in the private sector and one lakh govt jobs would be provided before 31st March 2022. It is expected that this initiative will help the youth of Assam find meaningful employment and contribute to the state's economy in a significant way.
- To make Assam the most entrepreneurial state of India through the Swami Vivekananda Assam Youth Employment Yojana (SVAYEY): With the goal of creating 10 lakh youth entrepreneurs, this initiative was set to support two lakh young people each year for the next five years.
- The distribution of land pattas to citizens of Assam with requisite rights: This initiative can provide landless Indian citizens of the state with the opportunity to secure their land.)

that after forming government for the second time BJP has fulfilled some of its promises.

Organisational Structure of BJP:

The unique features of a political party are reflected in its Organization and Ideology. A party can maintain its separate identity and achieve its goals through these aspects. The development of an organizational network and a strong ideological commitment are essential for any political party to succeed in promoting its ideas and values. Factors such as the size of the party, its geographical spread, and its support base are important in determining the organizational structure. Overall, a well-organized and ideologically committed political party can significantly contribute to a society's development and progress.⁴⁸The struggle for power and the desire for survival are indeed the key factors in understanding the changing nature of organizational structure of political parties.⁴⁹It's important to consider the circumstances under which a party is formed and the division of labour and coordination between different groups supporting the party.

The organization is essential for any collective human effort, including political parties. It's impossible to imagine a political party without some form of organization. Without it, the party would struggle to bring together and represent the diverse views and interests of society. And, importantly, formal participation in the democratic process requires organization. Ultimately, organization is the key to achieving a political party's objectives and gaining political power.

The success of a political party is greatly dependent on its level of organization. According to A. Rossi "No amount of correct policy will make the party effective unless it is supplemented by good and sound Organization."⁵⁰This is especially important in the context of parliamentary democracies, where the success of democratic process is heavily dependent on the functioning of political parties.

⁴⁸Yogendra K. Malik and V.B. Singh., Hindu Nationalists in India, New Delhi, Vistaar Publications, 1995, p.139.

⁴⁹Angelo Panebianco., Political Parties- Organization and Power, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, Chapter 1.

⁵⁰A Rossi., Communist party in Action, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1962, p. 62

Political parties are important in modern politics. They provide a platform for members to work together and select leaders who can influence the direction and success of a movement. The structure and organization of a party can impact its ability to represent constituents and participate in the democratic process.⁵¹ The mechanism of party organization plays a crucial role in translating the votes of individuals into choices between politicians and programs.⁵² It is the organization, not the electorate, that selects candidates and prepares election manifestos, pledging what these candidates would do if voted to power

It is widely accepted by scholars that the strength and efficiency of a political party could be explained by the effectiveness of its organization. The principles and beliefs that a party professes to uphold are also important factors in understanding the behavior of its members.⁵³ A party's class character or ideology may not be as relevant as its organization and principles when it comes to analyzing political behaviour.

Maurice Duverger, a political scientist who analyzed European political parties, categorized them into two types: those with direct and indirect structures. Direct structures comprise members who applied for membership and have been accepted into the party. They attend regular meetings and are card-carrying members. Indirect structures, on the other hand, are supported not by individual members but by groups like trade unions or other organisations that have joined the party as a whole. Duverger argues that with the direct structure, members of the party come together to build a community independent of any external networks. Indirectly structured parties, such as those formed when like-minded organisations come together for a shared purpose, are known as federal parties.

The BJP can be categorized into one of Maurice Duverger's political party types as a 'federal party'. Supporting this claim is the fact that the BJP had two large non-political components, Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh and VHP, as well as a

⁵¹Maurice Duverger., *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, New Delhi, B.I. Publication, 1979, p. 4

⁵²Richard Rose., *The Problems of Party Government*, New Delhi, McMillan Press, 1974, p. XIX.

⁵³C.P. Bhambri., *Bureaucracy and Parties in India*, New Delhi, Vikas Publication, 1971, p. 13.

significant number of supportive groups. These groups have played a crucial role in the BJP's political and electoral success, and their relationship with the party has been influenced by both historical factors and shared ideological beliefs. moorings.⁵⁴ Many leaders and observers in Indian politics have pointed out that the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh and VHP, despite their close relationship with the BJP, maintained a significant level of organizational and functional autonomy. Each of these groups had its own goals, functionaries, and area of operation, and has created various supportive organizations and agencies to operate in their respective areas with the help of workers and finances.

The RSS, compared to the sun, is considered the primary source of Hindu nationalism and the ideological and organizational actor of the BJP, occupying a central position in the organization's movement.⁵⁵ The three groups, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, RSS, and VHP, are linked by a common ideology, which makes it difficult to distinguish their functions and boundaries. The RSS, founded in 1925 by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in Nagpur, is the largest and most influential organization dedicated to Hindu Revivalism. It aims to restore community among Hindus and train them to work together for India's independence.⁵⁶ The organisation promotes a populist kind of Hindu revivalism and aims to train members' minds to be objectively useful to the Hindu Nation. The interdependence of the three entities is complicated by the fact that their duties and people overlap.

The RSS believes that each individual must discover their Dharma, or social obligation, to contribute to the well-being of the community without causing conflict among its members. According to M.S. Golwalker, the second head of organization, nation is the 'living' God of Hindu people. In one of the organization's major ideological treatises, Golwalker argued that people seek a 'living' God who responds to their actions, not just an emblem that remains unresponsive. The Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh's focus on Hindu revivalism with a populist orientation and its

⁵⁴P.C. Swain., *Bharatiya Janta Party; Profile and Performance*, New Delhi, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation 2001, p. 72

⁵⁵India Today., May 15, 1991, p.6. Also Swapan Das, "Hedgewar's Legacy: Limitation of Elitist Hinduism" *Statesman Weekly*, April 8, 1989, p. 12

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

interconnectedness with other related groups makes it challenging to fully understand their functions and boundaries.

Deendayal Upadhyay's philosophy of Integral Humanism emphasizes the importance of satisfying the needs of body, mind, intelligence, and soul to create a harmonious society. He believed that institutions must be periodically reshaped to sustain social solidarity and that people should be closely involved in decision making at the political and economic levels. The RSS brotherhood has advocated for Hindu Revivalism to restructure the domestic order and oppose the concentration of power and wealth that disrupted social solidarity and threatens India's political and cultural autonomy. In fact, the brotherhood considers itself the vanguard of a movement to restructure the domestic order with a populist orientation that opposed the concentration of power and wealth as disruptive of the social solidarity required to sustain India's political and cultural autonomy.

Angelo Panebianco states that every second office bearer of the party at both center and state level has been a full-time Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh pracharak or a member.⁵⁷ When analyzing the operations of BJP, it is crucial to examine the functions and responsibilities of each unit. Experts suggest that even parties established to pursue specific ideological objectives are prone to developing internal bureaucracies over time, resulting in a divergence of their goals.⁵⁸ As with any organization, a party can develop a life of its own. This can lead to a focus on organizational survival and a need to respond to various demands from different sources, which can create challenges. However, the party may try to balance and reconcile these demands to maintain stability.

The Bharatiya Janata Party is a significant non-communist cadre-based party in contemporary Indian Party politics. It has a well-defined party organizational structure and highly motivated cadre for ethno-religious mobilizations. The party claims to have over ten million members, many of whom are active members and

⁵⁷Angelo Panebianco., *Op.Cit.*, Chapter 1.

⁵⁸Abrahamson., *Bureaucracy or Participation: The Logic of Organization*, London, Sage Publication, 1977, p. 108

entirely devoted to the party.⁵⁹ These whole-time members are instrumental in the party's success and growth. party.⁶⁰ The Bharatiya Janta Party is known for its superior organization compared to other non-communist parties. Its ability to mobilize the Hindu masses is due to its unique political ideology and highly motivated members. The party has a well-established organizational structure that extends from national to local levels.

Discipline in the Party

It is important for political parties to maintain discipline in order to ensure unity and strength. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is no exception, and its constitution outlines the importance of self-imposition of restrictions and adherence to party rules and decisions. Violations of party discipline can result in disciplinary action, ranging from warnings to expulsion from the party. While the BJP has a well-established organizational structure, it can also suffer from weaknesses such as lack of coordination between higher and lower units, poor functioning of some local units, and a mixture of oligarchy and democracy in its leadership structure. Despite these weaknesses, the party does have democratic features, such as committees elected through democratic elections and autonomy in dealing with local issues. Overall, the party's senior leaders have significant control over its organizational structure.

Leadership Role of BJP in the Context of Assam

The 2021 Assembly election in Assam saw the ruling BJP-led alliance, including AGP and UPPL, for the first time in the state's history return to non-congress government. The alliance easily crossed the halfway mark of 64 seats in the 126-member house due to strong and stable leadership, a fractured opposition, and

⁵⁹Neealm Pandey. (2019). "BJP now has more members than the population of all but 7 countries," *The Print*, August 29, 2019.

⁶⁰BJP, Report of General Secretaries: BJP National Council Session 18-20 June 1993, Bangalore, New Delhi, BJP Publication, 1993, p. 7

significant support from women voters. Despite losing six seats compared to the 2016 election, their collective vote share increased from 37.6 percent to 40.5 percent.⁶¹The Bodoland People's Front (BPF) deserted the alliance, but the alliance found a new partner in the UPPL, resulting in 74 seats for the alliance.

While there was some concern over the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Act, the alliance maintained its core vote base, particularly in upper Assam. It is important to recognize that two new parties were born out of the agitation against the CAA, highlighting the strong feelings on the issue among certain sections of population. However, it is noted that this loss of 12 seats was not a significant damage considering what the ruling alliance was up against, as a large section of people in Assam were angry with the BJP leadership over the CAA.⁶² There was a strong chance that the BJP and AGP may lose the support of Assamese-speaking people, who formed their core vote base, particularly in upper Assam.

The BJP-led alliance faced some challenges in the 2021 Assembly election in Assam due to the formation of a grand alliance of eight parties, including the Congress and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), which had the potential to consolidate Muslim votes against the BJP. This alliance had the potential to cause massive damage to the BJP by consolidating Muslim votes, which usually go against the saffron party. However, despite these challenges, the BJP-led alliance secured a majority with support from women voters and strong leadership. It is worth noting that including BPF in the anti-BJP alliance added to its strength.

Results of the 2021 Assembly election in Assam showed that the Congress-led alliance could not seriously challenge the ruling BJP-led alliance despite having a potential demographic advantage. Various factors at play worked in favour of the BJP-led alliance and against the one led by the Congress.⁶³ The factors are-

⁶¹“Assembly elections: BJP has won 33.21 percent votes in Assam” *The Economic Times*, May 03,

2021,

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³Kaushik Deka. (2021). “How the BJP returned to power in Assam,” *India Today*, May 03, 2021.

- I.** Despite their internal differences, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Himanta Biswa Sarma worked together to provide stable leadership in the state. Their efforts to combat corruption, especially in government recruitment, have earned them much support from the people. Additionally, improving road infrastructure has given people a sense of development.
- II.** The performance and politics of Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam's minister for finance, health, education and PWD. The BJP's key strategist was a former Congressman. He has a reputation for delivering on his promises and has been a minister for almost two decades. In addition, he received widespread public support for effectively handling the Covid crisis in the state. Due to his immense popularity, his state-wide campaign and road shows drew large crowds, ultimately leading to many people voting for the BJP in the name of Sarma. Indeed, most BJP candidates were eager to have him campaign in their constituencies.
- III.** The BJP was successful in creating polarisation over religious identity. One of the key issues that Himanta Biswa Sarma focused on was the perceived threat to Assamese identity posed by AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, who was seen by many as protecting the interests of illegal Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh. This narrative helped to shift the discourse from one of 'Assamese vs illegal immigrants' to that of 'Hindu vs Muslims', which resonated with many voters. Ultimately, Sarma's leadership and messaging were instrumental in securing the BJP's victory in the state.
- IV.** The anti-BJP votes did not go to the Congress-led alliance because they included the AIUDF. The anti-BJP votes were divided among multiple parties, leading to the ruling coalition's advantage in the recent Assembly election. The Congress-led alliance's inclusion of the AIUDF and the creation of two new parties further fragment the opposition. This is evident in the BJP winning most seats in upper Assam, which was the epicenter of agitation against the CAA.

- V. The BJP also benefitted from its dominance over tea gardens, once a stronghold of the Congress. The BJP's influence over tea gardens definitely played a role in their success, which was the Congress's stronghold. Additionally, the BJP's implementation of welfare schemes at both the Centre and state levels helped them gain even more support from the tea garden voters.
- VI. The massive support of women voters swung the results in the BJP's favour. The BJP secured much support from female voters, which ultimately helped them win the election. The key factor that turned the tide in their favor was the Arunodoi scheme, which provided eligible households Rs 830 monthly. The BJP also promised to increase this amount to Rs 3,000 monthly, which appealed to many voters. Additionally, Sarma made a significant promise to waive all microfinance loans taken out by women in the state, which helped sway many female voters to support the BJP. Overall, the party successfully appealed to this key demographic and secured a victory as a result.
- VII. In contrast to the BJP, the Congress did not have strong leadership. The Congress party did not have strong leadership and spent most of the past five years dealing with infighting, which disadvantaged them in the recent elections. While they did run an innovative campaign with their offer of five guarantees, it did not sway as many voters as they had hoped. As a result, their final tally did not show any significant improvement and their vote share actually dropped from 30 percent in 2016 to 28 percent this year.

Leadership Role of BJP in the Context of Tripura

The BJP's victory in Tripura in the 2018 assembly elections has been attributed to their effective campaign strategy, particularly in tribal areas where the party worked hard to build their base. With the help of RSS and its affiliate organisations, the BJP focused on improving health and education sectors, which resonated with voters and contributed to their success in the polls. Despite having a high vote share in the

previous election, Congress could not win any seat, highlighting the effectiveness of BJP's approach.⁶⁴⁶⁵

The 2018 Tripura assembly election results have caused quite a stir in the political world. With the BJP's resounding victory over the Left, the region has become crucial to the RSS's future plans. This win is more than just another state victory for the BJP, it represents a significant ideological battle between the Left and the Right. The BJP's two-thirds majority in the first electoral contest between these two forces clearly indicates their growing dominance in the region. However, the victory was achieved over time due to careful planning and strategy over the past two years.⁶⁶ Despite this, the CPM failed to mount a serious challenge, thereby allowing the BJP to secure its position as a major player in Tripura politics.

The BJP has been working diligently since January 2016 to establish its base in Tripura and crack the stronghold built by the Left over the past 25 years. They have strategically targeted issues such as the 4th pay commission in the state. At the same time, the country has already moved to the 7th pay commission and the youth demographic, which has reportedly broken ranks with their families to vote for the BJP.⁶⁷ Additionally, the BJP has tapped into the RSS's long-term Northeast agenda, which had helped them secure victory in the 2018 assembly election.

I. Massive Outreach Program

The BJP's strategic approach to the Tripura Assembly election has paid off, as they increased their membership base in the region significantly. The RSS's door-to-door outreach program, combined with the regular visits from Union ministers and promises of inclusive development, may have been a key factor in their success.⁶⁸ In this case, the Left Front's traditionally strong grassroots base may not have been

⁶⁴(Experts have suggested that this could be a valuable case study for political science students to learn from. One BJP member, Deodhar, has even entertained the idea of using it as a case study or learning experience)

⁶⁵“Saffron surge in Tripura: 3 reasons for BJP's spectacular show in big Left bastion for 25 years,” *India Today*, March 3, 2018.

⁶⁶ Esha Roy. (2018). “How Tripura was won,” *The Indian Express*, June 26, 2018.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸*India Today*, March 3, 2018. *Op. Cit.*

enough to overcome the BJP's efforts. During the election campaign, the BJP's star campaigners, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party chief Amit Shah addressed rallies in Tripura. They criticized the current government's handling of development and urged citizens to vote for change.

II. Alliance With Tribal Party

The strategy to ally with the IPFT in Tripura has resulted in success for the BJP and the BJP has gained a significant number of seats in the tribal areas, which the CPI (M)-led Left Front previously dominated. The BJP attempted to divide the tribal vote which typically went to the CPI(M). In the 2013 election, the CPI (M)-led Left Front secured 18 of the 20 ST seats in Tripura, but the margin of victory was slim in seven of them.⁶⁹The Congress party remains weak in these regions, so the partnership with IPFT has given the BJP an advantage in securing these seats.

The BJP knew the importance of securing the tribal vote in Tripura early on. In fact, they partnered up with IPFT, the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, a month before the elections. Although the CPI(M) accused the BJP of instigating riots, the BJP felt that the IPFT was the best option due to their strong tribal base and demand for a separate state for tribals. Despite not backing a separate tribal state during the campaign, the BJP's faith in the IPFT proved to be successful, with the tribal outfit winning eight out of nine seats it contested in the 2018 assembly elections.

The CPI (M) has experienced a significant loss of support from the tribal population. Despite consistently winning a majority of the tribal seats in the state, the party only managed to secure two viz., Jolaibbari and Manu. Even Deputy Chief Minister and tribal leader Aghore Debbarman was defeated in the Left's stronghold of Asharambari, losing by a substantial margin of 7,000 votes.⁷⁰ It's worth noting that even when the Congress formed a government in the state in 1988, the CPI (M) still managed to secure a large victory in Asharambari.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰Esha Roy. (2018).*The Indian Express*, June 26, 2018.

III. Choosing Peoples Issues:

During the BJP's 'Chalo Paltai' or Let's Change campaign in Tripura, they focused on addressing the high levels of unemployment and corruption under the prior Manik Sarkar-led Left government. The BJP's messaging on these topics resonated with voters, especially in the tribal areas where they secured seats through their alliance with the IPFT. According to Labour Bureau data, Tripura has the highest unemployment rates in India, making it a significant issue for voters. During a rally, Amit Shah criticized the Manik Sarkar government, citing the rising unemployment rates and alleged involvement in the Rose Valley chit-fund scam. In the election BJP has gained a significant number of seats in Tripura. Narendra Modi's promises of development through HIRA (Highways, Internet, Roadways, Airways) seem to have struck a chord with voters, as the election results suggest that the BJP has gained a significant number of seats in Tripura, over the competition led by Manik.⁷¹

IV. The Pay Commission

The BJP's campaign in Tripura heavily was focused on the issue of unemployment and repeatedly emphasized the non-implementation of the 7th Pay Commission. This was a crucial point in the party's Vision Document and election platform, and was highlighted in speeches made by top leaders, including the Prime Minister and Finance Minister. The promise of implementing the 7th Pay Commission had resonated with government workers in the state, who currently receive salaries based on the outdated 4th Pay Commission. If the BJP comes to power, they have pledged to increase salaries, If a government servant's salary is Rs 20,000 under the 4th Pay Commission, under 7th Pay Commission it will be at least Rs 35,000.⁷² Some CPI (M) insiders are of the view that, the issue of the Pay Commission had played a significant role in the BJP's success in the election. The CPI (M) leader stated that 60% of government employees' votes went to the BJP.⁷³ Deodhar agreed with the sentiment that the 7th Pay Commission played a significant role in the election

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷² "Tripura Sweep: 7th Pay Commission promised helped BJP woo government employees". *India Today*. March 05, 2018.

⁷³Esha Roy. (2018). *The Indian Express*, June 26, 2018.

outcome. According to him, the support of all central and state government employees was crucial for their success in the election.⁷⁴ This promise has worked for the BJP.

According to Deodhar, there was cross-voting by hardcore Left families that contributed to the BJP's victory. He states that there was at least a 10 percent cross-voting and that the disgruntlement with the CPI(M) leadership was high even among party workers and supporters. The BJP leaders allege that Left workers were in contact with them in many districts, and that even though they attended Left rallies and participated in the campaign, they knew they would vote for the BJP.⁷⁵ So, in the election cross voting was also an important factor.

In an interview with *The Sunday Express*, Sunil Deodhar, the BJP Tripura in-charge and former RSS pracharak, expressed his thoughts on the victory of BJP in the Northeast region. According to Deodhar, the win is a significant milestone for the party, as it paved the way for BJP to become the most dominant force in the area. He also referred to the RSS-BJP campaign as a campaign for a "Communist-mukt Bharat", which aimed to eliminate Communism from the country.⁷⁶ He went on to state that the victory had broken the Communist spine, and the backbone of Communism has been broken from JNU to Kerala. This victory is more than just symbolic for the BJP, as it marks a significant shift in the political landscape of the Northeast.

Building the party

The Northeast states have always been important for the RSS, according to Deodhar. He notes that this was due to strategic reasons such as concerns over China and Bangladesh, as well as issues with the infiltration of Bangladeshi Muslims and conversions to Christianity. It seems that the RSS had been increasing its presence in Tripura over the past couple of years. According to the party insiders, they had intensified their work and 265 shakhas in 2018 in the state, up from around 60 during

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵*India Today*, March 3, 2018.*Op.Cit.*

⁷⁶*The Indian Express*, June 26, 2018.*Op.Cit.*

the 2014 elections.⁷⁷ This could be seen as part of a larger strategy focused on Northeast states.

The BJP put in a lot of effort to establish a strong organisation in Tripura, as they had no presence in the state previously. During the 2013 Assembly polls, they won only 1.54 per cent of the votes, and all of their 50 candidates lost their deposits. To match the Left Front's cadre base, over 50,000 BJP and RSS members worked tirelessly in the state.⁷⁸ They organised protests and marches, from mandal to state level, including morchas for various groups such as the Yuva Morchas, Mahila Morcha, SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities and farmers.

The BJP in Tripura had a well-planned strategy for the state elections. 'Vistaraks' were appointed per constituency to ensure there was no infighting among mandals and local leaders. More 'Vistaraks' were brought in from other states to look after Tripura's tea estates. Each polling booth had about 17-18 pages of voters, and each page had a list of 60 voters. A 'panna pramukh' or page in-charge was given the charge of each such page and entrusted to look after the needs of all the 60 voters. For the job, local leaders, men and women, were picked up. 'Shakti Kendra Vistaraks' were also in charge of every five booths in the state. The BJP also launched its ambitious online registration of voters through missed calls given to a number. Another idea was 'Train Samparaks', who would travel on trains wearing Modi-T-shirts and hand out BJP pamphlets to passengers. They would talk to passengers, take down their phone numbers, ask them about their problems, from water issues to gas cylinder difficulties, and pass the same along to party workers in Agartala. The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, affiliated to the RSS, was strengthened and its membership increased. The BJP claims that their workforce underwent extensive training, which included teachings on ideology, nationalism, and Indian culture. In the lead-up to the elections, 400 'Vistaraks' were brought in from Assam to further

⁷⁷“Tripura Election results 2018: BJP-IPFT alliance wins majority in state Assembly, ends Left rule”
March 03, 2018, *Business Today*.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

assist with their efforts.⁷⁹ Thus 'Vistaraks' and 'panna pramukh' or page in-charge were also crucial in the ground level.

CPI(M) state secretary Bijan Dhar admits that the BJP had more resources at their disposal than their opponents, including funding and a larger mobilized workforce that included individuals from outside the region.⁸⁰ This indicated that money power and man power played vital role.

Main scriptwriters of the victory

Sunil Deodhar

The BJP's success in Tripura can be largely attributed to the efforts of Sunil Deodhar, a Maharashtra-born RSS pracharak who was sent to the state by then BJP president Amit Shah in 2014. Deodhar spent two and a half years in Tripura, visiting all 60 constituencies at least three times each and appointing 3,209 agents for the 3,214 polling booths in the state. In contrast, the Congress, with a 35 percent vote share last time, only had 1,500 booth agents. One of Deodhar's key decisions was for the BJP to directly take on CPI (M) Chief Minister Manik Sarkar, and to build its non-existent base in the state by reaching out to leaders from other parties and striking an unlikely deal with the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), a tribal outfit seeking a separate state. Deodhar also played a major role in selecting Biplab Kumar Deb as state party chief, who became the new CM in 2018. Deodhar's 11-year experience of working as an RSS pracharak in the Northeast and his success in winning three of six seats in Gujarat's Dahod district caught the eye of Narendra Modi, who made him in-charge of his Varanasi constituency in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.⁸¹ It can be said that Deodhar's role was crucial in the victory of Tripura.

⁷⁹Esha Roy. (2018).*Op.Cit*

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*India Today*, March 3, 2018.*Op.Cit.*

Biplab Kumar Deb

Biplab Kumar Deb, the youngest state chief of the BJP, who became the new chief minister of Tripura in 2018. Party leaders credit the spectacular victory to his leadership. Deb, a 49-year-old RSS volunteer from south Tripura's Udaipur, was apparently reluctant to take over the mantle in 2016 but was brought back from the national capital to lead the party against the experienced Manik Sarkar.⁸² Deb's wife, Niti, is a deputy manager at the State Bank of India's Parliament House branch in Delhi.

Ram Madhav

The BJP's recent victory in the polls is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the party general secretary Ram Madhav. Since joining the BJP in 2014, he has taken on challenging tasks, such as the alliance between the BJP and the PDP in J&K.⁸³ He had some trusted allies, including Deodhar and Deb in Tripura, and Priyang Pandey in Nagaland, who is with the India Foundation, to help him achieve these goals. According to sources, the general secretary had promised the Prime Minister 40 seats from the last red bastion, and it appears that he had delivered on that promise.

Himanta Biswa Sarma

Sarma, played a pivotal role in the BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance as convener. Since he left the Congress and join BJP in 2015, he has helped the party win government formation in Assam, Manipur, and Arunachal. Sarma also played a significant role in the BJP's alliance with The Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura, which helped the party win tribal seats in Tripura. Out of all those involved in the

⁸²“TRIPURA: MEET BIPLAB KUMAR DEB, NEXT CHIEF MINISTER OF THE STATE” *India Today NE*, March 07, 2018.

⁸³“Ram Madhav, Himanta Biswa, Kiren Rijiju, Sunil Deodhar: Leaders who steered BJP towards victory in Tripura, Nagaland elections,” *Hindustan Times*, March 04, 2018.

victory, Sarma is the only one without a Sangh background.⁸⁴ He used to be an Assam Congress strategist.

In 2023 Tripura assembly, the BJP managed to retain its hold on Tripura despite facing tough competition from the Left-Congress alliance and the Tipra Motha party. However, the BJP managed to overcome these obstacles through effective campaigning and a focus on delivering tangible benefits to the people of Tripura. By highlighting their achievements in areas such as infrastructure development, job creation, and social welfare programs, the BJP won the trust and support of voters across the state.⁸⁵ The BJP managed to get 32 seats and its ally IPFT one seat. CPI (M) bagged 11 and the Congress just three. The emergence of TipraMotha as the second-biggest party in the election by winning 13 seat was a significant development. Led by former royal Pradyot Manikya Debbarma, the party's strong showing highlights the growing influence of regional parties in Indian politics. The 2018 Assembly polls saw the BIP-led NDA win 44 of the 60 seats.⁸⁶ According to Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma, his party Tipra Motha did well in just two year sand everyone have to acknowledge the tribal discontent among tribal people in Tripura's recent election.⁸⁷ Non-tribal voters wary of Tipra Motha's Greater Tipraland demand may have helped in BJPs victory in 2023 assembly election.

The Manik Saha Factor

The victory of BJP in 2023 Tripura Assembly elections has been attributed to the leadership of Chief Minister Manik Saha, who is known for his skills as a dentist and surgeon.⁸⁸ According to state BJP leaders, Saha played a crucial role in saving the party's image after his controversial predecessor, Biplab Kumar Deb.Saha, who has a

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵Yudhajit Shankar Das. (2023). "How did BJP win Tripura assembly election? Vote-cutting and the Manik factor," *INDIA TODAY*, March 02, 2023.

⁸⁶Saikat Kumar Bose. (2023). "BJP Wins Tripura, Ex Royal's Party Shines Amid CPM-Congress Setback" *NDTV*, March 02, 2023.

⁸⁷Rahul Karmakar. (2023). "BJP and allies retain power in Tripura, Nagaland; hung verdict in Meghalaya," *The Hindu*, March 02, 2023.

⁸⁸Rahul Karmakar. (2023).*The Hindu*, March 02, 2023.*Op.Cit*

reputation for being soft-spoken, took over as Chief Minister nine months before the elections and has continued to address the needs and aspirations of all Tripura residents.

Conclusion

To summarise, it is important to understand the ideology of a political party in order to grasp its nature and structure. From the discussion it has been found that integral humanism was the basic foundation of BJP, which was propounded by Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. In the states of Assam and Tripura, BJP's approach involves incorporation of the core Hindutva elements along with the distinct regional aspirations. They have combined the politics of identity and ethnicity with Hindutva.

The BJP's pre-election programmes prioritized combating insurgency and terrorism in the region, health and infrastructure development, economic development, human resource development, sustainable development, urban/rural development, Guwahati development projects, agriculture/industrial development, and dealing with infiltration from Bangladesh. They promised to implement the Assam Accord and deal with infiltration from Bangladesh. Good governance, social justice, judicial reforms, and creating sources of finance for the state were prioritized. The BJP's election manifesto, Atma Nirbhar Assam, made ten promises, including the launch of Mission Brahmaputra, empowering women through the Orunodoi scheme, strengthening Namghars and protecting Satras' rights, Bal Unnayan, correction and reconciliation of entries in the NRC, protection of political rights of people of Assam through a delimitation exercise, self-sufficiency in food production, job creation for the youth, land patta distribution, and making Assam the most entrepreneurial state in India.

The success of a political party is largely dependent on its strength of organisation and BJP has a strong organisational base which made it connected with the masses. The RSS and other Sangh Parivar organisations played a crucial role in providing organisational strength in BJP. In Assam, BJP had a strong leadership,

that the Congress was lacking. Additionally, the performance and political tactics employed by Himanta Biswa Sharma, who held various ministerial positions like finance, health, education, and public works, proved advantageous for the BJP. These efforts effectively created polarisation, based on religious identity within the realm of state politics. Furthermore, division of opposition votes across various parties further strengthened the BJP's prospects. Notably, the party benefited from a strong backing from women voters and those affiliated with the tea gardens, ultimately contributing to its electoral victory.

In the context of Tripura, leadership role played a crucial part in the political landscape. The BJP and RSS executed an extensive outreach programme, formed an alliance with the IPFT, and successfully consolidated tribal votes. Additionally, the BJP strategically focused on popular public issues, which significantly contributed to their acquisition of power. Furthermore, the implementation of 7th pay commission issue proved advantageous for the BJP, as it garnered public support, particularly among the majority Bengali Hindu population. The leadership skills by leaders such as Sunil Deodhar, Biplab Kumar Deb, Ram Madhav, Himanta Biswa Sharma, and Manik Shaha were instrumental in securing victory for the BJP in both the consecutive elections of 2018 and 2023.

Chapter IV: Alliance Policy and Election Strategy of BJP in Assam and Tripura

The fourth chapter discusses the alliance policies and the election strategies of the BJP in Assam and Tripura. This chapter also discusses how the alliance formation, and its political strategy helped the party to come to power in the states of Assam and Tripura.

Introduction

In a Democratic polity, political parties are the brokers of power. The amount of political power political parties hold in a democratic system is determined by their electoral strength. In Indian elections, parties play a crucial role. The free and fair involvement of political parties in the electoral process is crucial to the success of Indian democracy. Moreover, a democratic polity's electoral strength and performance of the parties reflect their support base, popular appeal, and stake in the power struggle.

In May 1980, the Bharatiya Janata Party entered electoral politics as a new party. But throughout its early years, it suffered electoral setbacks. The BJP's performance in the elections was adversely affected by the deep ideological crisis and the dilemma over the inheritance of Bharatiya Jana Sangh's historical legacy. Due to the division of non-Congress votes, the "first past the post" system of elections was advantageous to the Congress.¹ With the leadership of L.K. Advani, the BJP reorganized its ideological commitments towards the end of the 1980s. The party clearly adopted the ideological legacy of Bharatiya Jana Sangh and openly used the "Hindu Card." The party benefited politically from this altered stance in the elections that followed. The BJP largely adopted the Leninist dictum of "few steps forward, one step backward" in its electoral politics.² In the initial years of its formation, after each electoral victory, the party received harsh criticism from the secular camp,

¹P.C.Swain., *Bharatiya Janata Party: Profile and performance*, New Delhi, A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, 2001, p.191.

²Yogendra Yadav., "Electoral Prospects", *Seminar*, 417, May 1994, p.59

which is followed by a period of its retrospection, rethinking, and finally consolidation.

The BJP's support base has consistently demonstrated variations to the Indian political system. Originally it was known as a Brahmin-Bania party with a social base limited to middle-class Hindus of North India. In due course, the BJP began to recognize the significance of various social groups. The party appeared to have made considerable advances into the western and southern regions of the nation starting in the 1990s, in addition to trying to reach out to new socio-economic groups, especially the backward and marginalized communities.³ After the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP made substantial ground in Northeast India. In this regard, the party developed an electoral alliance with a number of regional political parties in an effort to portray itself as an alternative to the Congress in the region.

Political parties are crucial in democratic countries like India, with numerous national, regional, and local parties playing significant roles. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a national political party, has dominated India's electoral politics. The attention is drawn to study the alliance formation, election strategy, and political strategy of BJP in Assam because of the party's gradual rise and growth across the nation, such as its victory in Assam in the 2016 and 2021 elections after 15 years of continuous Congress rule and its victory in Tripura by defeating 28 years of Left regime in the 2018 and 2023 elections.

This chapter seeks to study the alliance policies and the election strategy of the BJP in Assam and Tripura. This chapter also discusses how the alliance formation and its political strategy helped the party to come to power in Assam and Tripura.

³P.C. Swain., *Op.Cit.*, p.192.

Alliance Policy of BJP in Assam

In order to work in a coalition, one must take into account both ideological and practical factors. Despite a strong feeling of regionalism that defined the boundaries of its electoral politics, Assam had witnessed a national party's dominance throughout a significant portion of its political history. Congress's politics of accommodation through institutional measures and electoral representation that crossed different ethnic and linguistic groups were a significant factor in the party's supremacy. Since 2001, the Congress has won three elections in a row thanks to the persistence of division of opposition votes and a high vote share for the Congress. The Congress was able to translate vote share into seat share due to fragmentation frequently. Working a social coalition with regional players became an important concern for the BJP. Because, it could increase its legitimacy and acceptability in a region marked by extreme ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity while also helping to keep the anti-Congress vote division in check.⁴ Therefore, the BJP formed an alliance with regional parties like AGP, BPF and other smaller groups.

In every Lok Sabha election held since 1998, the BJP has received a larger proportion of votes and seats than the AGP, while in all assembly elections held since 2001, the AGP has received a more significant proportion of votes and seats. Both the BJP and the AGP formed alliances in preparation for the polls in the 2001 Assembly and the 2009 Lok Sabha. However, no votes were actually transferred in either case. As a result, both the BJP and the AGP experienced electoral stagnation, while the Congress maintained its hegemonic position. The BJP did, however, win four seats in 2009, three of which were in Lower Assam and the Barak Valley and one in Upper Assam. A political shift is evident when comparing the results of the 2014 Lok Sabha election with those of the 2009 Lok Sabha and the 2011 Assembly elections, as the rise of the BJP in Upper Assam could be understood at the expense of the AGP and the Congress. In a deeper sense, it revealed the BJP's shifting social base and its remarkable growth in the predominantly Assamese-speaking Upper Assam portion of the state. The Barak Valley and Lower Assam regions have

⁴Vikash Tripathi, Tamasha Das and Sandhya Goswami. (2018). "National Narrative and Regional Subtext: Understanding the Rise of BJP in Assam," *Studies in Indian Politics*, Vol.6(1).pp 61-70

historically seen considerable support for the BJP, although to a lesser degree. Assam's traditionally tilted electoral balance towards the Congress was disturbed by the BJP's regional transcendence in 2014, which can be seen as a forerunner of the party's rise there.⁵ Thus, the new era in the politics of Assam has begun.

The BJP faced a humiliating defeat in Delhi and Bihar due to the political opposition's consolidation of votes. The coalition became crucial for the BJP in Assam, while Congress and AIUDF refrained from alliance formation. The BPF broke its alliance with Congress after the 2014 elections. The Congress considered a pre-poll alliance, which could intensify polarization and disadvantage Upper Assam.⁶ However, the BJP's alliance formulation worked to its advantage in two ways.

First, in Lower Assam and the Barak Valley, the Congress-AIUDF contest spread out the votes of opposition, allowing the BJP to wrest a sizable number of seats from the Congress. The swapping of seats between Congress and the AIUDF demonstrates how the AIUDF suffered an erosion of seat share as its social base fragmented despite the AIUDF maintaining nearly the same vote share as in the previous assembly elections.⁷ Second, the AIUDF has no support base in Upper Assam, and the Congress lost a substantial portion of its social base during the 2014 Lok Sabha election, that is why the NDA alliance performed very well there. In Upper Assam, an alliance with the AGP helped the NDA win by preventing the division of anti-Congress votes. The BJP's rainbow coalition with the plain tribes, i.e., in upper Assam with the Tiwas, Sonowal Kacharis, and Mishings to Lower Assam with the Bodos and Rabhas, really worked in the 2016 Assam assembly election. In Lower Assam and the Barak Valley, the NDA won 64% of the seats, while winning 75% of the seats in Upper Assam.⁸ It shows how, throughout Assam, the BJP-led alliance has performed so well.

⁵Sandhya Goswami, & Vikash Tripathi. (2015). Understanding the political shift in Assam: Withering congress dominance. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 50(39), pp. 67–71

⁶Vikash Tripathi, Tamasha Das and Sandhya Goswami. (2018). *Op.Cit.* pp. 61-62

⁷V. Bijukumar. (2019). North East India: Development Rhetoric, Ethnic Anxieties. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LVII(25). pp 18-21.

⁸Vikash Tripathi.(2018).*Op.Cit.*p.63

The BJP is the head of the "Mitrajot" coalition in Assam's upcoming 2021 assembly elections, which also includes the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), and the Gana Suraksha Party (GSP), which mostly represents the Bodo and non-Bodo populations in the BTAD. The "Mahajot" (headed by the Congress), the "All India United Democratic Front" (supported by Bengali Muslims), the "Bodoland People's Front," and "marginal players" like the "Anchalik Gana Morcha," "Communist Party of India," and "Communist Party of India (Marxist)" make up the opposition. Both the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Raijor Dal (RD) are regional political parties. The major two candidates in this election were the BJP-led Mitrojot and the Congress-led Mahajot.

Formation of Alliance and Luring of Leaders

Many factors are responsible for the remarkable win of the BJP and the defeat of Congress and other regional parties. The crucial element in the BJP's electoral success was its policy of forging alliances with smaller, regional parties, promoting Congress party defections, and luring its leaders away. In fact, in 2016 the BJP created the NEDA, a coalition of parties under it, to establish an alliance in North-East India. Under Himanta Biswa Sarma, (present chief minister of Assam), the NEDA—the North-East version of NDA at the center emerged as a potential rival to the Congress and the left in Tripura.⁹ For example, Himanta Biswa Sarma was a former Congress leader in Assam and a close lieutenant of former chief minister Tarun Gogoi. The leadership vacuum in the BJP was filled by defection from other parties and the luring of their leaders. The BJP aimed to mobilize communities and strengthen its base by drawing leaders from their own communities, as the Northeast remained antithetical to its Hindu nationalist ideology. It reflects that BJP successfully assimilated and co-opted leaders from other political parties.

⁹V. Bijukumar. (2019). North East India: Development Rhetoric, Ethnic Anxieties. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LVII(25). pp 18-21.

Development vs Ethnic Issues

The BJP's victory in the region was due to its reiteration of its developmental imagination and actualisation, which countered the discontent created by the Citizenship Act (CAA) against the BJP. The CAB, passed by the Lok Sabha on 8 January 2019, aimed to make non-Muslim illegal migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh eligible for citizenship. The BJP ignored protests from civil society and ethnic organizations, pushing for the bill in the Rajya Sabha and it promised that the country would share the burden of people migrating as per the provisions of the bill as a whole. Protestors argued that the bill would encourage further illegal migration and negatively impact demography, affecting the cultural identity of various ethnic groups and scarce resources in these states. The protests against the CAB stemmed from ethnic anxiety and everyday life in the region, with violent protests in Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Tripura. The AGP left the NDA over the CAB, believing it goes against the spirit of Assam Accord of 1985.¹⁰ But in the later phase, BJP successfully handled the CAA issue in North-East.

The BJP passed the Citizenship and Amendment Bill (CAB) in parliament despite protests from civil society groups, ethnic organizations, and political parties, making it an Act (CAA). Addressing the legal migration burden, BJP pledged that the legal migration of citizens under CAA should not be taken alone by the North-East but shared with the entire country. The BJP justified its standby, ensuring Hindu minorities persecuted in Muslim countries were accommodated in India.¹¹ Through the process, BJP as a party and government stood by its commitment for CAA.

The BJP has used the CAA issue to consolidate Hindu votes in various states and address ethnic anxieties by emphasizing developmental issues and infrastructure development. The NDA government's Act East Policy (AEP) aims to promote economic cooperation, cultural ties, and strategic relationships with countries in the

¹⁰V. Bijukumar. (2019). *Op.Cit.* p.20

¹¹Vikash Tripathi & Dhruba Pratim Sharma. (2022). Religious Polarisation Outweighs Ethnic Mobilisation: Explaining NDA's Victory in Assam. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LVII(26& 27). pp 31-34.

Asia Pacific region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels. The AEP includes the construction of a 1,360 km long India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway.¹² It is expected to boost the regional economy within the North East and ASEAN countries.

Despite growing protests against the CAA and resentment against the BJP, the party has highlighted developmental initiatives undertaken by the NDA government over the past five years. These include the completion of Dhola-Sadiya bridge and the Bogibeel bridge, which connects Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The Dhola-Sadiya bridge, named the Bhupen Hazarika Setu, is a beam bridge extending 9.15 km over the Brahmaputra River and its tributary the Lohit River, and is India's longest railroad bridge. The Bogibeel bridge, constructed at the cost of `5,900 crore, provides rail amenities and enables fast movement of defence logistics along the China border.¹³ This reflects the developmental aspects of BJP government.

In addition to these infrastructure developments, the BJP could undertake developmental projects such as Sikkim's first airport at Pakyong, expansion of Pasighat airport at Arunachal Pradesh, upgradation of Guwahati and Agartala airports, opening of the Hollongi–Itanagar four-lane National Highway, train connectivity between Guwahati and Mendipathar in Meghalaya, and the inauguration of Agartala–Delhi Rajdhani Express. The 21 percent increase in allocation to the North East in the union interim budget for 2019-20 proves the BJP's commitment to the region's development. However, the BJP has also accused the Congress of lack of development in North East India during the election campaign and other occasions. Despite the highlighted infrastructure development not being followed by industrial development, accelerating gross domestic product and creation of job opportunities in the region, it attracted the people towards the BJP.

¹²*Ibid.* p.33

¹³V. Bijukumar. (2019). *Op.Cit.* pp18-21.

The political mistake on the part of Congress

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Congress was able to maintain its tally of three seats in Assam but its strength in Assam significantly decreased in the election due to several factors. The Congress failed to capitalize on the resentment against the CAA towards the ruling BJP in the region, particularly in Assam. The party's "go it alone" policy cost it more in various states. While the BJP could ally with the AGP and BPF in Assam, the Congress fought alone. In fact, by allying with the AGP and BPF, the BJP benefited more than its allies, as they could not get a single seat. If the Congress could have allied with the AIUDF, the situation would have been different. For example, in Karimganj constituency, the BJP won with a 44.62 percent vote share, while the Congress secured 11.36 percent. The Congress had concerns about the potential projection of an alliance with the AIUDF, a Muslim party, as a Muslim party to defeat the BJP in the state. Additionally, the Congress could have avoided significant damage if it had allied with the AGP when it parted ways with the NEDA over the CAA.¹⁴ Congress contesting the 2019 Lok Sabha election alone proves costly for the party.

Consolidation of Tribal Votes and Regional Balance

With the rise of the BJP, upper Assam has emerged as the Congress' Achilles' heel since it has served as a launch pad for the saffron surge. The "Mitrajot" (BJP-led alliance) defeated "Mahajot" (Congress led alliance) in the 2021 Assam assembly elections with a 47 percent vote share and 43 seats. "Mahajot" won 12 seats with a 38% vote share, while the regionalist alliance only managed to win one seat. The preceding pattern has continued with this. The Mitrajot's easy ride suggests a deeper shift in the ethnic base towards the BJP in a region historically being the centre of ethnic politics. Even in upper Assam, the AJP and Rajjor Dal's influence was restricted to a small number of constituencies.¹⁵ Thus BJP led alliance has clean sweep in Upper Assam.

¹⁵Vikash Tripathi &Dhruba Pratim Sharma.(2022).*Op.Cit.* pp 31-34.

The Mitrajot's success in Scheduled Tribe (ST) seats can also be attributed to a shifting ethnic basis. It won 14 of the 16 ST seats with an astounding 53% of the vote. Given that the majority of anti-CAA demonstrations took place in this region of Assam, the voting results demonstrate that religious differences predominated over ethno linguistic distinctions. One may claim that the Sangh Parivar's long-term strategy of building support among the Assamese tea tribes was a factor in the party's electoral stability in upper Assam. Despite the territorial concentration of a small number of ethnic groups, a sizable portion of constituencies in upper Assam are ethnically diverse and include votes from the tea tribes, having a significant influence on the election. During the elections, the Mahajot could only hold onto its support in the lower Assam and Barak Valley areas, which have sizable Muslim populations, which showed an evenly distributed performance by the "Mitrajot" (NDA) throughout regions.¹⁶ Thus, due to its good performance only in limited areas, Congress-led Mahajot was defeated.

Consolidation of Hindu Voters

In the 2021 assembly elections Hindu voters in Assam have given the BJP-led Mitrajot a substantial amount of support as a result of the party's politicisation of the immigrant surge and accused that earlier Congress government had harboured illegal Muslim immigrants. This story helped them win the 2016 election and keep their majority in the Lok Sabha in 2014 and 2019. The BJP views the Congress-led Mahajot as a "Alliance of Mughals" that is out to harm the interests of the state's original inhabitants of Assam. Himanta Biswa Sarma, a key leader in the BJP, has begun a campaign against the coalition because of its inclusion of the AIUDF. He claims that this has turned the elections into a "conflict of civilizations." This rhetoric has worked in the ground, and it accelerated the consolidation of Hindu votes towards the Mitrajot, which made large gains in the seats where the Hindu population is predominate and to take a commanding lead in Upper and North Assam

¹⁶*Ibid.* p.33.

while resolving ethnic differences.¹⁷ In this election religious polarisation has worked for BJP.

This campaign overshadowed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) issue, which was central to the campaigns of the Mahajot and regional parties. The BJP claims that the partnership of the Congress and the AIUDF has put Assam's cultural identity at risk.

Appeal among all Sections

Major ethnic groups including the Karbis, Dimasas, Misings, Rabhas, and Tiwas have come together to support the BJP-led Mitrajot in the upcoming 2021 Assam assembly elections. The Mahajot, however, is poised to make significant gains in Bodo-dominated seats located inside and outside the Bodoland Territorial area (BTR) due to the aggregation of Bodo votes with the AIUDF's minority base in the area. This is all because to the arrival of the Bodo People's Front (BPF). Since many Bodo voters have defected to the UPPL, this development has direct implications for the Mitrajot.¹⁸ With help from the BJP and the GSP, the UPPL may be able to win over non-Bodo Hindu voters and challenge the BPF in the polls.

In the 2021 Assam assembly elections, the BJP-led Mitrajot (NDA) gained power due to religious polarisation, positive perceptions of state and central governments, and pro-incumbency. The BJP's dominance in Assam is unprecedented, as it deepens the dependency of regional forces on religious polarization. This dependency temporarily benefits the Mitrajot, but, in the long run, shrinks autonomous electoral space for regional parties. The Congress's failure to forge alliances with regionalist parties and factions in upper Assam and its inability to project a leadership face made it vulnerable in the elections. The AIUDF's presence increased due to minority votes in favor of the Mahajot, but Congress could not secure the return of its traditional voters.¹⁹ The Mahajot could not counter the

¹⁷Abhinav Pankaj Borobora. (2021). *Op.cit.*

¹⁹Vikash Tripathi & Dhruva Pratim Sharma. (2022). *Op.Cit*, pp 31-34.

narrative about protecting cultural identity and was unable to gain Hindu bases shifted to the BJP in 2016.

