

**THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY REGIME IN ASSAM: A
STUDY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

SUBMITTED BY

DIPENDRA KUMAR KHANAL

MZU/M.Phil./438 of 03.05.2018

SUPERVISOR

Prof. K. V. REDDY



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

AIZAWL-796004

2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It is my privilege to express most sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. K. V. Reddy for his countless valuable guidance and keen interest throughout the course of my research work. His constant encouragement has been indispensable for the completion of this work. I acknowledge his untiring services with deep sense of salutation and express my sincere gratitude to him for his painstaking correction of the manuscript without which I would not have come to this final stage.

I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to Prof. J.K. Patnaik and Prof. J. DOUNGEL along with all the faculty members and staffs of the Department of Political Science, MZU, for their support, suggestions and cooperation throughout the course of my research work.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my teachers Dr Tenapalli Hari, Dr Juri Das Choudhury, Sumana Das, Dr Barnali Sarmah, Dr N. Bijen Meetei, Dr. Vivek Kumar Mishra, Prof Subhabrata Dutta, Prof. Chandan Kumar Sharma and Prof. Nani Gopal Mahanta for their valuable suggestion and help in the course of research. I take this opportunity to put on record my heartfelt thanks to my friend Chayanika Bora for her help throughout my research work. I also want to thank my friends Samujjwal, Gunjan, Mitali, Sumit, Manash, Gitika, Hiranku da and all other friends for their valuable help and co-operation. I am thankful to all my brothers from Buannel Research Scholars hostel and fellow research scholar friends, brothers and sisters.

I find no words to express my inner feeling and deep sense of gratitude to my parents and my brother Pankaj Kr Khanal for their silent sacrifices without which I would not have been what I am today. I am thankful to the almighty for the blessings and guidance. I dedicate this work to my parents who have sacrificed all their comforts for my higher studies.

Dated:

(DIPENDRA KUMAR KHANAL)

Aizawl:



MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL : MIZORAM
www.mzu.edu.in

Post Box No. 190
Gram : MZU
Phone : (0389) 2345211 / 2341725
Fax : 0389 - 2345211

Department of Political Science
Prof. K.V. Reddy, Head

F. No. MZU/(Pol.Sc)/21/M.Phil/2016/
Dated : 13th December, 2018

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY REGIME IN ASSAM: A STUDY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS**”, submitted by DIPENDRA KUMAR KHANAL for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**, is a research work, done under my supervision and guidance. The dissertation, 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 dissertation represents objective study and independent work of the scholar.

Place: Aizawl

Prof. K. V. REDDY

Date:

SUPERVISOR



MIZORAM UNIVERSITY
AIZAWL : MIZORAM
www.mzu.edu.in

Post Box No. 190
Gram : MZU
Phone : (0389) 2345211 / 2341725
Fax : 0389 - 2345211

Dated : 13th December, 2018

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY REGIME IN ASSAM: A STUDY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS**”, submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**, of Mizoram University is my own original work. The dissertation has not been previously submitted for the award of any degree of this or any other university.

DIPENDRA KUMAR KHANAL

Prof. K. V. REDDY

Head of the department

Prof. K. V. REDDY

Supervisor

CONTENTS

	Page No
DECLARATION	i
CERTIFICATE	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
CONTENTS	iv
Chapter I: Introduction	1-34
Chapter II: Rise and Growth of BJP	35-64
Chapter III: Performance of BJP Regime	65-102
Chapter IV: Socio Political Implications of BJP Regime	103-135
Chapter V: Conclusion	136-144
BIBLIOGRAPHY	145-156
APPENDICE	

Chapter I: Introduction

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

Introduction

Political party is understood as a group of people who are united to acquire and exercise political power. It was evolved in its present form in the United States and Europe in the 19th century. For the functioning of modern democratic governments political parties are necessary. It is regarded as the lifeline of democracy.¹In the parliamentary type of government, political party which gets majority number of seats formed the government. When a single party is unable to form the government, then the leader of the largest coalition would form the government. At times, Political parties assume different roles. For example, their role varies from ruling party to opposition party.² Political parties play an instrumental role in the functioning of modern welfare state.