Alliance Policy of BJP in Tripura

The fall of CPI(M) in Tripura in the 2018 assembly election is equally dramatic to the rise of the BJP-led alliance with the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT). The CPI(M), which won 13 seats, was defeated by the BJP (35 seats) and the IPTF (8 seats), while the Congress didn't even register an account. The BJP's appeal for a "Communist Mukt Bhatrat" in Tripura included references to the 7th Pay Commission and the need to recognise Bir Bikram Kishore Deb Burman of the Manikya dynasty, whose contributions to Tripura were routinely ignored by the CPI-M. These issues, combined with the anti-incumbency factor, undoubtedly assisted BJP in expanding its presence in this stronghold of Left and IPTF, which has a predominantly Christian tribal support base.²⁰ But in Tripura, the RSS's foundational effort proved to be crucial.

Ashish Kumar Saha, Diba Chandra Hrangkhawl, Biswa Bandhu Sen, Pranjit Singh Roy, and Dilip Sarkar are just a few of the Tripura legislators that have helped the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) establish a strong political presence in the state. Before the 2018 assembly election, these leaders and hundreds of Trinamool Congress officials and members switched to the BJP. Sudip Roy Burman, Ashish Kumar Saha, Diba Chandra Hrangkhawl, Biswa Bandhu Sen, Pranjit Singh Roy, and Dilip Sarkar, among other Congress officials, were all given BJP tickets from their respective seats. Subal Bhowmik and Manoj Deb, two more ex-Congress MLAs, have also been given BJP tickets. A significant number of 'paratroopers' to the BJP made it feasible for the party to establish itself in the State.²¹ The BJP's opposition to creating new states in the state remains uncertain, and the demand for Tipraland may shape the BJP-IPTF alliance.

²⁰Shubhrajeev Konwer (2019), BJP and Coalition Politics: Strategic Alliances in the States of Northeast. *Social Change and Development*. Vol. XVI (1). pp. 33-50

²¹*Ibid*.p.38

Alliance with Tribal Party

The BJP made it clear from the beginning that Tripura could not be won without the tribal support, which is essential to the Left in the region. It partnered with the IPFT (Indigenous People's Front of Tripura) a month before the polls. The party has supported the IPFT for a while, and CPI (M) leaders have been blaming the BJP for inciting rioting between IPFT workers and CPI(M) during the unrest in Agartala in August 2016. But it delayed making a choice as it considered its alternatives. Says a BJP leader, "We had been in touch with all the anti-Left regional parties. We felt the IPFT had managed to build a strong tribal base on the back of its demand for a separate state for tribals and so was the best bet for us."²²To retain the overwhelming Bengali vote in the state, the BJP made it clear in the poll's run-up that it did not support a separate tribal state.²³Despite this, the party's confidence in the IPFT was ultimately justified when the tribal group won eight of the nine seats it ran for.

By allying with the IPFT, the BJP sought to divide the tribal vote, which would have otherwise supported and voted for the CPI(M). In Tripura, the CPI(M)-led Left front took 18 of the 20 ST (Scheduled Tribes) seats in 2013, but only by a margin of less than 2,000 votes in seven of them. A deal with IPFT meant that the BJP could hope to win some, if not all, of the 20 seats as the Congress has had little presence in tribal districts.²⁴From the electoral verdict, it was clear that the tribal population had abandoned the CPI(M). The party only received two ST seats this time, Jolaibbari and Manu, despite always winning at least 18 of the 20 tribal seats in the state. Deputy Chief Minister and tribal leader Aghore Debbarman was one among the CPI(M) leaders who lost, falling to the Left's most vital stronghold of Asharambari by a large margin of 7,000 votes. Asharambari had delivered the CPI(M) its largest-ever win even in 1988, when the Congress formed the

²²Esha Roy. (2018). "How Tripura was won," *The Indian Express*, June 26, 2018.

²³"Tripura elections results 2018: Decisive factors that played in BJP's favour," *The Indian Express*, March 08, 2018.

²⁴"Saffron surge in Tripura: 3 reasons for BJP's spectacular show in big Left bastion for 25 years," *India Today*, March 3, 2018.

government.²⁵ In the 2018 assembly election CPM support base in the tribal areas was affected by the BJP IPFT alliance.

Former rebel commander and current president of IPFT rival INPT (Indigenous Nationalist Front of Tripura), Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhwal, claims the BJP victory was inevitable. Hrangkhwal states, “We don’t agree with the IPFT demand for a separate state, but the writing on the wall was there. The tribals were feeling alienated and neglected. This is not a bad verdict as far as we are concerned. We don’t support the BJP, but something had to change. The tribals have been loyal to the CPI(M) time after time but without getting anything in return. There are 10,000 tribal youths without jobs. Do you think that is a small matter? How will tribal families feed themselves without jobs? The tribal youth had had enough, and they are the ones who brought about the change”.²⁶ The dissatisfaction among tribal population was clearly visible.

In the 2023 Tripura assembly elections, the BJP- IPFT alliance returned to power for the second time due to division of opposition votes among the Left Congress alliance and the newly formed Tipra Motha, for developmental issues like building roads and infrastructure, with the support of state government employees due to implementation of 7th pay commission among other factors. In the 2018 assembly elections support from Tribal population as well as Bengali population also played a crucial role among others. In the coming days, it is interesting to see the political activities of the Left-Congress alliance and TIPRA motha in Tripura.

From the above discussion, BJP in both states has been found to have aligned with the local/regional forces and tried to make a social coalition to make them look more inclusive regarding their acceptance in these diverse ethnic societies.

Election Strategy of BJP in Assam

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) strategically set aside contentious issues such as "cow politics" and the "Ram Mandir" disputes, opting instead to create an alliance

²⁵Esha Roy. (2018).*Op.Cit*

²⁶*Ibid*

with the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). This alliance emphasised the party's commitment to preserving the cultural and territorial integrity of its indigenous population, as encapsulated in the phrase "jati, mati, bheti." The BJP's call for a fresh "battle of Saraighat" in 2016 inspired the "khilonjiyas" to unite against the "outsiders."²⁷ The RSS and BJP camp has gained greatly from its alliance with regional groupings that spearheaded huge political activities to expel the "Bengali Muslims."

Rainbow Coalition

Analysis of the BJP's victory in Assam during the 2016 elections for the state's assembly can be done in light of the party's overall strategy in the region. First, the BJP got the tacit support of the Bodos, Tiwas, and Rabhas, which helped the party gain ground in the districts populated by minorities. Second, the BJP enjoyed considerable support from both Bengali and Assamese Hindus throughout the election, resulting in a strong Hindu consolidation. However, Assamese and Bengali Muslims vote split between the Congress and the AIUDF. Thirdly, the BJP's pre poll alliance with the AGP and BPF helped it win more votes against the Congress. It is noted that the BJP allied with the AGP and BPF immediately before the announcement of polls. Local opposition to the coalition was first voiced by both the BJP and AGP in places like Bongaigaon, Sivasagar, Sonitpur, Amguri, and Tezpur. The BJP leadership was able to forge the coalition despite the oppositional voices.²⁸ The BJP reached a deal with the AGP and BPF in the run-up to the election to unify the Opposition vote against the ruling Congress regime.

On January 19, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi started his party's electoral campaign in Assam by delivering a speech in Kokrajhar, a significant centre of Bodo politics. The event was organised and supported by the BPF. Providing Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Bodos living in the two hill districts of Assam, was one of the important announcements made by Prime Minister Modi during the rally.

²⁷ Akhil R. Dutta (2017) BJP's Electoral Victory in Assam, 2016: Co-opting the Khilonjiyas. *Social Change*, 47(1), pp.108-124

²⁸ V. Bijukumar. (2016). Assam Assembly Elections 2016: BJP Triumphs and Congress Dwindles. *Mainstream Weekly*, Vol. LIV (25).

This alliance's primary objective was to win over Bodo voters in the roughly 12 assembly constituencies under BPF's political control and another 20 constituencies out of 126 seats where Bodos could impact state election results.²⁹ Additionally, the sizeable Bodo community in the hill districts also helped the BJP's electoral fortunes.

The BJP felt the need for this coalition, which it termed the Rainbow Coalition, for two reasons. First, one of the key factors of the BJP's victory in Upper Assam during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections was the party's fiery campaign promise to provide ST status to six communities. However, some of the state's existing ST communities were not happy with this pledge. Second, the NDA government at the Centre, led by the BJP, still needs to actually grant those communities the ST status, which led to a great deal of dissatisfaction. Both current Scheduled Tribes (STs) and aspiring STs were deeply insulted by these two concerns, which were widely seen as a significant challenge to the electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2016 assembly elections.³⁰ But election result shows BJP was successful in managing these groups.

The formation of a strategic alliance had a profound impact on the political landscape of Assam, leading to the emergence of a coalition headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that secured 86 out of 126 seats in the Legislative Assembly. The AGP neutralized the BJP's communal image, while the BPF's understanding with plains tribal organisations and the BPF gave the alliance an edge. The BPF not only bring 12 seats from the Bodo Tribal Autonomous District (BTAD) area but it secured support from Bodo voters in Mangoldoi, Sonitpur, and Lakhimpur districts, bringing the alliance to victory.³¹ Hence alliance with BPF proves beneficial for the BJP led coalition.

²⁹Akhil Ranjan Dutta. *Op. Cit.* p.112-115

³⁰*Ibid.* p.113

³¹Udayon Misra. (2016). Victory for Identity Politics, Not Hindutva in Assam. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 51(22), pp. 20-23

Politics of Identity

The Khilonjiya (indigenous) rhetoric was a defining feature of the campaign for 2016 Assam legislative assembly elections. The need for safeguarding the rights of indigenous populations in Assam has arisen due to the significant migration of individuals from neighbouring regions and the disproportionate growth of the Muslim community inside the state.³² Politics of Identity came into the centre stage during this election.

The BJP also highlighted the emotionally charged issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh. Due to this, voters were polarised along religious lines, which helped the BJP increase its support among Assamese Hindus but hindered it in regions with a high Muslim population. Shah stated during the final round of campaigning that if elected, the BJP would "completely free" Assam of Bangladeshis. The number of Bangladeshi migrants in India is unknown, however some estimates put the number at 20 million, with 5 million of those perhaps living in Assam.³³ The Hindutva forces exhibited strong involvement in grassroots mobilisation, but the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) strategically maintained a subdued presence throughout the campaign, consistently emphasising the phrase "Jati, Mati, and Bheti" (pertaining to nationality, land, and the hearth).³⁴ BJP has successfully played the anti- Bangladeshi card in 2016 assembly elections, as illegal immigration from Bangladesh is regarded as a threat by the Indigenous people of Assam.

The 2011 Census revealed a significant increase in the Muslim population in several districts (from 30.9% in 2001 to 34.2 % in 2011)³⁵, leading to a political fear psychosis in Assam. The cultivation of this phobia was purposefully fostered by prominent nationalist organisations such as the All Assam Students Union (AASU), which propagated concerns over the potential future dominance of 'Bangladeshis' in the political landscape of the state. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) successfully

³² Akhil Ranjan Dutta. *Op.Cit.* pp. 113-115

³³ Ronojoy Sen. (2016). Assam Assembly Elections: BJP has the momentum. *Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. ISAS Brief, No 418*, pp.1-3.

³⁴ Udayan Misra. *Op.Cit*

³⁵ "Census 2011: Assam records highest rise in Muslim population" *The Times of India*, January 22, 2015.

instilled this apprehension among the majority of indigenous populations throughout several states. The prominence of this issue resulted in the relegation of other matters, including as the Land Swap Deal with Bangladesh, the provision of refugee status to Hindu Bangladeshis, and the union government's commitment to recommence the Lower Subansiri Hydro Power project, to a peripheral position. The commitment of civil society, including the media, to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was openly shown, indicating a strong partnership between civil society and political actors, which received backing from the BJP. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) capitalised on the apprehension about demographic shifts resulting from the growth of the Muslim community during the election.

Under the leadership of Himanta Biswa Sarma, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) effectively used the prevailing anti-incumbency emotions throughout the election campaign. They strategically promoted the themes of identity and development, urging people to rally behind the cause of safeguarding their Jati, Mati, Bheti (referring to nationality, land, and hearth). All the ethnic groups, including the native Assamese, found this quite appealing. Although the topic of development remained a key concern throughout the elections, it was evident that the preservation of land and the identity of indigenous people resonated more strongly. Because of this, the elections were frequently referred to as the Assamese people's "last battle of Saraighat" and memories of the anti-foreigner movement were brought back to life.³⁶ After the election, some local media made the observation that the 1980s were back in full force, with concerns over identity, land, and language once more taking centre stage.

For instance, the BJP has been using the slogan "*Aibar Axomot Khilonjar Sorkar*" (This time, a government by the indigenous people of Assam) in their campaigning. It is unclear if the BJP intended to imply that the governments of Tarun Gogoi and past chief ministers Sarat Chandra Sinha and Prafulla Kumar Mahanta

³⁶Udayon Misra. *Op.Cit*

were not led by "khilonjias" or indigenous.³⁷ It can be said that in entire election campaign indigenous card was well played by BJP.

Anti-incumbency

The administrations in Assam had hurdles from the public during the 2016 assembly elections. However, their inability to foresee the anger among the general population may potentially be resolved by the intervention of the party's top leadership. The Congress government's approach characterised by an ostrich-like disposition proved ineffective. The victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in seven Lok Sabha seats in Assam during 2014 marked the start of its rise in the state and underscored the need for "parivartan" (change).³⁸ After 15 years of rule, the Congress government faced massive anti-incumbency.

Role of RSS

The BJP's victory in Assam was largely due to the systematic activities of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the state, which has been working in the tribal belt for years. In 1979, the RSS founded its first school, Shishu Shiksha Samiti, and over time, about 500 Ekal Vidyalayas were set up by the RSS in the state. The RSS has spread its roots in the state by appropriating Assam's medieval saint, Srimanta Sankardev, for political gains. Sankardev led a reformist neo-Vaishnavite movement against Brahmanism.³⁹ The RSS actively supported the anti-infiltration of Bangladeshis in the Assam movement of 1979-84 as it believed that illegal infiltration is a threat to national security.

The RSS, established in Assam in 1946, has effectively used local cultural icons for its penetration into Assamese society. The most important among these was the appropriation of Sankardeva, the religious and social reformer of medieval Assam, and Bhupen Hazarika (1926–2011), the twentieth-century musical legend. While Sankardeva's religion is anti-Brahminical in its substance and moved by the

³⁷Wasbir Hussain. *Op. Cit*

³⁸Malini Bhattacharjee. *Op. Cit*

³⁹*Ibid.*

philosophy of mass emancipation in all domains of life, the RSS co-opted him to consolidate Hindutva in the state. The Srimanta Sankardeva Sangha (formed in 1930) is the largest religious conglomerate in the state and was brought into being to accommodate those who were not given their due respect by the more Brahminical *satras*, religious monasteries in Assam which also claim to represent the Sankari culture.⁴⁰ It can be said that gradually, RSS has successfully penetrated in the social life of Assam.

In the 2016 elections, the BJP used both the *Satras* and the Sangha for its political mileage. Prime Minister Modi attended and addressed the 85th Annual Conference of the Sangha at Sibsagar, where he said, "the strength of the government and society must combine so that we can create the India Srimanta Sankardeva wanted"⁴¹ The *Satras* have been a core focus in the BJP's campaign, with financial assistance to these monasteries and the issue of invasion of the *Satra's* land by illegal migrants being continuously played out by the party. Bhupen Hazarika, active in the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA) movement in Assam and representing a progressive cultural ethos with his inimitable compositions to fight both feudalism and state atrocities, continued to enjoy the respect and adulation accorded to him as a people's artiste. Assam can only think of its identity with these two cultural icons, Sankardeva and Hazarika, and the BJP used them both to their full advantage during the 2016 elections.⁴² Thus co-opting these two great Assamese personalities with the Hindutva agenda, RSS was able to make it more acceptable in the society and politics of Assam.

The RSS has successfully expanded its reach across the nation, including the states of Northeast India. This region is characterised by its ethnic variety and the ambitions of many tribal groups, which have resulted in calls for self-governance and the establishment of new states. The states located in Northeast India have distinctive challenges, including the predicaments associated with 'Hindu' refugees, dietary preferences prevalent in places with Christian majorities, and the advocacy for the

⁴⁰Akhil Ranjan Dutta. *Op. Cit*

⁴¹Malini Bhattacharjee. *Op. Cit*

⁴²*Ibid.*

Hindi language. Various sister institutions and organisations, such as Yuva Vikas Kendra, Ekal Vidyalaya, Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram, Rashtra Sevika Samiti, and Vivekananda Kendra, have been established in different states. Through these initiatives, the RSS has successfully extended its influence by engaging with tribal youths and focusing on individuals who possess limited prior knowledge or experience.⁴³ It can be understood that affiliated organisations of ‘Sangh Parivar’ were also instrumental in this process.

The Hindutva activists have adopted novel strategies for navigating through the complex particularities of the region to establish itself in the cultural and political imagination of the people. They move away from standard techniques of mobilizing support by invoking Hindu stereotypes like Ram or Ayodhya. Instead, they focus on adapting local cults and symbols associated with Kamakhya and Sankardev-Sattra traditions. The RSS and BJP camp have clearly gained advantages from their alignment with regional groupings that spearheaded large-scale political activities aimed at expelling the "Bengali Muslims."⁴⁴ Additionally, the proselytising activities of Christian missionaries among the tribals in the state since the colonial period gave them an opportunity to play the anti-Christian card.

The broad network of the Sangh Parivar in Assam today, and its presence in virtually every possible sphere of society, has given it the appearance of a broad social movement. Any analysis of the reasons for growth in popularity of the BJP in the region acknowledges the invaluable contribution of its social and cultural wings in furthering the ideology of Hindutva. Bidyut Chakraborty asserts that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has a robust network in the North-East region. Given the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) control at the national level and in some states, it is expected that the RSS will endeavour to enhance its visibility and further extend its

⁴³RSS initiates a mass contact programme in North-East India, Konkan, parts of UP, Available at <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/JucGzLSVI6LxzkWyywXLoTI/RSS-initiates-a-mass-contactprogramme-in-NorthEast-India.html>, accessed on 26.8.2018.

⁴⁴ Malini Bhattacharjee. *Op. Cit*

existing organisational framework.⁴⁵ It reflects the kind of relation between RSS and BJP.

Furthermore, the state has a sizeable Muslim population, and the natives have long been concerned about the swiftly increasing number of "Bangladeshis", which has benefited the RSS in the area. Aligning with regional organisations that organised large-scale political campaigns to expel "Bengali Muslims" has undoubtedly helped the RSS and BJP. Additionally, they had the chance to use the anti-Christian card due to the Christian missionaries' operations of proselytising among the tribal people in the state during the colonial era. The Sangh Parivar in Assam presently has a wide network and is present in almost every aspect of life, giving the impression that it is a significant social movement.⁴⁶ Therefore, any investigation into the factors influencing the BJP's rise to prominence in the area can recognise the crucial role that its social and cultural wing(s) had played in advancing Hindutva ideology.

Strong Media Campaign

On 31 March 2016, an aggressive media campaign began four days before the first phase of elections. The advertisement in local dailies used Bhupen Hazarika's "*Akou natunprabhat hobo*" (A new dawn will descend once more) caption, asserting that the corrupt Congress would be defeated, and a new Assam would be built with an emphasis that if it did not happen this time, it never would. The advertisement also used Gauhati University's anthem, "*JilikabaLuitare Paar*" (The banks of the Luit will be illuminated) and added "*Samay ahilnatun Asom garhar, SoudisheSankhanaad, hobo eibar BJP-r sarkar*" (This is the time to build a new Assam; the reverberation of the notes of conch shell herald the formation of a BJP government in all directions) lyrics to emphasize the formation of a BJP government. Full-page

⁴⁵ Referred to Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right, Tapan Basu, Pradip Datta, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar and Sambuddha Sen, in 'Target northeast: How RSS plans to make region saffron', The Hindustan Times, Dec15, 2014.

⁴⁶ Malini Bhattacharjee. *Op. Cit*

advertisements of the party were displayed in all local dailies on Election Day.⁴⁷ This type of massive media campaign helped in creating an environment in BJP's favour.

The election campaign strategies changed after the first round of voting was completed. From 5 April 2016 on, the focus was on easily winning the already completed first phase. The caption read, "The change has already come in Upper Assam; it is time for Lower Assam to reciprocate," on April 5, 2016. The BJP once more bought full-page advertisements in the regional dailies on April 8 and April 10. On April 8, 2016, Prime Minister Modi's Parivattan Maharally was the subject of advertisements. On April 10, 2016, the BJP pledged that "Change will bring development," emphasising its commitment to providing 2.5 million youth with jobs, universal skill development training, free education and scooters for female students, 24-hour electricity and access to safe drinking water for all households, MUDRA loans for youth, the elimination of interviews for third- and fourth-grade recruitment positions, complete irrigation of paddy fields, the construction of AIIMS, and the establishment of an organic hub in Assam.⁴⁸ Thus development in various sectors was also promised to the people of Assam.

Leading local media houses, both print and electronic, particularly Asomiya Protidin, the most widely read daily in the state, and its television channel, Pratidin Time and News Live, the most popular network owned by the wife of the BJP state election committee convener Himanta Biswa Sarmah, as well as its daily paper Niyomiya Bartta, supported the opposition party (BJP). One of the most common tactics was to ridicule the BJP's opponents, especially the Left. It can be easily understood that during 2016 assembly elections in Assam, majority of the media houses played favourable role for the BJP.

Co-option of Regional Leaders to the BJP

From last many years, the BJP has seen an increase in electoral support, but it has rarely resulted in more seats. Only four seats from the state of Assam were won by the BJP in the 2009 Lok Sabha elections and five seats in the Assembly in the 2011

⁴⁷ Akhil Ranjan Dutta. *Op.Cit*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

elections. In other northeastern Indian states, it had essentially little political influence or leadership. With pre-election alliances and the co-optation of local leaders, it has made tremendous strides to marginalise the grand old party and establish itself as the "fulcrum party" of Northeast India, but, now that it is beginning to flex its muscles. The election triumph in Assam in 2016 was a pivotal juncture for the aforementioned political party, as it facilitated the subsequent expansion of its influence into other states within the Northeast region of India.⁴⁹The significant shift in political circumstances would not have been attainable without the assimilation of regional leaders within its framework.

Regional leaders from the AGP and Congress have joined the BJP in Assam before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, causing growing anti-congress sentiments. The BJP's call for protection of Jaati, Mati, Bheti resonated with the Assamese, who feared being swamped by outsiders. Sarbananda Sonowal, a prominent political figure, served as the Chief Minister of Assam and was affiliated with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Prior to his tenure as Chief Minister, Sonowal held the position of Member of Parliament (MP) for the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) party in the Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency till 2009. Several notable leaders of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), including Hitenda Nath Goswami, Chandra Mohan Patowary, Naba Doley, Padma Hazarika, and Jagdish Bhuyan, choose to align themselves with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) before to the 2014 elections. Similarly, notable congress figures such as Himanta B. Sarma, who became a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2015, had previously served as a lawmaker for the Congress party in the Jalukbari constituency. Bolin Chetia, Pradan Baruah, Pallab Lochan Das, Piyush Hazarika, Rajen Borthakur, Abu Taher Bepari, Kripanath Mallah, Binanda Kumar Saikia, and Jayanta Mallah Baruah emulated the actions of Himanta Biswa Sarma.⁵⁰The majority of these individuals often referred to as 'paratroopers' were successful in their electoral campaigns under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) banner, afterwards assuming cabinet roles within the government of Assam.

Creating of Beneficiaries

⁴⁹ShubhrajeetKonwer. *Op.Cit*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

The saffron party expanded its support base in Assam with numerous schemes from the Union government and the state. Sarma began distributing laptops in large quantities when serving as the education minister in the Congress cabinet. He continued the program while serving as the BJP's minister of education, where he had additional authority. Therefore, introduced a number of programmes, including the Arunodoi scheme for rural women, the scheme of Rs 12,000 for pregnant tea tribe women, and the distribution of land deeds, creating a new group of beneficiaries.⁵¹ This is now known as *Hitadhikari* (Beneficiary) politics.

Electoral Strategy of BJP in Tripura

In terms of the electoral strategy of BJP in Tripura it reflects how the party has utilised anti-incumbency and chooses the issues relevant to the people of state at large that includes tribals and the Bengali population.

Anti-incumbency

The CPI(M) faced opposition due to anti-incumbency and the Left government's failure to understand the changing aspirations of voters. The BJP's slogan "Chalo Paltai" (Let's Change) in the 2018 Tripura assembly elections resonated with both Bengali and indigenous tribal communities. With 60 assembly constituencies of Tripura 30 for the general, 20 for the Scheduled Tribe (ST) and 10 for the Scheduled Caste (SC), the party capitalized on the discontent of both groups, capturing the imagination of a cross-section of society.⁵² Therefore, the BJP was able to win seats in both the areas.

Based on a study conducted by CSDS, it was found that there was a significant degree of discontentment with the performance of the Tripura administration and its Chief Minister. Approximately one-third of the respondents

⁵¹ "Assam Elections: Why BJP Won Despite Huge Anti-Incumbency Initially" *NewsClick*, May 07, 2021.

⁵² V. Bijukumar. (2019). Nuances of the Left Debacle in Tripura. *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 54 (42).

expressed complete unhappiness with their performance.⁵³ Such high levels of dissatisfaction according to previous survey's, are a certain sign that a government is in trouble. Any party would always have to overcome the anti-incumbency issue, but it was especially difficult while a pro-Modi wave was there in the country.

Consolidation of Tribals

In the 2018 Tripura assembly election campaign, the BJP highlighted the insensitivity towards tribals in the state, mobilizing their discontent. It was able to create a misconception that Bengalis benefited at the expense of tribals during the 25-year CPI(M)rule, as there was only minimal representation of tribals in the ministry and government services. The BJP used a pragmatic strategy to strike a political balance between Bengalis and indigenous tribal communities, championing the cause of the tribal community, who became minorities due to the Bengali community's migration and access to resources and political power. The BJP pitching its development agenda during the 2018 election campaign, also promised special economic zones for food processing, bamboo, textile, and information technology sectors.

Hindutva's political project of appropriating the tribal king and creating alternate narratives, stirring up ethnic feelings among the tribal communities, and regaining the support of the dominant Bengali community through its pro-development rhetoric not only overthrew the left's dominance but also solidified the BJP's foothold in the state. The simmering resentment over the CAB strained the comfortable alliance between the tribes and the BJP, but the Left could not take advantage of the favorable political climate and reclaim its lost dominance in the general elections.⁵⁴ Moreover the Tipramotha, which is basically a tribal party has won majority of the ST seats in the 2023 assembly elections.

⁵³ Discontent powers vote for change, The Indian Express, March 5, 2018. Available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/Northeastern-states-2018-assembly-elections-tripura-pollsmeghalaya-nagaland-left-front-5086021/>, accessed on 26.8.2018.

⁵⁴V. Bijukumar.(2019).*Op.Cit*

7th Pay commission

The BJP emphasised that because the Seventh Pay Commission had not been implemented, state employees were receiving pay based on the Fourth Pay Commission. In fact, the BJP gained the support of government employees by promising to execute the Seventh Pay Commission in its vision statement. Because of this, a sizable proportion of Bengali Hindus switched over to the BJP. In order to strengthen its influence in the state, the party intentionally made use of the demographic makeup of state.

Role of RSS

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) groundwork was crucial in Tripura, among other states. The RSS played a significant part in this victory as well. Some senior workers were sent to the BJP to work in Tripura. Sunil Deodhar, incharge of the BJP in Tripura, was also a RSS pracharak. Deodhar managed Varanasi Parliamentary seat for Nreandra Modi in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.⁵⁵ The Sangh work in Tripura was intensified, from around 60 shakhas at the time of the 2014 elections, the RSS has 265 shakhas in the state in 2018. Moreover, BJP governments are always favourable for the growth of RSS and its affiliated organisations.

Co-option of Leaders from other parties to the BJP

A closer examination shows that the BJP's establishment of a political base in Tripura would not have been possible without the help of many political 'paratroopers'. Numerous regional leaders from various political parties joined the BJP prior to the 2018 assembly election. With hundreds of former Trinamool Congress leaders and members, they joined at the BJP in August 2017.⁵⁶ Similarly, a number of Congress politicians switched parties before the elections and received

⁵⁵ "How BJP fashioned Tripura Win?" *Livemint*, March 03, 2018.

⁵⁶ 6 TMC ex-MLAs in Tripura recognised as BJP legislators - Times of India, December 11, 2017.

BJP party tickets.⁵⁷ Thus co-option of leaders from other political parties has greatly helped BJP in its victory in Tripura.

Massive Outreach and Campaign

The BJP appointed 'Vistaraks' per constituency to prevent infighting among mandals and local leaders, while more were brought in from other states to manage Tripura's tea estates. Each polling booth had 17-18 pages of voters, with a 'panna pramukh' responsible for each page. Local leaders were picked up for the job. The BJP also strengthened its Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, affiliated with the RSS, and launched online voter registration through missed calls. Over two lakh members were registered by the time of elections. 'Train Samparaks' traveled on trains wearing Modi-T-shirts and handed out BJP pamphlets to passengers, who received "prashikshan" training on ideology, nationalism, and Indian culture. Before the elections, 400 'Vistaraks' were brought in from Assam.⁵⁸ Campaign rally by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers, and chief ministers from other BJP-ruled states intensified the election campaign and drew a large crowd.

The BJP's 2018 electoral victory over the communists was attributed to multiple factors, including its long-term strategy of constructing a counter narrative among tribal communities and rousing sentiments against the dominant Bengali community. The party also highlighted developmental paralysis, unemployment, and inadequate salary conditions for government employees. The disarray of opposition parties like the TMC and Congress allowed the BJP to gain space, as both parties experienced frequent defection and fell under the BJP's poaching strategy.

The campaign strategy employed by the Bharatiya Janata Party in Assam and Tripura indicates that the party effectively organised booth-level operations through the establishment of "booth committees" and the appointment of "panna pramukhs" responsible for overseeing each page of the voter list. There is a significant prevalence of electronic and print media usage as well. The utilisation of slogans and

⁵⁷Tripura Assembly polls: All ex-Congress MLAs in BJP first list of 44, *The Indian Express*, January 28, 2108.

⁵⁸Esha Roy. (2018). "How Tripura was won," *The Indian Express*, June 26, 2018.

songs in an election campaign is a common strategy employed by political parties to mobilise their party cadres and supporters. Large rallies featuring prominent leaders of the BJP are also advantageous in terms of activating party members and voters. The influence of financial resources was also a significant factor in the course of events. In Assam, there are various slogans and songs that hold significance. These include slogans such as "Jaati Mati Veti," "Saraighator Sesh Ron," "Parivartan," "Sakalure Ananda, Sarbananda," and "AhiseAhise, Himanta Ahise." The terms "Modi Sarkar," "Akou ebar Modi Sarkar," "Acche Din," "Bhal din," and "Savyatarjuj" have been used during successive electoral campaigns. During elections in Tripura, slogans such as "Chalo Paltai," "Acche Din," and "Sampark se Samarthan" have been used.

Conclusion

In Assam BJP's alliance policy which is regarded as rainbow coalition with regional parties like AGP and BPF and other Tiwas and Rabha organisations helped BJP creating acceptance among the various communities of Assam. They were successful in defeating Congress which ruled Assam for long 15 years. BJP has also worked on poaching of capable leaders from other political parties. Moreover the party was successful in showcasing the development agenda to people. Through these techniques they have successfully submerged the CAA outrage in the region. In the 2019 election also BJP fought the parliamentary election along with its alliance partners and was able to win majority of seats. Whereas Congress won only 3 seats by contesting alone. In the 2021 assembly election BJP led *Mitrajot* which include AGP and UPPL were able to defeat Congress led *Mahajot*. In this election due to inclusion of AIUDF in Congress led Mahajot, Hindu votes got consolidated in favour of BJP led alliance. In the 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly election BJP gained power due religious polarisation, positive perception of state and central government among the people, and pro incumbency.

In Tripura legislative election in 2018 BJP IPFT alliance was successful in defeating the Left party which ruled Tripura for 25 long years. In Tripura also BJP poached leaders from AITMC and Congress. The alliance with tribal party IPFT worked in favour of BJP. Further in 2023 state legislative elections BJP faced tough contest from left party and somehow managed to return to power in the state. Because in this election newly formed Tipra Motha gained majority tribal votes, which created a challenging situation for BJP in Tripura.

As part of its election strategy, BJP successfully utilised the issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh and the politics of identity in their favour since these issues remain the key concern of the politics of Assam. During the election campaign, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) effectively leveraged anti-incumbency sentiments and focused on the themes of identity and development. This strategy aimed to garner support from voters who were inclined towards preserving their cultural heritage, known as Jati Mati Bheti. Consequently, this approach resonated particularly well with indigenous communities. The election in question was well recognised and referred to as the "final confrontation of Saraighat." The RSS developed a notable influence in Assam by a calculated utilisation of the renowned figures of Saint Sankardeva and Bhupen Hazarika, hence creating societal acceptability. It has focused on local Hindu cults and symbols like Kamakhya, Sankardeva, Satra tradition etc. As a part of its electoral strategy, the BJP engaged in intensive media campaigning, successfully garnering the support of prominent local media houses, both electronic and print. The BJP has effectively assimilated regional leaders, hence boosting the party's political fortunes. Additionally, creating beneficiaries through populist welfare policies and programmes have also helped the party.

In Tripura, the BJP has used various tactics as part of its election strategy. These include capitalising on anti-incumbency sentiments against the left government, forming an alliance with the IPFT, pursuing a Hindutva political agenda by appropriating the tribal king and constructing an alternative narrative, implementing the recommendations of the 7th pay commission, and extensive

groundwork by the RSS. Additionally, the BJP has attracted leaders from other political parties, organised widespread outreach programmes through the deployment of 'Vistaraks' and 'Panna pramukhs' at the booth level, and intensified the election campaign through large-scale rallies featuring the Prime Minister and other prominent party members.

Chapter V: Policies and Achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura

The fifth chapter covers the policies and achievements of BJP governments in the states of Assam and Tripura. It studies the performance of BJP governments in both the states in various fronts.

Public Policy

Public policies are a manifestation of the fundamental objectives of a government, since they are important for the long-term viability and functionality of any governing body. Policies include a collection of guiding principles that facilitate the governing process. The evaluation of a government's efficacy may be gauged by the populace via an analysis of its policies. Public policies play a crucial role in ensuring governmental accountability to the public. Policies serve as formal documentation outlining the objectives and guiding principles of individual government departments.¹ Public policies are characterised by their dynamic nature, complexity, and interactive nature, as they aim to address the concerns and challenges faced by individuals and communities via the development of new policies or the reformulation of current ones.² The challenges faced by individuals are complex and need the implementation of diverse policy measures in order to effectively tackle them.³ Policy formulation may be subject to the impact of several elements, including socio-political, economic, cultural, and religious considerations.⁴ Public policies play a crucial role in governmental decision-making processes, since they provide comprehensive guidance and a broad perspective.

The policy making process is an integral component of the field of politics and encompasses many political actions. According to Gabriel Almond, a political system may be defined as a complex network of structures and interactions, whereby each

¹“Importance Of Public Policies,” *The Shillong Times*, Jun 12, 2012.

²Peter John. (1998). *Analysing Public Policy*. New York: Continuum.

³Ira Sharkansky, & R. Hofferbert. (1969). Dimensions of State Politics, Economics, and Public Policy. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol 63 (3), pp. 867- 879.

⁴Michael Hill. (2005). *Public Policy Process*. New Jersey: Pearson.

component fulfils certain duties to ensure its continuous existence and operation. The aforementioned is a collection of procedures that systematically transforms given inputs into corresponding outputs. Output activities refer to the actions undertaken by a political system in order to address demands or pressures exerted on the system in the form of inputs. The outcomes might manifest as policies, projects, and choices implemented by the government.⁵ Hence, the formulation and execution of policies are of utmost importance in the realm of government.

According to Robert Eyestone, Public Policy refers to the interplay between the government and its surrounding environment.⁶ According to Thomas R. Dye, public policy encompasses the decisions made by the government about the actions it takes or refrains from doing.⁷ Richard Rose argues that public policy should not be seen as a singular choice, but rather as a continuous path or pattern of action.⁸ According to Carl J. Friedrich, public policy refers to a suggested course of action by an individual, organisation, or government in a specific context, aiming to leverage and overcome the possibilities and challenges present in that environment, with the ultimate aim of achieving a goal or fulfilling an objective or purpose.⁹ Public policy refers to a formal declaration of intended actions by a government entity.

Hence, it is essential for every governing body to formulate and implement sound public policies that facilitate the provision of adequate services and promote efficient governance. In addition, it is important to recognise the significance of public policies in

⁵Gabriel Almond. (1978).*Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Policy*. Boston: Little Brown & Co.

⁶Robert, Eyestone.(1971).*The Threads of Public Policy: A Study in Policy Leadership*.Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co.

⁷Thomas R. Dye. (2016).*Understanding Public Policy*, New Jersey: Pearson.

⁸Richard Rose. (2004).*Learning From Comparative Public Policy: A Practical Guide*.Oxfordshire:Routledge.

⁹Carl J. Friedrich. (1950).*Constitutional Government And Democracy : Theory and practice in Europe and America*.Boston:Ginn publications.

facilitating an efficient decision-making process. To get insights into the success of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administrations in Assam and Tripura, an examination of the policies implemented by these governments subsequent to assuming office would be instructive. This chapter primarily focuses on the policies and accomplishments of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administrations in the states of Assam and Tripura. This study examines the performance of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administrations in both states across several domains.

Policies and Programmes of the BJP Government in Assam

The above analysis provides an elaboration of the major policies implemented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led administration subsequent to assuming office in 2016. The newly established state administration headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has promptly implemented a range of policies and initiatives in accordance with the election pledges outlined in its platform. The subject matter has been divided into two distinct categories, with the first segment including the policies and initiatives that are substantially implemented by the government at the state level. The second category encompasses the whole of novel initiatives and significant policy choices implemented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration.

Major Policies of State Government- The following discourse pertains to the major policies implemented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration subsequent to assuming power in the state of Assam in the year 2016.

Atal Amrit Abhiyan

The health care system, introduced in December 2016, primarily aims to provide health insurance coverage only to those residing in Assam, subject to an annual income threshold of five lakhs. Currently, around 16 million beneficiaries have been successfully registered in this programme, including almost 92% of the population of

Assam.¹⁰ This type of strategy confers significant advantages to those with low socioeconomic status.

Free Diagnostic Services and Mobile Medical Units

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led state government has implemented a programme inside the National Health Mission Assam to provide complimentary diagnostic services for X-rays and CT scans. Several mobile medical units have been established to provide vital and urgent healthcare services to individuals. This policy has garnered criticism for its perceived resemblance and iteration of a previous governmental policy (108).¹¹ While it is beneficial for the general population.

Major Decision of the State BJP Government

In addition to the aforementioned policies, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government in Assam has implemented other significant measures that have garnered much discussion. These projects are subject to ongoing discussion and debate, both inside the state and in external contexts. An effort has been undertaken to elucidate the significant policy choices made by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government in the state of Assam, with the aim of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing circumstances.

Free higher education

The Sarbananda Sonowal administration implemented a novel initiative aimed at enhancing the literacy rate within the state. This initiative entails the provision of complimentary higher education to students whose annual family income does not exceed one lakh rupees. In 2016, the Assam education department implemented a policy that rendered education free of charge for students pursuing upper secondary, three-year

¹⁰ "Assam Budget: Rs 980 crore allocated for school infrastructure, skill training programme for youth" *Scroll.in* , March 12, 2018.

¹¹ *ibid.*

degree, and certificate programmes. The Assam BJP administration has implemented this measure in an attempt to address the requests put up by various student organisations, including those aligned with Left-wing ideologies, seeking a reduction in college tuition prices.

Protection of land rights to indigenous people

Free education for Girls

Following the implementation of the new population policy, which encountered substantial backlash from feminist organisations and public policy professionals, the government of Assam subsequently introduced many modifications to the policy. One of the aforementioned improvements was the implementation of tuition-free education for female students, extending up to the tertiary level. According to Sarma, the provision of complimentary amenities such as facilities, fees, transportation, books, and meal dues in hostels for females would serve as an incentive for them to successfully pursue their studies. The aforementioned programme also implemented an elevation in the legally permissible age for marriage among males and females, with the establishment of a 50 percent quota for women in governmental positions and electoral processes.¹² The policy is designed with the objective of offering skill development training and pension benefits to Muslim women who have been affected by the practise of triple talaq.

Making Sanskrit Mandatory in Schools

The decision by the Assam government to mandate the inclusion of Sanskrit in the curriculum of schools up to Class VIII has generated significant controversy. The policy in question has faced criticism from the indigenous literary group, as well as other organisations such as AASU and AJYCP, who saw it as a deliberate attempt to eradicate native languages. Additionally, the tribal organisations have issued a warning to initiate a comprehensive demonstration throughout the whole state in the event that the state

¹²“Two child norm tied to jobs in Assam,” *The Hindu*, April 10, 2017.

government, headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), fails to retract its recent decision.¹³ However, one week subsequent to the resolution to mandate Sanskrit as a compulsory subject in schools, Sarma, who was serving as the education minister at the time, expressed that the state lacked an adequate number of teachers to enforce this need. Consequently, the decision could not be promptly executed.

Care for old parents

One significant decision made by the BJP administration pertains to the integration of aged care with the remuneration of government employees. Sarma, who concurrently holds the position of finance minister in the state, made an announcement on the responsibility of government workers to provide care for their respective parents. Failure to comply with this requirement may result in the government withholding a percentage of the employee's earnings, which will then be allocated to parents.¹⁴ The aforementioned issue was again brought to attention at the budget session of the Assembly for the fiscal year 2017-18.

Cancer Control Programme

One notable move within the healthcare sector during the tenure of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led administration was the initiation of a comprehensive cancer control project in collaboration with Tata Trusts. Multiple studies conducted in recent years have consistently shown a notable rise in the prevalence of cancer cases in the North East area, with Assam being identified as the primary contributor to this concerning trend. Consequently, it is imperative to promptly address the urgent needs of these cancer patients in Assam. Consequently, the current state administration has made the decision to enhance the infrastructure of six government medical schools and 11 district hospitals

¹³“Assam govt. makes Sanskrit compulsory,” *The Hindu*, March 03, 2017.

¹⁴Prabin Kalita. “Assam government staff who don't take care of elderly parents will face salary cuts,” *The Times of India*, July 27, 2018.

in order to provide dependable cancer care treatments.¹⁵ The government's decision to partner with Tata Trust for the cancer control plan has been widely embraced by the populace. It is anticipated that the whole North East region's cancer sufferers will get advantages from this development.

Focus on Education Sector

Efforts have been undertaken to develop three more medical colleges, three new universities, 21 new polytechnics, an All-India Institute of Ayurveda, and to complete the construction of current projects. Furthermore, with the successful completion of the building of medical colleges in Kokrajhar and Diphu, the budget has proposed the development of three further medical colleges in Nagaon, Dhubri, and Lakhimpur as part of a government financed initiative. The health minister has officially announced the establishment of an All-India Institute of Ayurveda in the town of Raha. In addition, it was announced that three further universities and 21 new polytechnic institutions would be established. Furthermore, it is anticipated that three engineering colleges located in Karimganj, Golaghat, and Dhemaji will achieve full operational status during the present fiscal year.¹⁶ Furthermore, a suggestion was put out in the budget to transform single-gender schools into co-educational institutions. Additionally, it was announced that children enrolled in the ninth and tenth grades of public schools will be provided with complimentary textbooks. The state administration further emphasised the enhancement of basic and secondary education.¹⁷ The implementation of this governmental initiative aimed at enhancing the educational system has yielded positive outcomes for pupils across different age cohorts.

¹⁵The Tata group contributes Rs 830 crore to this project over two financial years, while the government contributes Rs 1080 crore. "Assam Budget: Rs 980 crore allocated for school infrastructure, skill training programme for youth," *Op.cit.*

¹⁶Samudra Gupta Kashyap.(2016). "Assam budget: Sonowal govt's focus on healthcare, education," *The Indian Express*, July 26, 2016.

¹⁷(They have planned to open institutes for teacher education and appoint TET teachers. He further added that overall, 297 upper primary schools would be covered under computer-aided learning programme. The BJP government has also allotted Rs 980 crore for the improvement of infrastructure of schools that lacked basic facilities such as separate classrooms and electricity, Sarma announced.)

Introduction of ‘Gunotsav’

The state government has implemented Gunotsav as an endeavour to promote the quality of education and improve the academic performance of children at the Elementary level. The initiative was implemented with the aim of assessing the academic achievements of educational institutions and their students, so enabling the development of appropriate policies to enhance the overall educational experience and school environment. The assessment will include four key domains: academic success of students in grades 2 to 8, participation in co-scholastic activities, evaluation of the availability and utilisation of school infrastructure and other amenities, and community participation.¹⁸ This effort has established a kind of accountability among educational institutions.

New Industrial and Investment Policy

The state administration, under the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has implemented a novel industry and investment strategy with the aim of enticing investors and fostering industrial development. The administration has just unveiled a novel industrial and investment strategy with the aim of stimulating industrialization and fostering investment inside the state.¹⁹ The primary aim of this newly implemented strategy is to effectively appeal to both local and international investors and industrialists, encouraging them to make investments inside the state. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the state finance minister, further said that the state government intends to provide certain concessions and advantages to those who want to establish industries or invest in the state. Additionally, he offered information that the concession will be extended to all businessmen and industrialists who make a minimum investment of one hundred crore rupees in the state. According to the minister, the newly implemented policy does not include the provision for tax exemption as a result of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). According to his statement, qualifying investors and industrialists

¹⁸<http://gunotsavassam.org/>. Accessed on 24th June, 2022.

¹⁹“Assam government announces new industrial policy,” *Merinews*, January 22, 2018.

would get concessions in the form of repayment. It is imperative to acknowledge the Assam Global Investor's Summit, which constituted the most extensive gathering of investors in Assam. This summit was orchestrated by the government of Assam in February 2018. The Act East Policy (AEP) of India was further strengthened via the developmental plan of the summit, facilitating the expansion of opportunities in the tourist industry. The primary objective of organising the Global Investment Summit was to facilitate the enhancement of industrialization via the provision of technical skills and necessary funding. This, in turn, has the potential to provide a greater number of job possibilities, particularly for the younger population. This method not only provides assistance to Assam but also has the potential to provide beneficial outcomes for other states in the Northeastern region.²⁰ The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had really been signed between the government of Assam and many industries. However, because to insufficient communication, inadequate road transportation, and several other challenges, the project failed to attract a significant number of investors.

Act East Policy and Skill Development Departments

Under the leadership of Sonowal, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration established the Act East department with the objective of advancing India's Act East programme. The decision to develop twin towers in Guwahati by the state government aims to transform the city into a prominent economic centre within the South East Asia region. According to Chandra Mohan Patowary, the Minister for Act East Policy Department in Assam, the state government has formulated a strategy to foster economic ties with nations in Southeast Asia. To facilitate the implementation of this strategy, the Act East Policy Department has been established with the purpose of formulating policies and plans to effectively achieve this objective. The central government has undertaken measures to enhance connectivity by road, air, and water transportation in the North Eastern area. Additionally, efforts have been made to modernise Guwahati

²⁰Riddhi Mahanta.(2018). Advantage Assam': Instrumentalising Development through Tourism. *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*. 09 Jul, 2018.

Airport.²¹ These projects represent significant strides in fostering diplomatic ties with adjacent nations.

The Chief Minister, Sarbananda Sonowal, has initiated the establishment of Skill Development Training Centres throughout the whole state.²² In order to forward Prime Minister Modi's 'Skill India' initiative, skill development training institutes have been constructed inside the state. The Chief Minister of Assam has announced that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the government of Assam and the government of Singapore.²³ The Assam Government has also formulated plans to establish language study centres inside the state, with the aim of creating new employment prospects for young people overseas.²⁴ The establishment of the Act East Policy department and the skill development department is anticipated to contribute to the creation of employment and business prospects.