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 in the political party. In the political parties which have a direct organizational structure, the members are supposed to attend party meetings regularly in the local level. The parties having indirect structure do not have direct members but it is consisting with the support of various groups and organizations like the trade unions or other mass fronts and associations which have joined the party enbloc. 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 which have indirect structure can be called as federal parties, as they are formed by the joining together of like minded groups and organisations for a common objective.³

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

² V.M. Sirsakar & L. Fernandes. (1984). *Indian Political Parties*. Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan. p.9.

³ Maurice Duverger. (1954). *Political Parties*. New York: J. Wiley & Sons. p.5.

India, that has adopted the parliamentary form of government, is strengthened by the existence of multi-party political system. There are various types of political parties such as national parties, regional or state parties and local parties. The political parties have to be registered under the Election Commission of India (ECI). At present, there are six (6) national political parties recognised by the ECI. These are the Indian National Congress, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Communist Party of India , the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Nationalist Congress Party. Besides, there are numerous regional parties that have been functioning in several states in the country. Among these parties the INC and the BJP have nationwide presence. Though INC is the oldest party and ruled in centre as well as in the states it is not committed to any particular ideology. But it is widely known that only the Left wing or Communist parties and the Right wing political parties are ideologically committed. During their rule these parties with ideological commitment try to govern in their own way and they also try to influence the society and politics as a whole. The rule of these parties is beyond political control and thus these are regarded as regime.

While discussing about political parties one needs to also bring into light the relevance and importance of a political party when it called as a regime. Political regime is about the rule of those political parties which are committed to any particular ideology it may be either the left wing or communist parties or right wing political parties. According to Cambridge English dictionary “Regime means a particular government or a system or method of government”. In the proposed study the Regime has been understood as combination of multiple dimensions of rule by a party or a leadership. The BJP regime in Assam refers to socio-political, economic and cultural influences on the state and society. Here the BJP regime has been understood as how the BJP was committed to the ideology of “Hindutva”

that run the government and how it functioned and the way it influenced the socio-political, economic and cultural aspects of the society as part of its ideology. In Assam prior to the BJP rule, INC ruled for 15 years but it was never considered a regime. Because Congress, a centrist party has no commitment to any particular ideology, so they neither propagated neither any ideology nor they tried to influence the society economically and socially the way BJP has done recently. Therefore it is very important to study the BJP regime in Assam.

Historical Background of BJP

Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee founded the Bharatiya Jana Sangh in 1951, which later on merged with the Janata Party in 1977. But it could not last long. Several members and leaders of Janata Party such as Raj Narayan, Charan Singh and Madhu Limayee raised the question of dual membership and urged that the members of erstwhile Jana Sangh should break their connection with the RSS, as for them it was a political organisation. For, most of the Jana Sangh members and leaders were belonging to the RSS. And there was an ideological similarity with the RSS which results in their natural affinity with it. Hence, the erstwhile Bharatiya Lok Dal, a constituent unit of Janata Party has made it an issue and left the party.⁴

However in 1977-80, the Lok Sabha elections were jointly contested by the Janata Party including the erstwhile Jana Sangh. Jag Jivan Ram, the leader of the Janata parliamentary party again raised the issue of dual membership after the defeat of the party in the 1980s elections. As a result the erstwhile Jana Sangh leaders failed to continue in the Janata Party and had no alternative but to leave the party. The then General Secretary of the United Janata Party and former Jana Sangh member in the party Nanaji Deshmukh declared that, they were proud of their association with RSS which has grained them a spirit of selfless service and patriotism. Along with them several other prominent Janata Party leaders who did

⁴ Hans Raj. (1981). *Indian Govt and Politics*. New Delhi: Surjeet Publications. pp. 73-74

not subscribe to the ideal of dual membership also left the party and formed a new party on 6th April, 1980, which became popular as the Bharatiya Janata Party.⁵ Some of the new party members included were Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani, Sikandar Bakt, Shanti Bhusan , Ram Jethamalini, R.K. Hegede, and many others.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) officially came into existence in the year 1980 under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi.⁶ At present, it is the largest political party in the country in terms of its representation in the legislative assemblies of the state and in the Indian parliament. It is also regarded as the world's largest party regarding primary membership. The BJP is described as a rightist political party with close links in the ideological and organisational level with the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).⁷ It is regarded as the crucial member of the 'Sangh Parivar'.

The philosophy of the BJP is "integral humanism," which is first formulated by Deendayal Upadhyaya in the year 1965, who described it as advocating an "indigenous economic model that puts the human being at centre stage."⁸ It is committed to the ideology Hindutva, which is expressed by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, an Indian Freedom Fighter.⁹ 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

⁵ *Ibid.*

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

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

⁸ Christophe Jaffrelot. (1996). *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*. New York: Colombia University Press.

⁹ Yogendra K. Malik & V.B. Singh, *Op.cit.*

Jammu and Kashmir, from the Constitution of India.¹⁰ As the BJP is a nationalist political party, it supports one nation, one rule, so they are against any kind special status to any state.

From the inception of BJP “Lotus”, the national flower of India, has been approved as the Election symbol of BJP by the Election commission of India. The election symbol of the BJP seems to uphold the national identity. Further the BJP is adhered to cultural values of India and therefore the political ideology of the BJP is also described as cultural nationalism. Hence, the BJP promotes the ban on cow-slaughter as Cow is considered as a holy animal by Hindu people. Again, the party also seeks to uphold the cultural unity of India, and strongly criticised the European notion of ‘secularism’.¹¹ In other words, the BJP came into existence as an alternative political force primarily because of ideological differences.

Demographic profile of Assam

Assam, a state in Northeast India, is comprised of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. It is situated in the south of the eastern Himalayas which covers an area of 78,438 km². In the North, state is surrounded by the Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, in the East by Nagaland and Manipur ,in the South by Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Bangladesh; and West Bengal to the West via the Siliguri Corridor. It is a 22 kilometres of land which connects the Assam with other parts of India. Assam is a multicultural society. It is a home to people of different religious, linguistic and ethnic groups.

Two prominent valleys of Assam are the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley which are featured with the presence of Brahmaputra River and the Barak River respectively. The entire region of Assam consists of 33 districts which fall under five administrative

¹⁰ Ramachandra Guha. (2007). *India after Gandhi: the history of the world's largest democracy*. New York: Harper Perennial. pp. 250-352.

¹¹ Atal Bihari Vajpayee & Christophe Jaffrelot. (2007). *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. New Delhi: Permanent Black. pp. 318-342.

divisions viz. Barak valley, Central Assam, Lower Assam, North Assam and Upper Assam. Barak valley region is dominated by the Bengali speaking people and the Brahmaputra valley region is dominated by the Assamese speaking people.

According to the census report of 2011, the population of Assam is 3,12,05,576 where male population is counted as 1,59,39,443 and female population is counted as 1,52,66,133. The literacy rate is 72.19% of which 77.85% are male and 63% are female. Population density of the region as published in the report of 2011 is 398 persons per square kilometre. Among all the districts, Kamrup (Metro) registered the highest population density (1,313 persons per square kilometre) while Dima Hasao registered the lowest population density (44 persons per square kilometre) in the region.¹²

A study of the demographic and religious profile of Assam unveils the fact that the major religion in the state is Hinduism with 61.47% followers. Next to it is Islam with approximately 34.22% followers. Except these two, the positions of other religion are- Christianity (3.74%), Buddhism (0.18%), Sikhism (0.07%), and Jainism (0.08%), other religion (0.09%) and not stated (0.16%). Hence it is a multi- religious society with Hinduism as the dominant religion.

Majority of the state population is dependent on agriculture, thus it indicates that the Economy of Assam is agricultural based. In 2011-12, 31.98 per cent of the state's total population that is 101.27 lakh people are under the Below Poverty Line (BPL). In the rural areas 92.06 lakh people are under the BPL, which is 33.89 per cent of the total rural population. While in the urban areas, 20.49 per cent of the state's total urban population that is 9.21 lakh is under the BPL.¹³

¹² Santanu Kausik Baruah (ed.) (2017). *Assam Year Book*. Guwahati: Jyoti Prakashan. p.69.

¹³ "32% below poverty line," *Telegraph India*, April 11, 2017.