The construction of the Dhola-Sadia bridge, often referred to as the Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Setu, spanning the rivers Brahmaputra and Lohit, has been successfully concluded during the term of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration in the state of Assam, India. This bridge has the distinction of being the longest in the country.²⁵ This is a huge accomplishment for the state government, since it has great importance for the connectivity and security considerations of India. The construction of the Dhola-Sadia bridge has significantly improved travel inside the state of Assam, as well as between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Additionally, it has effectively mitigated the existing communication gap in the region.

²¹Bikash Singh. (2017). "Assam has set up 'Act East' dept for time bound implementation of Policy-Assam CM," *The Economic Times*, October 06, 2017.

²²"Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal launches Skill Development Training Centres across the state," *The Economic Times*, December 28, 2017.

²³ Under this MoU a Skill Development Centre would be set up at Mangaldoi which will have international standard. In the Mangaldoi Skill Development Centre 10,000 thousand youth of the state will undergo training.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵"How PM Modi fulfilled Vajpayee's 'dream' to build India's longest Bhupen Hazarika Bridge between Dhola, Sadiya in Assam," *Financial Express*, May 26, 2017.

The government has allocated funds for a programme aimed at encouraging the use of digital means of financial transaction among tea garden workers. As per the statement made by Himanta Biswa Sarma, it has been announced that each tea garden employee who has started the process of opening a bank account would be eligible to earn a sum of Rs 5,000.²⁶ In addition, the government will provide smart phones to each "line sardar," who serve as the leaders of the work force in tea gardens. These smart phones, valued at around Rs 3,000, will contribute to the promotion of digital literacy and utilisation. Among the total of 780,000 regular tea garden labourers, a significant proportion have successfully started the process of establishing bank accounts.

The administration has made the decision to provide resources for the provision of sanitary napkins to girls and women from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Females aged 12 to 20 years, belonging to households with an annual income below Rs 5 lakh, have the opportunity to receive an annual stipend of Rs 600 for the purpose of purchasing sanitary napkins. The government has implemented a programme aimed at providing assistance to unmarried daughters of seniors.²⁷ Moreover, they will be entitled to receive the funds in the event of the death of the pension recipient inside their household.

The state government has recently unveiled a comprehensive strategy aimed at enhancing the quality and functionality of state highways and important roads within the district. The local minister has also unveiled a scheme aimed at enhancing the infrastructure of state highways and important roads inside the districts. A pertinent point of discussion may be made about the event known as Namami Brahmaputra, which has resemblance to the Namami Ganga initiative. This event was orchestrated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led administration in the state of Assam, taking place from March 31 to April 4 in the year 2017. The inauguration of the event took place in

²⁶“Assam Launches Cash Award Scheme For Tea Garden Workers,” *The Shillong Times*, January 02, 2018.

²⁷“Assam government to give money to girls for buying sanitary napkins,” *The New Indian Express*, March 12, 2018.

21 districts located along the course of the Brahmaputra River, spanning throughout the state. The esteemed person who presided over the inauguration was the former President of India, Pranab Mukherjee. Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that characterize.²⁸ The five-day programmes have many activities to showcase Assam's art, heritage and culture.

This five-day event has brought business, fun, and festivities for all. Brahmaputra is regarded as the 'lifeline of Assam' for continuing to flow from the heart of the state, the river also has incredible opportunities for business. The National Waterways, mainly NW 2 and NW16 can play a vital role in economic development and prosperity. As a part of the Act East Policy, National Waterways 2 (NW-2) from Dhubri to Sadiya plays the role of a bridge for the economic progress in the market of Southeast Asia.²⁹ The Brahmaputra River is also a source of current and potential hydroelectric power generation and it improves the power sector of the state.³⁰ Recently the government bought ships for the water way connectivity and started its service in some parts of Assam.

Awareness programme called "Sanskar" to Counter Social Evils: The BJP led government will introduce awareness programme called 'Sanskar' in all the development blocks and gaon panchayats keeping in mind the superstitious practices which led to wacky incidents in the state.³¹ The Assam Science Technology and Environment Council is the nodal agency and the programme covered all Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police and all concerned government departments in a district. Further various local bodies, women organisations, voluntary organizations,

²⁸Bikash Singh. (2017). "Namami Brahmaputra event to showcase Assam's rich art, heritage and culture," *The Economic Times*, March 23, 2017.

²⁹(It is expected that these waterways would make Assam the centre of India-ASEAN collaboration and will also be able to attract major investments throughout the world.)

³⁰http://prepareias.in/current_affair/31/3/2017/namami-brahmaputra-festival-2017, Accessed on 19th Sept, 2020.

³¹"Assam government to start Sanskar programme to fight superstitions," *The Economic Times*, June 11, 2018.

media persons, leading citizens, academicians, MPs and MLAs from ruling and opposition parties will be the stake holders of the programme.

The presentation included the participation of social activist Birubala Rabha, who has dedicated significant efforts to combatting the issue of witch-hunting. Sonowal further requested the relevant authorities to formulate methodologies for the initiative and develop an appropriate plan of action to effectively execute the programme across all levels of the state, therefore mitigating the occurrence of unfavourable circumstances resulting from superstitious beliefs. The Chief Minister, Mr. Sonowal, disseminated information to the public on the aforementioned scheme.³² Advocacy for raising awareness among the populace inside the state is also encouraged, with the aim of empowering society to establish preventive measures against the potential reoccurrence of such incidents in the future.

Significant Developments in the Agricultural Sector: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration has recently declared its intention to provide identification cards (I-cards) to farmers, in addition to implementing the construction of 61,000 shallow tube-wells. In addition to the aforementioned initiatives, the government has also facilitated the development of organic farming. Furthermore, it has extended insurance coverage to a significant number of 150,000 fishermen via the implementation of a group insurance plan. In addition, the Government made the decision to establish 40 more milk cooperatives and 244 rural godowns.³³ Given that a significant proportion of the population in Assam relies on agriculture as their primary source of livelihood, it can be posited that the implementation of these policy measures will benefit the general populace.

The Chief Minister's Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana (MSGUY) is a government initiative aimed at comprehensive rural development, led by the Chief

³² (This programme basically started after the death of two young artistes in Karbi Anglong district of the state who were mistaken for child abductors.)

³³“Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Says ‘Government Committed to Growth of Agriculture Sector’” *The Sentinel*, August 02, 2018.

Minister. The Assam government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Sonowal, has initiated a comprehensive rural development scheme called the Chief Minister Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana (CMSGUY) for a duration of five years, commencing in the fiscal year 2016-17 and concluding in 2021-22, coinciding with the commemoration of India's 75th year of independence. The primary goal of this mission is to achieve a twofold increase in agricultural revenue. The formulation of this strategy is derived from the visionary perspective of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The state government of Assam has implemented an ambitious project with the aim of enhancing the agricultural sector. It is anticipated that this would assist farmers by providing insights about the soil's state in order to enhance crop productivity. In the last two years, the state administration has given over 1.1 million soil health certificates.³⁴ The efficacy of this approach has been widely questioned.

The recent approval of the Witch Hunt measure by President Ram Nath Kovind has reinvigorated the efforts of a 65-year-old lady, who has little literacy, in her ongoing crusade against superstitious practises. This measure, first enacted by the Assam Assembly three years ago, aims to combat the alarming number of lives lost due to witch-hunting incidents.³⁵ In June 2013, the Principal Secretary (Home and Political), L. S. Changsan, obtained the President's endorsement for the Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015, resulting in its enactment.

Under this statute, any crime is considered cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable, as per the inputs provided by Birubala Rabha. The legislation stipulates a maximum incarceration period of seven years and a fine of up to five lakh rupees for the act of referring to an individual as a witch. Furthermore, it includes provisions that align with Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which pertains to the penalty for the crime of murder, in cases when an individual is murdered subsequent to being

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵Rahul Karmakar. (2018). "Kovind cleans Assam Bill against witch-hunt," *The Hindu*, July 16, 2018.

stigmatised as a witch.³⁶ Therefore, the passage of this measure would aid many Daini Hatya or "witch hunt" victims in receiving justice. Additionally, it aids in lowering crimes linked to witch hunts.

The Assam Orunodoi Scheme, initiated by the Government of Assam on October 2nd, 2020, is a notable poverty reduction scheme. The programme initially offers a monthly cash aid of Rs 830/- via the mechanism of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to economically disadvantaged families within the State. In recent times, there has been an increase in the amount to Rs 1,250 each month. The recipients get the funds on a monthly basis, namely on the 10th day of each month. It is worth noting that women, who often assume the major caregiving role within families, have been designated as the recipients of benefits under the system. Consequently, over 1.9 million women have derived benefits from the programme. The annual financial expenditure for Orunodoi amounts to Rs 4,142 crore, positioning it as one of the most substantial Direct Bank Transfer (DBT) initiatives in the nation.³⁷ This strategy is well recognised as being popular among women.

Assam Arogya Nidhi: The Assam Arogya Nidhi (AAN) initiative is a great program that provided financial assistance to families in need. The program offers up to Rs 1,50,000/- to BPL families and families with a monthly income of less than Rs. 10,000/- for general and specialised treatment of life-threatening diseases and injuries caused by natural and manmade disasters like industrial/farm/road/rail accidents and bomb blasts.³⁸ This initiative covers a wide range of life-threatening diseases including heart diseases and heart surgery, cancer, kidney and urinary diseases, orthopaedic, thalassemia, bone marrow transplant, AIDS and chronic mental illness with surgical

³⁶ (The punishment for leading a person to suicide may be extended to life imprisonment and up to 5 lakh in fine.)

³⁷ "Assam Govt Launches Poverty Alleviation Scheme", *Outlook*, 8th December, 2022.

³⁸ <https://www.myscheme.gov.in/schemes/schemes/aan> , Accessed on 19th June, 2023.

treatment.³⁹ The Government of India contributes 50 percent of the funds sanctioned by the State Government under the AAN program. This initiative helps those who are in need of medical assistance.

Assam Right to Public Service Portal: The RTPS Portal has been created under the World Bank Financed Assam Citizen Centric Service Delivery Project of the Administrative Reforms & Training Department to allow citizens to apply for ARTPS-notified services online and also to promote proactive disclosure related to citizens' entitlements under the Act and procedures for accessing ARTPS services.⁴⁰ Some features of this portal are: i) Online application of services ii) SMS alerts to applicant and designated officials iii) Acknowledgement receipt on application submission iv) Dashboard for real time monitoring v) Online tracking of status of application vi) Process automation vii) Online appeal provision for non-delivery/delay in providing services viii) Lodge online grievance ix) Information repository of RTPS Services. This portal is designed and developed by NIC Assam, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India.

Chief Minister's Covid-19 Widows Support Scheme: The Government of Assam has launched a special scheme to provide socio-economic security to widows who lost their husbands due to Covid-19. The Chief Minister's Covid-19 Widows Support Scheme is a initiative that offered a one-time financial assistance of Rs 2.5 lakh to low-income families with an annual income up to Rs 5 lakh. In the first phase, 874 Covid widows have received support from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. This scheme can provide much-needed relief and support to those who had been affected by the pandemic.

Chief Minister's Shishu Seva Scheme: This scheme provides financial assistance to children who lost their parents in Covid-19. Each beneficiary can receive a fixed deposit of ₹7,81,200 in their name, and that they will receive a monthly financial assistance of

³⁹ The selection of beneficiaries is done by a Selection Committee that had been notified by the Government of Assam.

⁴⁰ <https://art.assam.gov.in/portlets/assam-right-to-public-service-artps> , Accessed on 15th June, 2023.

Rs 3,500 until they turn 24 years old. This helps to alleviate some of the financial burden that these children were facing. The government is taking a holistic approach to supporting those who had been affected by the pandemic, and this scheme can provide much-needed relief to those who need it most.

Swanirbhar Naari: The Swanirbhar Naari is an initiative aimed at making the weavers of state self-reliant, ensuring their economic security and empowerment.⁴¹ The scheme's objective of arranging the purchase of handloom-produced textile products directly from the weavers, depositing the money in their bank accounts within four days, and selling the products at fixed prices through outlets set up in different districts is commendable. With the opening of 100 procurement centers of traditional goods across Assam, this scheme can benefit the weavers and help them become financially independent.

Achievements:

The Assam government has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with 38 Micro Finance Institutions and Banks to provide relief to microfinance loan borrowers, as part of the Assam Microfinance Incentive & Relief Scheme (AMIRS). The scheme offers benefits and incentives to around 11 lakh prompt-paying borrowers of microfinance loans. The government has also introduced MyGov Assam, a platform that has gained popularity for its wide reach and social media presence. This platform has helped channel government messages more effectively and introduced a grievance redressal mechanism. The government has intensified efforts against illegal drug trafficking, seizing drugs worth Rs 343.36 crore. Adarsh Vidyalayas, English-medium schools in rural areas affiliated with CBSE, have been established, and the government is working on establishing 118 Tea Estate Model Schools. The Project Child initiative ensures children's mental and physical well-being, and training is provided to headmasters/headmistresses and teachers. The government has promised to create one lakh government jobs for local youth, and over 86,000 candidates have been appointed

⁴¹(This scheme was launched by Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on January 13, 2022.)

to different departments. Mission Basundhara 2.0, launched after the success of the first phase, aims to streamline land revenue services and make them more accessible to citizens facing land-related issues. The current government has maintained tight control over the situation, with few instances of civilian or security personnel killings and no ethnic or communal riots observed. Peace accords signed with various insurgent groups are seen as positive developments for the state. The government has made significant progress in resolving long-standing border disputes with neighboring states, including a Memorandum of Settlement with Meghalaya and a resolution of the border row with Arunachal Pradesh. The government has also taken steps against child marriage, with over 97% of cases charged under POCSO and the Child Marriage Act.⁴²

NRC Upgradation in Assam and Role of the BJP Government

The first call for the upgrading of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was initiated by the All Assam Student Union (AASU). The Assam movement, which took place from 1979 to 1985, stands as one of the most enduring student movements in the annals

⁴²(The Assam government has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with 38 Micro Finance Institutions and Banks to provide relief to microfinance loan borrowers, as part of the Assam Microfinance Incentive & Relief Scheme (AMIRS). The scheme offers benefits and incentives to around 11 lakh prompt-paying borrowers of microfinance loans.

- The government has also introduced MyGov Assam, a platform that has gained popularity for its wide reach and social media presence. This platform has helped channel government messages more effectively and introduced a grievance redressal mechanism.
- The government has intensified efforts against illegal drug trafficking, seizing drugs worth Rs 343.36 crore. Adarsh Vidyalayas, English-medium schools in rural areas affiliated with CBSE, have been established, and the government is working on establishing 118 Tea Estate Model Schools. The Project Child initiative ensures children's mental and physical well-being, and training is provided to headmasters/headmistresses and teachers.
- The government has promised to create one lakh government jobs for local youth, and over 86,000 candidates have been appointed to different departments.
- Mission Basundhara 2.0, launched after the success of the first phase, aims to streamline land revenue services and make them more accessible to citizens facing land-related issues.
- The current government has maintained tight control over the situation, with few instances of civilian or security personnel killings and no ethnic or communal riots observed.
- Peace accords signed with various insurgent groups are seen as positive developments for the state.
- The government has made significant progress in resolving long-standing border disputes with neighboring states, including a Memorandum of Settlement with Meghalaya and a resolution of the border row with Arunachal Pradesh.
- The government has also taken steps against child marriage, with over 97% of cases charged under POCSO and the Child Marriage Act.)

of Indian history. Spearheaded by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), the movement was primarily driven by the demand for the identification and expulsion of illegal immigrants, namely those originating from Bangladesh. The AASU, along with other organisations, advocated for the deportation of immigrants without regard to their religious affiliation, whether it Hindu or Muslim. The signing of the Assam Accord in 1985 was a consequential outcome resulting from negotiations between the leaders of the Assam movement and the then Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi.⁴³ Over the course of the last 33 years, the Assam Accord has not effectively enforced this particular clause, resulting in its inability to effectively curb the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh into Assam. Following the implementation of the Assam Accord, the Asom Gano Parishad (AGP) was established under the guidance of leaders from the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and subsequently gained political authority via the 1985 Assembly elections. However, their efforts were unsuccessful in addressing the issue of individuals from Bangladesh. The absence of interest and motivation on the part of both the State and Central governments is the underlying reason. The AASU and other organisations, such as the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), have consistently advocated for the complete implementation of the Assam Accord and the repatriation of undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants. Since 1985, they have engaged in several meetings with both state and central administrations to discuss these issues.

The establishment of the Illegal Migration (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 (IMDT) by the federal government on December 12, 1983, via parliamentary legislation, was intended to address the problem of unauthorised migration into the state of Assam.⁴⁴ In addition to this, the IMDT Act conferred a discriminatory status to the state of Assam. The Act shifted the burden of proof regarding citizenship status from the accused to the complainant. Contrary to the provisions of the Foreigner's Act of 1946,

⁴³ Their key demands were- detection of foreigners and their deportation, NRC upgradation in Assam and sealing the Indo Bangla borders. According to the Assam Accord of 1985, any person settled in Assam from Bangladesh after March 25, 1971 is regarded as an illegal migrant, not a citizen.

⁴⁴ According to the Act, anyone who entered Assam before March 25, 1971 can be regarded as a legal citizen, but in case of other state of India, July 19, 1948 is the cut off date for getting citizenship of India.

the burden of accountability is placed onto the accused individual. The ineffectiveness of the IMDT Act in accurately identifying and deporting undocumented migrants became evident.

West Bengal, a state in India, has effectively repatriated around 500,000 unauthorised Bangladeshi migrants under the provisions of the Foreigners Act of 1946, which it has been enforcing. This state has been grappling with the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh. The court declared the IMDT Act to be unconstitutional and in violation of Article 355 of the Constitution.⁴⁵ However, there is scepticism over the efficacy of these legal processes in addressing the issue of undocumented immigration. According to reports, an estimated one million two hundred thousand Bangladeshi individuals, who first entered India legitimately with valid visas, have later disappeared without any discernible trace. This observation suggests a lack of effectiveness on the part of law enforcement officials in fulfilling their responsibilities pertaining to the identification and removal of these individuals from Bangladesh.

The decision to update the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was declared by the government of Assam in the year 2005. The current acceleration of the NRC upgradation process may be attributed to the active participation of the Supreme Court. The first version of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was released on December 31, 2017, under the guidance of the Supreme Court. This publication included a population of 19 million individuals from Assam, accounting for around 32.9 million applications. On July 30, 2019, the highly anticipated and significant final version of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) for Assam was officially released. This publication was a result of a meticulously supervised process overseen by the Supreme Court, aimed

⁴⁵(Later on, July 12, 2005 a three judges Bench of the Supreme Court, ruled that the IMDT Act “created the biggest hurdle and is the main impediment or barrier in identification and deportation of illegal migrants.” The Bench pointed out that out of 310,759 cases under the IMDT Act, only 10,015 persons were declared as illegal migrants. Among them only 1,481 persons were deported till April 30, 2000.)

at identifying individuals of Indian nationality residing in the state. Notably, this final draught excluded around 12 percent of the state's population..⁴⁶

In the Lok Sabha, Home Minister Rajnath Singh unequivocally said that the draught in question is entirely unbiased. He reassured those whose names were not included that they need not be alarmed, as they would be provided with a chance to prove their Indian citizenship. Furthermore, the individual expressed the viewpoint that matters of sensitivity should not be subject to political manipulation, and provided reassurance that the Government would refrain from using any kind of forceful measures.

In light of the accomplished release of the ultimate version of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal, extended his felicitations to the populace of Assam and characterised the occasion as a momentous day. Nevertheless, he emphasised the need of maintaining peace and unity after the release of the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The individual made a plea to the residents of Assam, urging them to maintain communal unity within the state and refrain from adhering to any provocative remarks.

Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016

Another contentious matter that garnered attention was the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill introduced by the federal government, which had also been presented to the state legislative assembly for deliberation. The aforementioned measure served as a focal point for several concerns about the function of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state. The proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill aims to confer citizenship to

⁴⁶(The NRC coordinator in his report to the court, stated that out of the state's 3.29 crore population, 2.89 crore names had been included in the final draft NRC while 40,70,707 people could not make it to the register. Of these, 37,59,630 names had been rejected whereas the 2,48,077 were on hold. The genuine Indian citizens whose names are not included in the final draft of NRC will be given time for Claim and Objection.)

marginalised religious communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, subject to a minimum residency period of six years inside the territory of India. The introduction of this legislation has sparked much debate, notably in the region of Assam, due to concerns about its potential impact on the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures. The law faced opposition from civil society groups as well as numerous student and peasant groupings. According to the source, it is said that this legislation aims to incentivize the migration of Hindu individuals from Bangladesh to Assam, while also granting citizenship to current foreign residents. The apprehension around the "Tripura-like situation," characterised by the numerical dominance of migrants over indigenous populations, served as a significant catalyst for the emergence of extensive protest groups against the law. The AGP, a political ally of the BJP, also expressed its opposition to the amendment bill on many forums. Amidst the continuing demonstrations in Assam against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, the Chief Minister provided reassurances that the administration will not act in a manner contrary to the welfare of its constituents.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill of 2016 faced opposition from several segments of the population in Assam due to concerns of potential minority status inside their own country.⁴⁷ Extensive demonstrations occurred throughout the region of Assam in response to the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. The demonstrators engage in the act of burning effigies depicting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, and Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. Additionally, they organise processions and disrupt transportation by obstructing rail and road traffic. Protesters around the state were seen brandishing banners in opposition to the law, vociferating chants, and engaging in processions throughout various urban and rural areas. The protester further presented a paper to the deputy commissioner of the district,

⁴⁷ The visit by a parliamentary committee to Assam to know the opinion of people on the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, had sensitised tensions in Assam. The hearings in Guwahati and Silchar showed clearly that while most people in the Brahmaputra valley were against the bill, it was the opposite in the Bengali-dominated Barak valley. Ankush Saikia (2018). "Citizenship Amendment Bill-What is it the Assamese fear the most?" *Daily O*, .May 22, 2018.

specifically directed for the prime minister. The protesters, in their refusal to bear the "burden of foreigners," expressed their criticism towards the state administration headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for endorsing the proposed amendments to the Citizenship law by the central government. The measure was characterised as having detrimental effects on the ethnic identity, cultural heritage, and linguistic traditions of the indigenous population residing in Assam.

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 has been met with opposition by the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) in various regions of Assam. The bill's provision to provide citizenship only to non-Muslims originating from bordering nations has been the primary point of contention.⁴⁸ According to Samujjal Bhattacharya, the main advisor of AASU, several groups, people, and diverse platforms have formed a collective front to oppose the Citizenship law. The proposed Bill has the potential to negatively impact the political future of Assam and pose a danger to the land, identity, and culture of the indigenous population.⁴⁹ On November 8th, 2018, the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), in conjunction with 28 other ethnic student organisations, organised a protest march in Dispur. The purpose of the gathering was to express opposition to the Amendment bill and to caution the government about potential repercussions if it were to act contrary to the interests of the indigenous population. On October 23, 2018, the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) and 46 other groups together organised a protest known as the "Assam Bandh" in opposition to the Citizenship law. This demonstration garnered significant public support.

Coincidentally, a number of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) affiliated with the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were also expressing

⁴⁸“Massive protests across Assam against Citizenship Bill,” *The new Indian Express*, May 29, 2018.

⁴⁹(The Asom Yuba Chatra Parishad, the All-Boro Students' Union, the All-Assam Adivasi Students' Association, the Missing Students' Union, the Gorkha Students' Union, the Sodou Assam Karmachari Parishad, the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, among others, joined the protests. The All-Assam Karbi Students' Union (AAKSU), the All-Assam Adivasi Students' Union (AAASU), the All-Assam Tea Tribe Students' Association (AATTSA) and the All-Assam Karmachari Parishad (AAKP) joined an AASU protest march in Tezpur. “Citizenship Bill an attempt to jeopardize Assamese community,” says Dr. Samujjal Bhattacharya” *The Sentinel*, September 13, 2018.)

opposition against the aforementioned measure. Granting citizenship to Hindu Bangladeshis has the potential to pose a significant challenge to the cultural and ethnic identity of the Assamese population, as well as adversely affect the welfare and rights of indigenous communities.⁵⁰ According to Naba Kumar Doley, the Minister of Cultural Affairs in Assam, it is said that the matter at hand pertains to the sentiments of the populace, and the government is committed to refraining from taking any actions that may compromise the welfare of Assam. Moreover, it was explicitly stated by Binod Hazarika, a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and representative of the Chabua constituency, that the inclusion of individuals from Bangladesh is not acceptable to us. I shall not continue to serve as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) if they are granted permission to enter. We will compel them to go. According to Bokajan MLA Numal Momin, it is said that the Assamese population should not be reduced to a minority group inside their own state. Momin expresses a commitment to consistently advocate for the welfare and rights of the indigenous inhabitants of the region.⁵¹ According to additional Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) like Suren Phukan, Terash Gowalla, Jogen Mohan, and Debananda Hazarika, it is said that the chief minister would refrain from taking any actions that might potentially have adverse effects on the welfare and well-being of Assam and its inhabitants.

In contrast, the Assam Congress has expressed opposition to the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill by the Centre. It is noteworthy that several allies of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have also expressed their dissent against the measure.⁵² Debabrata Saikia, the leader of the opposition in the state assembly from the Congress party, expressed his party's willingness to undertake any necessary measures to preserve the Assam Accord. This accord, which was signed in 1985 between the All Assam Students Union, the central government, and the state government under the

⁵⁰“Massive Protests Across Assam Against Citizenship Bill,” *NDTV*, May 28, 2018.

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²Prabin Kalita. (2018). “Assam: Cong, BJP ally AGP oppose new Citizenship Bill,” *The Times of India*, May 25, 2018.

leadership of then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, effectively concluded a six-year-long anti-foreigners' movement in Assam.

The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), a political party in the governing coalition, was established in response to the demand for the expulsion of individuals from Bangladesh. The party supports the updating of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) with a deadline set on the 25th of March, 1971, in accordance with the provisions outlined in the Assam Accord. The governing coalition partner BJP was even subjected to threats of severing relations with the Government in the event that the Centre pursues the passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. This bill aims to provide citizenship to Hindu individuals from Bangladesh who entered Assam unlawfully after the year 1971.

Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the leader of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and former chief minister of Assam, issued a warning that he will withdraw from the partnership with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state in the event that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act is enacted by the central government. According to his statement, the Assamese population would face the prospect of becoming a minority inside their own territory should the law be enacted by the government. According to him, the situation posed a significant threat to the inhabitants of Assam.⁵³ The President of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Minister of Agriculture in Assam, Atul Bora, expressed their opposition to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, at the third conclave of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), which was attended by the President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Amit Shah.⁵⁴

The Citizenship Amendment Bill had caused controversy in Assam, with the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), one of the three constituents of BJP-led government in

⁵³Mohua Chatterjee. (2018). "Assam ally AGP threatens to quit NDA over Citizenship bill," *The Times of India*, August 11, 2018.

⁵⁴(In the conclave, Bora said "the bill is a threat to the identity of the indigenous people of the state. The AGP is opposed to the bill since it violates the Assam Accord." This generated protest against the bill as it was against Assam accord terms. Pankaj Sarma. (2018). "AGP opposes citizenship bill at meet," *The Telegraph* (online edition), 21 May 2018.)

Assam, leaving the BJP-led state government in protest against the proposed legislation. The AGP's opposition was based on the fact that the bill contradicted the Assam accord, which sets March 25, 1971, as the cut-off date for migrants, including Bengali-speaking Hindus.⁵⁵ The terms of the accord were considered a red line for the party and reflected a significant section of public opinion in the state.

Two months after leaving the NDA over the Citizens Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) rejoined the alliance after reaching an agreement with BJP during a meeting with the ex-Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and others. According to the agreement, at least three of the 14 Lok Sabha seats and one of the two Rajya Sabha seats, for which elections were scheduled for June, will be handed to AGP. Additionally, the BJP has promised the AGP that the Citizen Bill would be amended when it is reintroduced in Parliament.⁵⁶ On the other hand, there were disagreements inside AGP on its rejoining the governing alliance.

Eviction Drive

In accordance with the directive issued by the Gauhati High Court and in alignment with its pre-election commitments, the BJP administration initiated a campaign aimed at removing encroachments in different regions of the state. The practise originated with Kaziranga National Park and Vaishnavite sattras, and then expanded to include further regions, including the eviction campaign conducted in the Amcheng reserve forest. The primary objective of this initiative was to facilitate the evacuation of areas that had been unlawfully occupied by individuals, either inside the premises of Sattras or within protected forest regions.⁵⁷ The eviction of several families has resulted in significant adversity for these households. The Kaziranga National Park and Vaishnavite sattras in Assam are widely regarded as symbols of Assamese cultural heritage and have been

⁵⁵Prabin Kalita. (2019). "AGP Quits NDA as Cabinet Approves Citizenship Bill," *The Times of India*, January 08, 2019.

⁵⁶"Assam: AGP back in NDA after midnight deal with BJP," *The Times Of India*, March 14, 2019.

⁵⁷Samudra Gupta Kashyap. (2016). "Freeing Kaziranga, satra land priority, says Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal." *The Indian Express*, October 13, 2016.

subject to concerns of encroachment, which have been a prominent topic in electoral discourse for over a decade. However, these eviction initiatives have been a subject of controversy due to the assertion that inaccurate mapping conducted by government personnel has resulted in the displacement of innocent individuals residing in regions that are not designated as conserved forests.

The performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has generated controversies in relation to a range of problems, including eviction, which has been a subject of contention.⁵⁸ Advocates of the eviction campaign cast doubt on the individuals' identities via the use of terms such as "unlawful Bangladeshi immigrants," "poachers involved in rhinoceros activities," and "individuals suspected of citizenship status." "The user's text lacks academic tone and structure. It should be rewritten to adhere to academic The Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), a prominent group representing peasants in the state, expressed their opposition to the eviction process that was being carried out without providing enough compensation to the affected villagers. This stance received criticism from several sources.⁵⁹ Akhil Gogoi, the head of the Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), faced criticism for his stance on the aforementioned matter.

On the 24th of November, an eviction campaign was initiated in Sipajhar, resulting in the displacement of around 60 households after almost a year of delay. Nevertheless, the eviction campaign did not cease after Sipajhar. A similar initiative was implemented on November 27th at the Amchang Reserve Forest in the vicinity of Guwahati.⁶⁰ The Amchang eviction was carried out in accordance with a decision issued by the High Court, whereas the Sipajhar eviction mostly originated from the appeals made by members of the local Bajrang Dal. The Amchang eviction, in contrast to the

⁵⁸ (On 19th September 2016 eviction drive was carried by the state government in three fringe villages—Banderdubi, Deosursang and Palkhowa after the order of Gauhati High Court. During the massive protest against the eviction drive two persons including a 12-year-old girl were killed in police firing. This subsequently led to a debate in the print, electronic, and social media.)

⁵⁹ Pinku Muktiar, Prafulla Nath & Mahesh Deka. (2018). The Communal Politics of Eviction Drives in Assam. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 53(8).

⁶⁰ This also displaced more than 700 families who allegedly encroached upon reserved forest land.

Sipajhar incident, received substantial condemnation from all elements of Assamese society and media owing to the majority expulsion of persons belonging to the Mishing and Bodo ethnic groups. The aforementioned people have undergone relocation from their respective lands in Majuli, Lakhimpur, and Dhemaji due to the phenomenon of river erosion. However, the eviction procedure was carried out without any assurance of eventual rehabilitation. The persons under consideration were confronted with the task of surviving the natural elements in the absence of a shelter, therefore presenting substantial impediments to their ability to survive.⁶¹ The prevalence of eviction has raised concerns about the motives of the administration.

Regarding the Amchang eviction, indigenous groups, who have always coexisted with the natural environment and relied on it for their sustenance, have been accused of depleting forest resources. The Amchang eviction method exhibits a significant disparity. The eviction was executed in accordance with a High Court directive pertaining to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) focused on the preservation of the environment. Several activists, notably Bhuvan Pegu, a prominent leader of the Gana Shakti party and Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), have made substantial claims about the expulsion.⁶² This observation highlights the apprehension expressed by individuals over the adverse consequences of eviction.

The KMSS had expressed similar concerns in relation to the Kaziranga evacuation. The process of designating revenue villages as part of the National Park and then conducting evictions was carried out in a random manner. Regrettably, the demonstrators were subjected to gunfire, resulting in the close-range shooting of two individuals. The government first defended the action by categorising the settlers as illegal immigrants. However, after a period of eight months, the government provided compensation amounting to around 15 crores, acknowledging that these individuals had really been displaced by erosion and were resettled in the area by previous

⁶¹ Parvin Sultana. (2017). The Politics of Eviction In Assam. *Counter Currents.org*, December 02, 2017.

⁶² Parvin Sultana. *Op.cit.*

administrations.⁶³ According to the Assam government, it has been said that the Gauhati High Court has granted its request to temporarily halt the continuing removal of residential areas inside the Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary. However, the court has instructed the government to proceed with the eviction of commercial buildings.⁶⁴ After May 2021 eviction drive of Assam government against the alleged encroachers was going on with a new speed. It was the eviction drive in Dholpur of Darrang district which turned violent, or that of Barpeta or Lumding, Hojai or other eviction drives carried on by the state government thereafter.

In Assam's Sonitpur district, the effort to remove "encroachers" from about 1,900 hectares of forest and revenue property was initiated.⁶⁵ The designated forest is a designated buffer zone of the Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve and is an essential component of the Laokhowa-Burachapori ecosystem.⁶⁶ The eviction drive in Burachapori is Assam's fourth such eviction drive in last two months. Since it removed more than 5,000 alleged encroachers, the exercise in Nagoan's Batadrava on December 19 of that year had been regarded as one of the largest in the area. On December 26, another drive to remove 400 bighas from Barpeta was conducted in its wake. These incidents have raised important questions of rights and livelihood.

To clear 450 hectares of encroached land in Pava Reserve Forest, which is part of the Lakhimpur district, the administration launched an eviction drive on January 10. The campaign lasted for several days and resulted in the displacement of some 500 "illegally settled" households. A sizable portion of forest that had been converted to farmland was also cleared. Since taking office in May 2021, the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ "HC has allowed Assam govt's prayer to suspend eviction drive," *Outlook*, November 29, 2017.

⁶⁵ A senior official indicated that 12,000 or so individuals who had supposedly been living there illegally for decades were left behind. According to him, the government had been evicting residents from the Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary and surrounding government land in five locations. On the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River, the 44.06 sq km Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary is situated around 40 kilometers south of Tezpur town and 180 km east of Guwahati.

⁶⁶ "Eviction Drive In Assam Continues," *Outlook*, February 15, 2023.

dispensation had conducted eviction drives in several regions of the state. The chief Minister of Assam showed its firm role in these cases.

Anti-corruption drive

The anti-corruption measures implemented by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Government immediately upon assuming office are noteworthy. During the latter two years of the time of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration, the Chief Ministership of Sarbananda Sonowal effectively implemented an anti-corruption campaign. While these measures may not completely eradicate corruption, they significantly contribute to the promotion of good government. During this time, many government-led anti-corruption programmes have garnered significant attention. One of the significant steps undertaken was the apprehension of Rakesh Pal, the chairman of the Assam Public Service Commission, who was found to have accepted monetary bribes in exchange for unlawfully granting employment opportunities.⁶⁷ Moreover, the arrest of Kuzendra Doley, who serves as the secretary of the Irrigation Department of Assam, has considerable importance due to his involvement in soliciting bribes from contractors.

Additionally, the Chief Minister (CM) also emphasised the need of government personnel embracing a zero-tolerance attitude against corruption. The CM also directed the initiation of thorough investigations into numerous corruption incidents, with the aim of eradicating this societal malpractice from the governmental apparatus.⁶⁸ The state administration effectively incarcerated APSC chairman Rakesh Kumar Paul, along with Commission members Samedur Rahman and Basanta Kumar Doley.⁶⁹ In this particular instance, a total of 56 personnel from the state civil service, state police services, and associated agencies, together with five other government workers, were apprehended.

⁶⁷ "Assam government to highlight PSC reforms in panchayat polls," *The Economic Times*, May 22, 2018.

⁶⁸(He also cited various examples of such moves by the government. For example, around 74 government officials, including two serving IAS officers, Director of Information and Public Relations and CEO of Zilla Parishad were arrested for their corrupt practices. Sonowal also referred to the cash-for-job scam that remained in limelight for quite a long time in the state.)

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

Therefore, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led administration in Assam asserts that they have effectively addressed the issue of corruption inside the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC), which is considered to be the most corrupt department in the region.⁷⁰ The laudable nature of government actions aimed at eliminating corruption is evident in several cases.

Population control policy

The persistent increase in the size of the population has been a longstanding issue of worry in the state of Assam over the course of many decades. The Sonowal administration has implemented a new population strategy in Assam, aimed at managing the ongoing population rise. This policy includes the adoption of a two-child norm. According to these regulations, individuals who have more than two children are ineligible for government employment and are prohibited from participating in panchayat and local council elections.⁷¹ In 2018, after intense deliberations, this law was successfully enacted with the backing of a majority of members.⁷² The Health and Finance Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma, further said that the state administration intends to formally petition the central government to disqualify Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assembly who have exceeded the limit of two children.⁷³ The strategy has been rebranded by the government as the "Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam." The strategy underwent a renaming process to expand its scope beyond population control and include measures aimed at empowering women.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Jaideep Mazumdar. (2017). "Assam's Carrot and Stick Policy To Check Population Growth," *Swarajya*, May, 10, 2017.

⁷² (However, the population policy exempts families having more than two children because of twin and triplet births. The population policy for Assam has faced severe criticism from feminist groups and public policy experts for being "anti-women". They fear that implementation of this policy would result in slanted sex ratio and more physical and emotional violence against women to produce a male child.)

⁷³ "Assam wants to bring lawmakers under its two-child population policy," *The new Indian Express*, May 04, 2017.

The policy in question alludes to the United Nations' Programme of Action on Population Policy, which underscores the significance of development planning in fostering social justice and eliminating poverty by means of continuous economic growth within the framework of sustainable development.⁷⁴ The National Population Policy (NPP) of 2000 was cited, which outlined the objective of attaining a stable population by the year 2045, at a level that aligns with the demands of sustainable economic growth, social development, and environmental preservation.⁷⁵ In addition to population control, the policy's goal was to raise people's standards of living. The PWEPA was adopted in 2017, which exacerbated these general worries. You might refer to Himanta Biswa Sarma, the minister of health and family welfare of Assam, who said that acknowledging women's empowerment is crucial for the success of any population strategy and for attaining sustainable development.⁷⁶ The draught population policy had been modified to add a few elements that would promote women's empowerment, and it was then called the Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam (PWEPA).

According to the 2011 population census, Assam's population rose from 2.66 crores in 2001 to 3.12 crores in 2011. The policy has made it abundantly evident that the state's population increase has put strain on its environment and natural resources. It has also made it more difficult for the government to raise the standard of living for its citizens.⁷⁷ Early marriage among the populations residing in the char (riverine) and tea garden regions was the primary cause of this enormous population boom.⁷⁸ The BJP

⁷⁴Department of Health and Family Welfare 2017a: 1

⁷⁵(The references that had been mentioned here clearly demonstrate that population policy of the Government of Assam was for inclusive and sustainable well-being of the population which also result in population stabilisation. The population control policy had given emphasis on demographic and development concerns. The policy has also focused on issues like child marriage, unemployment, literacy, high infant mortality rates (IMR) and maternal mortality rate (MMR), and also the problems faced by some communities. Department of Health and Family Welfare 2017a: 2)

⁷⁶Akhil Ranjan Dutta. (2017). Assam's Population Policy, 2017 Overstated Numbers and Underlying Agendas. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LII (48), 19-21.

⁷⁷ (Though the policy has a broader outlook, it is apparent from the very first paragraph of the official notification (27 March 2017) of the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Assam that the policy was formulated to control the population explosion in the State.)

⁷⁸Draft population policy: Assam govt proposes strict two-child norm,"*The Indian Express*, April 11, 2017.

administration has implemented severe legislation pertaining to the minimum age for marriage in order to discourage young marriages.

The PWEPA offers specific incentives to individuals as well.⁷⁹ There are specific measures aimed at allocating supplementary money and undertaking projects for the district or gramme panchayat that surpass the predetermined objectives outlined in the population strategy. In addition, there were measures in place to provide special awards to districts and public healthcare units for their creative techniques and exemplary performance in the area of population control. The policy mandates the distribution of 10 percent of the total funds for panchayats to be reserved for disbursements based on performance in the areas of reproductive health, child health care, and female education. Additionally, Special funds would be allocated to those who are members of self-help organisations and have two children.⁸⁰ According to the population strategy, focused interventions will be implemented in the riverine regions characterised by socioeconomic and educational disadvantages, as well as inadequate healthcare infrastructure. According to the policy, some groups exhibit a significant prevalence of religious biases and conservative beliefs that oppose family planning. Additionally, among certain communities, there exists a cultural taboo against male sterilisation.⁸¹ The population policy implemented by governments continues to be a subject of controversy.

⁷⁹(The health minister asserted that to achieve the goal to provide high quality life to the people which would ensure access to quality education, healthcare and employment opportunities this new population policy was a positive move in this regard. Along with this the policy had also ensured 100 percent immunisation, empowerment of women, free education for girls upto university level and introduction of population and sex education in school curriculum which was also appreciable.)

⁸⁰Jaideep Mazumdar, *Op.cit.*

⁸¹(According to Health minister Sarma, coming decade would be a defining one for Assam. He also added “We are determined to achieve our primary goal of providing a high quality of life to our people with access to quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. But Assam’s resources are limited, and the burgeoning population is putting a severe a strain on our natural resource and environment, So, it is critical to curb Assam’s population growth,”. The population control policy is a positive and effective move for the state of Assam. The policy has larger acceptance among the masses and considered as a positive move by the state government.)

Teaching mathematics and science in English in vernacular medium schools

In place of the current practice of teaching mathematics and science in Assamese, Bodo, or Bengali, the Assam cabinet had decided that classes from Class 3 to Class 12 were to be taught entirely in English.⁸² The new education policy brings positive hopes in the education sector.

Ranoj Pegu, the minister of education for Assam, stated that the government amalgamated 1,710 schools with other nearby ones throughout the state. Despite the opposition's claims that this program involved closing of schools, the government insisted that it was carried out to improve infrastructure management and the teacher-to-student ratio. "A few years ago, when we went through the last merger process, we provincialized teachers but left schools untouched. What would therefore happen to those schools was a question. This time, we combined those," he remarked.⁸³ Pegu further claimed that no violations of the children's Right to Education were committed during the merging process.

Provincialisation refers to the government taking over non-government schools' all liabilities including salaries and others benefit of the teachers, aiming to serve society. In 2017-18, around 2,200 schools were merged with nearby ones prior to the latest amalgamation process.⁸⁴ In July 2022, state cabinet decided that from the academic year 2023, mathematics and science will be taught in English from Class 3 onwards in all government and provincialized Assamese and other vernacular medium schools. Additionally, it had approved the adoption of a dual language curriculum for Classes 6

⁸²(Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister, asserts that the use of English as the language of instruction for science and math will not have a negative impact on Assamese or other languages because those disciplines will still be taught to students. Ranoj Pegu, the state's education minister, described the debate of education policy as constructive and said, "We all agreed that teaching English to children at an early age is essential for the kids in today's competitive world. The conversation was in-depth, and we agreed to meet again in a month to thoroughly address the impending demands of the organisations")

⁸³"Opposition Slams Assam Govt Over Education Sector Moves, Calls For Protest," *Outlook*, September 21, 2022.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

through 12 in state-run Assamese and vernacular medium schools.⁸⁵ The entire curricular has changed the teaching learning process in India.

Delimitation of the Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies

The Election Commission (EC) published a draft recommendation on June 20 about the redrawing of Assam's Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies. Although there are still 126 Assembly seats and 14 Parliamentary seats, respectively, several constituencies have been suggested to be reconfigured, and the number of reserved seats has increased.⁸⁶ This has caused a tumult among many organizations and political groups, including the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies, and is expected to have an impact on the fortunes of many MLAs.

In order to ensure that each seat had about equal numbers of voters, the Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats are redrawn through the delimitation process in light of a recent Census. An impartial Delimitation Commission established in accordance with the Delimitation Commission Act can conduct it on an annual basis following a Census.⁸⁷ Many parties, including the BJP, demanded that the delimitation of Assam only take place once the National Register of Citizens (NRC) had been updated to clear out "illegal immigrants" The Delimitation Commission for the four north-eastern States and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir was re-established by the Center on March 6, 2020. On December 27, 2022, the EC announced the start of Assam's delimitation, at which point four districts were re-merged with the original ones.⁸⁸ This led to new controversies in the state.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶Rahul Karmakar. (2023). "Assam's delimitation test" *The Hindu*, June 29, 2023.

⁸⁷(Before the exercise was stopped in 1976 due to the family planning policy, such panels were established in 1952, 1962, and 1972. The delimitation of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, and Nagaland was postponed owing to "security risks" through presidential orders before the exercise of the next panel could be finished in 2008.)

⁸⁸(24 Assembly are reorganized and given new names, and the reserved seats for the ST and SS expanded from 16 to 19 and eight to nine, respectively. The reserved seats are also switched around, with nine ST

Despite Congress skipping a meeting with the election panel team that visited Assam a few months ago, the EC claimed that the plan was based on inputs from 71 more organizations and 11 political parties. By July, the EC had requested "suggestions and omissions" before making a second trip to the State to speak with various stakeholders. If the draft is accepted, the AIUDF has promised to file a lawsuit. The assertion that the rights of indigenous people must be protected in the light of "demographic changes" by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, whose Assembly seat Jalukbari will also be impacted by the delimitation, suggests that there may not be big changes.⁸⁹In the "greater interest of the State," he further counselled political leaders not to worry about losing out if more seats were designated for SCs and STs.

Performance of the BJP government

This section aims to analyse the performance of the state government headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Given that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has assumed governance in Assam for two consecutive terms and has emerged as a viable alternative to the Indian National Congress (INC), the populace had significantly elevated expectations from the BJP. The performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration include both good and bad elements. In assessing the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), it is crucial to acknowledge the accomplishments highlighted by the chief minister after the end of two years of their governance.

and seven SC general seats becoming reserved and six SC and ST seats each becoming unreserved. Two ST and one SC Lok Sabha seats would still be set aside for people of color, but Silchar would take Karimganj's place as a SC seat. The draft has erased the seats of Assembly Speaker Biswajit Daimary (Panery), ministers like Chandra Mohan Patowary (Dharmapur), and Parimal Suklabaidya (Dholai), ally Asom Gana Parishad MLAs Ramendra Narayan Kalita (West Guwahati) and Pradip Hazarika (Amguri), Congress MLAs Bharat Narah (Naoboicha), Sherman Ali Ahmed (Baghbar), and Rekitabuddin Ahmed (Chaygaon), and All India United Democratic Front's Aminul Islam (Dhing) and Rafikul Islam (Sarukhetri).Congressman Gaurav Gogoi (Kaliabor to Kaziranga) and BJP member Dilip Saikia (Mangaldoi to Darrang) are two lawmakers whose seats would be renamed and reorganized. 39 MLAs and 5 MPs would all lose their seats as a result.)