BJP in Assam

The BJP was not a major political force in Assam before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, though it had its presence in the politics of Assam. The BJP was failed to gain the support of Assamese Hindus, as early as in 1991, but it was successful in gaining ground in the Bengali dominated Barak valley region, where it won Silchar and Karimganj parliamentary constituencies. However, the real breakthrough for the BJP in the Brahmaputra valley came during the 1998 parliamentary elections, when its election manifesto offered an attractive package to the whole of the north-east. After the NDA came into power at the centre in 1998, the BJP national leadership had focussed its special attention to Assam. The prime minister and the home minister had visited Assam frequently and promised various measures to check immigration and sanctioned about Rs. 90 crore as special assistance from the central government. In Assam the BJP has seen a steady growth of vote share since 1991, with a slump in 2004 and the 2009 (in the latter year it was in an alliance with the AGP which got 14.6% vote share). The party has benefited from its alliance with the AGP in the 2006 assembly and 2009 parliamentary elections.

After the 2014 General Elections, the BJP has expanded its influence in almost all parts of the country. Presently, it is the ruling party in 19 states of India (either its own government or with coalition partners). In fifteen states, the BJP has its own chief ministers and in other four states, chief ministers are from the coalition partners.

For the first time, the BJP won half (seven out of fourteen) of the Lok Sabha seats from Assam in 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). This victory is the largest for the BJP as it never won more than 10 seats in the assembly elections of Assam. The congress party was in power most of the time only with an exception of 10 years when AGP formed the government and 18th months of Janata Party government. The BJP never had any strong presence in the politics of Assam. Prior to this, election politics of Assam was dominated by the Indian National Congress (INC) and the other regional political parties like the AGP, the BPF, the All India United Democratic front (AIUDF).

The downfall of AGP as an opposition party for 15 years created a vacuum in the politics of Assam. The leadership crisis, frequent splits in the party further weakened the organisational structure of the AGP. Due to this, the party lost its public support and thus it also contributed to the emergence of BJP in Assam. The BJP won the 2016 assembly elections mainly because of five factors. These are, people voted for a change, illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue, rainbow alliance of the BJP with all groups, leadership, support of youth and students. Therefore, it is important to study the rise, growth, role and relevance of BJP in Assam.

Party Structure

The BJP has been regarded as an important rightist cadre based party in the contemporary Indian politics. The party has had a well defined organizational structure and highly motivated cadre with ethno-religious mobilizations for which it occupies a distinct position. The party at present claims that it has more than 10 million members of which there are many active members fully devoted to the party which are regarded as full time members of

the party.¹⁴ As the party is a cadre based, it produces efficient leaders from time to time. There is hardly any vacuum of leadership unlike the other non cadre based political parties.

The Constitution of BJP in its Article IX elaborately discusses the membership procedure in detail.¹⁵ According to the article, any Indian citizen who has attained 18 years or above who accepts the Objectives, Basic philosophy and Commitments of the party (mentioned in article II, III and IV of the constitution) can become a member of the party, provided that one is not a member of any other political party. The party's National Executive decides the term of membership, which varies from time to time. All members of the party have to fill up the membership forms in the beginning of every new term.¹⁶ However the party membership can be ceased by death, resignation or removal. A person can become a member only in one place at one time.

The organizational structure of the BJP has been mentioned in the Article VII of the BJP's constitution. At the National Level it consists of the National President, the Plenary of Special session of the party, the National Council and the National Executive. State level organisation of BJP consists of State Council and State Executive. Furthermore, the BJP has created Regional Committees, District Committees, Mandal Committees, Gram/Shahari Kendra and Local Committees.¹⁷ The National President is the highest office of the party. He is elected by an electoral college. The Presidential election normally takes place when any 20 members of the electoral college of a state, jointly propose for the post of National President for any person who has fifteen years of membership and has been a active member for five terms. But such joint proposal should come from not less than five states where elections

¹⁴ Yogendra K Malik & V.B. Singh. (1996). *Hindu Nationalists in India. The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party*. San Francisco: Westview.

¹⁵ P.C. Swain. (2001). *Bharatiya Janta Party; Profile and Performance*. New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ P.C. Swain. *Op.cit.*

have been completed for the National Council. The consent of the candidate is necessary. The Party President is elected for the period of the two years and cannot hold office for more than two consecutive terms. Any vacancy to the post is to be filled up within six months. In actual practice, however, there is virtually no contest for the Presidential election. It is normally by a consensus rather than an electoral contest. It is the party elders who decide on a candidate and their choice is usually accepted by the electoral college of the party.¹⁸

However at the State level, the party has got two Organizational forums i.e. State executive and State council. The State unit of the party is headed by the State President and it functions through a team of office-bearers. The State President is the head of party at the State level. An Electoral College comprising of members elected by the District units elected the State President¹⁹ In the state level the State President plays a vital role and he appoints all the office bearers in the party organisation.

The BJP's election symbol has the pan-Indian outlook as it represents and respects all sections of a united "Bharat" or India. It has been said by the BJP that Bhagavad Gita should be taught in the educational institutions.²⁰ The party believes and propagates Indian cultural values and also supports the cultural nationalism.

Ideological Foundation

Ideology is basically used by a political party to gain political power, as it binds together diverse groups of people to build its support base. Ideologies are meant to form new visions, provide blue prints for a new society, a kind of utopia, and appeal to the emotions of common people. Politicians use ideologies and political parties to gain offices which advancing their

¹⁸ India Today, February 23, 1983, p. 27.

¹⁹ P.C. Swain, *Op.cit.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

personal as well as collective goals. Thus one can refer here with D.W. Brogran, for whom the real world of politics is an "erroneous assumption that parties are and must be doctrinal bodies."²¹

Ideology generates the necessary commitment to a political activist to sustain his idealism and obligation to the cause.²² According to 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."²³

As long as a political party is able to project its own ideology, it continues to have a separate identity. The statement that is BJP is regarded as a party with a difference means that it possesses an ideology which is not fully shared by other political parties. Political parties strength and influence depends upon its ideological appeals. A political party appeals, socializes the people politically, articulates and aggregates their interest in the light of its ideology.

According to the encyclopedia of America, Ideology constitutes the key stone of the arch of a political party. In general, ideology denotes the system of practical beliefs developed by and characteristics of a group whose members have common political, economic, religious or cultural bonds.²⁴ Ideology is the base of any political party, it determines the way of functioning of a party. It is very important that the political party should be driven by clear ideological commitments.

The historical and ideological roots of BJP lie in Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) founded by Syama Prasad Mookerjee. After consulting the RSS chief M. S. Golwalkar , he formed the

²¹ Robert Lane. (1962). *Political Ideology*. New York: The Free press of Glenco.p.15.

²² V.M. Sirsikar & L. Fernandes, *Op.cit* , p.137.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Encyclopaedia of America Int. edition. (1970). *Vol, I*, New York. p.744.

BJS in Delhi on 21st October 1951. Mookerjee became its first President. In the parliamentary elections of 1952, the BJS won three seats which also includes Mookerjee's seat.²⁵ With the objective of nation-building and "nationalising" all non-Hindus by "inculcating Bharatiya Culture" in them, the BJS was created. The BJP is widely considered as the proponent of Hindu Nationalism and ideologically closed to RSS.²⁶ Mookerjee opposed Article 370 and he perceived it as a threat to the unity and integrity of the nation. He also fought against the Article 370 inside and outside the parliament. Abrogation of the article 370 was one of the major objectives of the BJS. The Arrangements under the article is termed by him as Balkanization of India and three-nation theory of Sheikh Abdullah.²⁷ Mookerjee opposed the decision to grant Jammu and Kashmir separate flag. As argued by him that a single country can't have two constitutions, two prime ministers, and two national emblems. Mookerjee once said "*Ek desh mein do Vidhan, do Pradhan aur Do Nishan nahi challenge*".²⁸ The BJS launched a massive Satyagraha with Hindu Mahasabha and Ram Rajya Parishad in order to removed harmful provisions. On 11th May 1953, Mookerjee was arrested while entering Kashmir and died in jail on June 23rd, 1953.

After Mookerjee, from 1953 to 1968 Pandit 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 organization 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.