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

The chief minister asserts that a significant portion of the pre-election pledges, including the enhancement of the economy, addressing insurgency, combating corruption, and resolving the problem of illegal immigration, have been duly prioritised and addressed. Sonowal emphasised the dedication to serving individuals with honesty and efficacy, while also highlighting the implementation of significant measures to modernise the National Register of Citizens (NRC) as per the directives of the Supreme Court.⁹⁰ Assam has emerged as the only state in the nation to have started the endeavour of documenting bonafide citizens of the state.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration has successfully delivered on one of its pre-polls commitments, which had been consistently emphasised throughout the campaign for the 2016 assembly elections. During a discussion on the state government's anti-corruption initiative, Sonowal unequivocally emphasised that no anybody involved in corruption, regardless of their position as a minister, MLA, or any other, would be granted amnesty.⁹¹ The anti-corruption campaign has therefore emerged as a notable accomplishment of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) administration in the state of Assam. The Sonowal administration has further claimed that it provided employment opportunities to 45,000 young people via a transparent selection procedure. Additionally, he said that the current administration had invalidated over four hundred thousand fraudulent employment cards that were granted by the former Congress government.⁹² In addition to the aforementioned efforts, a number of significant projects have been expedited under the proactive leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. One prominent illustration of this phenomenon is the accomplished construction of the Dhola-Sadia bridge, which spans the rivers Brahmaputra and Lohit in India. This significant infrastructure development has catalysed a new wave of economic transformation in the regions of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and the whole Northeastern part of the country.

⁹⁰<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/bjp-led-govt-completes-2-yrs-in-assam-cm-lists-achievements-2575387.html>, Accessed on 20th June, 2020.

⁹¹ “Assam government to highlight PSC reforms in panchayat polls,” *Op.cit.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

Now that the GST has been implemented, Assam has become the first state in the nation to declare a new industrial policy.⁹³ With this in mind, the Assam government has started a number of investment-focused initiatives throughout time in an effort to draw in and encourage foreign investors, which might help accelerate Assam's industrialization process.

Criticism from Opposition Political parties

Many different groups of individuals have criticised the BJP administration in Assam. The BJP administration has come under fire for restricting the number of children who may use government facilities and run for office to just two. The new draught population strategy from the administration has drawn criticism from opposition parties.⁹⁴ With former chief minister Tarun Gogoi challenging the necessity for a distinct population programme for Assam, the Congress has also voiced opposition to the scheme.

Although the Congress had no objections to any population control measures, Ripun Bora, the previous president of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC), maintained that they should not infringe upon basic and constitutional rights. Second, only government workers are covered by the policy. However, it is crucial to understand why this policy did not extend to those employed in the private sector. Bora feels that they need to be included in the scope of policy.⁹⁵ He said that the government's action was intended to draw attention away from the urgent issue of unemployment in the State. The government has not been successful in helping the

⁹³ "Assam comes up with new industry promotion policy to attract investment in state" *The Northeast Today*, January 19, 2018.

⁹⁴(Badruddin Ajmal, leader of the All India United Democratic Front, has vowed to mount a legal challenge to such provisions once the policy is enacted. He and some Muslim religious leaders were strongly opposed to implementing the two-child norm. "Assam Opposition slams government's two-child policy for job," *The new Indian Express*, April 10, 2017.)

⁹⁵Samudra Gupta Kashyap "Why Assam wants to replace central population policy with its own, and why Opposition questions it," *The Indian Express*, April 18, 2017.

jobless find work. Therefore, the administration was attempting to deflect attention away from the problem by making this step.

The strategy was also criticised by minority-based parties like the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF). They disagree with the drafted ideas in several places, in their opinion.⁹⁶ The state government's move to provide pensions to Muslim women who were divorced via triple talaq has drawn criticism from the Congress and the Communist Party of India (M). Discrimination against poor women on the basis of their religion, according to Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala, was unfair and unjustified.⁹⁷ The Assam administration "had proven itself 'unlettered' in the area of women's rights and had turned the 'sabka saath sabka vikas' slogan on its head," said CPI (M) politburo member Brinda Karat. She said, "The percentage of Hindu women abandoned or deserted without maintenance or support is much higher than among Muslim women." Karat disagreed with the choice to connect population policy to women's rights and empowerment. She said that official government population plans have long disregarded the connection between women's rights and population.

The Assam government's eviction of 800 residents from their homes in "Dholpur" of the Darrang district as part of its drive against "encroachments" had come under harsh fire from the opposition Congress and AIUDF. Debabrata Saikia, the leader of the opposition denounced the "inhumane" act and claimed that because it was carried out in the midst of a pandemic without regard for rehabilitation, the affected individuals' lives were in danger. "The government have carried out such a large-scale eviction in Sipajhar's Dholpur neighborhood three times since 2016 without providing for any alternatives, which was completely anti-democratic. Their livelihood were to be impacted if they did not receive

⁹⁶ "Assam Opposition slams government's two-child policy for job," *Op.cit.*

⁹⁷ (He questioned "Why should destitute or abandoned Hindu women be not given similar pension and assistance by the state government?")

financial assistance and land for farming. We want rehabilitation right away," Saikia stated.⁹⁸ It shows how eviction created problem for people.

The All-Assam Minorities Students' Union (Aamsu), an influential students' body representing religious minorities also formed a human chain demanding immediate rehabilitation.⁹⁹ Himanta Biswa Sarma, the chief minister of Assam, said that the eviction was part of a campaign against "encroachments" and was intended to start community farming.¹⁰⁰ The All-Assam Students' Union (AASU), All Bodo Students' Union, Asam Sahitya Sabha, and Bodo Sahitya Sabha had all expressed opposition to the state government's decision to teach science and math in English medium instead of Assamese or other vernacular languages. In a meeting with the state's education minister Ranoj Pegu at Dispur, representatives of each of these important groups reiterated their decision.

The organizations emphasized the significance of preserving Assamese culture and language even as they continued to criticize the state government's action as hasty and unscientific. Samujjal Bhattacharjya, chief adviser of AASU, stated, "The meeting was not successful. We have pushed for the protection of our mother tongue at all costs while keeping the competitive environment in mind. The state government's decision is contradictory while the National Education Policy 2020 is based on promoting education in mother tongue and the Prime Minister even stated that even engineering and medical science should be taught in the vernacular languages."¹⁰¹

⁹⁸RokibuzZamam. (2021). "Congress, AIUDF tear into Assam government over Darrang eviction," *The Times Of India*, September 23, 2019.

⁹⁹(The AAMSU had sought an inquiry into the eviction. "We have protested against the anti-minority, inhumane and unconstitutional Sipajhar eviction, in which three mosques were destroyed without showing any respect to religious sentiments of the minorities. We have sought immediate rehabilitation of the people who were only given three days to vacate their homes," Md Imtiaz Hussain, general secretary of Aamsu, said. Another human rights lawyer, Aman Wadud, said the government was "unfair" and "prejudiced" towards landless people only because of their "identity".)

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹(Samujjal Bhattacharya, chief advisor of the AASU, speaking to India Today NE said, "We are ultimately demanding that English should be taught well and right from the pre-primary classes. Additionally, importance should be also given towards teaching of Assamese language so that students can read and write their mother tongue properly. Unfortunately, the government couldn't answer to this

The opposition criticized the Assam government for its decisions in the educational sector and said that the BJP-led coalition was attempting to privatize schools. At a joint press conference of nine political parties, its leaders claimed that recent government initiatives would gradually "destroy" the mother tongue, because kids won't be learning it in school.

Rajya Sabha MP Ajit Kumar Bhuyan said "The hidden agenda of the government is to hand over the education sector of Assam to some private players. They intend to destroy the mother tongue of all communities,".He stated that the BJP-led NDA was making basic education unaffordable for poor children's and encouraging the growth of private schools.¹⁰² Manjit Mahanta, a senior spokesperson for the Congress, claimed that having science and mathematics taught in English starting in Class three (3) could prevent children from naturally learning their mother tongues.

According to CPI(M) leader Isfaqur Rahman, the Assam government, was allegedly closing thousands of state-run schools under the guise of better administration and a low admission rate. "If the admission count has fallen in recent years, then it is a matter of concern and the authorities should work on this front. However, the government is doing the reverse and closing down the schools," he said. The nine parties as Congress, CPI(M), CPI, Assam Jatiya Parishad, Jatiya Dal-Asom, Raijor Dal, NCP, and RJD also released a report on the "pathetic" state of eight historic schools in Guwahati.¹⁰³

demand. The government is saying that English will be taught in the schools in parallel to the Assamese language which is not possible." "The government should instead focus on providing proper infrastructure in schools such as fans, desks, chairs, laboratories so that parents feel happy in sending their wards to such government schools. Students will only take interest in going to schools if they receive all the proper infrastructures," added Bhattacharya. "Government's decision to introduce English as medium of instruction in schools is contradictory to the NEP: Samujjal Bhattacharya," *India TodayNE*, August 19, 2022.)

¹⁰² "Opposition Slams Assam Govt Over Education Sector Moves, Calls For Protest," *Outlook*, September 21, 2022.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

The All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the opposition parties in the state had criticized the state government's decision to open more liquor stores in order to bid on illicit country-made wine in the state. The move comes in response to the state government's decision to grant new licenses to more wine stores in the state to an effort to reduce the sale of illicit alcohol and increase revenue.¹⁰⁴ The state government was also considering passing an Act and legalizing the community liquors consumed by the state's various tribes by having them tested in a lab.¹⁰⁵ Senior Congress leader and leader of opposition Debabrata Saikia said, "The government's move is also against the directive principles of state policy enshrined in our Constitution, which asks the state to endeavour for the prohibition of intoxicating drinks, except for medicinal purposes."¹⁰⁶ These has created larger debates in society and politics of Assam.

The AASU general secretary Shankar Jyoti Baruah reacted to the government's decision, saying, "The increase in liquor shops will destroy the new generation, the government has taken such a decision only to collect taxes." Additionally, the Students leader asserted that the government was unconcerned whether taxes were being collected lawfully or illegally. As many as 40 new wine shops were just opened afresh in Nalbari, which is known as a center for education, the speaker continued.¹⁰⁷ This again created issues in Assam.

As opposed to this, Aminul Islam, an AIUFD MLA, claimed that "the government wants to keep the common people blind by drinking alcohol." The MLA further claimed that the government was merging educational institutions rather than building more of them. "The government has taken up two formulas, deprive people of getting an education by closing down institutions and merging them and make them drunkards so that they lose their thinking capacity and have blind faith in BJP," claimed

¹⁰⁴ "Opposition, AASU criticizes Assam government's plan to open more wine shops" *India Today* NE, November 03, 2022.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ "Opposition Slams Assam Govt Over Education Sector Moves, Calls For Protest," *Outlook*, September 21, 2022.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

MLA Aminul Islam.¹⁰⁸ According to government data, alcohol sales revenue increased significantly from about Rs 300 crore yearly in 2016, when the first BJP-led government assumed power, to almost Rs 3,000 crore in the last financial year.¹⁰⁹ Government role seems very biased in this regard.

Since the Election Commission revealed the proposed draft, there had been demonstrations all over Assam. Ethnic groups like the Ahoms were upset that there were fewer Assembly seats in eastern Assam and more in western Assam.¹¹⁰ When the EC used the 2011 Census to complete the exercise in Jammu and Kashmir, where the number of seats increased, Congress and the AIUDF smelled a nefarious design. This raised suspicions about the use of the 2001 Census data. Assam's delimitation might have been completed in 2026 alongside the rest of the nation rather than hurriedly before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, according to Badruddin Ajmal of the AIUDF. In order to ensure that Muslims had less representation in the Assembly and Parliament, he said that some constituencies had been redesigned to disperse Muslim voters. Others argued that delimitation should have been postponed until the NRC update process was finished.¹¹¹ People are content with the idea of increasing the number of Assembly seats in the Bodoland Territorial Region from 16 to 19.

Policies and Programmes of the BJP Government in Tripura

After coming to power in 2018, the BJP-led government's primary policies have been detailed. The state administration headed by the BJP has made a number of initiatives and accomplishments since taking office. In accordance with some of the pledges made in its election platform, the party has enacted several measures.

¹⁰⁸“Opposition, AASU criticizes Assam government's plan to open more wine shops” *India Today*NE, November 03, 2022

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ (Raijor Dal leader Akhil Gogoi, has questioned why the EC used Section 8A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, to start the delimitation process. Only the reorientation of seats, not the total number, is permitted under Section 8A.)

¹¹¹Rahul Karmakar, (2023). *Op.cit.*

The Tripura government has claimed that they have taken significant steps since its formation in 2018. It has launched a mission-driven campaign to make Tripura a drug-free state, resulting in over 71,000 kg of marijuana being seized. The state has also committed to doubling farmers' income through direct paddy procurement and the establishment of Krishak Bandhu Kendras. Sushasit Tripura implemented the 7th Pay Commission, increased tax revenue by 25.8% in the Financial Year 2018-19, and implemented transparent recruitment policies. The state has also implemented strict laws against crime against women, reducing crime against women by about 7%. Ease of living has been improved through initiatives like the Atal Jal Dhara Mission, which provides tapped water connections to 10.5 lakh households. The state is a leader in digital delivery of government services, including sugar distribution through e-PDS. Social pensions have been increased to Rs.1000/month, benefiting nearly 4 lakh pensioners. The state has also adopted the NCERT Curriculum, improved education quality through the Natun Disha program, held Parent-Teacher Consultation, and offered CM B. Ed Anupurna Yojana for students. The Kuposhan Mukta Tripura Mission aims to eradicate malnutrition and recruit additional medical officers for better health care. Khelo Tripura organized the 64th National School Games and Northeast Youth Festival 2018, recognizing and honoring sporting talents. Tripura is also transforming into an economic powerhouse, promoting a creative environment for local, national, and international investors through measures such as a single window clearance system, investor facilitation cells, and the development of a Mega Food Park.¹¹² The state's

¹¹²(Nasha Mukta Tripura, A mission-driven campaign has been launched to make Tripura a drug-free state. Till 28th February 2019 more than 71,000 kg of marijuana had been seized. Krishak Kalyan Samarjit Tripura- Committed to Doubling Farmers Income in Tripura Direct paddy procurement by FCI in Tripura, with 9600 MT paddy procured, has led to 12 crore+ rupees being transmitted to farmers. PM Fasal Bima Yojana covers high-risk zone farmers. Krishak Bandhu Kendras are established in each agriculture sub-division. PM Kisan Samman Nidhi provides benefits to 60,000+ farmers, with additional income sources like animal husbandry and poultry farming.

(Sushasit Tripura, The state implemented the 7th Pay Commission, implemented transparent recruitment policies, and increased tax revenue by 25.8% in Financial Year 2018-19. Road maintenance policy ensured effective maintenance of Roads, e-tendering system to combat corruption, Panchayat monitoring system developed, and model blocks developed. Steps were taken for Removal of illegal encroachments by political parties on Government Khas Land and enhancing Compensation for Victims

Employment Generation Programme and Swawalamban programs aim to promote self-employment.

Major Achievements of BJP Government in Tripura

The BJP government in Tripura has claimed to made significant achievements in various sectors, including housing, health insurance, water access, pensions, education, and employment opportunities. They have sanctioned over 3.37 lakh houses and constructed over 2.54 lakh houses under PM Awas Yojana, provided health insurance to 13.8 lakh beneficiaries, and provided clean drinking water to over 4 lakh households. They have also introduced Kokborok in 943 schools, provided ₹6,000 annually to 2.4 lakh farmers under PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, and cultivated over 1.3 lakh MT of paddy. The government has also implemented the 7th Pay Commission, increased DA and DR for government employees and pensioners, and completed the construction of the

under various state government programs. Nari Shakti for New Tripura.10% of police positions are reserved for women. The state government provides bicycles to all girl's students in Class 9 across the state and more than two lakh women were provided PM Ujjwala Yojana connections in a year. Strict laws were enacted for crime against women by legislative amendment as a result crime against women have reduced about 7% in the state.Ease of Living.The Atal Jaladhara Mission aims to provide tapped water connections to 10.5 lakh households in Tripura, costing around Rs.850 crores. The state is a leader in digital delivery of government services, including sugar distribution through e-PDS. The e-PDS system ensured timely and targeted resource delivery. Social pensions have been increased to Rs.1000/month, benefiting nearly 4 lakh pensioners. The state is self-reliant in fish production and offers pensions for retired journalists.1.36 lakh households have been provided electricity under various schemes, and 24000+ houses have been constructed under PMAY-Gramin.)

(Transforming Tripura into Tourist Paradise Matabari Development Project was inaugurated by the Hon'ble President in June 2018, and the International Tourism Mart-2018 in Tripura attracted foreign participants. Tripura's tourist destinations, like Neer Mahal and Unakoti, gained global recognition through visits by international dignitaries. Eco-tourism and adventure tourism sectors are being developed.Transforming Tripura into Horticulture Hub A state-wide campaign is being launched to support flower and fruit cultivation on paved roads in Tripura. Queen Pineapple is declared the state fruit, and its exports are promoted. Tripura Tea is branded and promoted, and a Tea Tower is proposed. The campaign also aims to create a conducive ecosystem for spices and rubber-related units in the state. Steps were taken to make Tripura a vibrant center for production and trade of Bamboo products in North-East India. Swachh Tripura As an homage to Mahatma Gandhi on the 150th anniversary of his birth, 1.35 lakh+ toilets have been erected in the last 12 months as opposed to only 0.33 lakh toilets in the previous year, and Tripura may become open defecation free (ODF). Digital Tripura,Tripura is developing as Northeast India's IT hub, utilizing e-stamping, e-challan, e-gazette, and biometric attendance for efficient legal document stamping, traffic rule implementation, and government institution transparency and accountability365 Days Achievements of Tripura Government, . 2019.)

International Terminal Building at Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport. The government has also provided employment opportunities to over 3.5 lakh women, initiated a World Bank Project for the upliftment of 4.10 lakh tribal families, insured 8.8 lakh farmers, and distributed smartphones to 27,000 youths.¹¹³

BJP's 'Double Engine' of Development

The BJP claims that Tripura has experienced significant development in the last five years, it also critically depended on the popularity of the Prime Minister. The government constructed the new terminal building of Maharaja Bir Bikram Airport Agartala and established India's second and the state's first National Forensic Science University. Union home minister, Amit Shah released "Lakshya 2047," the "Vision Document for Development in Northeast India," in January 2021, identifying six sectors for the state's overall development. The Prime Minister announced several development programs, including the "Grih Pravesh Programme" for over 2 lakh beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. On August 29, 2022, the BJP's national president visited Tripura and claimed that the state's per capita income had surged by 30% to `1,30,000 per person per annum, and political violence had stopped.¹¹⁴ These are some of the important works of BJP Government.

¹¹³(The government of Tripura has implemented various initiatives to improve the lives of its citizens. These include constructing over 2.54 lakh houses under PM Awas Yojana, providing health insurance to 13.8 lakh beneficiaries, and increasing monthly pensions for 3.81 lakh beneficiaries. The government has also introduced various programs, such as Kokborok in schools, Chakma in 58 schools, and Halam Kuki in 49 schools. Additionally, the government has provided ₹6,000 annually to 2.4 lakh farmers under PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, cultivated over 1.3 lakh MT of paddy, and reserved 33% of seats in all government jobs for women. The government has also implemented the 7th Pay Commission, increased DA and DR for government employees and pensioners, and completed the construction of the International Terminal Building at Maharaja Bir Bikr Airport. The government has also reduced crime rates and crimes against women. Unnato Tripura, Sreshtho Tripura Sankalp Patra, 2023. BJP, 2023.)

¹¹⁴V. Bijukumar. (2023). Dissecting the Verdict of Tripura Assembly Election 2023. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LVIII(15). pp 16-19

In January 2023, the union minister for home affairs inaugurated the BJP's Jan Viswas Yatra, which emphasized the government's efforts to advance development.¹¹⁵ It was noted that the state's agricultural and agri-allied sectors experienced exceptional growth despite the negative effects of COVID-19. The commitment of the Union government contributed to the creation of first special economic zone in the South Tripura district of the state. The Tripura government started making an attempt to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of its school children in August 2022. In its electoral manifesto, the BJP (2023) stated that the state had made progress during the previous five years.¹¹⁶In contrast to other issues, the party's narrative of development produced an electoral harvest, as evidenced by the renewed mandate in the election.

Criticism from Opposition Political parties

The opposition has criticized the BJP regime's recent attacks on religious minorities, The CPI(M) workers, and offices, as well as the state's lack of development, unemployment, and teacher protests. They also cited incidents like the physical attack on Manik Sarkar, journalist killings, and press censorship. Hindu organizations protested against the Durga pandal attacks in Bangladesh, which fueled attacks on Muslim minorities.¹¹⁷

According to a directive issued by the state government, bureaucrats in Tripura are not permitted to wear jeans or sunglasses while working. The opposition parties criticized the action and labeled it "feudal" in response. Officials attending high-level meetings are required to adhere to the dress code, as per a memo issued by Sushil Kumar, senior secretary for revenue, education, and cultural affairs. "District Magistrates, ADMs being the district head need to ensure that in/at the state level official meetings which are chaired by the Honorable Chief Minister, Deputy Chief

¹¹⁵ According to him, the "Mukhyamantri Chaa Sramik Kalyan Prakalpa" will guarantee social security for some 7,000 workers in the state's tea gardens.

¹¹⁶ India Today, March 03, 2018.

¹¹⁷(The BJP's historic victory in the 2018 assembly election was marred by internal bickering, leading to the party's replacement of BiplabKumar Deb with ManikSaha on May 15, 2022.¹¹⁷The thin majority in the assembly provided solace for the ruling BJP, which is struggling with anti-incumbency and internal bickering.)

Minister, Ministers, Chief Secretary, or other high-level official meetings due regard needs to be given to the dress code," it continued. "Some casual clothing, such as cargo pants and jeans, should be avoided."¹¹⁸The BJP-IPFT government's memorandum also made note of the fact that certain officials send and read text messages while in meetings, which is disrespectful and should be avoided.

According to Tapas Dey, vice president of the Tripura Pradesh Congress, this order is an example of the state's current BJP-IPFT administration's feudal mindset and encroachment on the rights of public employees. "How can they enforce dress code by telling people what to wear and what to avoid? This is absolutely unacceptable," he stated.¹¹⁹CPM's Goutam Das criticized the memorandum, saying it served as a reminder of colonial domination by the British.

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi left Tripura on after launching several projects, the opposition Communist Party of India (CPI (M)) reacted sharply to his visit, accusing the BJP of using government machinery for the party's election campaign. The CPI(M) claimed that crores of money were spent on the BJP's election campaign, leading to a crippled administration and various losses. The tour of Modi also resulted in a loss of funds from the government's treasury, and school students and common people were blocked for the entire day. The CPI(M) Tripura state secretary Jitendra Chowdhury described the day as a day of "misfortune" as the central and state governments and PM had befooled the people once again.¹²⁰ Thus it plays an important role in the politics of Tripura.

Clarifying a few of the comments made by PM Modi during his speech, Chowdhury stated, "The project to build a new terminal for MBB Airport was started before the inauguration of Modi-led government and initiative was taken to make it an

¹¹⁸"Tripura government's 'dress code' diktat for bureaucrats draws criticism," *The Times Of India*, August 27, 2018.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰"Tripura CPIM Claims BJP Using Govt Machinery for Party's Election Campaign," NewsClick, December 19, 2022.

international connectivity place. Instead, there are no indications of any international flights, and flight frequency has decreased. "Second, the Agartala-Akhaura railway link project's construction work began before the formation of the double-engine government. The project work was supposed to be finished after the Tripura BJP-IPFT coalition government was formed in 12–13 months, but 58 months have passed and it still hasn't been finished. Thirdly, only for exhibition purposes were certain fruits exported outside of India. Does the PM aware that there hasn't been a single acre added for pineapple farming? Instead, these are being combined, and homes and other structures are being built, taking over paddy fields and filling up water bodies.¹²¹ Similar to this, lands used to grow jackfruit and pineapples were decreased due to use for other purposes, he added.

Choudhury said "During the Left Front government's regime, Rubber Park was opened and various entrepreneurs visited the state. In this five-year tenure, no entrepreneur visited the state and old entrepreneurs closed their businesses and left the state as mafias are looting money from them at the Bodhjunnagar Industrial Growth Centre run by TIDC. In Tripura, one thing is flourishing in the past few years and i.e. the business of narcotic substances or drugs". The BJP has paralyzed the administrative system of Tripura, putting the people in jeopardy. The people of Tripura were disappointed with the BJP government's misrule for the last five years and were expecting the Prime Minister to explain the reasons for the failure of the BJP to fulfill the 2018 poll promises. PM Modi's visit to the state just before assembly elections left the people in trouble and spent a significant amount of public money.¹²² During the last five years, no initiative has been taken to develop the industrial sector of Tripura, with many industries and production shut down due to mafia rule at the Bodjannagar Industrial Development Centre.

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²"BJP used massive money power in PM visit" *The Times of India*. December 18, 2022.

The CPI (M) leader is eager to form a larger platform of secular forces against the BJP in the upcoming 2023 polls, but they are trying to convey their message from a united platform. Positive talks are underway with opposition political parties in this regard. Chowdhury alleged that the BJP-led state government is putting all efforts to gather people at Swami Vivekananda stadium for the Prime Ministers event, which he believes is a poor show of political morale. He believes the PM should review development activities and consider the people's desires but has reservations about using public money at the behest of ruling party.¹²³“When the district magistrates and sub-divisional magistrates have already been designated as the district election officers (DEO) and returning officers (RO) for the elections, they have now been instructed to gather the public for the PM’s event ”Choudhury said.¹²⁴

The main opposition party in Tripura, Tipraha Indigenous Peoples Regional Alliance (TIPRA), criticized the BJP-led state administration on July 9, 2023 for failing to provide the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) with the requisite funding. The meager money allocation, according to party chairperson Pradyot Kishore Manikya and Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly Animesh Debbarma, has hampered development and welfare-related operations in the council districts. They criticized the state budget for the fiscal year 2023–2024, which allocated 2.7% to the TTAADC. Kishore claimed that their demand for Greater Tripaland to protect indigenous people was motivated by the "step-motherly treatment of the State government."¹²⁵The TTAADC, where 35% of the State's population resides, is in charge of 70% of the land, according to TIPRA's chief.

Debbarma criticized the Budget for inadequate provisions for healthcare, education, and infrastructure development in the state. He specifically said the TTAADC had been continuously deprived of its legitimate funds for a long time. He questioned

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Syed Sajjad Ali. (2023). “TIPRA slams Tripura government for allocating inadequate funds to tribal council,” July 09, 2023.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

how the TTAADC could function with only 2.7% allocation in a budget of ₹27,654 crore. He argued that a large portion of the budget would be spent on salaries, wages, and pensions, leaving nothing to be done with the remaining funds.¹²⁶ The TIPRA is currently governing the tribal council, which was founded under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India for the development of the State's minority tribal population.

Former Tripura Minister and Congress MLA Sudip Roy Barman criticized the BJP-led state government for not taking action to combat drug addiction among youth and ensure women's safety. He called for a drug-free Tripura and the prevention of women abuse during a 4-hour-long mass demonstration. Barman cited incidents of rape and gang rape, as well as 29 incidents of crimes against women, including murder. There is a deep conspiracy to suppress the voices of youth demanding jobs. He questioned the government's commitment to 'Nesa Mukta Tripura' (Drug free Tripura) and told that Bangladesh government has drawn the attention of Indian government.¹²⁷ Barman questioned the party's political stance and the lack of action taken to combat drug addiction and women's abuse.

He asserted that a new practice is beginning in which individuals are required to pay commissions to BJP members and leaders if they wish to buy or sell land. "People are living in fear. Cases of theft and dacoity are increasing day by day, and a large number of drug-addicted youths are involved in such crimes. Seven years ago, I sent a proposal to the Centre to amend the NDPS Act and make it more stringent. In Tripura, there is no government-run drug rehabilitation centre. Crimes against women are increasing day by day. They are betraying the people," Barman added.¹²⁸ These led to severe criticisms from various sectors.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*

¹²⁷Tanmoy Chakraborty. (2023). "Tripura Congress legislator slams BJP government for failing to take action against drug addiction and women's safety," July 10, 2023.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that subsequent to assuming office, the state administrations headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam and Tripura have implemented a multitude of policies, programmes, and initiatives aimed at enhancing the welfare of the respective populations in both states. The performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led administrations in Assam and Tripura include both positive and unfavourable characteristics. The implementation of policies aimed at combating corruption, such as the anti-corruption effort targeting the APSC fraud and other instances of wrongdoing inside the government, is widely acknowledged and positively perceived by the populace. Recruitment processes within the APSC have consistently adhered to merit-based principles. To far, no substantiated allegations of corruption have been levied against the government in relation to these procedures.

The population control programme and eviction campaign implemented by the BJP regimes have sparked considerable controversy, eliciting criticism for inadequate planning and rehabilitation efforts for indigenous populations residing in certain regions. There have been instances when government schools have faced eviction, hence prompting inquiries on the efficacy of government entities. Furthermore, the occurrence of evictions in revenue villages as a result of errors made by government employees, who incorrectly classified these areas as reserved forests, has sparked apprehension about the trustworthiness and competence of those authorities. The lack of attention to detail has resulted in significant adversity for several individuals, leading to homelessness for some individuals. Notwithstanding this, the removal of unauthorised occupants from the Sattras is widely acknowledged and valued by the populace.

The public has expressed appreciation for the government's policy to provide tuition-free education to females until they reach university level. However, the organisation of cultural events like as "Namami Brahmaputra" has faced criticism from the BJP administration, with allegations of cultural imposition. The government's

initiatives pertaining to health and education are widely regarded as favourable. Nevertheless, the incapacity of state governments to resist the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the pronouncements made by leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have engendered discontent and scepticism among the populace. The introduction of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has caused apprehension among indigenous populations over potential marginalisation. The extent of the NRC upgradation's impact on the state government's involvement is limited, however there have been accusations of religious prejudice levelled against the administration. The good impact of the government's actions pertaining to the Act East policy, industrialisation, and skill development programmes on the region's growth is widely acknowledged. The positive steps implemented by the BJP administration in the domains of agriculture, transit infrastructure, social security, and addressing social issues have been well recognised.

The *Orunodoy* scheme in Assam is a significant move for poverty alleviation in the state, further to provide financial assistance to the families in need government of Assam's creation of Assam Arogya Nidhi (AAN) remain helpful for the people. Assam Right to Public Service Portal has been created under World Bank to facilitate citizens with various e services. Chief Ministers Covid19 widow support scheme has been helpful to for the widows who lost their husband due to Covid19 as it ensures their socio-economic security. Along with that Chief Ministers shishu seva scheme is a positive move to provide financial assistance to children who lost their parents in Covid19. Relief to microfinance loanees which was a major promise by the BJP during 2021 elections has generated huge controversies as the loanees were happy with the loan waving scheme whereas others were critical of such move. After formation of BJP government in Assam for the 2nd term, the government's endeavour to initiate a campaign against illicit drug trafficking commonly referred to as the "war on drugs," has garnered significant public backing. Nevertheless, the encounters linked to this campaign were subject to significant criticism due to allegations of numerous fabricated

incidents. However, the government faced criticisms for encouraging opening up of more liquor shops in the state for revenue generation.

As part of governments welfare activities, the present governments move to setting up more Adarsh Vidyalayas received applause from people. Another significant step taken by the state government is that has been trying to fulfil the electoral promise to fill up one lakh jobs and it has been partially successful. Further this government tries to bring significant reforms in land revenue services by launching Mission Basundhara 2.0 to solve various land issues of the people. The actions taken by the Government of Assam in response to child marriage have generated considerable controversy. Although the decision has garnered acclaim, the implementation of initiative has resulted in instances of harassment experienced by individuals.

Government's initiative to teach mathematics and science in English in vernacular medium schools has been criticised by several organisation of the state. In the issue of delimitation of the Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies, many opposition parties and many other organisations have criticised BJP government that they have influenced election commission of India in their favour. However, BJP government claimed that this action has been done to protect the Land, identity and culture of the indigenous people.

In Tripura, the BJP implemented 7th pay commission for the state government employees as it was one of the major issues during election. In education sector they have adopted NCERT curriculum in the state level and offered CM B.Ed Anuprerana Yojana. Regarding health and infrastructure, this government has initiated many developmental projects. In communication as well this government has initiated many new national highway projects with the aid of central government and upgradation of Tripura Airport also started under them. Under the social welfare activities of the government it has increased the monthly pension of widows, constructed PM Awas Yojana houses, provided health insurance under Ayushman Bharat etc. Further BJP

government implemented 33% reservation of seats for women in government sector jobs. Apart from that this government introduced many indigenous languages (Kokborok, Chakma and Halam Kuki) at school level as a reflection of their commitment towards protection of identity of local people. During their tenure first National Forensic University also has been established. They have worked for the development of tribal's, farmers and tea garden labourers in various aspects.

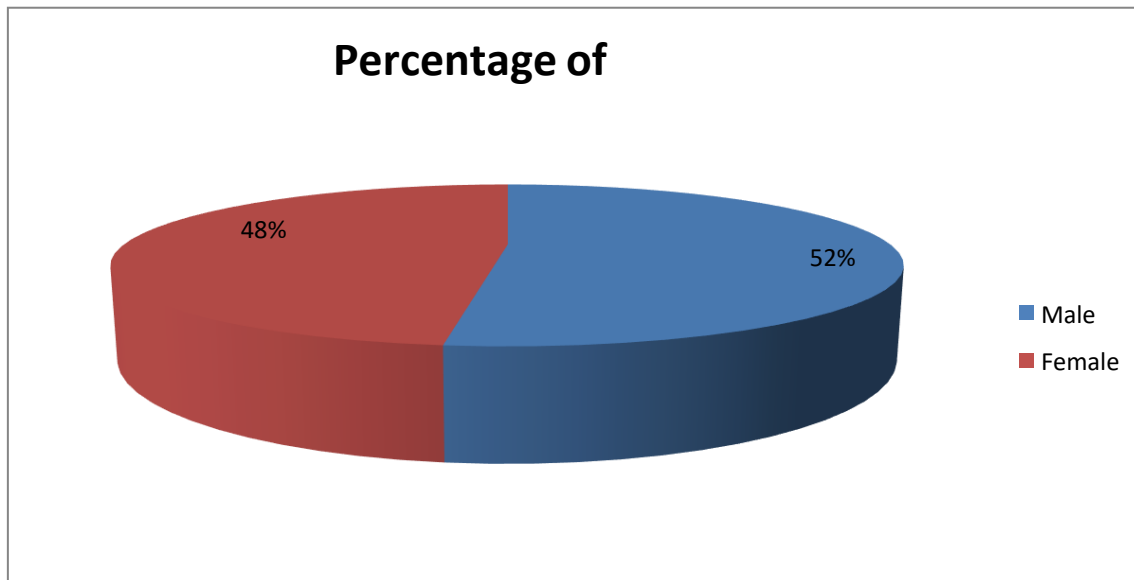
However, opposition parties criticised the government on the issues of attack on religious minorities and attack of opposition party workers. There were allegations by opposition parties that BJP attacked on the offices of opposition including physical attack on former chief minister Manik Sarkar and killed journalists and also imposed press censorship which created controversies and huge debate around the role of BJP government in the state. Apart from that due its internal conflicts BJP has replaced the Chief Minister of the state one year ahead of the assembly election. Further opposition parties raised questions on the developmental activities carried out by the government that it has not make any remarkable change and there are allegations that infrastructure works have been delayed. Nonetheless the imposition of dress code for the bureaucrats has been termed as the reflection of feudalistic mindset by opposition parties. Further, there are allegations from opposition that BJP misused government machinery and fund from government machinery for election campaign. Another major allegation is that old entrepreneurs and industries had to shut their business and leave the state as the mafia extortion. According to oppositions no steps have been taken for the development of industrial sector in Tripura. Another serious allegation against BJP government in Tripura is misrule. Government also faced criticism from opposition parties regarding the insufficient funding to the autonomous district council. Further, allegation have been made by opposition that government had not released sufficient funds for healthcare, education and infrastructure development. Furthermore, the government failed to combat drug addiction and ensure women safety in the state for which it faced a lot of criticism.

Chapter VI: Comparative Study of the Political Strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura

The sixth chapter studies political strategy adopted by the BJP in Assam and Tripura to strengthen its organizational base at various levels and thereby to win in the elections. This chapter consists of the data collected from primary sources. Primary data is collected by using structured questionnaire, which contains close ended questions. For the collection of required data, respondents were selected based on representative character. Keeping in view of the significance of this study, 200 respondents were contacted as part of the field survey. 100 respondents were selected from each state, who gave their feedback on the subject under study, belonging to various walks of life in Assam and Tripura. Some of these respondents include political activists and civil society leaders, employees, students and youths. Besides, teachers and lawyers and farmers and workers have been interviewed during the course of study. For instance, in the case of Tripura, both the tribal and non-tribal representation has been given proportionately, whereas in Assam, it is about communal and linguistic classification that becomes significant.

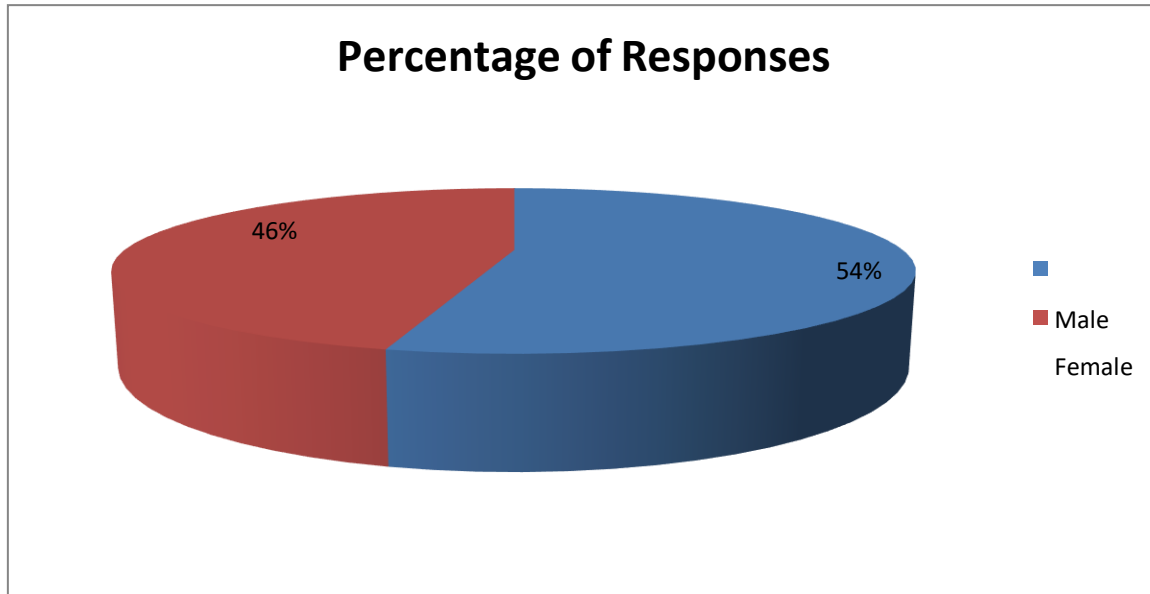
The data collected from the field survey has been discussed here to arrive at a comparative analysis of the study of the Political Strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura. This chapter is primarily based on the data collected from interviews from various respondents during the course of the study.

Figure 6.1: Gender composition of respondents in Assam



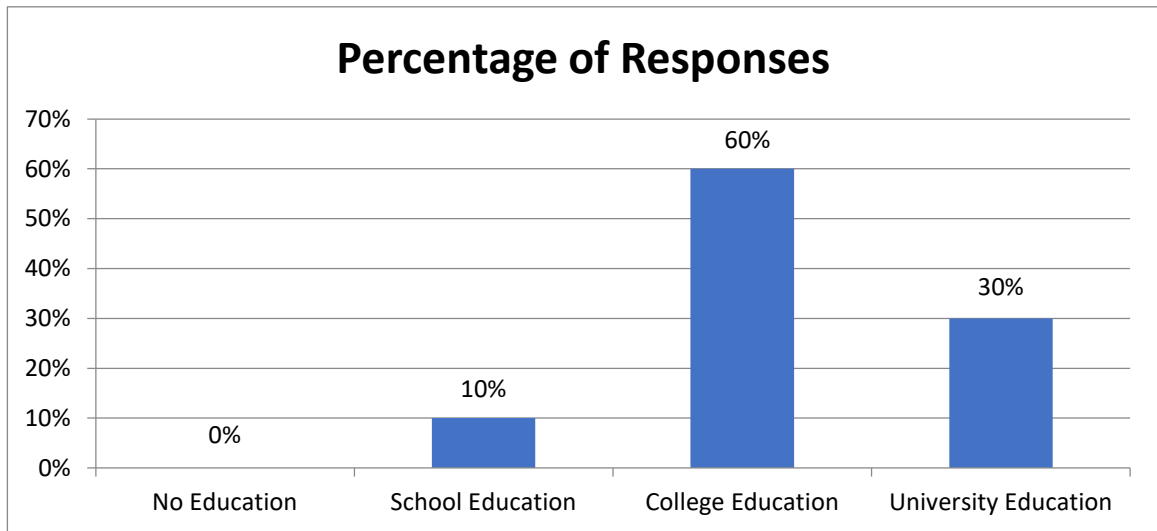
In Assam 52% of the respondents were male and another 48% respondents were female.

Figure 6.2: Gender composition of respondents in Tripura



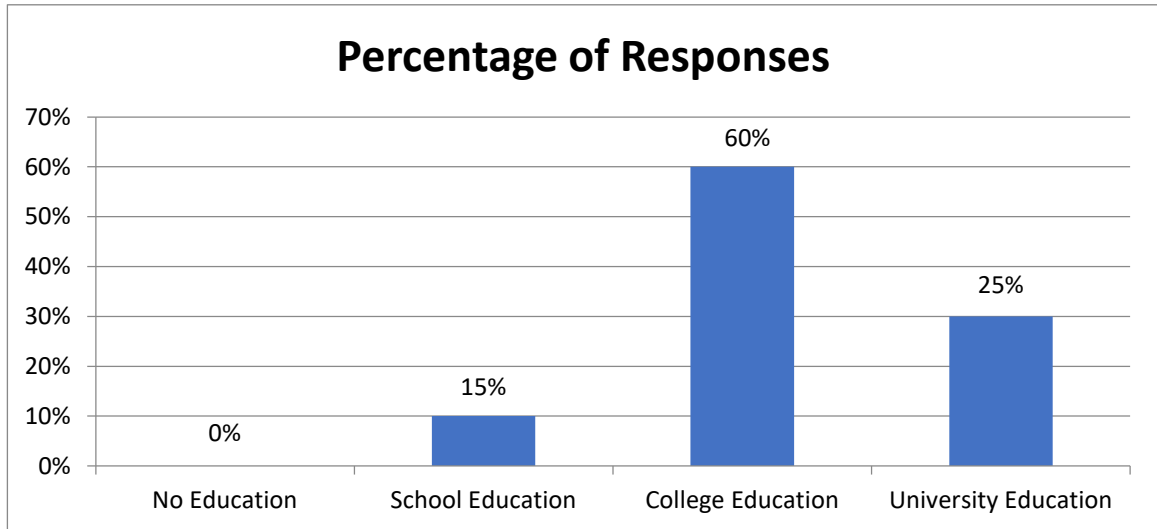
In Tripura 54% of the respondents were male and another 46% respondents were female.

Table 6.3: Qualification of respondents in Assam



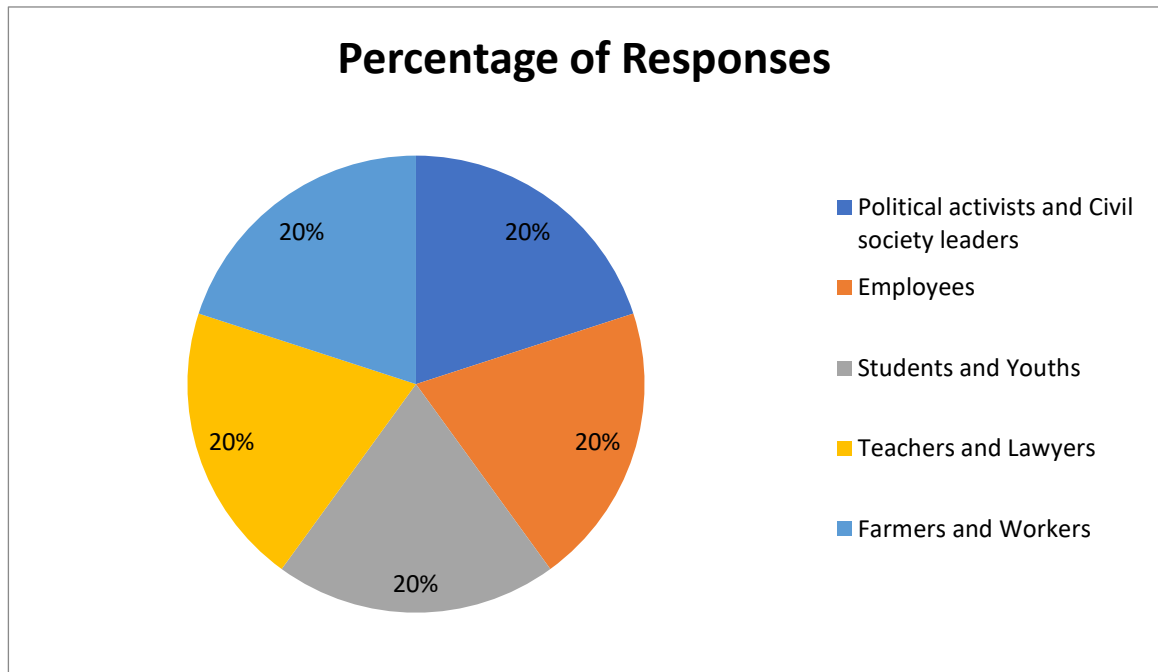
In Assam 30% of the respondents have reached to the University level, another 60% respondents have reached upto college level. Whereas remaining 10% respondents have studied upto school level.

Table 6.4: Qualification of respondents in Tripura



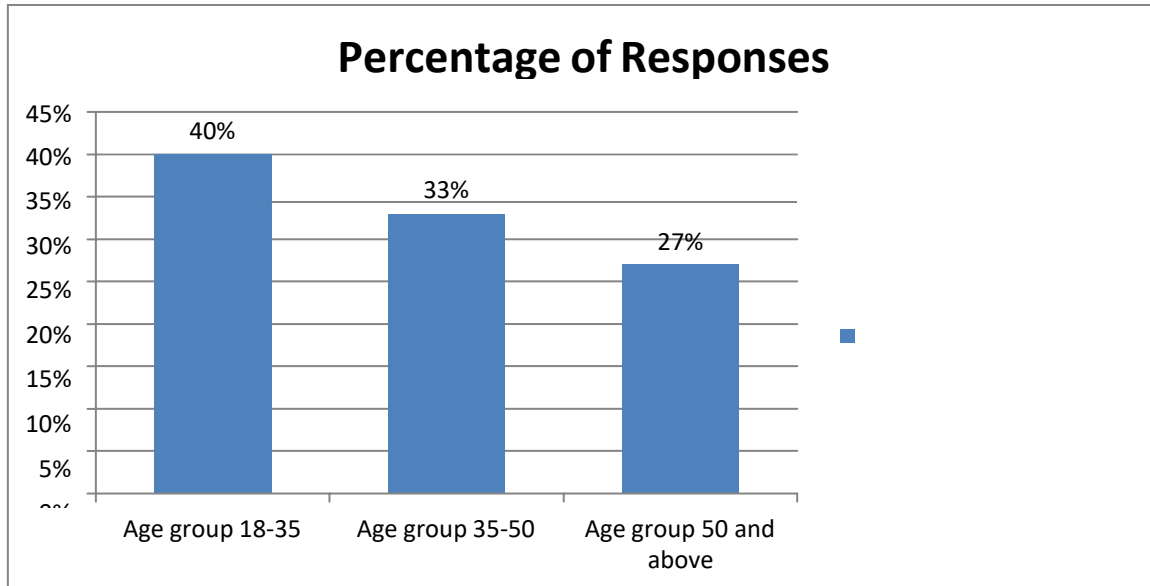
In Tripura 25% of the respondents have reached to the University level, another 60% respondents have reached upto college level. Whereas remaining 15% respondents have studied upto school level.

Table 6.5: Occupational composition of respondents in Assam and Tripura



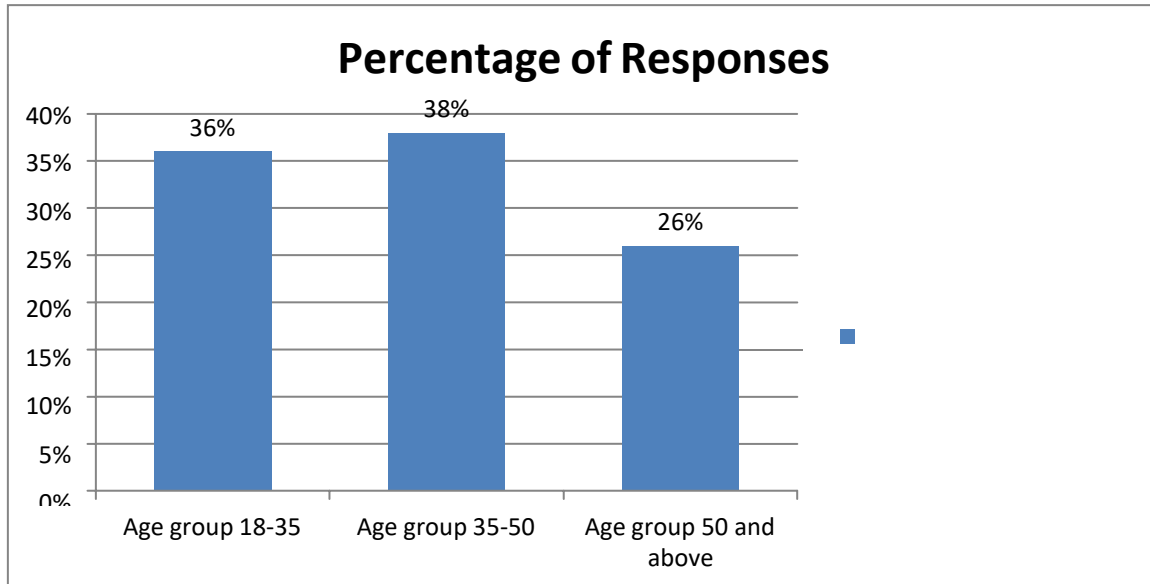
In Assam and Tripura 100 respondents were selected from both the states, these respondents were from various occupations.

Table 6.6: Age group of the respondents in Assam



In Assam 40% of the respondents were from the age group of 18 to 35 and another 33% respondents were from 35 to 50. Remaining 27% respondents were from the age group of 50 and above.

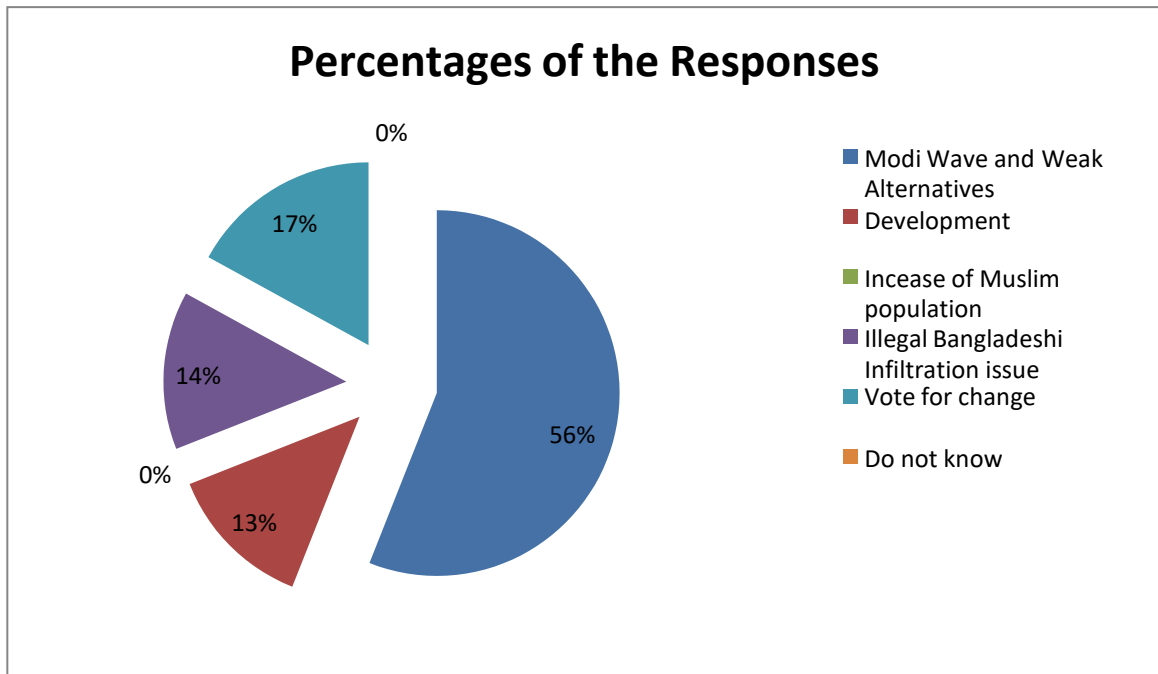
Table 6.7: Age group of the respondents in Tripura



In Tripura 36% of the respondents were from the age group of 18 to 35 and another 38% respondents were from 35 to 50. Remaining 26% respondents were from the age group of 50 and above.

Questions asked to respondents on the Political Strategy of the Bharatiya Janata Party in North-East India: A Study of Assam and Tripura

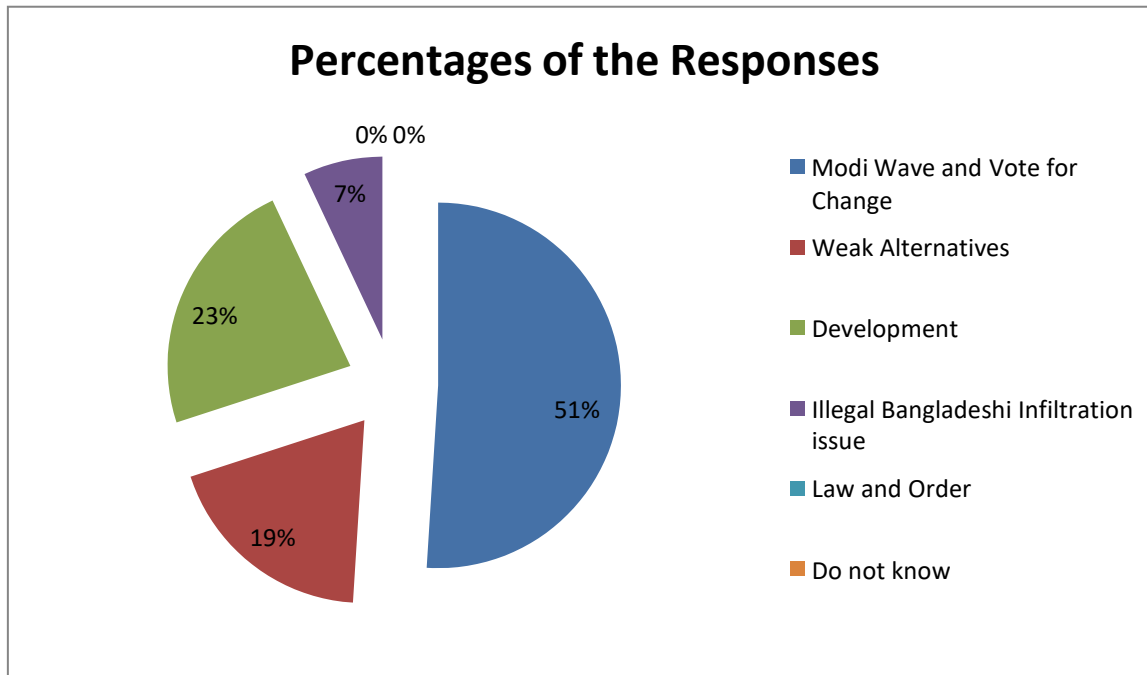
Figure 6.8: Factors largely responsible for the success of BJP in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

To the questions related to the factors responsible for the success of BJP in Assam, 56% respondents replied that Modi wave and weak alternatives were the important factors. However 17% believes that people basically voted for change. Whereas 14% remarks illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue as a major factor, another 13% believes that development was one of the major factors responsible for the victory of BJP in Assam.

Figure 6.9: Factors largely responsible for the success of BJP in Tripura



Source: Data collected from the field study

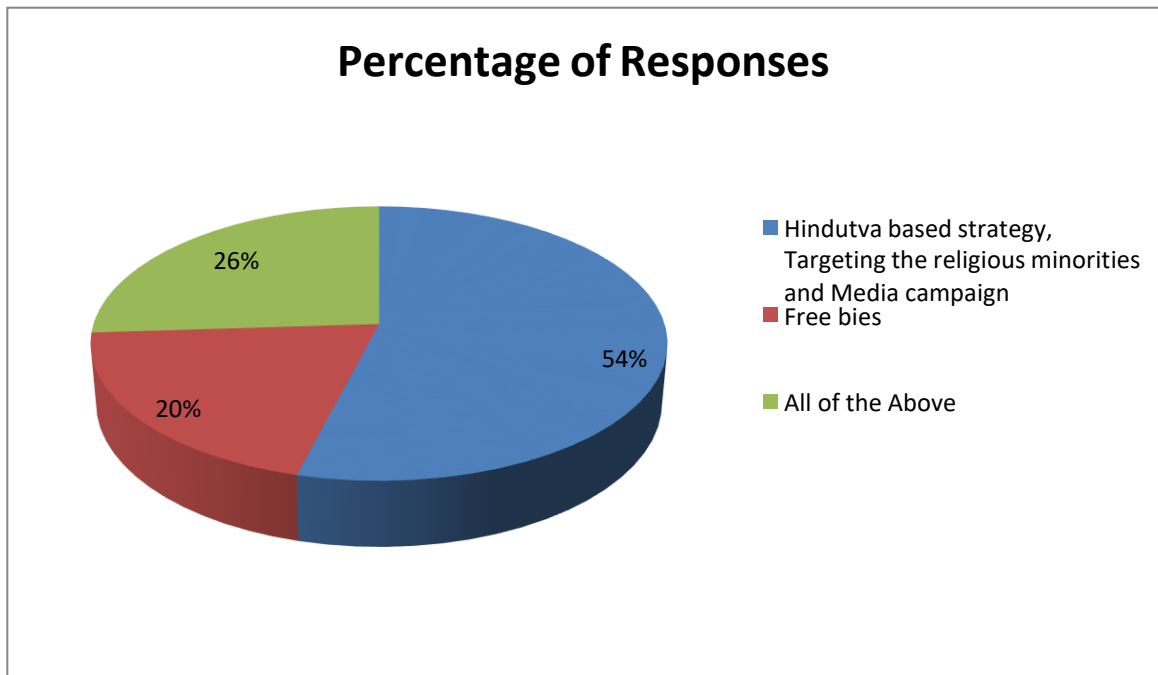
To the queries related to the factors responsible for success of BJP in Tripura, 51% of the respondents believe that Modi wave and vote for change were the major factors in Tripura. Whereas 23% of the respondents was of the view that development was one of the major factors in the success of BJP in Tripura. However, 19% believe that weak alternative was also a crucial factor; apart from that seven percent respondents were of the opinion that illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue was also a factor people voted for BJP.

It has been observed that respondents from both the states were of the view that Modi wave, weak alternatives and vote for change are the crucial factors for the success of BJP in Assam and Tripura in various elections, followed by the factors like development and illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue. From the responses it has been

understood that like other North Eastern states, in Assam and Tripura, factors are similarities which led to the rise and victory of BJP in these states. In Assam and Tripura people basically wanted to change the existing government as there was anti-incumbency and for that they voted for change

After years BJP gained massive popularity in North-East India due to the factors like Modi wave, change, absence of alternatives, and many others. It can be understood from earlier experiences that state politics in North-East India is usually influenced by the ruling power at the center. Elections in the North-East held after Lok Sabha, hence its reflections have been seen in the results of state politics as well. Lack of alternative has created a political vacuum because of the absence of strong leadership among political parties to project a symbol for change and the expectations of people to bring new air in the political sphere led to the emergence of BJP in India. BJP magnificently showed Modi as a successful leader among the masses who was projected as the face of change and it created a kind of wave in the political atmosphere. This wave worked in the state elections of Assam and other states of North-East India.

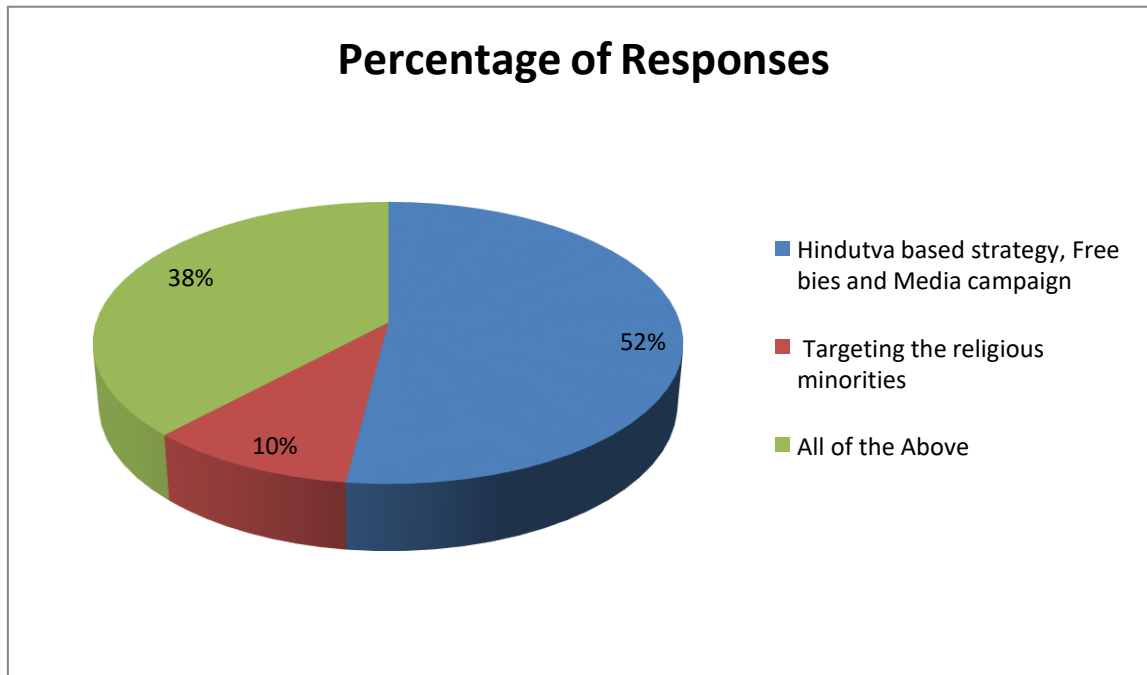
Figure 6.10: Political Strategies BJP adopted in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

Questions were asked to know about the view of the respondents on the political strategies BJP adopted in Assam. It is seen that 54% respondents believe that Hindutva based strategy, targeting the religious minorities and media campaign were the major strategies which were crucial in the victory. Another 20% respondents were of the view that distribution of freebies played a vital role in the success of BJP in Assam. However, the remaining 26% respondents stated that Hindutva based strategy, targeting the religious minorities, media campaign, and freebies, all these strategies together helped BJP in its electoral success in Assam.

Figure 6.11: Political Strategies BJP adopted in Tripura



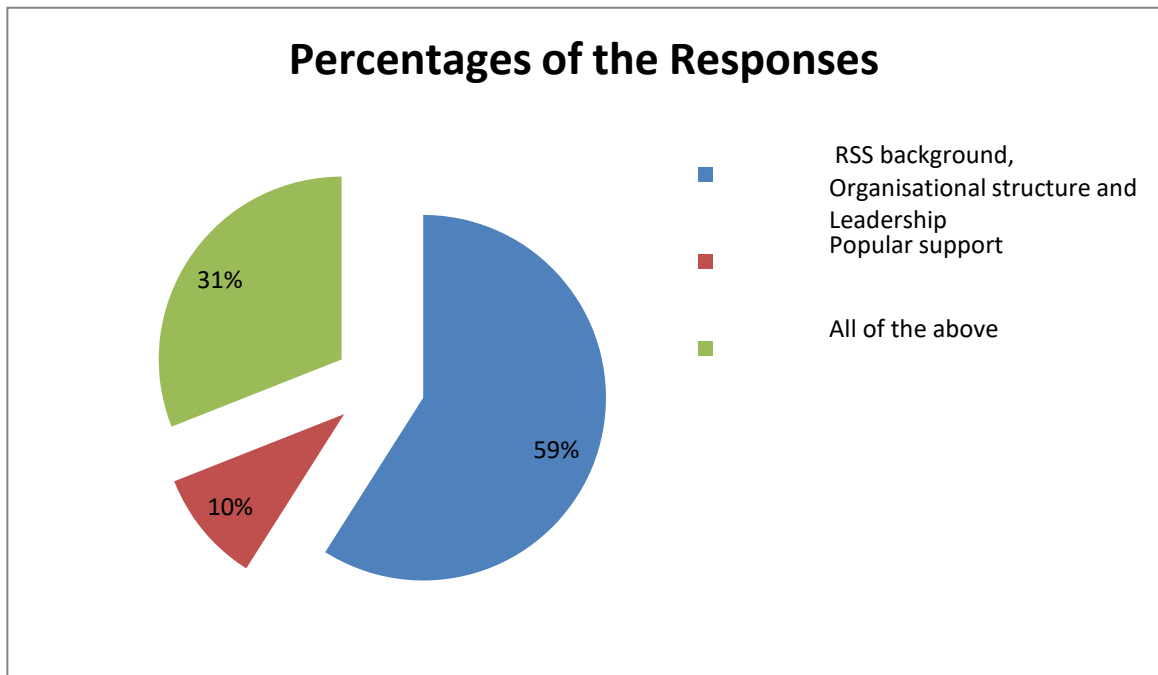
Source: Data collected from the field study

To the queries related to the political strategies BJP adopted in Tripura, it has been seen that 52% respondents were of the view that Hindutva based strategy, freebies and media campaign were the strategies that largely contributed in the victory of BJP in Tripura. However the 10% respondents believe that targeting the religious minorities also played an important role. Another 38% respondents were of the opinion that it was Hindutva based strategy, targeting the religious minorities, media campaign, and freebies played a crucial role in the victory of BJP in Tripura.

It is believed that with BJP coming to power in Assam and Tripura, Hindutva based politics remained significant. In the context of North East, politics of Hindutva was not that relevant before BJP gain power. Another strategy that worked in BJP's favour in both states was the role of media. The extensive campaign through print and

electronic media makes people attracted towards BJP in both the states. Apart from these two major factors i.e. targeting the religious minorities and freebies also played an important role.

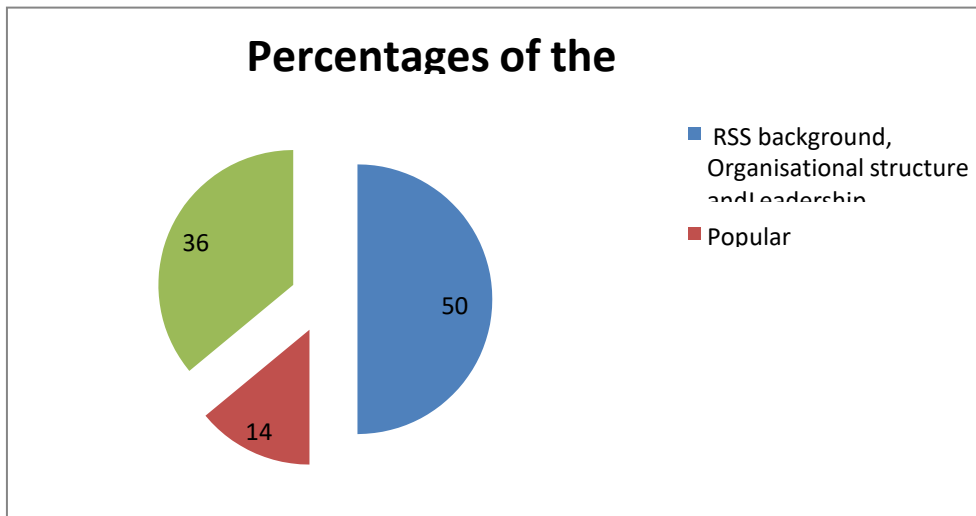
Figure 6.12: BJP organisation is more effective than other political party organizations in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

On the question of effectiveness of BJP's organisation than other political parties, in Assam 59% respondents stated that RSS background, organisational structure and leadership were the factors that make BJP organisation more effective. However, 10% of the respondents was of the view that popular support of the masses also played a vital role. Another 31% respondents believe that RSS background, organisational structure, leadership and popular support, all these factors together contributed in making the BJP's organisation effective.

Figure 6.13: BJP organisation is more effective than other political party organizations in Tripura

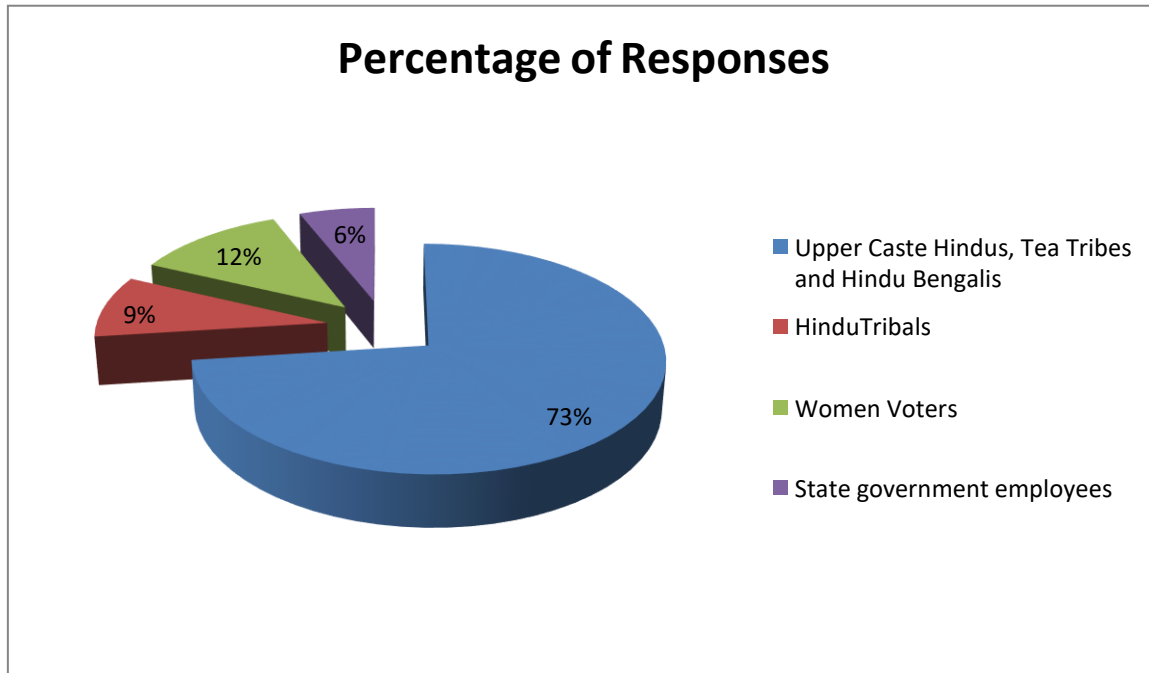


Source: Data collected from the field study

In the interview, in Tripura, 50% of the respondents was of the opinion that RSS background, organisational structure and leadership together make the BJP organisation effective. Whereas 14% respondents believe that popular support among the masses also played a vital role. Apart from that 36% respondents stated that RSS background, organisational structure, leadership and popular support, all the factors helped in making the BJP organisation more effectiveness.

From the responses it is clear that major factor behind the effective organisation of BJP is RSS background, as RSS and its affiliated organisations have strong cadre base and presence in the society of Assam and Tripura, so it helps BJP. Another, strength of BJP's strong organisation is its organisational structure i.e. emphasis from the top to booth committees and an active organisational presence. It has also been seen that leadership also played a vital role. Moreover, popular support of BJP among the masses is also helpful to its organisation.

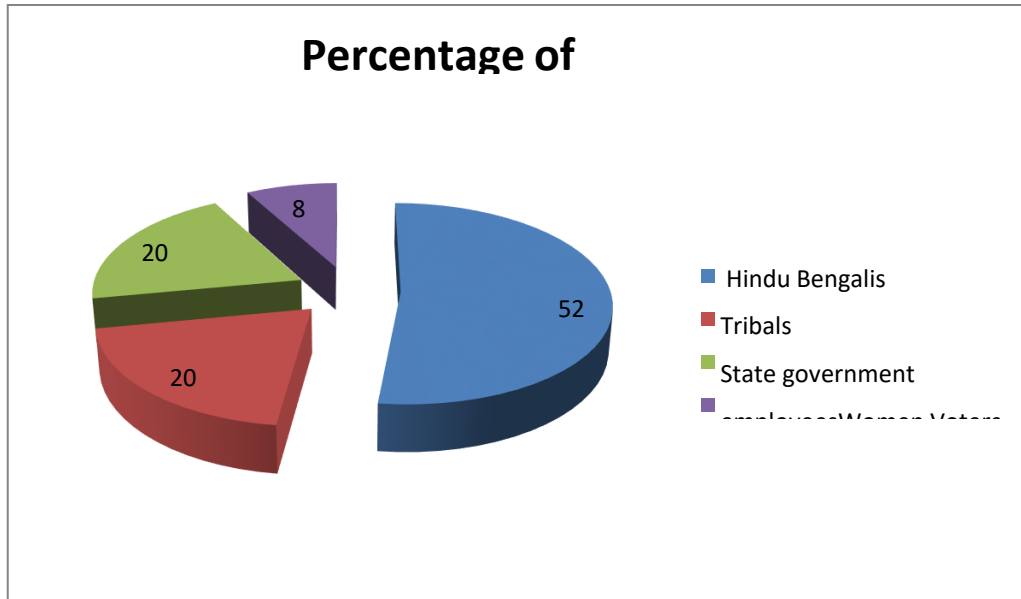
**Figure 6.14: Main support base of
BJP in Assam**



Source: Data collected from the field study

Question was also asked on the main support base of BJP in Assam, 73% respondents were of the view that Upper caste Hindus, Tea Tribes (Tea garden workers) and Hindu Bengalis are the major support base of BJP in Assam. However another 12% of the respondents believe that women voters are also a crucial support base. Whereas 9% respondents stated that Hindu tribals also constitute the support base of BJP and remaining six percent were of the opinion state government employees also supported BJP.

Figure 6.15: Main support base of BJP in Tripura



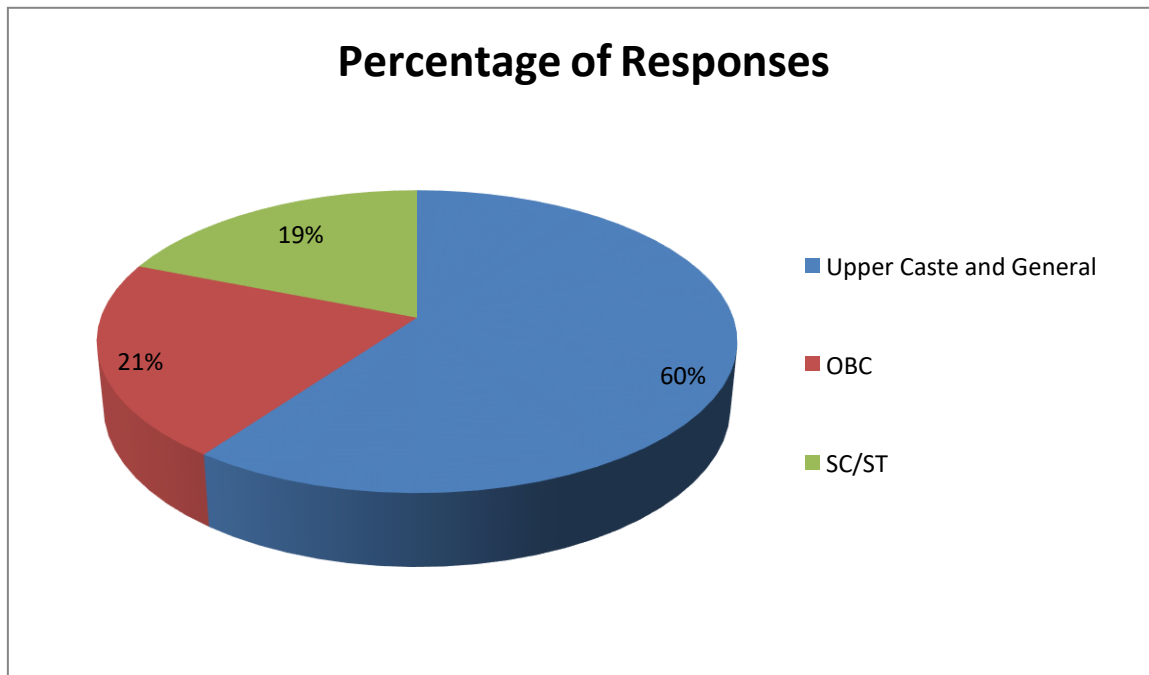
Source: Data collected from the field study

To the queries on main support base of BJP in Tripura 52% of the respondents believe that Hindu Bengalis are the major support base of BJP in Tripura. However, 20% respondents were of the view that Tribal's are also the support base of BJP, another 20% respondents stated that state government employees also constitute the support base of BJP in Tripura. Apart from that eight percent respondents were of the opinion that women voters also support BJP in Tripura.

Regarding the support base of BJP in Assam and Tripura, it has been seen from the responses that in Assam, Upper caste Hindus, Tea Tribes (Tea garden workers) and Hindu Bengalis constitute the major support base of BJP. Whereas in Tripura, Hindu Bengalis are the main support base of BJP. Further, in Assam, Women's, Hindu tribal and state govt employees also remained significant. In case of Tripura, Tribal's, state government employees and Women played vital role. Since BJP talks about religion and RSS supports Hinduism, so upper caste feel belongingness with them.

After independence, for a long time tea tribes were regarded as a vote bank for Congress, but from last few elections they feel that Congress government have not paid much attention to their concern so later they started supporting BJP to fulfil their interests. BJP supports migration of Hindu Bengalis from Bangladesh, and CAA also played an important role in this regard. Therefore Hindu Bengalis in Assam and Tripura supports BJP.

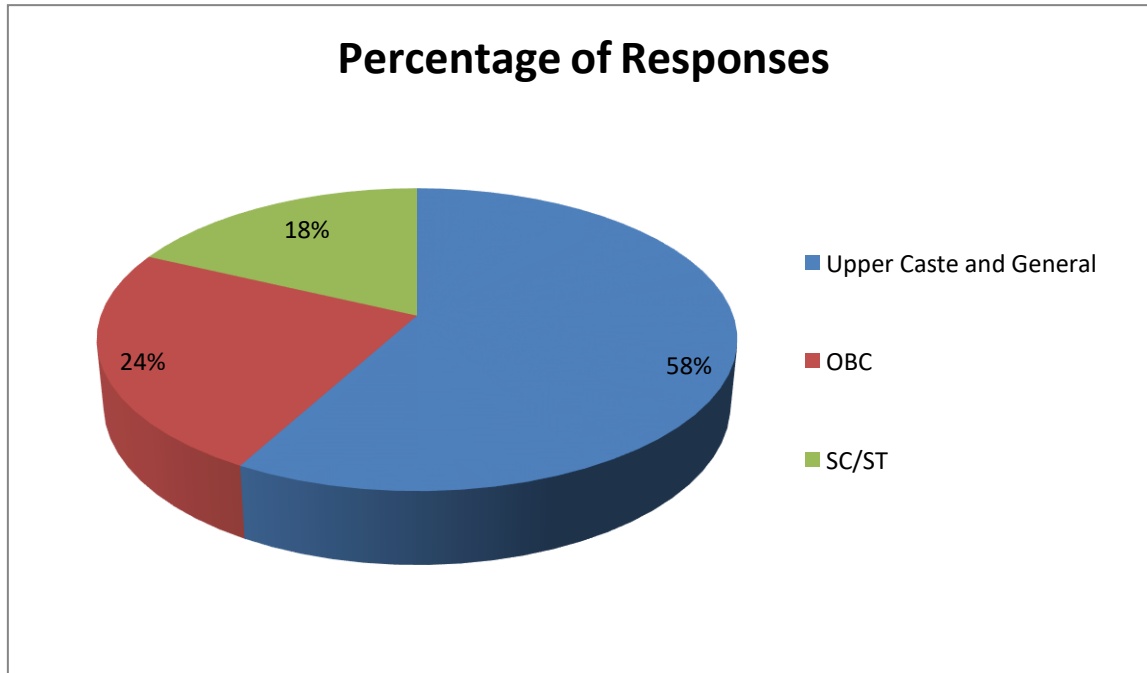
Figure 6.16: State leadership in BJP's success in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

On the questions of State leadership in BJP's success in Assam, 60% of the respondents were of the views that leadership from upper caste and general category plays a crucial role in the success of BJP in Assam. However, 21% of respondents believe that leadership from the OBC category also plays a vital role. Another 19% of the respondents stated that leadership from SC/ST communities is also contributed in BJP's success in Assam.

Figure 6.17: State leadership in BJP's success in Tripura

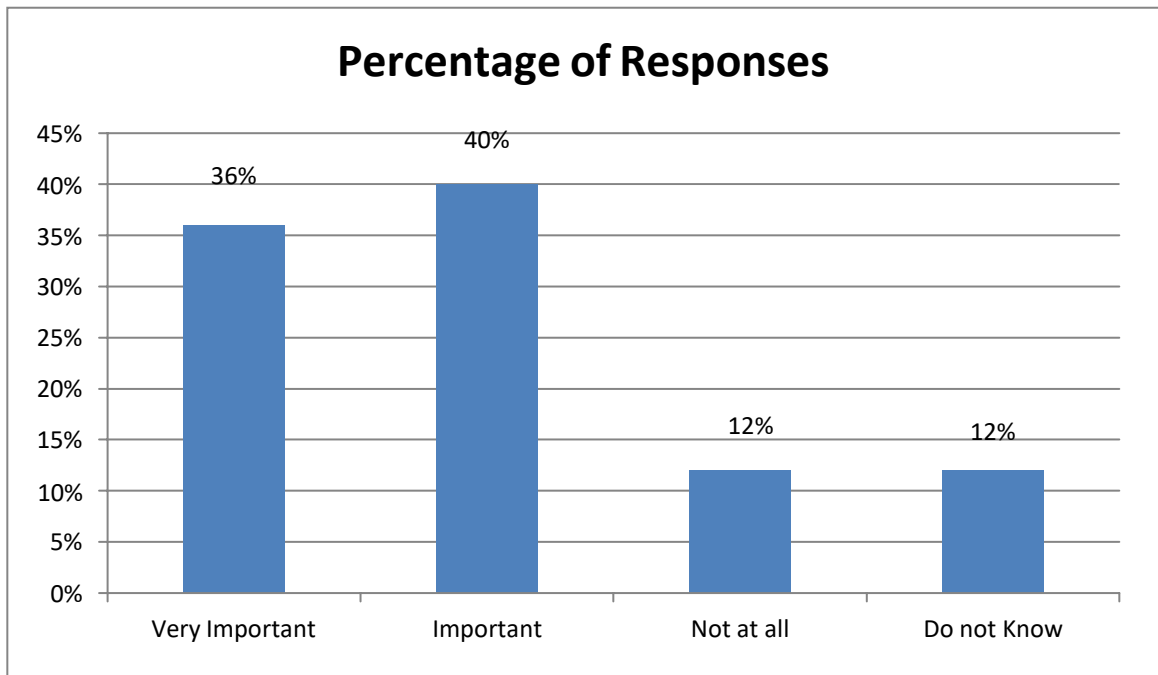


Source: Data collected from the field study

To the queries on State leadership in BJP's success in Tripura, 58% respondents were of the opinion that leadership from upper caste and general category plays a major role in the success of BJP in Tripura. Whereas 24% respondent replied that leadership from OBC category also plays a crucial role. Remaining 18% believes that leadership from SC/ST communities is also significant.

Upon analysing the responses, it is noticed that in both Assam and Tripura leadership from upper caste and general category played a significant role in the state level. In both states, it was followed by OBC and SC/ST leadership. It has been seen that BJP has mostly upper caste leadership, which is due to RSS influence. After the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, OBC leadership has also been seen in the BJP. Moreover, both states have a sizeable number of tribal populations, so their representation is also visible.

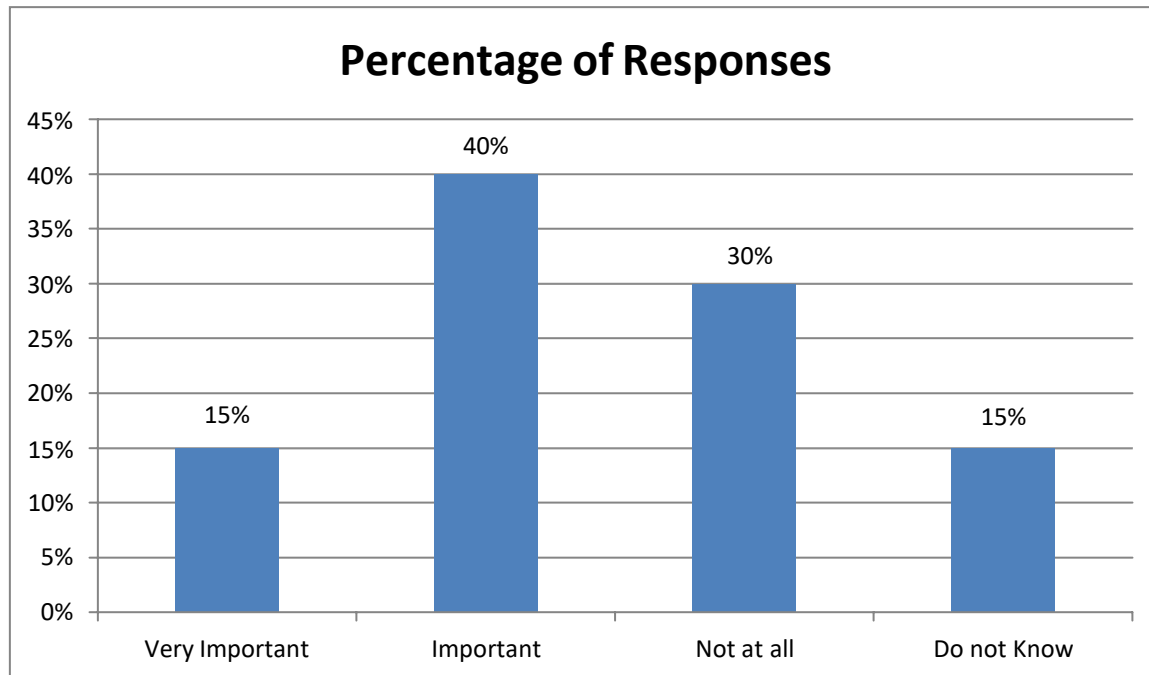
Figure 6.18: Role of state leadership in BJP's success in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

To the questions on role of state leadership in BJP's success in Assam, 36% of the respondents was of the opinion state leadership played a very important role in BJP's success in Assam. However, 40% of the respondents stated that state leadership in Assam played an important role. Whereas 12% respondents were of the view that state leadership have no role in the success of BJP in Assam and another 12% respondents replied that they did not know.

Figure 6.19: Role of state leadership in BJP's success in Tripura

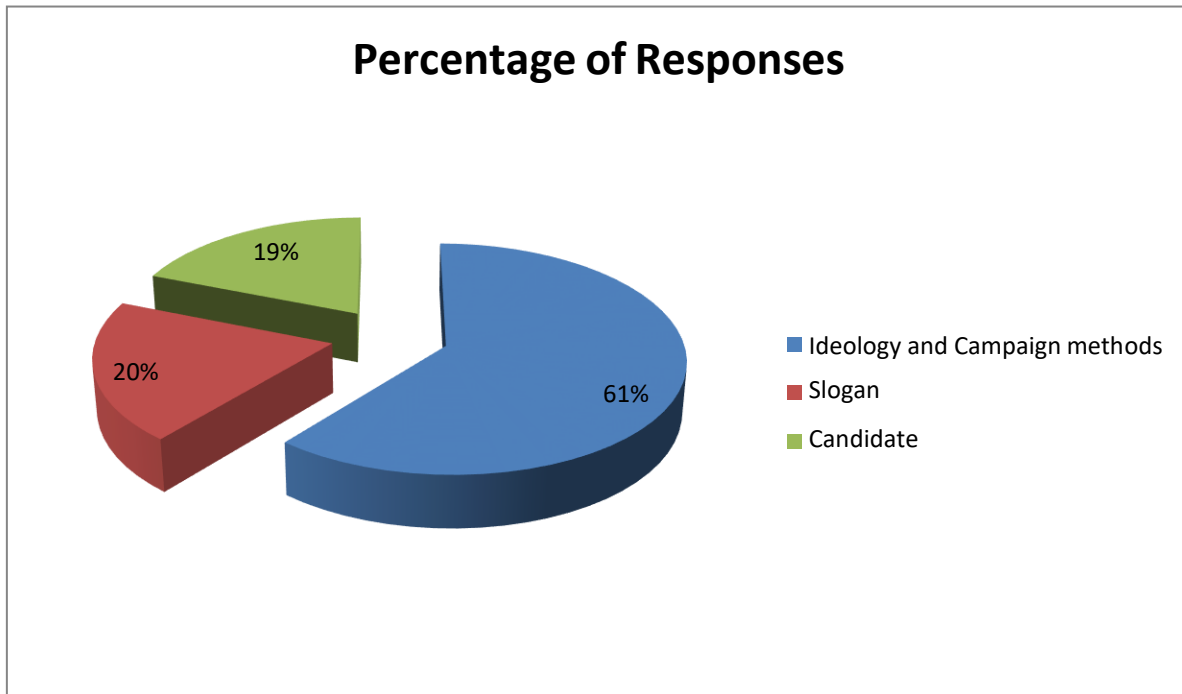


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the questions of role of state leadership in BJP's success in Tripura, 40% respondents believe that state leadership played an important role in BJP's success in Tripura. Whereas 30% respondents were of the view that state leadership had no role. However, 15% respondents stated that state leadership played very important role in the success of BJP in Tripura. Remaining 15% replied that they did not know.

According to the view of respondents, in Assam state leadership plays very important role in BJP's success, in comparison to that the role of state leadership in Tripura was not that key factor in BJP's victory. In Assam state leaders like Himanta Biswa Sarma and Sarbananda Sonowal played a vital role in the victory of BJP, whereas in Tripura role of Biplab Kumar Deb and Manik Saha was not regarded as that crucial.

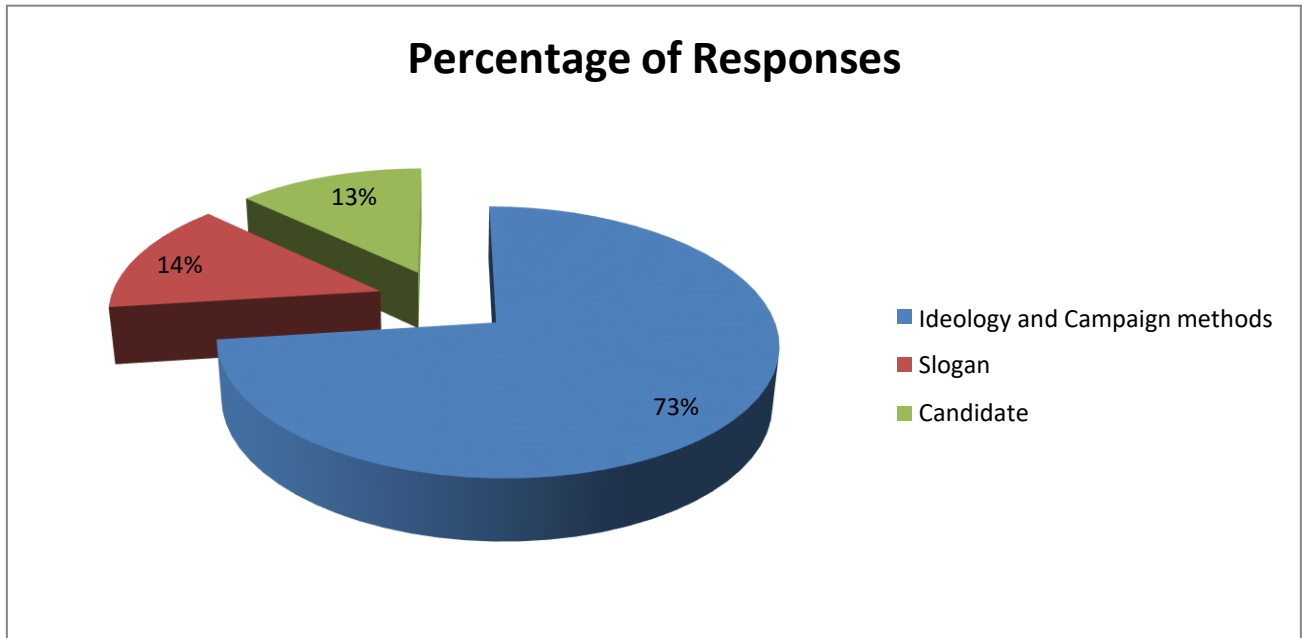
Figure 6.20: People are voting for BJP in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

To the queries on the reasons people are voting for BJP in Assam, 61% of the respondents was of the view that Ideology and campaign method were the major factors that led people to vote for BJP. Whereas, 20% respondents stated that slogan also played a vital role in the election, another 19% believe that the candidate also attracts people to vote for BJP in Assam.

Figure 6.21: People are voting for BJP in Tripura

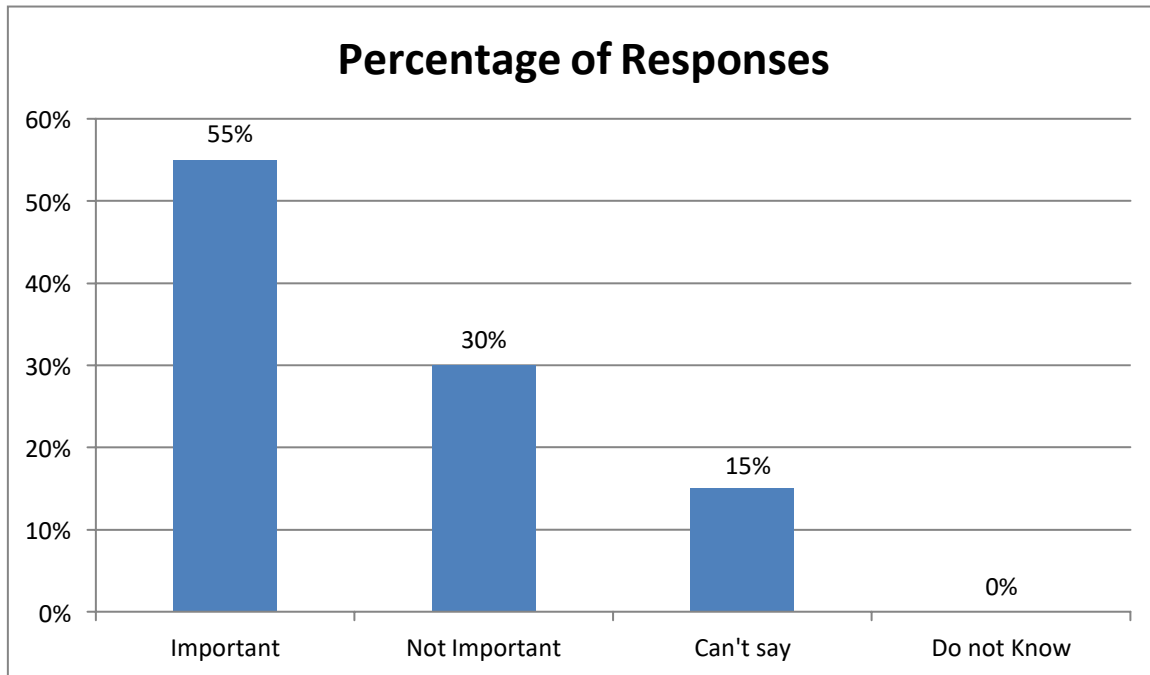


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the questions of factors that led people to vote for BJP in Tripura, 73% respondents stated that Ideology and campaign method played a vital role. However, 14% respondents were of the opinion that slogans during election also attract people to vote for BJP in Tripura. Another 13% believe that candidate also played an important role.

From this data it has been noticed that both in Assam and Tripura, Ideology and campaign method were the crucial factor for which people voted for BJP. Followed by these two factors slogans during election and candidate of the BJP also played a vital role in both the states. In the ideological ground 'Hindurva' played a crucial role, where the ground work of RSS was fruitful. Further, BJP's massive campaign also resulted in to the victory in Assam and Tripura.

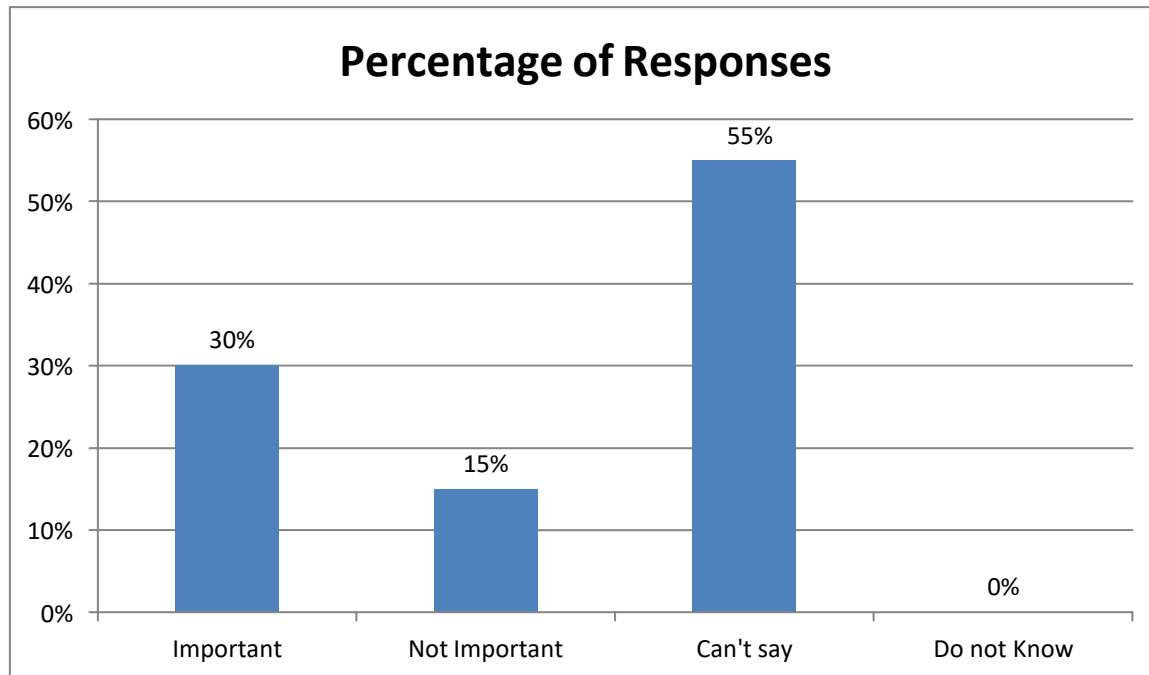
Figure 6.22: Profile of candidate is important in contesting election in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

To the questions on profile of candidate is important in contesting election, in Assam out of the total respondents 55% respondents said that profile of candidate is important. However, 30% respondents were of the view that profile of candidate is not important in contesting election. Another 15% respondents stated that can't say anything regarding that.

Figure 6.23: Profile of candidate is important in contesting election in Tripura

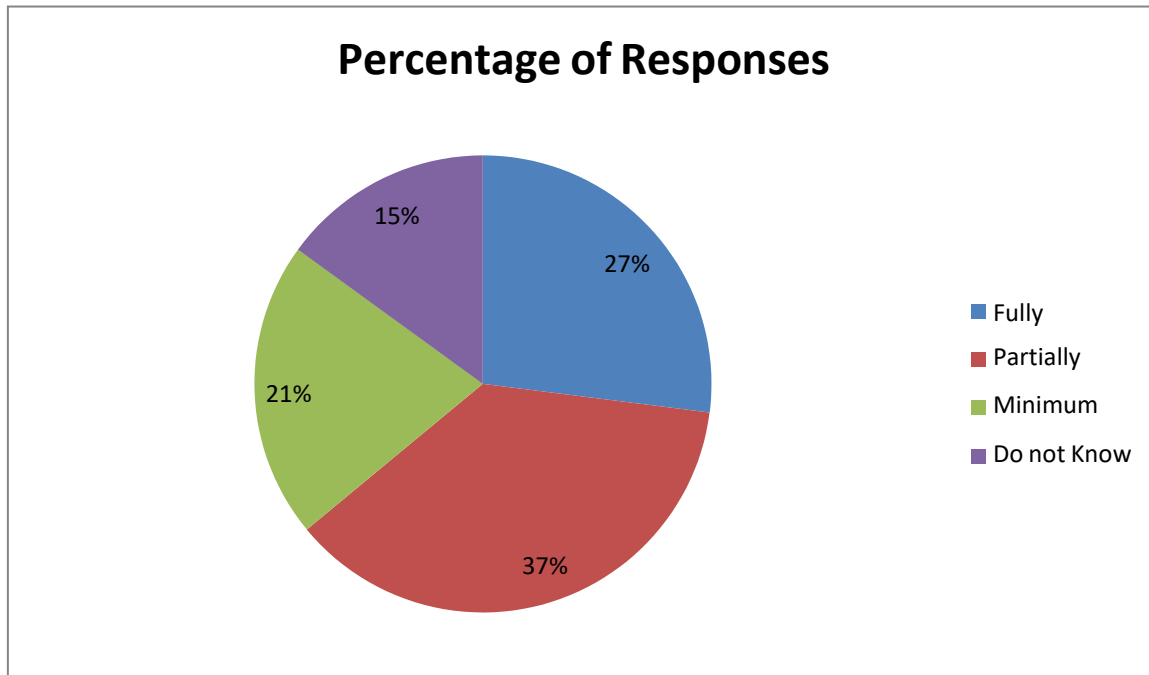


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the questions of profile of candidate is important in contesting election, in Tripura 55% respondents stated that they can't say anything in this regard. Whereas 30% of the respondents were of the view that profile of candidate is important in contesting elections. Remaining 15% of the respondents believe that profile of candidate is not important in contesting elections.

It can be analysed from the above discussion that in Assam most of the respondents were of the view that candidate profile plays a vital role during election, whereas in Tripura candidates profile does not play much important role. In Tripura much of the respondents were not aware of the candidate's role.

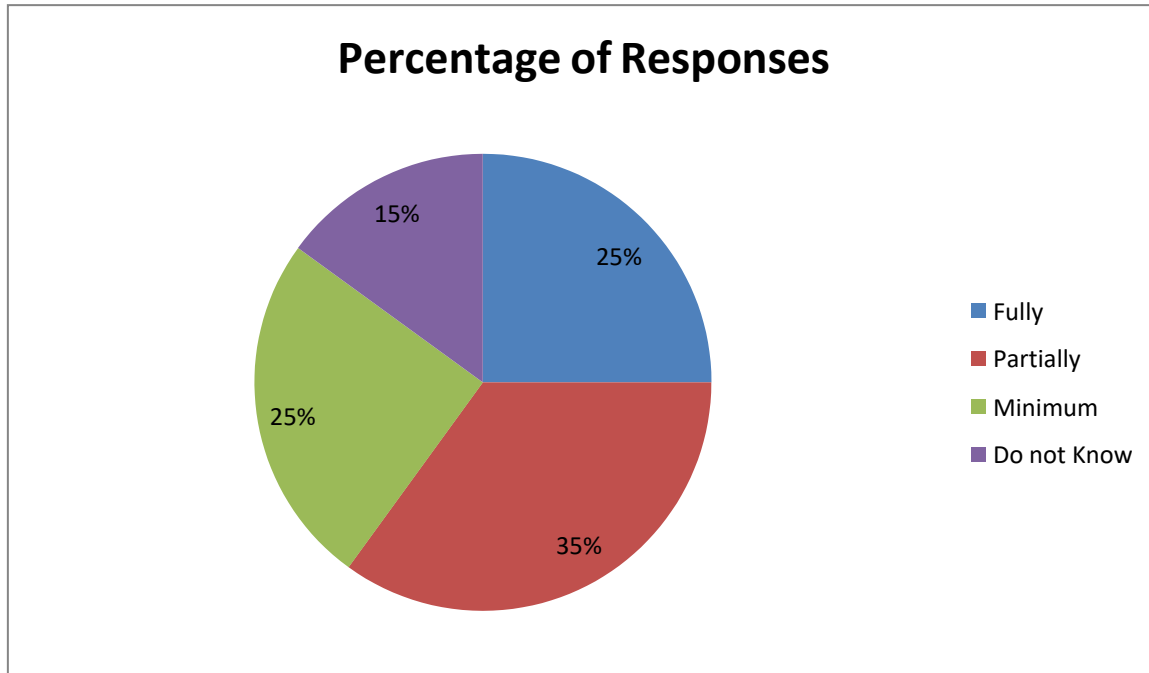
**Figure 6.24: Alliance policy helps
BJP in Assam**



Source: Data collected from the field study

Question was also asked on to what extent alliance policy helped the BJP in Assam, 37% of the respondents were of the view that alliance policy had partially helped BJP in Assam. Whereas 27% respondents stated that alliance policy fully helped BJP. Another 21% respondents believe that BJP got minimum help from its alliance policy in Assam. Remaining 15% respondents were of the opinion that they do not know regarding this.

Figure 6.25: Alliance policy helps BJP in Tripura

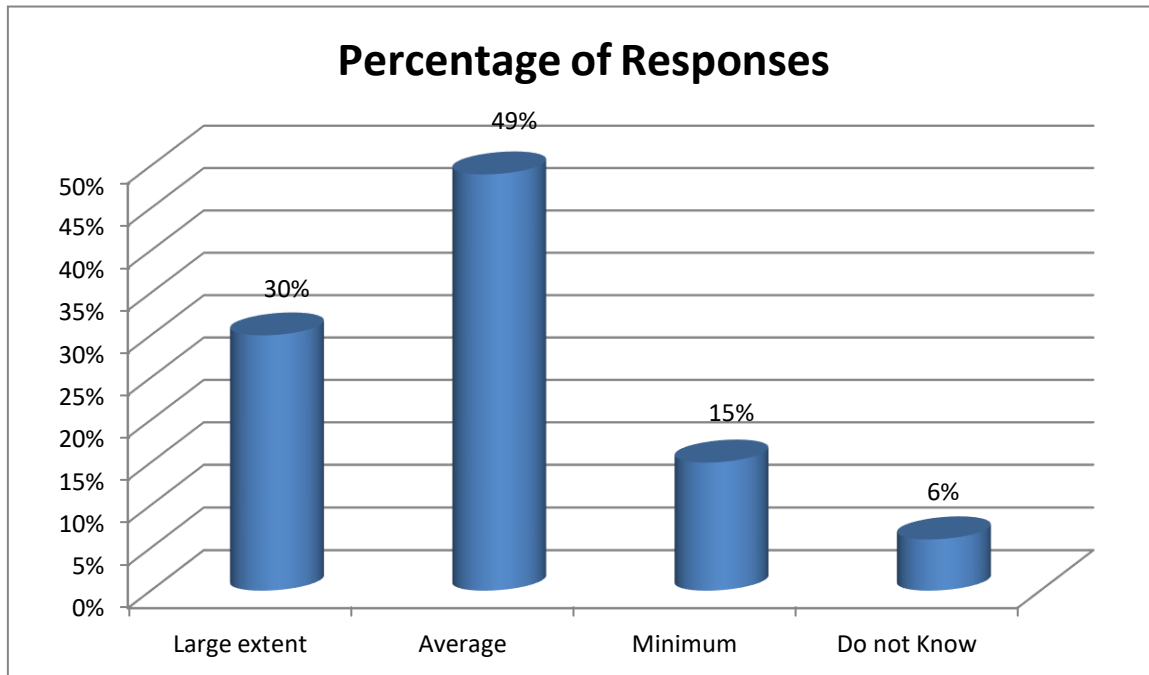


Source: Data collected from the field study

To the queries on what extent alliance policy helps BJP in Tripura, out of the total respondents 35% of the respondents stated that alliance policy has partially helped BJP in Tripura. However 25% respondents were of the opinion that alliance policy fully helped BJP, another 25% believes that BJP got only minimum help from its alliance policy in Tripura. Whereas 15% respondents replied that they did not have any idea in this regard.

From the observation, it is noticed that since BJP was new to the politics of North East, its strategy to make alliance with the regional or local political parties helped in gaining power both in Assam and Tripura. In Assam BJP's alliance policy to ally with AGP, BPF and other groups in 2016 assembly elections and with AGP and UPPL in 2021 assembly elections have positive impact for BJP. Whereas, in the context of Tripura its alliance with IPFT was beneficial for BJP.

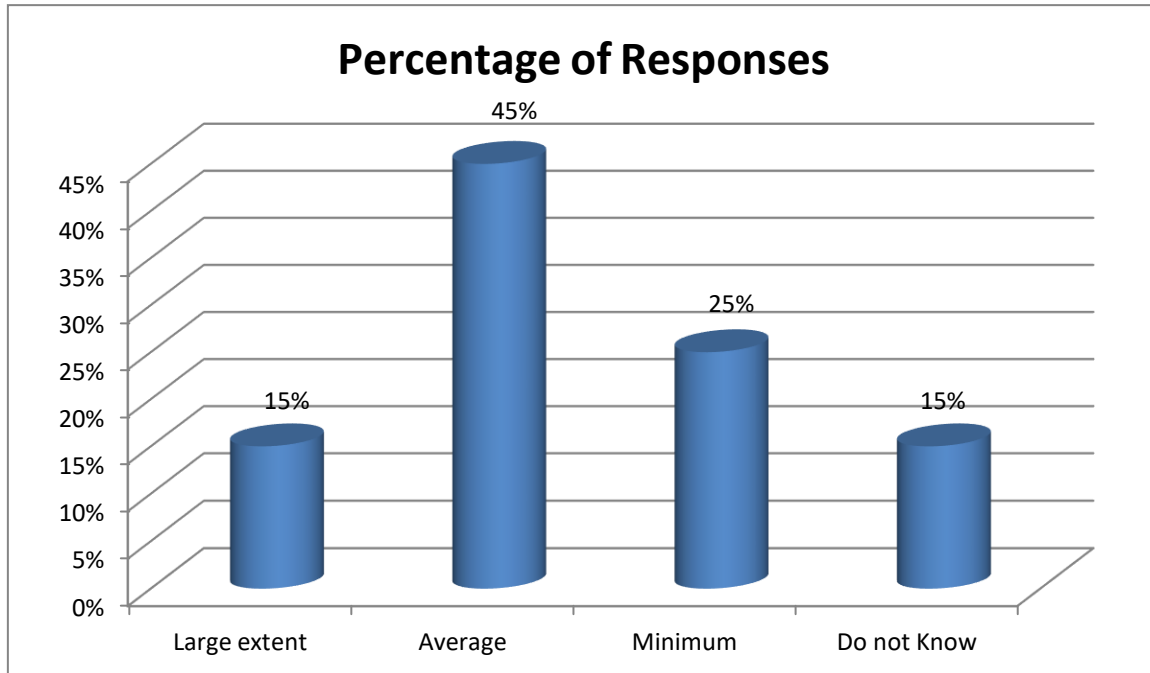
Figure 6.26: Alliance policy helped BJP in its victory in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

To the questions on to what extent alliance policy helped BJP in its victory in Assam, 49% of the respondents were of the view that it is average. Whereas 30% respondents stated that alliance policy had helped BJP to a large extent in its victory in Assam. Another 15% of the respondents believe that alliance policy helped BJP in its victory to a minimum extent. Remaining six percent replied that regarding this they did not have any idea.

Figure 6.27: Alliance policy helped BJP in its victory in Tripura

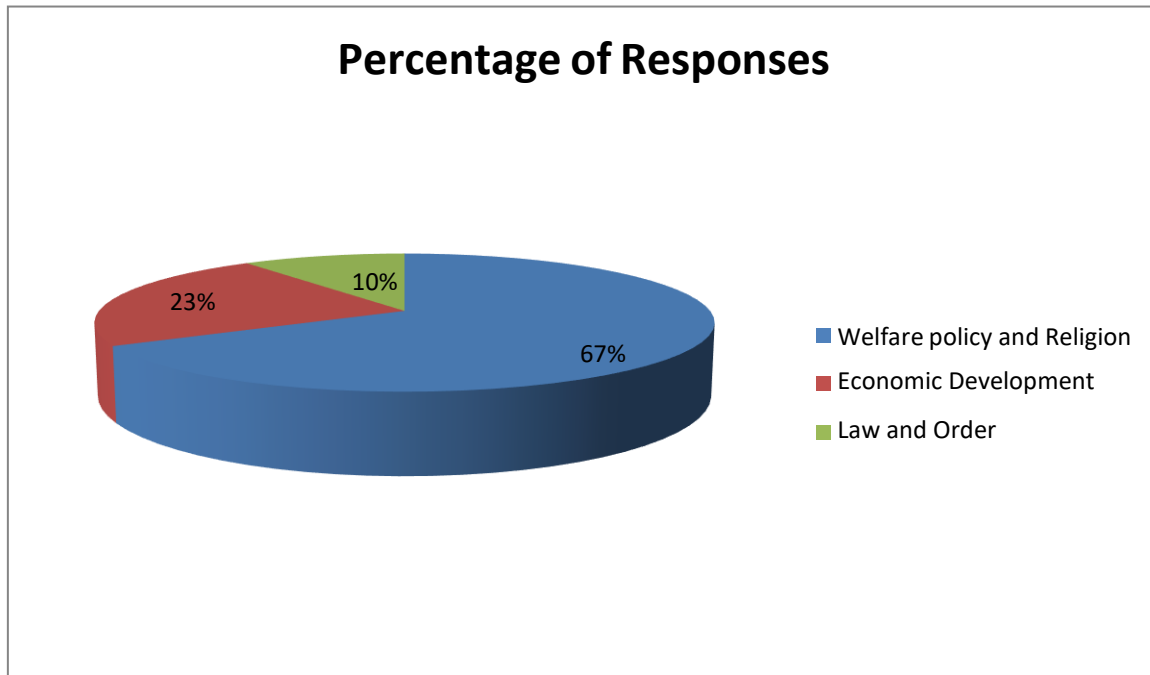


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the questions to what extent alliance policy helped BJP in its victory in Tripura, out of the total respondents 45 % believe that it is average. However 25% of the respondents were of the opinion that to a minimum extent alliance policy helped BJP in its victory in Tripura. Another 15% respondents replied that that alliance policy had helped BJP to a large extent in its victory. But 15% of the respondents stated that they did not have any idea in this regard.

In both Assam and Tripura majority of the respondents were of the view that alliance policy had partially (average) helped BJP in its victory. However, in Assam a substantial number of respondents were of the opinion that alliance policy had helped BJP to a large extent, but in Tripura only a few respondents agreed to this. It can't be denied that alliance with regional political parties like AGP, BPF and UPPL and other groups have helped BJP in the assembly elections. In case of Tripura, alliance with IPFT has also helped BJP in its victory in various elections.

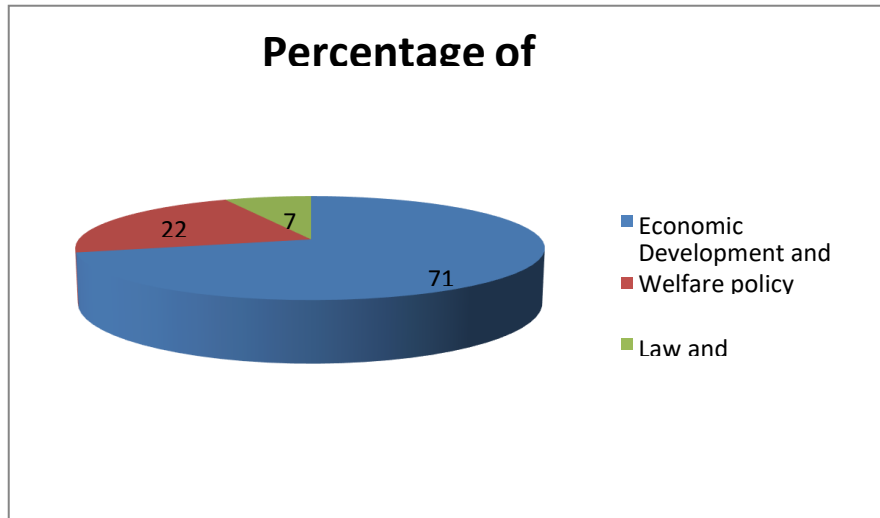
Figure 6.28: Policies of BJP government played main role in attracting votes in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

To the queries on policies of BJP government played main role in attracting votes in Assam, 67% of the respondents was of the view that welfare policy and religion played a crucial role in attracting votes in Assam. Whereas 23% respondents stated that economic development by the BJP government played a major role. Another 10% of the respondents believe that maintenance of law and order by the BJP government also attracted votes in Assam.

Figure 6.29: Policies of BJP government played main role in attracting votes in Tripura

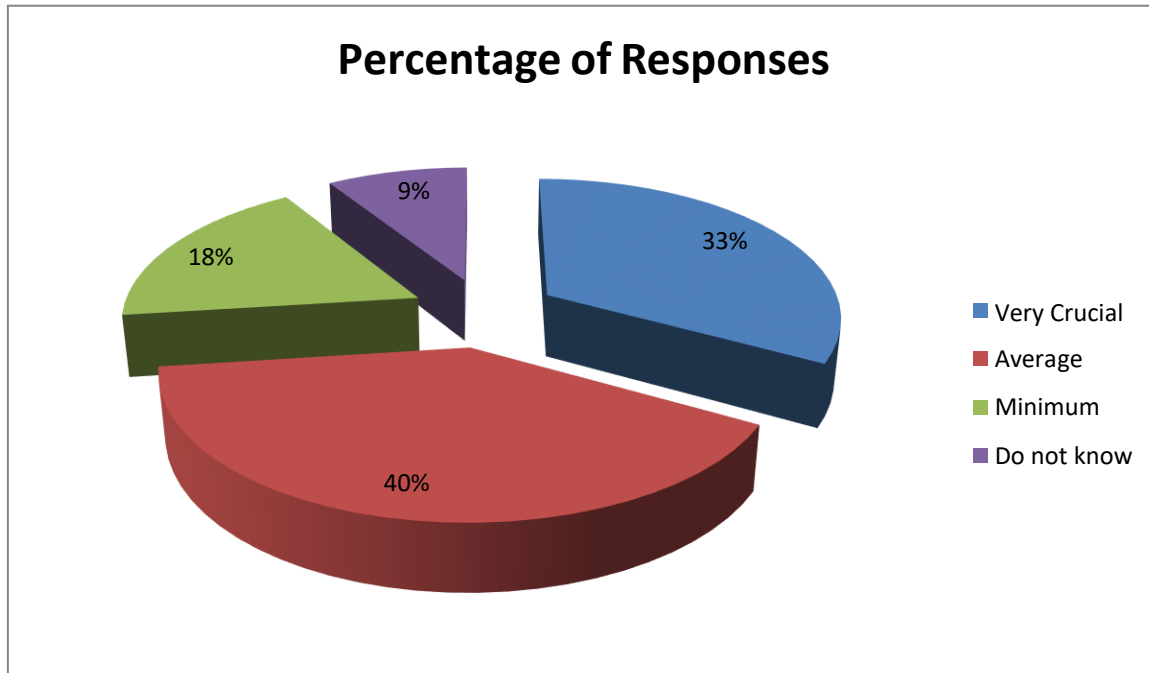


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the question of policies of BJP government played main role in attracting votes in Tripura, 71% respondents stated that economic development and welfare policy of the BJP government played a vital role in attracting votes in Tripura. However, 22% of the respondents were of the opinion that religion also played a crucial role in attracting votes. Remaining seven percent respondents believe that maintenance of law and order by the BJP government also attracted votes in Tripura.

Further, it is observed that in Assam, majority of the respondents were of the view that policies of the BJP government like welfare policy and religion played a vital role in attracting votes. Whereas in Tripura majority of the respondents stated that economic development and welfare policy were crucial in attracting votes for BJP. In Assam, economic development and maintenance of law and order remained crucial, however in Tripura religion and maintenance of law and order were also significant. In Assam it can be said that BJP government is openly playing the Hindu card along with welfare policies and developmental initiative. But in Tripura religion does not played a crucial role, so others factors are more important.

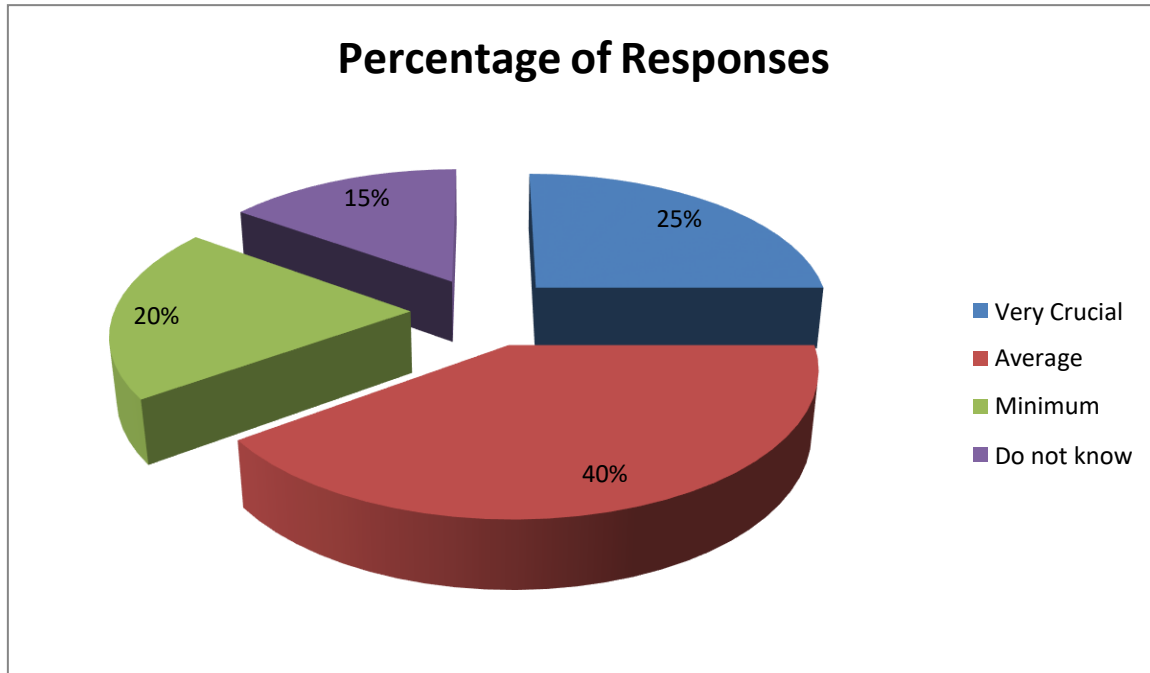
Figure 6.30: Role of Election manifesto of BJP in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

Regarding the question of the role of Election manifesto of BJP in Assam, 40% of the respondents were of the view that the election manifesto of BJP played an average role in Assam in its success. Whereas 33% of respondents believe that the election manifesto played a crucial role in the victory of BJP in Assam. However, 18% of respondents stated that it played a minimum role, another nine percent respondents replied that they did not have any idea regarding this.

Figure 6.31: Role of Election manifesto of BJP in Tripura

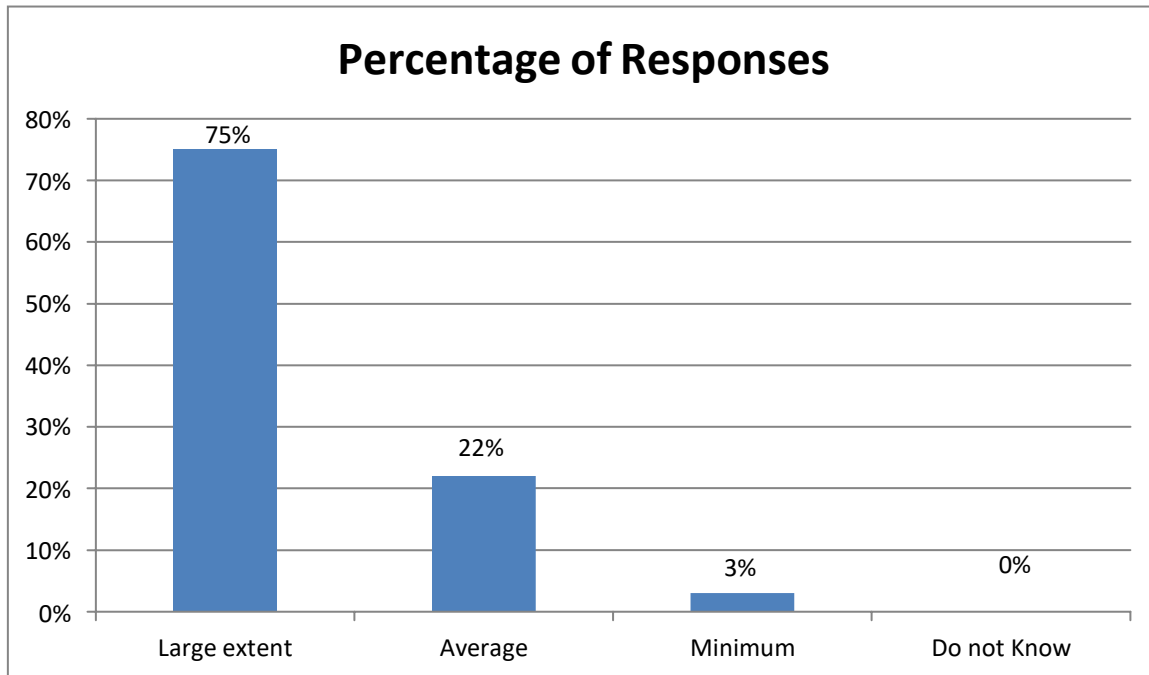


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the question of role of Election manifesto of BJP in Tripura, 40% of the respondents believe that election manifesto of BJP played an average role in Tripura in its success. However 25% respondents stated that election manifesto played a very crucial role. But another 20% respondents was of the opinion that election manifesto played a minimum role. Remaining 15% respondents replied that in this regard they did not have any idea.

In both Assam and Tripura majority of the respondents were of the view that role of Election manifesto of BJP was either very crucial or average. Thus is understood that Election manifesto of BJP played an important role in Assam and Tripura. As in both the states BJP has promised much welfare and developmental programmes in election manifesto, so its role becomes significant.

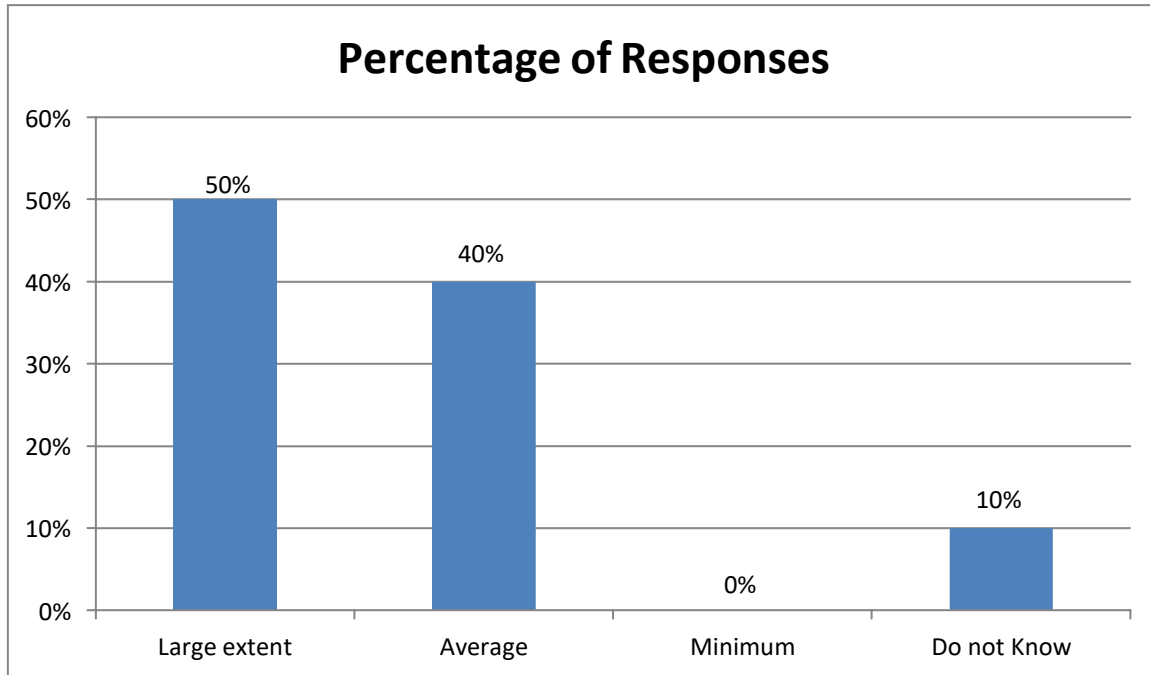
Figure 6.32: Campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

To the queries on to what extent campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Assam, 75% respondents stated that to large extent campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Assam. However, 22% of the respondents was of the opinion that campaign method of BJP played an average role in attracting votes in Assam. According to three percent of respondents it played a minimum role.

Figure 6.33: Campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Tripura

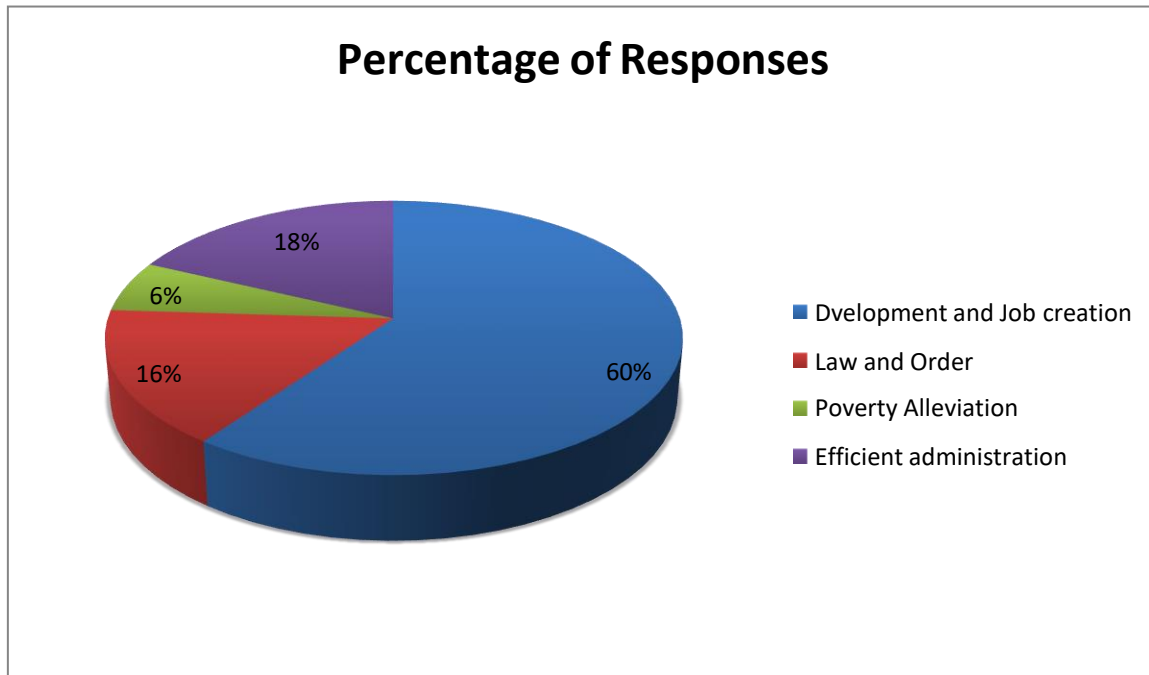


Source: Data collected from the field study

In the question on to what extent campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Tripura, 50% of the respondents were of the view that to large extent campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Tripura. Another 40% respondents believe that campaign method of BJP played an average role. Remaining 10% of the respondents stated that they did not have any idea in this regard.

From the responses in both Assam and Tripura it can be stated that campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes up to a large extent. Hence campaign method is very crucial in its electoral success. A significant number of the respondents were also of the view that it played an average role.

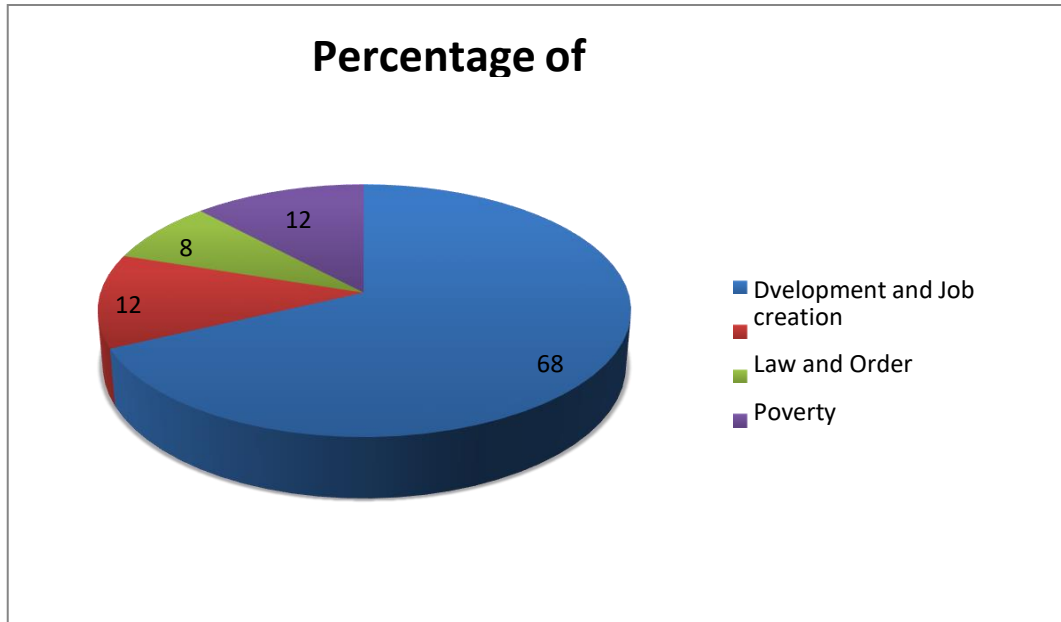
Figure 6.34: Main achievement of BJP government in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

Questions were asked on the main achievement of BJP government in Assam. Out of the total respondents, 60% respondents were of the view that development and job creation were the main achievements of BJP government in Assam. Whereas 18% respondents stated that efficient administration was also a crucial achievement. Another 16% of the respondents replied that maintenance of law and order was also an important achievement of the BJP government in Assam. According to six percent of the respondent's poverty alleviation was also a major achievement.

Figure 6.35: Main achievement of BJP government in Tripura

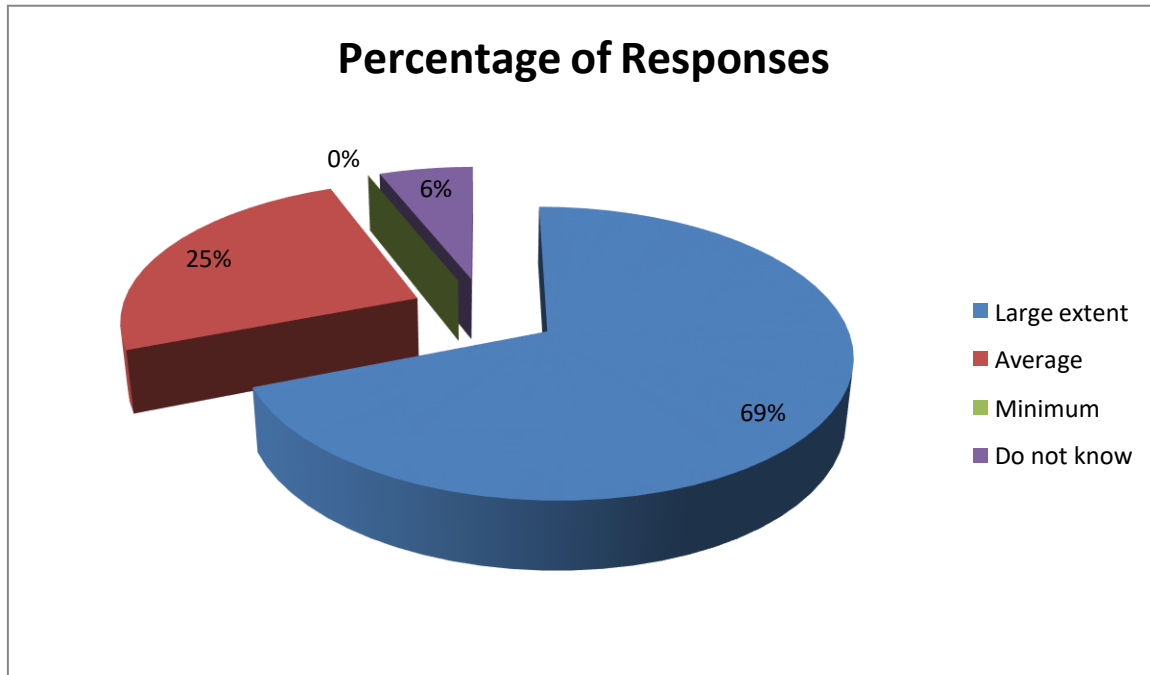


Source: Data collected from the field study

To the queries on main achievement of BJP government in Tripura, 68% respondents was of the view that development and job creation were the main achievements of the BJP government in Tripura. However, 12% of the respondents stated that maintenance of law and order was also a crucial achievement, another 12% believe that efficient administration was also an important achievement. Remaining eight percent replied that poverty alleviation was also a vital achievement of the BJP government in Tripura.

So far the main achievements of BJP government in Assam and Tripura are concerned, it is noticed from the responses that development and job creation were the prime achievements in both the states. According to the responses, along with these two, efficient administrations, maintenance of law and order and poverty alleviation were also regarded as significant achievements. In both Assam and Tripura, it is seen that under BJP government recruitment process is continuously going on, which has a positive impact.

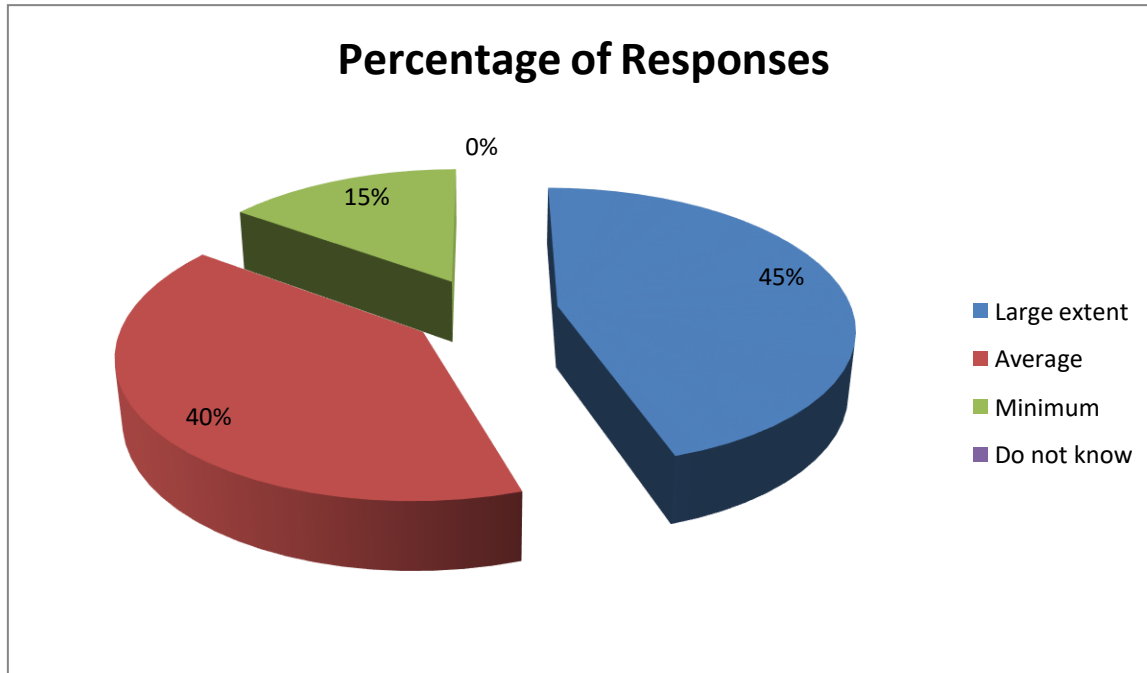
Figure 6.36: Role of money power in the victory of BJP in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

Regarding the question on role of money power in the victory of BJP in Assam, it is important to note that 69% of the total respondents were of the view that to a large extent money power played a crucial role. Whereas, 25% respondents stated that money power played an average role in the victory of BJP in Assam. Remaining six percent of the respondents replied that regarding this they do not have any idea.

Figure 6.37: Role of money power in the victory of BJP in Tripura

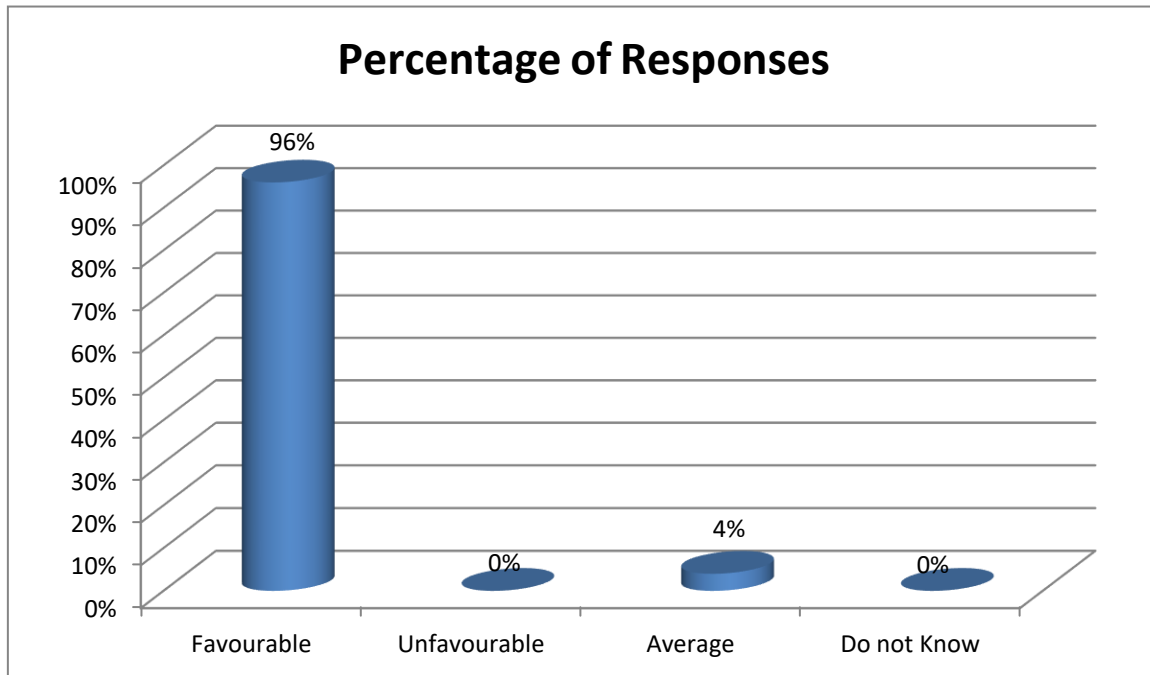


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the question of role of money power in the victory of BJP in Tripura, 45% of the respondents believe that to a large extent, money power played a major role in the victory of BJP. However, 40% of respondents stated that money power played an average role in the victory of BJP in Tripura. Another 15% of respondents were of the opinion that the role of money power was minimum in the electoral victory of BJP in Tripura.

It is to notice that both in Assam and Tripura money power played a crucial role in the Victory of BJP. Though some other respondents were of the view that role of money power was partial (average) in the victory of BJP in Assam and Tripura and other factors are also important. It can be said that at present time BJP's election campaigning is high voltage and expensive, so it needs lot of money to manage this type of programmes.

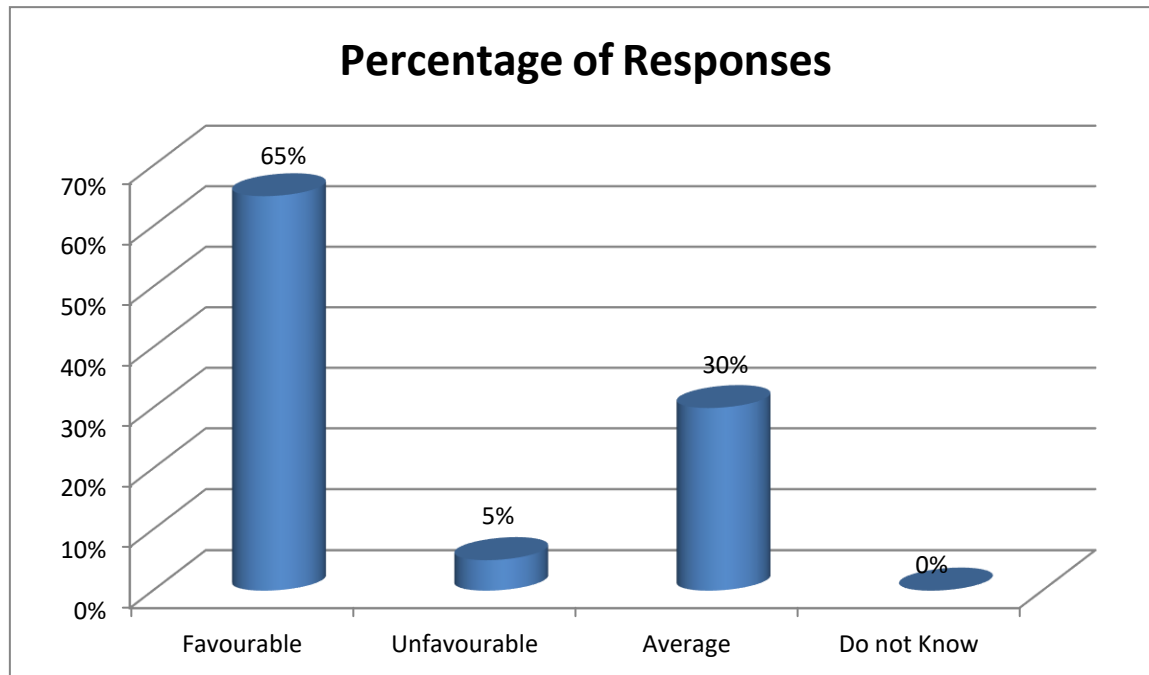
Figure 6.38: Role of media in the victory of BJP in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

To the questions regarding the role of media in the victory of BJP in Assam, 96% of the respondents was of the opinion that media played a favourable role in the victory of BJP in Assam. Another 4% respondents stated that media played an average role in the victory of BJP.

Figure 6.39: Role of media in the victory of BJP in Tripura

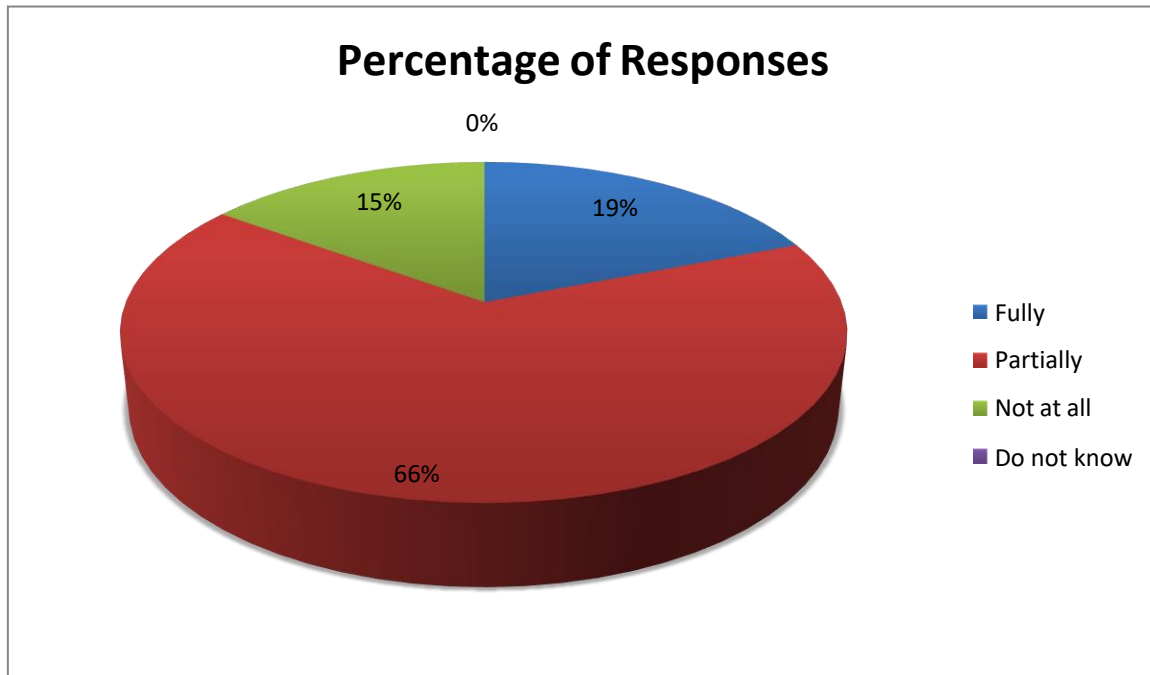


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the questions related to the role of media in the victory of BJP in Tripura, out of the total respondents, 65% respondents were of the view that in the victory of BJP in Tripura, media played a favourable role. However, 30% of the respondents believe that media played an average role. Remaining five percent of respondents replied that role of media was unfavourable in the victory of BJP in Tripura.

It is clear from the responses that media played a favourable role in the victory of BJP in Assam and Tripura. Particularly in Assam some media houses took a pro BJP stand in the entire election period. Whereas some other respondents were of the view that media played an average role. It is seen that in India majority of the media houses played a pro government role at the national level, so media houses of the Assam and Tripura are not the exemption.

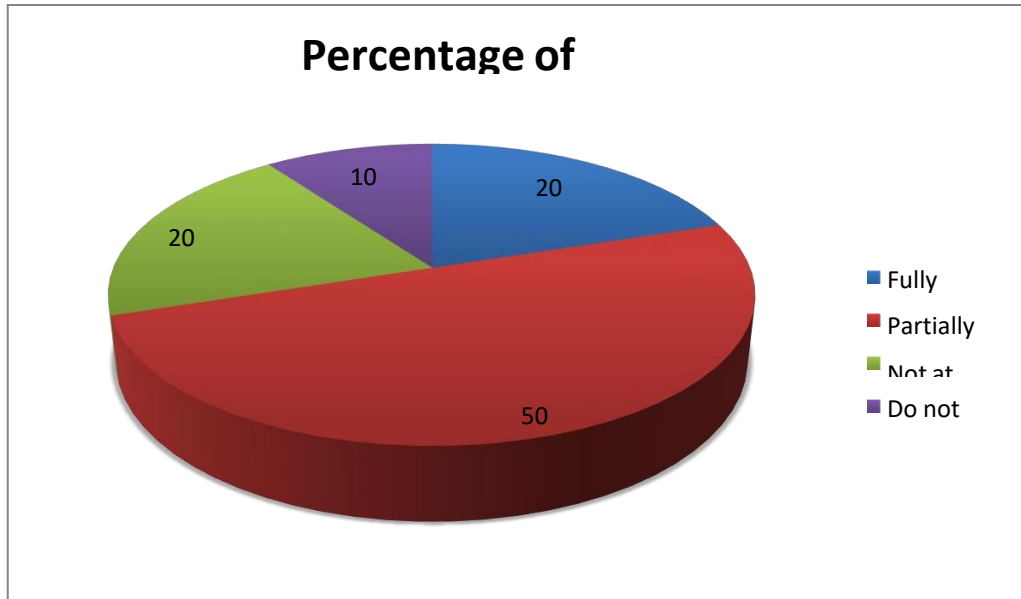
Figure 6.40: Social harmony prevails in the BJP rule in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

Regarding the questions of to what extent social harmony prevails in the BJP rule in Assam, 66% of the respondents were of the opinion that social harmony partially prevailed in the BJP rule in Assam. However 19% of the respondents believe that social harmony fully prevailed in BJP rule. Apart from that 15% respondents stated that social harmony not at all prevailed in the BJP rule in Assam.

Figure 6.41: Social harmony prevails in the BJP rule in Tripura

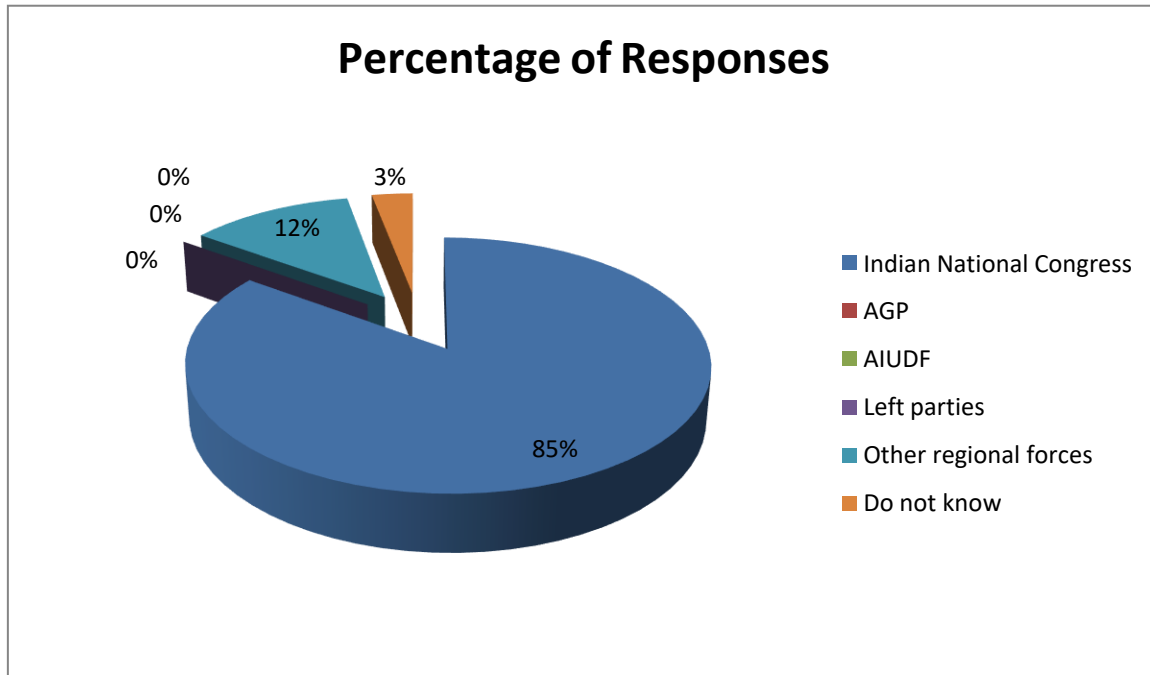


Source: Data collected from the field study

On the queries on to what extent social harmony prevails in the BJP rule in Tripura, out of the total respondents 50% respondents believe that social harmony partially prevails in the BJP rule in Tripura. However 20% respondents were of the opinion that social harmony fully prevails in BJP rule, whereas another 20% respondents replied that social harmony not at all prevails in the BJP rule in Assam. Remaining 10% respondents were of the view that they do not have any idea regarding this.

From the above discussion it is that in the BJP rule social harmony partially prevailed in both Assam and Tripura. Since a larger number of respondents stated that only partially social harmony prevailed in both the BJP ruled states. On top of that a few others expressed their opinion that BJP rule adversely affected social harmony in states. Whereas few other respondents were of the view that social harmony fully prevailed in BJP rule in both the states. It can be said that due to BJP's Hindutva agenda which at time become anti-muslim and anti-christian, affects the social harmony.

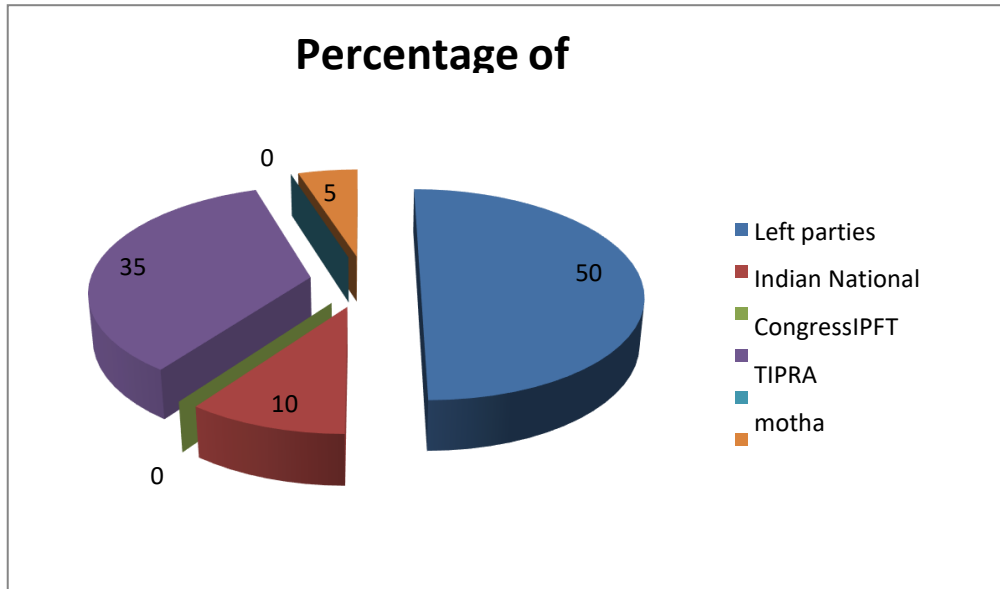
Figure 6.42: Political party that is considered the main Alternative of BJP in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

Regarding the question of main alternative or opposition party of the BJP in Assam, it is important to note that 85% of the total respondents were of the view that it was the Indian National Congress (INC) which considered the main alternative. However other 12 % respondents believe that it was other regional forces of the state. Remaining three percent stated that they did not know have any idea regarding this.

Figure 6.43: Political party that is considered the main Alternative of BJP in Tripura



Source: Data collected from the field study

On the questions of main contender or opposition party of the BJP in Tripura, 50% of the respondents believe that it was the Left parties which considered the main alternative. Whereas 35% respondents were of the view that newly formed Tipra motha was the main alternative in Tripura. However 10% respondents stated that Indian National Congress (INC) is the main alternative of BJP in Tripura. Another, five percent of the respondents replied that they did not know have any idea in this regard.

From the responses in Assam it is observed that INC is regarded as the main alternative of BJP in Assam. In terms of the organisational strength and presence in the Assembly and Lok Sabha also the Congress party is regarded as the second largest and chief opposition party in Assam. Few respondents were of the view that other regional forces were the alternative in Assam. In case of Tripura, from the responses it is observed that Left parties are regarded as the main alternative of BJP in Tripura.

From the organisational strength and presence in the Assembly also they are regarded as the strong opposition party. Some other respondents were of the view that newly formed TIPRA motha was the alternative of BJP in Tripura, as it was the main opposition party in the Assembly. Few respondents were of the view that INC was the alternative in Tripura.

Conclusion

The discussions above underline the perception of people regarding the political strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura and to arrive at a comparative understanding of the same. The study has shown that there were similarities in many areas in terms of political strategies in Assam and Tripura is concerned.

And it is highlighted that, the Modi wave along with weak alternatives and vote for change remained the common factors for the rise of BJP in North East India. Further, respondents from both the states agreed on the fact that issues like development and illegal Bangladeshi infiltration were also influential to some extent. It has been noted that respondents from both states held the opinion that the Modi wave, the lack of viable alternatives, and the desire for change were the most important factors for the success BJP in Assam and Tripura in various elections, followed by the issue of development and illegal Bangladeshi infiltration. And, Assam and Tripura share characteristics with other North Eastern states that contributed to the emergence and victory of the BJP in these states.

The results of study indicate that the Hindutva-based politics continued to be important after the BJP won elections in Assam and Tripura. Prior to the BJP gaining power, Hindutva politics was not very significant in the North East politics. BJP's use of the media was another tactic that was successful in both states. People in both states were lured to the BJP by the intensive print and electronic media blitz. The targeting of religious minorities and freebies also had a significant impact. Based on the replies received, it is evident that a significant determinant contributing to the successful

organisation of BJP is its affiliation with the RSS. The RSS, together with its associated organisations, possesses a robust cadre base and a notable societal presence in the regions of Assam and Tripura. Consequently, this affiliation is advantageous for the BJP. Another advantage of the BJP's robust organisation is its well-developed organisational framework, which places significant emphasis on the top-down approach, extending from higher-level committees to grassroots booth committees, so ensuring an active and pervasive organisational presence. Furthermore, it is observed that leadership has also assumed a crucial role. Additionally, widespread endorsement of the BJP by the general public serves as a beneficial factor for its overall structure and functioning.

The support base of BJP in Assam and Tripura is characterised by the prominence of certain demographic groups. In Assam, the BJP garners significant support among upper caste Hindus, tea garden workers (Tea Tribes), and Hindu Bengalis, as seen by the replies received. In the state of Tripura, the BJP garners significant support mostly from the Hindu Bengali population. In addition, the presence of women, Hindu tribals, and state government employees in Assam continued to have considerable importance as a support base of BJP. In the context of Tripura, the active participation of tribal communities, state government officials, and women has been essential.

After conducting an analysis of the responses, it is observed that in both Assam and Tripura, individuals belonging to the upper caste and general category exerted considerable influence at the state level. In both states, the leadership that followed was comprised of individuals from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) as well as the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) communities. Based on the perspective of participants, the significance of leadership in

the state of Assam is deemed crucial for the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party, whereas the role of state leadership in Tripura is perceived to be less influential in the party's triumph. Based on the available data, it has been observed that in both Assam and Tripura, the determining factor influencing the voting behaviour in favour of the BJP was the ideological stance and campaign strategy employed by the party. In addition to the aforementioned considerations, the utilisation of slogans throughout the election campaign, together with the selection of candidates affiliated with the BJP, significantly influenced the outcomes in both states.

This discourse reveals that in Assam, majority participants expressed the belief that a profile of a candidate significantly influenced election outcomes. Conversely, in Tripura, the profile of candidates is perceived to have less significance. In the state of Tripura, a significant portion of the respondents showed a lack of awareness on the roles and responsibilities of the candidates. Based on empirical observations, it is evident that the BJP, being a relatively recent entrant into the political landscape of North East India, has strategically formed alliances with regional or local political parties. This astute approach has proven instrumental in facilitating the BJP's acquisition of political power in both Assam and Tripura. The majority of respondents in both Assam and Tripura expressed the belief that the alliance policy had provided partial assistance to the BJP in achieving victory. However, it is observed that a significant proportion of respondents in Assam held the view that the alliance policy had greatly benefited the BJP. In contrast, a minority of respondents in Tripura concurred with this perspective.

Further, it can be inferred that a significant proportion of the participants in Assam expressed the belief that the policies implemented by the BJP government, such as welfare initiatives and religious considerations, played a crucial role in garnering electoral support. In contrast, majority of respondents in Tripura expressed that the BJP's ability to secure votes was contingent upon economic development and welfare programmes. The state of Assam placed great importance on economic

development and the preservation of law and order, whereas in Tripura, religion and the maintenance of law and order were also deemed vital. It is argued that a significant proportion of respondents in both Assam and Tripura expressed the belief that the role of the BJP election manifesto was of great importance or moderate significance. Hence, it has been comprehended that the election manifesto of the BJP has played a significant influence in the states of Assam and Tripura.

It can also be concluded that the campaign strategy of the BJP was successful in garnering a significant number of votes. Therefore, it can be asserted that the campaign method holds significant importance. A considerable proportion of the participants likewise held the perspective that it fulfilled a moderate role. Regarding the accomplishments of BJP government in Assam and Tripura, it has been observed that the primary achievements revolved around development and employment generation. Based on the received feedback, in addition to the aforementioned two, effective management of governmental affairs, maintenance of societal stability, and efforts towards reducing poverty were also identified as noteworthy accomplishments.

It has been observed that the influence of money power had a significant role in the electoral success of BJP in both Assam and Tripura. While some other participants expressed the opinion that the influence of money power was only partially responsible for the success of the BJP in Assam and Tripura, it is acknowledged that there were other significant elements at play. The responses indicate that the media played a significant and positive impact in facilitating the win of BJP in the states of Assam and Tripura. During the election time, certain media houses in Assam exhibited a pro-BJP stance. While a subset of the participants held the perspective that the media's involvement was moderate. The preceding discourse reveals that under the governance of the BJP, there exists a degree of social harmony in both Assam and Tripura. A greater proportion of participants indicated that a situation of partial social peace existed in the states governed by the BJP. Furthermore, several individuals voiced their perspective that the governance of the

BJP had a detrimental impact on social harmony throughout several states. In contrast, a limited number of respondents expressed the belief that under the governance of BJP, social harmony was effectively established in both states.

Based on the responses received in Assam, it is inferred that the Indian National Congress(INC) was perceived as the primary alternative to BJP in the state of Assam. The Congress party is widely recognised as the second largest political party and the primary opposition party in Assam, based on its organisational strength and representation in the Assembly and Lok Sabha. A minority of participants expressed the belief that alternative regional forces exist in Assam. In the context of Tripura, it is evident from the gathered replies that the Left parties were perceived as the primary alternative to the BJP. Due to their robust organisational capacity and notable representation in the Assembly, they are widely acknowledged as a formidable opposition group. According to certain respondents, the recently established TIPRA motha is perceived as a viable alternative to the BJP in Tripura, given its status as the primary opposition party in the Assembly. A minority of participants expressed the belief that the INC serves as a viable alternative in the state of Tripura.

In conclusion, the study highlights that the BJP's success in Assam and Tripura could be attributed to various factors such as the Modi wave, lack of viable alternatives, and a desire for change among voters. The party's association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, effective media utilization, and Hindutva-based politics also played a significant role. The support base in both states is diverse, with different demographic groups favoring the BJP. State leadership is crucial in Assam, while, its less important in Tripura. The BJP's ideology, campaign tactics, and candidate profiles influenced the voting patterns. The party's alliance approach, welfare initiatives, and religious considerations were instrumental in winning the elections. The INC and Left parties are considered the main opposition groups in Assam and Tripura respectively

Chapter VII: Conclusion

The concluding chapter incorporates the summary of the study. Major findings of the study are also incorporated, besides a few concluding remarks in this chapter.

The study entitled “Political Strategy of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in North East India: A Study of Assam and Tripura” is aimed at finding the factors responsible for the rise of BJP and its political strategies in the North East India. The study has been conducted to analyse the ideology, programmes, organisational structure and leadership role of the BJP in Assam and Tripura. The research work also covers the role of alliance policy and election strategy of the BJP in these two states. This chapter analyses the main policies and achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura. This chapter also makes a comparative study of political strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura.

The first chapter highlights that the political parties played a crucial role in building a robust democracy. Political parties also play the role in any parliamentary form of government, serving either as the governing party or the opposition party. After the formation of BJP led government at the centre in 2014, the BJP has emerged as a ruling party in the states like Assam and Tripura in the political sphere of Northeast. This has changed the political dynamics in these states. Growth of BJP in these states over the year has led to the emergence of new ideological support base in the form of Hindutva which has marked a significant shift in the society and politics of Assam and Tripura. This draws the attention of people in the Northeast region at large towards BJP. A significant number of populations seem to support BJP due to several factors, which were earlier absent in the politics of North East. Therefore it becomes crucial to study the political strategy of BJP in Assam and Tripura. The role of RSS and other Sangh Parivar organisations also played a crucial role in strengthening BJP in these two states.

In the year 2016, the BJP formed its first government in Assam. And, first BJP government was formed in Tripura in 2018. Prior to acquiring power in Assam, the party won seven seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. The issues like anti

incumbency against Congress government, misrule, corruption, increase of Muslim population were crucial in 2016 assembly elections. The BJP emerged victorious in the 2016 assembly elections following the formation of a rainbow coalition, which included regional parties such as the AGP and BPF, as well as many smaller political groups. In the assembly elections of 2021, BJP has focussed on the issue of development and Hindutva which they termed as the “*Savyatar ju*” (Clash of Civilisation) and also told about the protection of Culture. In the 2021 elections AGP and UPPL were the alliance partners.

In 2018 Tripura assembly elections, BJP has used the anti-incumbency against the Left regime, and also focused on peoples issues like road, connectivity, unemployment, and implementation of 7th pay commission for the state government employees. The massive outreach campaign by BJP and RSS and the work done by the RSS affiliated organisations also helped the BJP in gaining ground in Tripura. The alliance with IPFT and joining of BJP by the leaders across the political parties also helped the party in gaining power for the first time in Tripura. In the 2023 assembly elections, the BJP returned to power in Tripura for the second time. Issues like development and fulfilment of many of its electoral promises helped the BJP in coming to power. Further, division of opposition votes between Left-Congress alliance and newly formed Tipra Motha also helped the BJP in returning to power. Thus, it is observed that over the years BJP had emerged as a significant political player in the politics of Northeast India. Hence it is important to study the political strategy of BJP in Northeast India and particularly in Assam and Tripura.

The second chapter underlines that political parties assumed a significant role in the electoral politics of a well-functioning democracy. Hence, importance of the BJP's electoral politics in Assam is significant. The BJP gradually established a presence in the political landscape of Assam following the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections in 1991. From the inception of the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign, the BJP commenced establishing a significant presence in the Barak Valley region of Assam, which is predominantly inhabited by Bengali-speaking communities. Subsequently, the BJP made progress in other regions of the state, namely in the Brahmaputra

valley, which is predominantly inhabited by the Assamese community. Over the years, there has been a notable gain in both the vote share and seat share of the BJP. The continuous decline and disintegration of the dominant regional party, AGP, has resulted in a void in the opposition landscape within the state's political sphere. The BJP strategically enhanced its organisational structure. Additionally, other organisations affiliated with the sangh parivar have played a significant role in establishing a solid foundation of support for the BJP. Increase of Muslim population, resulting from illegal immigration from Bangladesh and the politics of appeasement by the Congress party, has played a significant role in bolstering the support base of BJP. Furthermore, the Congress party's 15-year rule had resulted in a significant sentiment of anti-incumbency, which has been advantageous for the BJP. During the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP emerged victorious in seven out of the 14 seats, indicating a significant establishment of the party's presence within the state.

Additionally, leaders from several political parties joined the BJP both prior to and subsequently after the Lok Sabha elections, thereby expanding the party's support base. The BJP emerged as a viable political option for the people of Assam, providing an alternative to the Indian National Congress. In order to address the issues of misrule, corruption, and misgovernance associated with the Congress party, majority of people of Assam cast their votes in favour of the alliance led by BJP. The BJP was able to strengthen its position by forming alliances with the AGP, the BPF, and Rabha and Tiwa organisations. These alliances played a significant role in consolidating the votes against Congress. Moreover, people across the communities cast their votes in favour of the BJP led rainbow alliance. The BJP achieved a significant milestone by forming its first government in the state of Assam, marking its first foray into the political landscape of North East India. The BJP government, in collaboration with its alliance partners, the AGP and the UPPL, secured a consecutive term in office following the 2021 assembly elections.

In the 2018 Tripura assembly elections, the BJP-IPFT alliance defeated the leftist regime which ruled Tripura continuously for 25 long years. BJP's victory was

shocking for many as they didn't have any member in the 2013 Assembly elections in Tripura. The 2023 Tripura assembly election was characterised by intense competition, marked by significant events that are expected to establish new patterns and influence the political landscape of state in the near future. Despite the significant financial and political influence of the BJP, the CPI (M) managed to give a formidable challenge and successfully transitioned a state characterised by ethnic volatility and extremism into a state marked by peace and stability. The verdict signifies the rise of Tipra Motha as a significant political entity, supplanting the IPFT which was established in 2021 through the merger of Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) and the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT). The outcome of election also shattered the aspirations of AITMC to establish itself as a significant political entity. The 2023 verdict in Tripura politics was responsible in strengthening the BJP as it forms its second consecutive government. Additionally, there is likely to be an enduring alliance between the CPI (M) and the Congress party, aimed at jointly opposing the government. Furthermore, Tipra Motha is expected to intensify its efforts in mobilising support and advocating for separate statehood for tribal communities. Lastly, the Trinamool Congress is making desperate attempts to gain political influence in the state, which is predominantly a Bengali-dominated regional party.

In the third chapter, it is important to understand the ideology of a political party in order to grasp its nature and structure. From the discussion it is found that integral humanism was the basic foundation of BJP which was propounded by Deen Dayal Upadhyaya. In the states of Assam and Tripura, the BJP's approach involves incorporation of the core Hindutva elements along with the distinct regional aspirations. In a way, they have combined the politics of identity and ethnicity with the Hindutva.

The BJP's pre-election programmes prioritized combating insurgency and terrorism in the region, health and infrastructure development, economic development, human resource development, sustainable development, urban/rural development, Guwahati development projects, agriculture/industrial development,

and dealing with infiltration from Bangladesh. They promised to implement the Assam Accord and deal with infiltration from Bangladesh. Good governance, social justice, judicial reforms, and creating sources of finance for the state were prioritized. The BJP's election manifesto, Atma Nirbhar Assam, made ten promises, including the launch of Mission Brahmaputra, empowering women through the Orunodoi scheme, strengthening Namghars and protecting Satras' rights, Bal Unnayan, correction and reconciliation of entries in the NRC, protection of political rights of people of Assam through a delimitation exercise, self-sufficiency in food production, job creation for the youth, land patta distribution, and making Assam the most entrepreneurial state in India.

The success of a political party is largely dependent on its strength of organisation and BJP has a strong organisational base which made it connected with the masses. The RSS and other Sangh Parivar organisations played a crucial role in providing organisational strength to the BJP.

In Assam, BJP had a strong leadership, where the Congress was lacking. Additionally, the performance and political tactics employed by Himanta Biswa Sharma, who held various ministerial positions like finance, health, education, and public works, proved advantageous for the BJP. These efforts effectively created polarisation based on religious identity within the realm of state politics. Furthermore, division of opposition votes across various parties further strengthened the BJP's prospects. Notably, the party benefited from a strong backing from women voters and those affiliated with the tea gardens, ultimately contributing to their electoral victory.

In the context of Tripura, leadership role played a crucial part in the political landscape. The BJP and RSS executed an extensive outreach programme, formed an alliance with the IPFT, and successfully consolidated tribal votes. Additionally, the BJP strategically focused on popular public issues, which significantly contributed to their acquisition of power. Furthermore, implementation of the 7th pay commission issue proved advantageous for the BJP, as it garnered public support,

particularly among the majority Bengali Hindu population. The leadership skills by leaders such as Sunil Deodhar, Biplab Kumar Deb, Ram Madhav, Himanta Biswa Sharma, and Manik Shaha were instrumental in securing victory for the BJP in both the consecutive elections of 2018 and 2023.

The fourth chapter highlights that in Assam BJP's alliance policy, which was regarded as rainbow coalition with regional parties like AGP and BPF and other Tiwas and Rabha organisations, helped the BJP creating acceptance among the various communities of Assam. They were successful in defeating Congress, which ruled Assam for 15 long years. The BJP has also worked on poaching of capable leaders from other political parties. Moreover, the party was successful in showcasing the development agenda to people. Through these techniques they have successfully submerged the CAA outrage in the region. In the 2019 election also BJP fought the parliamentary election along with its alliance partners and was able to win majority of seats. Whereas, the Congress won only three seats by contesting alone. In the 2021 assembly elections BJP led *Mitrajot*, which include AGP and UPPL were able to defeat the Congress led *Mahajot*. In this election due to inclusion of AIUDF in Congress led Mahajot, Hindu votes got consolidated in favour of BJP-led alliance. In the 2021 Assam legislative assembly elections BJP gained power due religious polarisation, positive perception of state and central governments among the people, and pro incumbency.

In Tripura legislative election in 2018, the BJP IPFT alliance was successful in defeating the Left party which ruled Tripura for 25 long years. In Tripura also, the BJP poached leaders from AITMC and Congress. The alliance with tribal party IPFT worked in favour of BJP. Further in 2023 state legislative elections, the BJP faced tough contest from Left party and somehow managed to return to power in the state. Because in this election, newly formed Tipra Motha gained majority tribal votes, which created a challenging situation for BJP in Tripura.

As part of its election strategy, BJP successfully utilised the issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh and the politics of identity in their favour since these issues remain the key concern of the politics of Assam. In the election campaign, the

BJP fully capitalised on anti-incumbency sentiments and the agenda of identity and development, which encouraged voters to support the preservation of their *Jati Mati Bheti*, which has appealed to the indigenous communities and the election, was termed as the *last battle of Saraighat*. The RSS developed a notable influence in Assam by a calculated utilisation of the renowned figures of Saint Sankardeva and Bhupen Hazarika, hence creating societal acceptability. It has focused on local Hindu cults and symbols like Kamakhya, Sankardeva, Sattria tradition. As a part of its electoral strategy, the BJP engaged in intensive media campaigning, effectively garnering the support of prominent local media houses, both electronic and print. The BJP has effectively assimilated regional leaders, hence boosting the party's political fortunes. Additionally, creating beneficiaries through populist, welfare policies and programmes have also helped the party.

In Tripura, the BJP has used various tactics as part of its election strategy. These include capitalising on anti-incumbency sentiments against the left government, forming an alliance with the IPFT, pursuing a Hindutva political agenda by appropriating the tribal king and constructing an alternative narrative, implementing the recommendations of 7th pay commission, and extensive groundwork by the RSS. Additionally, the BJP has attracted leaders from other political parties, organised widespread outreach programmes through the deployment of 'Vistaraks' and 'Panna pramukhs' at the booth levels, and intensified the election campaign through large-scale rallies featuring the Prime Minister and other prominent party leaders.

In the fifth chapter it is observed that the BJP-led state governments in Assam and Tripura had adopted numerous policies, programmes and initiatives for the betterment of people of both the states. There are both positive and negative aspects of performance of the BJP led governments in Assam and Tripura. Policies like anti corruption drive especially against the APSC scam and against corruption in other places by the government are largely appreciated by the people and regarded as a positive initiative. In the case of recruitment under APSC, that had been based on

merit and so far there is no allegation of corruption has been proven against the government.

The BJP governments population control policy and eviction drive have caused controversy, with the government being criticized for not properly planning and rehabilitating indigenous people living in certain areas. Some government schools have also been evicted, raising questions about the ability of government departments. Additionally, evictions in revenue villages due to government officials' mistakes, which were mistakenly assumed as reserved forests, have raised concerns about the credibility of government officials. This carelessness has caused hardship for thousands of people and made some of them homeless. Despite this, eviction of illegal encroachers from the Sattras is largely appreciated by the people.

The government's decision to provide free education to girls upto university level has been praised by the public. But the organising of events like the "Namami Brahmaputra" has been criticized as cultural imposition by the BJP regime. The government's policies on health and education are seen as positive. However, the state governments' inability to oppose the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and statements from BJP leaders have created dissatisfaction and distrust among the people. There is a fear of marginalization among indigenous people due to implementation of the CAA. The NRC upgradation on the state government's role is minimal, but allegations of partiality on religious grounds had been made against the government. The government's initiatives on the Act East policy, industrialization, and skill development programs are seen as positive for the region's development. The initiatives undertaken by the BJP government in the areas of agriculture, transportation infrastructure, social security, and combating social evils are acknowledged as constructive measures.

The *Orunodoy* scheme in Assam is a significant move for poverty alleviation in the state. Further, financial assistance to the families in need government of Assam's creation of Assam Arogya Nidhi (AAN) is helpful for the people. Assam Right to Public Service Portal was created under World Bank to facilitate citizens with various e services. Chief Ministers Covid19 widow support scheme has been

helpful to the widows who lost their husbands due to Covid19 as it ensured their socio-economic security. Along with that, Chief Ministers 'shishu seva' scheme is a positive move to provide financial assistance to children who lost their parents in Covid19. Relief to microfinance loanees which was a major promise by the BJP during 2021 elections had generated huge controversies as the loanees were happy with the loan waving scheme. Whereas, others were critical of such move. After formation of the BJP government in Assam for the second term, the government's endeavour to initiate a campaign against illicit drug trafficking commonly referred to as the "war on drugs," had garnered significant public backing. Nevertheless, the encounters linked to this campaign were subject to significant criticism due to allegations of numerous fabricated incidents. However, the government faced criticisms for encouraging opening up of more liquor shops in the state for revenue generation.

As part of government's welfare activities, the present governments move to setting up more Adarsh Vidyalayas received applause from people. Another significant step taken by the state government is that it had been trying to fulfil the electoral promise to fill up one lakh jobs, which has been partially successful. Further, this BJP government tried to bring significant reforms in land revenue services by launching 'Mission Basundhara 2.0' to solve various land issues. The actions taken by the Government of Assam in response to child marriage have generated considerable controversy. Although the decision has garnered acclaim, implementation of the initiative has resulted in instances of harassment experienced by individuals.

Government's initiative to teach mathematics and science in English in vernacular (assamese) medium schools has been criticised by several organisations in the state. In the issue of delimitation of the Assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies, many opposition parties and other organisations had criticised the BJP government that they had influenced election commission of India in their favour. However, the BJP government claimed that this action had been done to protect the land, identity and culture of the indigenous people.

In Tripura after forming government in 2018, the BJP implemented 7th pay commission for the state government employees, as it was one of the major issues during the election. In education sector, they have adopted the NCERT curriculum at the state level and offered the CM B.Ed Anuprerana Yojana. Regarding health and infrastructure, the state government has initiated many developmental projects. In communication as well this government has initiated many new national highway projects with the aid of central government and upgradation of Tripura Airport also started. Under the social welfare activities of government, it has increased the monthly pension of widows, constructed the PM Awas Yojana houses, provided health insurance under Ayushman Bharat. Further, state government implemented the 33% reservation of seats for women in government sector jobs. Apart from this, the government introduced many indigenous languages (Kokborok, Chakma and Halam Kuki) at school level as a reflection of their commitment towards protection of identity of local people. During their tenure, first National Forensic University also has been established. They have worked for the development of tribals, farmers and tea garden labourers in various aspects.

However, opposition parties criticised the government on issues of attack on religious minorities and attack of opposition party workers. There were allegations by opposition parties that the BJP attacked the offices of opposition peoples including physical attack on former chief minister Manik Sarkar and killed journalists and also imposed press censorship, which created controversies and huge debate on the role of BJP government in the state. Apart from that due to its internal conflicts, the BJP has replaced the Chief Minister of state one year ahead of the assembly election. Further, the opposition parties raised questions on the developmental activities carried out by the government that it had not made any remarkable change and there are allegations that infrastructure works had been delayed. Nonetheless imposition of dress code for the bureaucrats has been termed as a reflection of feudalistic mindset by opposition parties. Further, there are allegations from opposition that the BJP misused government machinery and fund from government machinery for election campaign. Another major allegation is that old entrepreneurs and industries had to shut their business and leave the state due to the

alleged mafia extortion within the state. According to opposition parties, no steps have been taken for the development of industrial sector in Tripura. Another serious allegation against the BJP government in Tripura is misrule. Government also faced criticism from opposition parties regarding the insufficient funding to the autonomous district council. Further, allegations have been made by opposition that government had not released sufficient funds for healthcare, education and infrastructure development. Furthermore, the government failed to combat drug addiction and ensure women safety in the state for which it faced a lot of criticism.

The sixth chapter underlines the perception of people regarding the political strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura and to arrive at a comparative understanding of the same. The study has shown that there were similarities in many areas in terms of political strategies in Assam and Tripura is concerned.

From the discussion it has been highlighted that, the Modi wave along with weak alternatives and vote for change happened to be the common factor for the rise of BJP in North East India. Further, respondents from both the states agreed that issues like development and illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue also remained influential to some extent. It has been noted that respondents from both states held the opinion that the Modi wave, the lack of viable alternatives, and the desire for change were the most important factors for the success of BJP in Assam and Tripura in various elections, along with the issue of development and illegal Bangladeshi infiltration. Besides, Assam and Tripura share some characteristics with other North Eastern states that had also contributed to the growth and victory of the BJP in these states.

The study indicates that the Hindutva-based politics continued to be important after the BJP won elections in Assam and Tripura. Prior to the BJP gaining power, the Hindutva politics was not very significant in North East politics. The BJP's use of media was another tactic that was successful in both states. People in both states are lured to the BJP by the intensive print and electronic media blitz. The targeting of religious minorities and freebies, in addition to these two key elements, also had a significant impact the affiliation with the RSS played a crucial role in the

effective organisation of the BJP. The RSS, together with its associated organisations, possesses a robust cadre base and a notable presence in the regions of Assam and Tripura. Consequently, this affiliation is advantageous for the BJP. One further advantage of the BJP robust organisation is in its well-developed organisational framework, which places significant emphasis on the top-down approach, extending from higher-level committees to grassroots booth committees, so ensuring an active and pervasive organisational presence. Furthermore, it has been observed that leadership had also assumed a crucial role. Additionally, widespread endorsement of the BJP by the general public serves as a beneficial factor for its overall structure and functioning.

Support base of the BJP in Assam and Tripura is characterised by the prominence of certain demographic groups. In Assam, the BJP garners significant support among upper caste Hindus, Tea Tribes (Tea garden workers), and Hindu Bengalis, as seen by the study responses. In the state of Tripura, the BJP garners significant support mostly from the Hindu Bengali population. In addition, presence of women, Hindu tribals, and state government employees in Assam continued to have considerable importance as a support base of the BJP. In the context of Tripura, active participation of tribal communities, state government officials, and women has been essential.

After conducting an analysis of the responses, it is observed that in both Assam and Tripura, individuals belonging to the upper caste and general category exerted considerable influence at the state level. In both states, the leadership was comprised of individuals from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) as well as the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) communities. Based on the perspective of participants, significance of leadership in the state of Assam is deemed crucial for the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party, whereas the role of state leadership in Tripura is perceived to be less influential in the party's triumph. Based on the available data, it is observed that in both Assam and Tripura, determining factor influencing the voting behaviour in favour of the BJP was an ideological stance and campaign strategy employed by the party. In addition to these considerations,

utilisation of slogans throughout the election campaign, together with the selection of candidates affiliated with the BJP, significantly influenced the outcomes in both states.

The study reveals that in Assam, majority of the respondents expressed a belief that the profile of candidates significantly influences the election outcomes. Conversely, in Tripura, profile of candidates is perceived to have less significance. In the state of Tripura, a significant portion of the respondents showed a lack of awareness on the roles and responsibilities of candidates. Based on empirical observations, it is evident that the BJP, being a relatively recent entrant into the political landscape of North East India, has strategically formed alliances with regional or local political parties. This astute approach has proven instrumental in facilitating the BJP's acquisition of political power in both Assam and Tripura. Majority of respondents in both Assam and Tripura expressed a belief that the alliance policy had provided partial assistance to the BJP in achieving victory. However, it was observed that a significant proportion of respondents in Assam held a view that the alliance policy had greatly benefited the BJP. In contrast, just a minority of respondents in Tripura concurred with this perspective.

Based on the collected responses, it can be inferred that a significant proportion of the participants in Assam expressed a belief that the policies implemented by the BJP government, such as welfare initiatives and religious considerations, played a crucial role in garnering electoral support. In contrast, majority of respondents in Tripura expressed that the BJP's ability to secure votes was contingent upon economic development and welfare programmes. The state of Assam placed great importance on economic development and the preservation of law and order, whereas in Tripura, religion and the maintenance of law and order were also deemed vital. It is argued that a significant proportion of respondents in both Assam and Tripura expressed a belief that the role of BJP election manifesto was of great importance or moderate significance. Hence, it has been comprehended that the election manifesto of BJP has played a significant influence in the states of Assam and Tripura.

Based on the observations made in Assam and Tripura, it is concluded that the campaign strategy by the BJP successfully garnered a significant number of votes. Therefore, it is argued that the campaign method held significant importance. A considerable proportion of the respondents likewise held a perspective that it fulfilled a moderate role. Regarding the accomplishments of BJP government in Assam and Tripura, it is observed that the primary achievements revolved around development and employment generation, as indicated by the respondents view. Based on the received feedback, in addition to the aforementioned two, the effective management of governmental affairs, maintenance of societal stability, and efforts towards reducing poverty were also identified as noteworthy accomplishments.

Based on the collected data, it is observed that the influence of money power had a significant role in the electoral success of BJP in both Assam and Tripura. While some other respondents expressed an opinion that the influence of money power was partially responsible for the success of BJP in Assam and Tripura. It is acknowledged that there were other significant elements at play. The responses indicate that the media played a significant and positive impact in facilitating the win of BJP in the states of Assam and Tripura. During the election time, certain media houses in Assam exhibited a pro-BJP stance. While a subset of the respondents held a perspective that the media involvement was moderate. The preceding discourse reveals that under the governance of BJP, there existed a degree of social harmony in both Assam and Tripura. A greater proportion of participants indicated that a situation of partial social peace existed in the states governed by the BJP. Furthermore, several individuals voiced their perspective that the governance of the BJP had a detrimental impact on social harmony throughout several states. In contrast, a limited number of respondents expressed the belief that under the governance of the BJP, social harmony was effectively established in both states.

Based on the study in Assam, it can be inferred that the Indian National Congress is perceived as the primary alternative to BJP. The Congress party is widely recognised as the second largest political party and the primary opposition party in Assam, based on its organisational strength and representation in the

Assembly and Lok Sabha. A minority of participants expressed the belief that alternative regional forces existed in Assam. In the context of Tripura, it is evident from the gathered data that the Left parties were perceived as the primary alternative to BJP in the state. Due to their robust organisational capacity and notable representation in the Assembly, they are widely acknowledged as a formidable opposition group. According to certain respondents, the recently established TIPRA motha is perceived as a viable alternative to the BJP in Tripura, given its status as the primary opposition party in the Assembly. A minority of participants expressed the belief that the INC served as a viable alternative in the state of Tripura.

In conclusion, the study highlights that the BJP's success in Assam and Tripura could be attributed to various factors such as the Modi wave, lack of viable alternatives, and a desire for change among voters. The party's association with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, effective media utilization, and Hindutva-based politics also played a significant role. The support base in both states is diverse, with different demographic groups favoring the BJP. While state leadership played crucial role in Assam, but its less important in Tripura. The BJP's ideology, campaign tactics, and candidate profiles influenced voting patterns. The party's alliance approach, welfare initiatives, and religious considerations were instrumental in winning elections. The INC and Left parties are the main opposition groups in Assam and Tripura respectively.

Findings of the Study

- I. The Modi wave anti-incumbency, vote for change, weak alternatives, development, illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue, growth of Muslim population, role of RSS, leaders from several other political parties joining the BJP, alliance with regional political parties all these factors were instrumental in the rise and growth of BJP in North-East India.
- II. In Assam and Tripura, BJP has incorporated the core Hindutva ideology and regional aspirations. The party had combined the politics of identity and ethnicity with Hindutva. The BJP has promised for the overall development of Assam and Tripura. In Assam, BJP made a promise that it would make

Assam free from illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. In Tripura, it had promised to protect the rights of tribals and also promised people to implement the 7th pay commission for all state government employees, which helped them gain public support. The RSS is the centre at the organisational level, which helped the BJP. Massive outreach by RSS and its affiliated organizations also helped the BJP. Its micro-management to booth level has been very effective at the organizational level. The proactive and decisive role of central leadership also played a crucial role. In the context of Assam role of state leadership was very significant. In Tripura leadership role was average.

- III. In Assam in the 2016 assembly elections, the alliance policy played a vital role. Its alliance with AGP, BPF, Tiwa, and Rabha groups increased its acceptance among indigenous and tribal people in Assam. Moreover, its alliance with AGP gave it a secular outlook. In the 2021 election alliance with AGP and UPPL helped BJP to fight against *Mahajot*. Tripura's alliance with IPFT greatly helped BJP in the 2018 election. The BJP has also worked on poaching capable leaders from other political parties and was successful in showing a development agenda. Further, religious polarisation also helped the BJP in the consolidation of Hindu votes in Assam. Also, it has successfully used the politics of identity in Assam. The BJP was engaged in an intensive media campaign. Further, it also effectively played the strategy of assimilation of regional leaders to grow its support base. Additionally, creating beneficiaries through welfare policies also helped the BJP. In Tripura, the BJP's strategy of capitalising on the anti-incumbency of the Leftist government, political agenda of the Hindutva, implementation of the 7th pay commission, and massive groundwork by the BJP greatly helped the party. In addition, the joining of leaders from other political parties to work at the booth level and intensifying the election campaign also helped the BJP.
- IV. In Assam, anti-corruption drive and free and fair recruitment are considered as positive steps. Further, free education to girl child up to university level has been praised by people and the policies of health and education are termed as positive by people. However, the state government was criticized on the population control policy and eviction drive. Along with that state

government's decision to implement CAA was largely criticised. The BJP government initiatives in agriculture, social security, and combating social evils are acknowledged as constructive measures. Relief to microfinance loanees created controversies. Further government's action against illicit drug trafficking was commendable but fake encounters were criticised by people. The government promised to fill up one lakh jobs and solve land issues through mission Basundhara was supported by the people. Further government action against child marriage generated mixed responses. Some supported the policy and the way it was implemented created harassment for many and hence faced criticism. Along with that government's decision to teach maths and science in English medium in vernacular medium faced criticism. Further, regarding the issue of delimitation of assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies, many opposition parties and other organisations criticised the BJP government that they had influenced the election commission in its favour.

The BJP government in Tripura, formed in 2018, had implemented several developmental projects, such as the 7th pay commission for state government employees, adoption of the NCERT curriculum, and upgradation of the Tripura Airport. They have also initiated national highway projects and social welfare initiatives, such as increased widow pensions and health insurance. The government has also introduced indigenous languages and established the first National Forensic University. However, opposition parties have criticized the government for attacks on religious minorities, attacks on opposition workers, and press censorship. Apart from that, due its internal conflicts, the BJP has replaced Chief Minister of the state one year ahead of the assembly election. Opposition parties have also accused the government of misrule, insufficient funding for autonomous district councils, and failure to combat drug addiction and ensure women's safety.

- V. The political strategies of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam and Tripura, focusing on the Modi wave, weak alternatives, and the desire for change. The study finds similarities in the strategies in both states, with Hindutva-based politics, media use, targeting religious minorities, and affiliation with the RSS

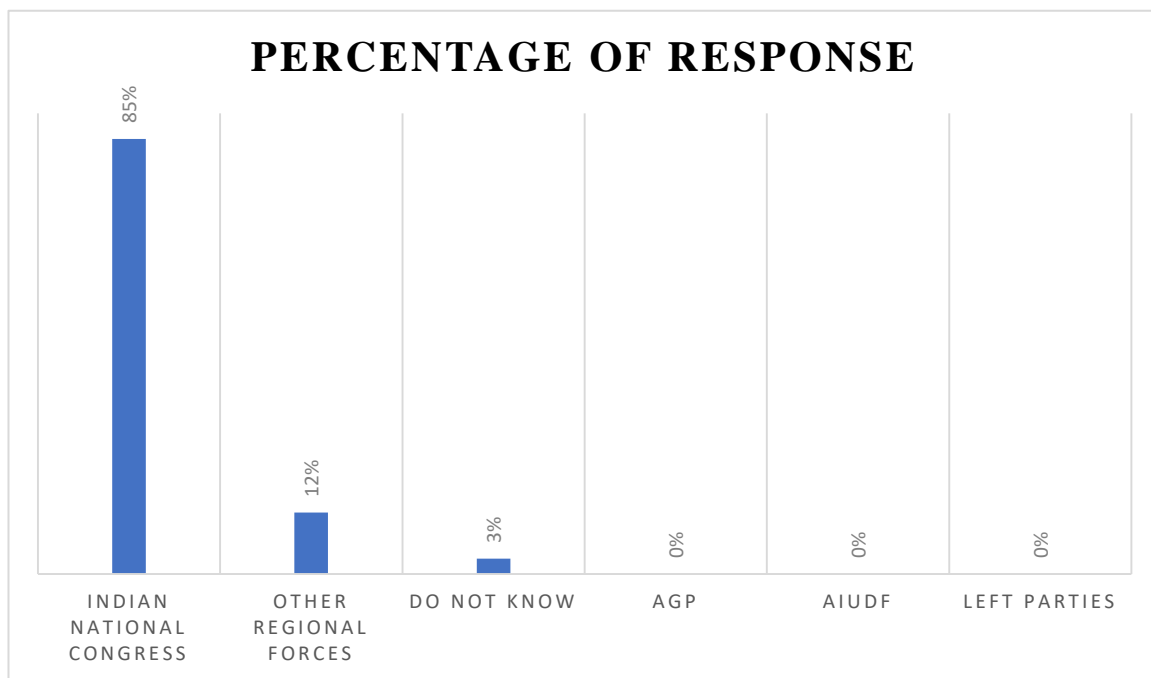
playing significant roles. The BJP's well-developed organizational framework, top-down approach, leadership, and widespread public endorsement contributed to its success.

Support base of the BJP in Assam and Tripura is characterized by the prominence of certain demographic groups, such as Upper caste Hindus, Tea Tribes, and Hindu Bengalis in Assam. However, in Tripura the BJP gained significant support from the Hindu Bengali population. The presence of women, Hindu tribals, and state government employees is also crucial. In both states, upper caste and general category individuals exert considerable influence at the state level, with leadership comprising individuals from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) communities. The determining factor influencing voting behavior in favor of the BJP is the ideological stance and campaign strategy employed by the party, along with the use of slogans and the selection of candidates affiliated with the BJP. The discourse reveals that in Assam, the profile of an election candidate significantly influenced election outcomes, while in Tripura, the profile of candidates is perceived to have less significance. The BJP, a relatively recent entrant into the political landscape of North East India, has strategically formed alliances with regional or local political parties, which has been instrumental in facilitating the BJP's acquisition of political power in both states. In Assam, welfare initiatives and religious considerations played a crucial role in garnering electoral support, while in Tripura, economic development and welfare programs were deemed vital. The BJP election manifesto played a significant influence in both states. The campaign strategy by the BJP successfully garnered a significant number of votes, with a moderate role played by the media. The Primary achievements of the BJP government in Assam and Tripura revolve around development, employment generation, effective management of governmental affairs, maintenance of societal stability, and efforts towards reducing poverty. The influence of money power had a significant role in the electoral success of BJP in both states. In Assam, the Indian National Congress (INC) is perceived as the primary alternative to the BJP, whereas the Left parties being

the primary opposition group in Tripura. The newly established TIPRA motha is perceived as a viable alternative to the BJP in Tripura.

The discussion in this study shows how BJP timely utilised various factors, which helped the party not only gain power but to flourish in every nook and corner of this region in a very short period of time. It used all the political strategies like exploiting regional sentiments, establishing a sense of connectedness with the people, identifying the issues on which people can be mobilized, picking up the right battles, comparing present problems with historical events, creating a new narrative of us versus them, fear of losing identity and religion, using lucrative tactics to invite strong candidates or sitting representatives from others parties. Lastly, alliance with regional parties to show solidarity with regionalism broadly helped the BJP in getting power in a very calculated and strategic manner in North-East India, especially in Assam and Tripura. However, in the second phase, it could attract people by offering welfare schemes or by creating beneficiaries and jobs. Ceremonial distribution of appointments created a new dimension to the entire scenario and it has been showcased so that the duty of government looked like a gift to people. To sum up, the BJP got political power in Assam and Tripura using several strategies that look like are in favour of indigenous people or pro-poor but if one tries to analyse the practical scenario it can be understood that most of BJP's policies created division on the lines of religion and it also reflects its agenda of expansionism and it tries to impose uniformity or saffronise in the name of Hindutva.

Figure 6.42: Political party that is considered the main Alternative of BJP in Assam



Source: Data collected from the field study

Regarding the question of main alternative or opposition party of the BJP in Assam, it is important to note that 85% of the total respondents were of the view that it was the Indian National Congress (INC) which considered the main alternative. However other 12 % respondents believe that it was other regional forces of the state. Remaining three percent stated that they did not know have any idea regarding this. But for AGP it is 0%.

Appendices

Questionnaire

POLITICAL STRATEGY OF THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY (BJP) IN NORTH-EAST INDIA: A STUDY OF ASSAM AND TRIPURA

Name:

Occupation:

Gender:

Age:

Caste/Community:

Edu. Qualifications:

Address/ Mobile no:

1. Which of the factors are largely responsible for the success of BJP in Assam?
 - a) Modi Wave,
 - b) Weak Alternatives,
 - c) Development
 - d) Increase of Muslim population,
 - e) Illegal Bangladeshi Infiltration issue,
 - f) Vote for change
 - g) Do not know

2. Which of the factors are largely responsible for the success of BJP in Tripura?
 - a) Modi Wave,
 - b) Weak Alternatives,
 - c) Development
 - d) Illegal Bangladeshi Infiltration issue,
 - e) Law and Order

- f) Vote for change
- g) Do not know

3. What kind of political strategies BJP adopted in Assam?

- a) Hindutva based strategy
- b) Targeting the religious minorities
- c) Freebies,
- d) Media Campaign
- e) All of the above

4. What kind of political strategies BJP adopted in Tripura?

- a) Hindutva based strategy
- b) Targeting the religious minorities
- c) Freebies,
- d) Media Campaign
- e) All of the above
- f)

5. Why BJP organisation is more effective than other Political party organisations?

- a) RSS background,
- b) Organisational structure,
- c) Leadership
- d) Popular support
- e) All of the above

6. What is the main support base of BJP in Assam?

- a) Upper Caste Hindus
- b) Tea Tribes(Tea Garden Workers)
- c) Hindu Bengalis
- d) Hindu Tribals
- e) Women Voters

f) State govt employees

7. What is the main support base of BJP in Tripura?

- a) Hindu Bengalis
- b) Tribals
- c) State govt employees
- d) Women Voters.

8. What sort of state leadership plays in BJP's success in Assam and Tripura?

- a. Upper Caste,
- b. OBC
- c. SC/ST,
- d. General

9. What sort of role that state leadership played in BJP's success in Assam and Tripura?

- a. Very important,
- b. Important
- c. Not at all,
- d. Do not know

10. Why people are voting for BJP in Assam and Tripura?

- a) Ideology,
- b) Candidate,
- c) Slogan,
- d) Campaign Methods

11. Whether profile of candidate is important in contesting election?

- a. Yes,
- b. No
- c. Can't say,
- d. Do not know

12. To what extent alliance policy help BJP in Assam and Tripura?
- Fully,
 - Partially
 - Minimum,
 - Do not know
13. To what extent the alliance policy helped BJP in its victory in Assam and Tripura?
- Large extent,
 - Average,
 - Minimum,
 - Do not know
14. What policies of the BJP govt played main role in attracting votes in Assam and Tripura?
- Eco Development,
 - Welfare policy,
 - Religion,
 - Law and Order
15. What is the role of election manifesto of BJP in Assam and Tripura?
- Very Crucial,
 - Average
 - Minimum,
 - Do not know
16. To what extent the campaign method of BJP was able to attract votes in Assam and Tripura?
- Large extent,
 - Average,

- c. Minimum,
- d. Do not know

17. What is the main achievement of BJP govt in Assam and Tripura?

- a) Law and Order,
- b) Development
- c) Poverty Alleviation
- d) Job creation
- e) Efficient administration.

18. To what extent Money power played a crucial role in the victory of BJP in Assam and Tripura?

- a. Large extent,
- b. Average
- c. Minimum,
- d. Do not know

19. What sort of role that the Media played in the victory of BJP in Assam and Tripura?

- a. Favourable,
- b. Unfavourable
- c. Average,
- d. Do not know

20. To what extent Social Harmony prevails in the BJP rule in Assam and Tripura?

- a. Fully,
- b. Partially
- c. Not at all,
- d. Do not know

21. Which Political Party (Other than BJP) was considered the main Alternative in Assam?

- a. Indian National Congress,
- b. AGP,
- c. AIUDF,
- d. Left parties
- e. Other Regional forces,
- f. Do not know.

22. Which Political Party (Other than BJP) was considered the main Alternative in Tripura?

- a. Left parties,
- b. Indian National Congress,
- c. IPFT,
- d. TIPRA Motha,
- e. AITMC,
- f. Do not know.

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North-East India: A study of Assam and Tripura

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Declaration

I Mr. Dipendra Kumar Khanal , hereby declare that the information furnished above is true to best of my knowledge and belief.

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Introduction

A political party is a group of persons organized to acquire and exercise political power. It originated in its modern form in Europe and the United States in the 19th century. For the functioning of democratic governments, political parties are necessary. It is regarded as the lifeline of democracy. In Maurice Duverger's view, "a party is not a community but a collection of communities, a union of small groups dispersed throughout the country (branches, caucuses, local associations) and linked by coordinating institutions" According to Burke, "Party is a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed." The political party plays a crucial role in democracy.

While analysing the political parties of Europe, Maurice Duverger has categorized them into two, having direct or indirect structures. The direct structure consists of those members who pay dues and who carries cards and signed the application for membership and are duly admitted to the political party. In the political parties, which have a direct organizational structure, the members are supposed to attend party meetings regularly at the local level. The parties having an indirect structure do not have direct members. Still, it consists of the support of various groups and organizations like the trade unions or other mass fronts and associations that have joined the party en bloc. Duverger states that, in the direct political party, the members themselves formed the party organisation without the support of other social groups and organisations. Parties that have an indirect structure can be called federal parties, as they are created by the joining together of like-minded groups and organisations for a common objective. Here, Duverger has given extensive ideas about various structures of political parties.

The BJP on its own emerged victorious in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and formed the Government at the Centre. And it won half (seven out of fourteen) of the Lok Sabha seats in Assam in the 2014 elections. This sort of success of the BJP had opened up all the possibilities to establish its roots in Assam thereafter. Subsequently, in the 2016 Assam Legislative Assembly elections, the BJP emerged as a vibrant political party by acquiring 60 seats alone and 86 seats (out of 126 seats) along with its coalition partners like the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the

Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and ended the 15 years rule of Indian National Congress (INC). This victory is the largest for BJP as it never won more than 10 seats in any of the previous assembly elections of Assam. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP has further increased its seat tally in Assam from seven in 2014 to nine seats. Incidentally the BJP has contested in 10 seats out of 14 in the state, whereas the remaining four seats were contested by its allies the AGP and the BPF. In the 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly elections, the BJP led alliance MITRAJOT which includes its alliance partners AGP and United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) won 75 seats and again formed the govt for second term by defeating INC led alliance MAHAJOT.

Similarly in the Tripura Assembly elections of 2018 the BJP-IPFT (Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura) alliance was able to secure 44 (36+8) seats out of the total 60 seats and defeated the CPI(M) led Left front which was ruling the state of Tripura for the last 25 years. In the 2013 assembly elections, the BJP could not win a single seat in the Tripura Assembly. The BJP has categorically replaced the major opposition, that is INC and AITMC (All India Trinamool Congress) at first and then it successfully overthrown the Left regime from the power. The BJP won 36 seats, surpassing the magic number (30) to form the government on its own, in the assembly elections 2018, besides winning both seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. In the 2023 Tripura assembly elections, the BJP-IPFT alliance won 32 seats and formed the government for the second term by defeating Left- Congress alliance and Tipra Motha. This is a unique case because BJP never had any political presence there in the earlier periods. These two victories have set a landmark in the politics of North East India. Ofcourse the party has also secured state governments in a few other states in the region in recent times. Given the diverse setting in North-East India, it becomes important to study the factors responsible for the rise of an ideological party like the BJP in the two states of Assam and Tripura.

Review of Literature

Relevant literatures from the books and articles have been collected as part of the review of literature. The review of literature is divided into two parts. The first part reviewed the related books and the second part reviewed some important articles. The review of literature has been given in chronological order. They are as follows:

Partha S. Ghosh(1991) in his book, *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre*, has traced the rise and growth of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism from the initial *days* of the Indian renaissance of the late 19th century to the present. The author discusses the growth of Hindu nationalism in India during a period of progressive competition among social forces against India becoming a Hindu Rashtra, aiming to critically analyze the future prospects of political Hinduism, particularly the BJP.

Kingshuk Nag (2014) in his book, *The Saffron Tide: the Rise of the BJP*, has stated that after the Congress in the 1984 parliamentary elections, Bharatiya Janata Party is the only other party which came into power with such massive mandate with a full majority in the Lok Sabha in the 2014 general elections. In 1980, Janata party collapsed, leading to Jana Sangh-led BJP. With a strong presence in India and worldwide, the BJP has grown from a small political force to a powerful national party.

Paul Wallace (2015) in his book, *India's 2014 Elections: A Modi-led BJP Sweep*, has described how a Modi led strong majority party is governing India. The 16th Lok Sabha election marked a peaceful power transfer, indicating political maturity. The Bharatiya Janata Party's majority victory over the Congress-led coalition government was a historic event, and this book helps understand the 2014 elections.

Manish Anand (2015) in his book, *The Enabler Narendra Modi: Breaking Stereotypes*, highlights Modi's rise as India's second RSS pracharak(bachelor preacher) Prime Minister, following Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Vajpayee's tenure in India solidified the BJP as a reliable political alternative, while Modi's rule weakened the Congress party and led to regional parties accommodating the BJP to maintain power.

Rajat Sethi & Shubhrastha (2017) in their book, *The Last battle of Saraighat: The Story of the BJP's Rise in the North-east*, written about the BJP's landslide victory in the 2016 Assam legislative assembly elections, comparing it to the 1671 victory of the Ahom army. The title refers to the Saraighat battle, where Assamese soldiers defeated the Mughals and Ahom army. The 2016 Assam election was a turning point in political history, with the BJP transforming Assam as a local vs.

illicit Bangladeshi Muslim and a last chance to save the state from Bangladeshis. This book, written by insiders, provides insight into the 2016 election phenomenon.

V. Bijukumar (2019) in his book (edited), *Parties and Electoral Politics in North East India: Contention of Ethnoregionalism and Hindu Nationalism*, has described the political landscape in Northeast India, focusing on the trajectory from ethno regionalism to Hindu nationalism. Northeast India's political landscape is characterized by Christianity and diverse ethnic communities, with the Congress party playing a significant role. However, the rise of Hindu nationalism post-2014 has reduced its influence. These articles offer valuable insights into the region's emerging politics.

Akhil Ranjan Dutta (2021) in his book, *Hindutva Regime in Assam: Saffron in the Rainbow* has stated that the Bharatiya Janata Party's strategy of appropriating cultural resources in Assam while pursuing the Hindutva agenda.

H. Srikanth (1999) in his article, "Communalising Assam: AGP's Loss Is BJP's Gain," has stated that in last two decades the politics of regional identity has kept the politics of Hindutva at distance in Assam. The article explores the BJP's growth in Assam and the decline of AGP, focusing on electoral strategies, electoral victories, and the BJP's unique development agenda in Assam and India.

Sutapa Lahiri (2005) in her article, "Jana Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party: A Comparative Assessment of their Philosophy and Strategy and Their Proximity with the Other Members of the Sangh Parivar," has analysed the close relationship between BJP and Jana Sangh. The paper explores the evolution of the Jana Sangh and BJP parties, their ideological affinities, organizational patterns, electoral mobilization strategies, and the results from previous works. It provides a partial understanding of the BJP's ideology and organizational setup, based on previous research.

Sandhya Goswami (2004) in her article "Mixed Verdict," has highlighted that though the 2004 Lok Sabha elections results were victorious for the Congress, it also marked the revival of the AGP. The Congress, BJP, and AGP faced off in a triangular contest in Assam, with the linguistic Hindu minority supporting the BJP and indigenous people backing the AGP. The BJP's success was not due to

organizational strength but reflects regionalism. The Congress government must address deficiencies and make amendments to recover its eroded social base.

Nani Gopal Mahanta's (2014) article "Lok Sabha Election in Assam, Shifting of Traditional Vote Bases to BJP," highlighted the significant shift in electoral politics of Assam after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, with the BJP's emergence as the strongest party. The BJP gained support from various groups, but faced challenges in the Bengali-dominated Barak valley and religious polarization in Assam, potentially restoring Assamese-Bengali division through Hindutva politics.

Sandhya Goswami and Vikash Tripathi (2015) in their article, "Understanding the Political Shift in Assam: Withering Congress Dominance," highlighted that Assam, which was once considered a stronghold for Congress, has undergone significant political changes in recent years. The Bharatiya Janata Party's 2014 Lok Sabha and Bodoland Territorial Council victories highlight its growing influence in Assam, with implications for 2016 state assembly elections and the state's future.

Udayon Mishra (2016) in his article, "Victory for Identity Politics, Not Hindutva in Assam," has stated that the 2016 Assam assembly elections was a victory for identity politics, not Hindutva. The RSS's role in Assam's election suggests Hindutva ideology acceptance, but the election focused on protecting indigenous culture and identity amid rapid demographic change due to Bangladeshi infiltration. BJP's coalition with regional forces played a key role.

V. Bijukumar (2016) in his article "BJP's Mobilization and Consolidation in North East India," discussed that the BJP adopts a multiple mobilization strategies in the North Eastern States. The BJP does not put emphasis on the Hindutva agenda, rather it stresses on the issues of development, security, corruption, illegal migration, youth empowerment. Besides, the BJP stresses on cultural aspects also for mass mobilization strategy. The BJP projects itself as upholder of Srimanta Sankadev's legacy in Assam who was a medieval saint.

Malini Bhattacharjee (2016) in her article "Tracing the Emergence and Consolidation of Hindutva in Assam," discusses the origin of RSS and overall activities of Sangh Parivar in Assam. The RSS has been working in Assam since 1946. This article explores the rise of Hindu nationalism in Assam, a region with

diverse races, ethnicities, faiths, customs, and issues. It highlights how the ideology has overcome challenges to establish itself both institutionally and ideologically in the social and cultural domain of Assam, despite the region's complex demographics.

Ronojoy Sen (2016) in his Article “Assam Assembly Elections: BJP has momentum,” written before the result of the election, analyses that the BJP along with the alliance partners like Asom Gana Parishad and Bodo People’s Front was upper hand in the elections against the ruling Congress and All India United Democratic Front. Further, he explained that the announcement of Chief Ministerial candidate, Sarbananda Sonowal, a former AGP leader and belonging to Scheduled Tribes, factionalism in Congress Party and illegal migration issue raised by BJP and high turnout in voting percentage strengthened the BJP’s position in Assam.

Akhil Ranjan Dutta (2017) in his article, “BJP’s Electoral Victory in Assam, 2016: Co-opting the Khilonjiyas” has highlighted the interpretation of the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in the 2016 Assam assembly election is a subject of debate. The BJP's election campaign, despite its alliance with regional-ethnic partners and protection of indigenous rights, has been criticized for excluding indigenous people from the list, neglecting substantive rights like self-determination and resource rights.

Radhika Ramaseshan (2018) in her article “What the Tripura Victory signifies for the BJP,” has highlighted that the Bharatiya Janata Party is ecstatic by its victory in the 2018 Tripura assembly elections. The BJP may gain ground in Tripura and Assam, but struggle in other north-eastern states, as these states follow mainstream India politics. The BJP aims to build peaceful relations with regional parties and compromise, enabling central government incentives.

Vikash Tripathi, Tamasha Das and Sandhya Goswami (2018) in their article, “National Narrative and Regional Subtext: Understanding the Rise of BJP in Assam,” discusses that it's important to carefully analyze the growth and consolidation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam, especially considering their unprecedented mandate in the 2016 Assembly elections. The party's rise in the state can be attributed to a shift in its social base, which has moved away from the Congress in recent years due to various factors such as the decline of Congress dominance and political stagnation of the AGP.

In his article, V. Bijukumar (2019) discusses the political landscape in Tripura, where the left has suffered a defeat in general elections due to long-term social transformations and the exploitation of tribal discontent. The Bharatiya Janata Party has used ethnic sentiments and development rhetoric to gain support from the Bengali community and appropriate the tribal king, eroding the Communist Party of India's base. Despite tensions between tribal communities and the BJP over the CAB issue, the left failed to capitalize on the political environment and regain its position.

Shubhrajeev Konwer (2019) in his article, "BJP and Coalition Politics: Strategic Alliances in the States of Northeast," has stated that the BJP's increasing influence in Northeast India has been a subject of study and analysis. The BJP has grown significantly in Northeast India, despite facing regional opposition. Factors include anti-incumbency, NEDA, assembly floor management, and RSS growth. The BJP's growth has brought challenges and contradictions, requiring further attention.

Tarun Gogoi (2019) in his article, "North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) and Political Change in Northeast India," highlighted that The BJP's dominance in Indian politics has been marked by a series of impressive victories, including their landslide success in the 2019 general election and several state assembly elections since 2014. The BJP's rise to power in Northeast India is largely attributed to the formation of the North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA), which has been used for territorial expansion and political consolidation.

Suhas Palshikar, Manjesh Rana, Dhruba Pratim Sharma and Vikas Tripathi (2021) in their article, "Hindu consolidation pays off for BJP" have highlighted that the recent Assembly election in Assam saw the BJP retain the State, thus consolidating its eastern footprint. The NDA's success in consolidating Hindu votes in a diverse state is attributed to its ability to maintain high voter satisfaction with both Central and State governments. The party's alliance with the AIUDF may have helped retain Hindu voters and reduce Assamese Muslim voters. This consolidation further exacerbated religious polarization in the state.

Vikash Tripathi and Dhruba Pratim Sharma (2021) in their article, "After Gogoi Congress and Its Challenges in Assam," highlighted that the passing away of senior Congress leader and former chief minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi, has left the Congress party facing three formidable challenges ahead of the assembly elections in

April 2021. The Congress faces challenges in resolving leadership crises, revamping organizational structures, forming social coalitions, and establishing a new ideological middle ground to challenge the Bharatiya Janata Party's dominance in the state, primarily due to religious barriers.

Vikash Tripathi and Dhruva Pratim Sharma (2022) in their article, "Religious Polarisation Outweighs Ethnic Mobilisation: Explaining NDA's Victory in Assam," highlighted that the 2021 Assam assembly elections have shown a trend towards deepening religious polarisation in the state, with the BJP retaining its hold over the ethnic base. The NDA won the 2021 elections due to religious polarisation, positive perceptions, and pro-incumbency. The BJP's dominance in Assam deepens regional forces' dependency on religious polarisation, benefiting the NDA but shrinking autonomous electoral space. Congress failed to forge alliances and counter cultural identity protection narratives, making it vulnerable.

V. Bijukumar (2023) in his article, "Dissecting the Verdict of Tripura Assembly Election 2023," has stated that the recently concluded Tripura assembly election saw the Bharatiya Janata Party secure a renewed mandate with a slim majority. The election results in Tripura will lead to the consolidation of the BJP, with the CPI(M) and Congress forming an alliance for joint action against the government. The Tipra Motha Party continues to advocate for tribal statehood.

The review of literature reflects that a lot of work had been done on the rise of BJP in India. However, very few works have covered the details on the political strategies of BJP in the North Eastern states like Assam and Tripura. Unlike the other political parties, the BJP has adopted unique political strategy in the case of North East India. The profile of North East India, both demographic and otherwise is distinct and thus the party had to operate differently in different states. Therefore, the research work focuses on the political strategies of the BJP in North-East India and also to make a comparative study of Assam and Tripura.

Statement of Problem

The rise of the BJP in North East India, particularly in Assam and Tripura, is a recent phenomenon. The party has used the politics of identity and Hindutva ideology to overthrow the INC in Assam and the CPI (M) led Left front in Tripura in the last

assembly elections. The socio-cultural pattern of these states is different from that of the Hindi heartland, as identity and ethnicity play a major role than religion. The BJP has successfully mobilized diverse ethnic communities into one platform and gained the trust of people, making it an important discourse in academic discussions.

The BJP started gaining ground as an anti-congress force following the gradual decline of the support base of the AGP in the politics of Assam. The increasing Muslim population attracted people towards the Hindu nationalist BJP, which gradually strengthened itself in the NE region. The leaders of the AGP were engaged in inner fighting, leading to several splits and weakening their support base. The BJP successfully filled that political vacuum.

In Assam, the BJP came into power in 2016 with the slogan "JATI, MATI, BHETI," which means the protection of Land, Identity, and Culture of indigenous people. The party also came into power on issues like price rise, corruption, and misrule of the Congress government. In the 2021 assembly elections, the BJP-led MITRAJOT, which included AGP and UPPL, won 75 seats and defeated the INC-led MAHAJOT. The BJP focused on development and Hindutva, termed as the "Savyatarjuj" (Clash of Civilisation), and protection of identity and culture.

Apart from 25 years of anti-incumbency against the Left regime in Tripura, the massive outreach campaign by BJP and RSS and the work done by RSS affiliated organizations in the health and education sectors, particularly in tribal areas, greatly helped the BJP in gaining ground. The alliance with IPFT also helped BJP come to power for the first time in Tripura.

The BJP's slogans like "CHALO PALTAI" (Lets Change) became popular among the masses, and they were successful in choosing people's issues like road, connectivity, unemployment, and implementation of the 7th pay commission. In the 2023 Tripura assembly elections, the BJP-IPFT alliance won 32 seats and formed government for the second time in Tripura. The division of opposition votes between the Left-Congress alliance and Tipra Motha played a vital role in BJP's victory in Tripura.

The study focuses on the emergence of BJP as a strong political force in North East India and its efforts to become the ruling party in key states like Assam and Tripura. The party operates differently in the electoral field, with unique alliance

policies, election manifestos, and campaign methods. The electoral performance of the BJP in Assam and Tripura is significant, making this study essential for analyzing the strategy and growth of BJP in the region.

Objectives

1. To study the factors responsible for the rise of BJP and its political strategies in the North East India.
2. To analyse the ideology, programmes, organisational structure and leadership role of the BJP in Assam and Tripura.
3. To study the role of alliance policy and election strategy of the BJP in these two states.
4. To analyse the policies and achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura.
5. To make a comparative study of the political strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura.

Research Questions

1. What factors are responsible for the rise and growth of BJP in the NorthEast India?
2. What are the Ideology, programmes, organisational structure and leadership component of the BJP in Assam and Tripura?
3. What is the role of alliance policy and election strategy of the BJP in the two states?
4. What are the policies and achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura?
5. What are the similarities and differences in the political strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura?

Methodology

This study focuses on the growth of the BJP in North East India, focusing on both theoretical and empirical aspects. It is both descriptive and analytical, using both primary and secondary sources to collect data. Primary data includes surveys and

fact-finding inquiries, while secondary data includes government records, election commission data, assembly proceedings, books, newspapers, magazines, journals, election manifestoes, and party records.

Primary data is collected using structured questionnaires, with 200 respondents contacted as part of a field survey. 100 respondents from each state provided feedback on the subject, including political activists, civil society leaders, employees, students, youths, teachers, lawyers, farmers, and workers. The study's significance is dependent on the characteristics of the study areas, such as tribal and non-tribal representation in Tripura and communal and linguistic classification in Assam. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the BJP's role in Tripura and Assam, highlighting the importance of both quantitative and qualitative aspects in political parties.

Chapter Wise Analysis

Chapter I: Introduction

The first chapter highlights that the political parties played a crucial role in building a robust democracy. Political parties also play the role in any parliamentary form of government, serving either as the governing party or the opposition party. After the formation of BJP led government at the centre in 2014, the BJP has emerged as a ruling party in the states like Assam and Tripura in the political sphere of Northeast. This has changed the political dynamics in these states. Growth of BJP in these states over the year has led to the emergence of new ideological support base in the form of Hindutva which has marked a significant shift in the society and politics of Assam and Tripura. This draws the attention of people in the Northeast region at large towards BJP. A significant number of populations seem to support BJP due to several factors, which were earlier absent in the politics of North East. Therefore, it becomes crucial to study the political strategy of BJP in Assam and Tripura. The role of RSS and other Sangh Parivar organisations also played a vital role in strengthening BJP in these two states.

The BJP, a political party in Northeast India, has gained significant political power in Assam and Tripura over the years. In 2016, the party formed its first

government in Assam, winning seven seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. The party focused on issues like anti-incumbency against the Congress government, misrule, corruption, and the increase of Muslim population. In the 2016 assembly elections, the BJP emerged victorious through a rainbow coalition, including regional parties like the AGP and BPF.

In the 2021 elections, the BJP focused on development, Hindutva, and cultural protection. AGP and UPPL were alliance partners in the 2021 elections. In the 2018 Tripura assembly elections, the BJP used anti-incumbency against the Left regime and addressed people's issues like road, connectivity, unemployment, and the implementation of the 7th pay commission for state government employees.

The BJP returned to power in Tripura for the second time in the 2023 elections, focusing on development and fulfilling electoral promises. The division of opposition votes between the Left-Congress alliance and the newly formed Tipra Motha also contributed to its return to power. Studying the political strategy of the BJP in Northeast India, particularly in Assam and Tripura, is crucial for understanding its impact.

Chapter II: BJP in North East India: Historical Background

The second chapter discusses the role of political parties in electoral politics, particularly the BJP's presence in Assam. The BJP gained prominence in the state after the 1991 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, particularly in the Barak Valley region and Brahmaputra valley. The decline of the dominant regional party, AGP, left a void in the opposition landscape. The BJP has strategically enhanced its organizational structure and bolstered its support base through various organizations. The increase in the Muslim population due to illegal immigration from Bangladesh and Congress party appeasement has also bolstered the BJP's support base.

The BJP emerged victorious in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, indicating a significant establishment of its presence in the state. Leaders from several political parties joined the BJP both before and after the elections, expanding the party's support base. The BJP emerged as a viable political option for the people of Assam, providing an alternative to the Indian National Congress.

In the 2018 Tripura assembly elections, the BJP-IPFT alliance defeated the leftist regime that ruled Tripura continuously for 25 years. The 2023 Tripura assembly election was marked by intense competition and significant events that are expected to establish new patterns and influence the political landscape of the state in the near future.

The verdict signifies the rise of Tipra Motha as a significant political entity, supplanting the IPFT, which was established in 2021 through the merger of Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) and the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT). The outcome of the election also shattered the aspirations of AITMC to establish itself as a significant political entity.

The 2023 verdict in Tripura politics strengthened the BJP as it formed its second consecutive government. There is likely to be an enduring alliance between the CPI (M) and the Congress party, aiming to jointly oppose the government. Tipra Motha is expected to intensify its efforts in mobilizing support and advocating for separate statehood for tribal communities.

Chapter III: Ideology, Programmes, Organisational Structure and Leadership

Role of BJP in Assam and Tripura

The third chapter discusses the ideology of the BJP, which is based on integral humanism and incorporates Hindutva elements with regional aspirations in Assam and Tripura. The party prioritizes combating insurgency, health and infrastructure development, economic development, human resource development, sustainable development, urban/rural development, Guwahati development projects, agriculture/industrial development, and dealing with infiltration from Bangladesh. They promise to implement the Assam Accord and deal with infiltration from Bangladesh.

The BJP's election manifesto, Atma Nirbhar Assam, includes ten promises, including the launch of Mission Brahmaputra, empowering women through the Orunodoi scheme, strengthening Namghars and protecting Satras' rights, Bal Unnayan, correction and reconciliation of entries in the NRC, protection of political rights of people of Assam through a delimitation exercise, self-sufficiency in food

production, job creation for the youth, land patta distribution, and making Assam the most entrepreneurial state in India.

The success of a political party depends on its organizational strength, and the BJP has a strong organizational base in Assam, thanks to the leadership of Himanta Biswa Sharma and the division of opposition votes across various parties. The party also gained support from women voters and those affiliated with the tea gardens, contributing to their electoral victory.

In Tripura, the BJP's leadership role was crucial, with the BJP and RSS executing an extensive outreach program, forming an alliance with the IPFT, and consolidating tribal votes. The BJP strategically focused on popular public issues, such as the 7th pay commission issue, which garnered public support, particularly among the majority Bengali Hindu population.

Chapter IV: Alliance Policy and Election Strategy of BJP in Assam and Tripura

The fourth chapter discusses the BJP's alliance policy in Assam, which included regional parties like AGP and BPF, Tiwas and Rabha organizations. This strategy helped the BJP gain acceptance among various communities and defeat Congress, which ruled Assam for 15 years. The party also worked on poaching leaders from other political parties and showcasing development agendas to submerge CAA outrage in the region.

In the 2019 election, the BJP won majority of seats with its alliance partners, while in the 2021 assembly elections, the BJP-led Mitrajot defeated Congress-led Mahajot. The inclusion of AIUDF in Congress led Mahajot consolidated Hindu votes in favor of the BJP-led alliance.

In Tripura, the BJP IPFT alliance defeated the Left party, which ruled Tripura for 25 years. The alliance with tribal party IPFT worked in favor of the BJP. In the 2023 state legislative elections, the BJP managed to return to power, despite facing tough contests from the Left party.

The BJP utilized the issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh and identity politics to their advantage, capitalizing on anti-incumbency sentiments and the agenda of identity and development. The RSS developed a notable influence in Assam by utilizing figures like Saint Sankardeva and Bhupen Hazarika, creating

societal acceptability. The BJP engaged in intensive media campaigning, garnering support from prominent local media houses.

In Tripura, the BJP used various tactics, including capitalizing on anti-incumbency sentiments against the left government, forming an alliance with the IPFT, pursuing a Hindutva political agenda, implementing the recommendations of the 7th pay commission, and extensive groundwork by the RSS. The BJP attracted leaders from other political parties, organized outreach programs, and intensified the election campaign through large-scale rallies featuring the Prime Minister and other prominent party leaders.

Chapter V: Policies and Achievements of BJP governments in Assam and Tripura

The BJP-led state governments in Assam and Tripura have implemented numerous policies, programs, and initiatives to improve the lives of their citizens. These policies include anti-corruption efforts, such as the APSC scam, population control policies, and eviction drives. However, these policies have faced criticism for inadequate planning and rehabilitation of indigenous people, evictions of schools, and evictions in revenue villages, causing hardship for thousands of people and homelessness.

The government's decision to provide free education to girls up to university level has been praised by the public, but the BJP regime's cultural imposition of events like "Namami Brahmaputra" has been criticized. Health and education policies are seen as positive, but the state governments' inability to oppose the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and statements from BJP leaders have created dissatisfaction and distrust among the people. There is a fear of marginalization among indigenous people due to the implementation of the CAA.

The government's initiatives on the Act East policy, industrialization, and skill development programs are seen as beneficial for the region's development. Initiatives undertaken by the BJP government in areas such as agriculture, transportation infrastructure, social security, and combating social evils are acknowledged as constructive measures.

The Orunodoy scheme in Assam is a significant move for poverty alleviation in the state, while financial assistance to families in need is provided through the creation of Assam Arogya Nidhi (AAN). The Assam Right to Public Service Portal was created under the World Bank to facilitate citizens with various e services. The Chief Minister's Covid19 widow support scheme has been helpful to widows who lost their husbands due to Covid19, ensuring their socio-economic security.

The BJP government's campaign against illicit drug trafficking, known as the "war on drugs," garnered significant public backing, but encounters linked to this campaign were subject to significant criticism due to allegations of numerous fabricated incidents. The government also faced criticism for encouraging the opening up of more liquor shops in the state for revenue generation.

The BJP government's welfare activities, such as setting up more Adarsh Vidyalayas, has been partially successful in fulfilling electoral promises and implementing significant reforms in land revenue services. However, the government's actions in response to child marriage have generated considerable controversy, with instances of harassment experienced by individuals.

The government's initiative to teach mathematics and science in English in vernacular medium schools has been criticized by several organizations in the state. Opposition parties have accused the BJP government of influencing the election commission of India in their favor, but the government claims that this action was done to protect the land, identity, and culture of the indigenous people.

In Tripura, the BJP implemented the 7th pay commission for state government employees after forming government in 2018, adopting the NCERT curriculum at the state level and offering the CM B.EdAnuprerana Yojana. The government has initiated many developmental projects, introduced indigenous languages at school levels, and worked for the development of tribals, farmers, and tea garden laborers. However, opposition parties have also criticised the government for attacks on religious minorities and attacks on opposition party workers.

Chapter VI: Comparative study of the Political Strategies of BJP in Assam and Tripura

The sixth chapter explores the political strategies of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam and Tripura, comparing them to other North Eastern states. The study reveals similarities in many areas, such as the Modi wave, weak alternatives, and the desire for change as the most important factors for the BJP's success in these states. Additionally, issues like development and illegal Bangladeshi infiltration remain influential.

The study also highlights the importance of Hindutva-based politics in both states, with the BJP's use of media, targeting religious minorities, and freebies playing significant roles. The BJP's affiliation with the RSS, leadership, and widespread public endorsement are also crucial factors in its overall structure and functioning.

The support base of the BJP in Assam and Tripura is characterized by the prominence of certain demographic groups. In Assam, the BJP gains significant support from upper caste Hindus, Tea Tribes (Tea garden workers), and Hindu Bengalis. In Tripura, the BJP gains support mostly from the Hindu Bengali population. The presence of women, Hindu tribals, and state government employees in Assam remains significant, while active participation of tribal communities, state government officials, and women is essential in Tripura.

In both states, individuals from the upper caste and general category exerted considerable influence at the state level. Leadership was comprised of individuals from the Other Backward Classes (OBC) and the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) communities. The significance of leadership in Assam is considered crucial for the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party, while the role of state leadership in Tripura is perceived to be less influential. The use of slogans and the selection of candidates affiliated with the BJP significantly influenced the outcomes in both states.

The study reveals that the profile of candidates significantly influences election outcomes in Assam and Tripura, with a majority of respondents believing that the alliance policy has provided partial assistance to the BJP in achieving victory. In both states, a significant proportion of respondents believe that the

policies implemented by the BJP government, such as welfare initiatives and religious considerations, played a crucial role in garnering electoral support. However, in Tripura, the majority of respondents expressed that the BJP's ability to secure votes was contingent upon economic development and welfare programs.

The BJP election manifesto played a significant or moderate significance in both states. The campaign strategy by the BJP successfully garnered a significant number of votes, with a considerable proportion of respondents holding a moderate view. The primary achievements of the BJP government in Assam and Tripura revolved around development and employment generation, effective management of governmental affairs, maintenance of societal stability, and efforts towards reducing poverty.

The influence of money power had a significant role in the electoral success of BJP in both states, while some respondents believed that the influence of money power was partially responsible for the success of BJP. Other significant elements at play include the media, which played a significant and positive impact in facilitating the win of BJP in the states.

Under the governance of the BJP, there existed a degree of social harmony in both states, with a greater proportion of participants indicating that a situation of partial social peace existed in the states governed by the BJP. A limited number of respondents expressed the belief that social harmony was effectively established under the BJP's governance.

The Indian National Congress is perceived as the primary alternative to the BJP in Assam, with the Left parties being the primary opposition group in Tripura due to their robust organizational capacity and notable representation in the Assembly. Some respondents believe that the recently established TIPRA motha is a viable alternative to the BJP in Tripura, given its status as the primary opposition party in the Assembly.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

The discussion in this study shows how BJP timely utilised various factors, which helped the party not only gain power but to flourish in every nook and corner of this region in a very short period of time. It used all the political strategies like exploiting

regional sentiments, establishing a sense of connectedness with the people, identifying the issues on which people can be mobilized, picking up the right battles, comparing present problems with historical events, creating a new narrative of us versus them, fear of losing identity and religion, using lucrative tactics to invite strong candidates or sitting representatives from others parties. Lastly, alliance with regional parties to show solidarity with regionalism broadly helped the BJP in getting power in a very calculated and strategic manner in North-East India, especially in Assam and Tripura. However, in the second phase, it could attract people by offering welfare schemes or by creating beneficiaries and jobs. Ceremonial distribution of appointments created a new dimension to the entire scenario and it has been showcased so that the duty of government looked like a gift to people. To sum up, the BJP got political power in Assam and Tripura using several strategies that look like are in favour of indigenous people or pro-poor but if one tries to analyse the practical scenario it can be understood that most of BJP's policies created division on the lines of religion and it also reflects its agenda of expansionism and it tries to impose uniformity or saffronise in the name of Hindutva.

Findings of the Study

The BJP utilized various strategies to gain power in North-East India, particularly in Assam and Tripura. These strategies included exploiting regional sentiments, establishing a sense of connectedness with the people, identifying issues for mobilization, and comparing current problems with historical events. The party also created a narrative of "us versus them" and fear of losing identity and religion. Alliances with regional parties showed solidarity with regionalism, attracting people through welfare schemes and job creation. Ceremonial distribution of appointments added a new dimension to the situation, making the government's duty appear like a gift to the people. Despite appearing to favor indigenous people or the pro-poor, the BJP's policies created division based on religion and reflected its agenda of expansionism. The party aimed to impose uniformity or saffronise in the name of Hindutva, highlighting the party's strategic approach to gaining power in the region.

- i. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has experienced significant growth in North-East India due to various factors, including the Modi wave anti-

incumbency, vote for change, weak alternatives, development, illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue, growth of Muslim population, role of RSS, leaders from several other political parties joining the BJP, and alliance with regional political parties.

- ii. In Assam and Tripura, the BJP has incorporated the core Hindutva ideology and regional aspirations, combining politics of identity and ethnicity with Hindutva. The party has promised for the overall development of these states, making promises to make Assam free from illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and protect tribal rights. The RSS plays a central role at the organizational level, with massive outreach by RSS and its affiliated organizations. The proactive and decisive role of central leadership also played a crucial role.
- iii. In the 2016 assembly elections, the alliance policy played a vital role in Assam, with alliances with AGP, BPF, Tiwa, and Rabha groups increasing acceptance among indigenous and tribal people in Assam. In the 2021 election, alliances with AGP and UPPL helped BJP fight against Mahajot. Tripura's alliance with IPFT greatly helped BJP in the 2018 election. The BJP has also worked on poaching capable leaders from other political parties and showing a development agenda.
- iv. Religious polarisation has helped the BJP in consolidating Hindu votes in Assam. The BJP was engaged in an intensive media campaign, assimilation of regional leaders, and creating beneficiaries through welfare policies. In Tripura, the BJP's strategy of capitalising on the anti-incumbency of the Leftist government, political agenda of the Hindutva, implementation of the 7th pay commission, and massive groundwork greatly helped the party.
- v. In Assam, anti-corruption drive, free and fair recruitment, free education to girl child up to university level, and policies of health and education are considered positive steps. However, the state government was criticized on population control policy, eviction drive, and decision to implement CAA. The BJP government initiatives in agriculture, social security, and combating social evils are acknowledged as constructive measures.
- vi. In Tripura, the BJP government implemented developmental projects such as the 7th pay commission for state government employees, adoption of the

NCERT curriculum, and upgradation of the Tripura Airport. They have also initiated national highway projects and social welfare initiatives, such as increased widow pensions and health insurance. The government has introduced indigenous languages and established the first National Forensic University.

- vii. Opposition parties have criticized the BJP government for attacks on religious minorities, attacks on opposition workers, and press censorship. Due to internal conflicts, the BJP has replaced the Chief Minister of the state one year ahead of the assembly election. Opposition parties have also accused the government of misrule, insufficient funding for autonomous district councils, and failure to combat drug addiction and ensure women's safety.

The political strategies of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Assam and Tripura, focusing on the Modi wave, weak alternatives, and desire for change, have contributed to the BJP's success. The party's well-developed organizational framework, top-down approach, leadership, and widespread public endorsement contributed to its success. The support base of the BJP in Assam and Tripura is characterized by the prominence of certain demographic groups, such as Upper caste Hindus, Tea Tribes, and Hindu Bengalis. The determining factor influencing voting behavior in favor of the BJP is the ideological stance and campaign strategy employed by the party, along with the use of slogans and the selection of candidates affiliated with the BJP.

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