²⁵"Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Encyclopaedia Britannica,"<https://www.britannica.com>, Accessed on 13th April 2017.

²⁶ Rafiq Dossani & Henry S. Rowen. (2005). *Prospects for Peace in South Asia*. California: Stanford University Press, p. 191.

²⁷ Hari Ram. (1983). *Special Status in Indian Federalism: Jammu and Kashmir*. New Delhi: Seema Publications. p. 115.

²⁸ "A tribute to Mookerjee," *Daily Excelsior*, June 23, 2013.

The BJP is a strong force of Hindu nationalism. It propounds self-reliance, conservative social policies and free market economics. The foreign policies of the BJP are driven by a nationalist agenda with strong national defence. The BJP is considered as right-wing political party, with some centrist tendencies. The Integral Humanism played a vital role in the ideology of BJP which aimed to transform India into a modern, progressive and enlightened nation.²⁹ It has been mentioned in the Party's Constitution in Article IV that it is committed to *Gandhian approach* to socio-economic issues, positive secularism and value-based politics. BJP's ideology is constituted by other two components that is *Hindutva* and *Integral Humanism*.³⁰ The Party believes in the *Hindutva* which is interpreted by Arun Shourie. The four lectures delivered by Deendayal Upadhyay in the mid-1960s constitute the philosophy of 'Integral Humanism'. Through these lectures Upadhyaya critically analysed the national politics which evoked the natural relationship between individual and society.³¹

Aims and Objectives of the BJP

There is an extensive discussion about the objectives of BJP in the Article II of its Constitution. Those are discussed here-

The BJP has taken the responsibility of building India into a strong and prosperous nation, keeping ancient culture and values intact, and committed to give a modern, progressive and enlightened outlook in the process of emerging as a great world power. BJP is also committed to perform an effective role in the comity of Nations so that world peace and a just international order can be established.

²⁹ "BJP: History and ideology," *Hindustan times*, August 25, 2009.

³⁰ Hilal Ahmed. (2014). What is BJP's ideology? *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 03, 2014.

³¹ *Ibid.*

The Party promises to establish a democratic state, to all citizens irrespective of caste, creed or sex. It also aims at ensuring political, social and economic justice, equality of opportunity and liberty of faith and expression. As established by the law, the Party shall bear true faith and allegiance to the Indian Constitution and to the principles of socialism, secularism and democracy and would uphold the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.³²

Role of RSS

The RSS is a formidable key organization of the BJP.³³ It provides ideological and organizational strength to the party. This Organization has got more than 56,859 shakhas³⁴ (branches) till 2016 and more than 2500 full time pracharaks (propagandists) today. The RSS occupies the central position in the Sangha Parivar. It has been compared to the sun, with all other organizations that move around it.³⁵

The RSS is regarded as an Ideological and Organizational actor of the BJP. The main source of the Hindu nationalism that links the three groups is the RSS. Since the three are linked by the common ideology, a complete deliberation of their functions and boundaries is difficult. There is an overlapping of functions and personnel among the three i.e. BJS, RSS and VHP. The RSS is the largest and most influential organization committed to Hindu Revivalism. Main objective of the RSS is to restore the sense of community among Hindus. It was established in 1925 at Nagpur by Dr. 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. The RSS was intended to be a kind of educational body whose

³² http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf_2012_h/constitution_eng_jan_10_2013.pdf, (Constitution and Rules of Bharatiya Janata Party)

³³ Yogendra K. Malik & V.B. Singh, *Op.cit*, p.155.

³⁴ "Highest growth ever: RSS adds 5,000 new shakhas in last 12 months". *The Indian Express*, March 16, 2016.

³⁵ Swapan Das. (1989). "Hedgewar's Legacy: Limitation of Elitist Hinduism," *Statesman Weekly*, April 8, p. 12.

primary objective was the training of Hindus so that they should work united to regain India's independent 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."³⁶

Main Frontal Organizations

The BJP can be placed in Duverger's model of 'federal party'. In addition to two major non-political components of Sangh Parivar like RSS and Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the BJP has got sizeable number of supportive groups. All these groups play a major role for BJP's political and electoral prospects. Their relationship with BJP has been shaped by historical factors and ideological moorings.³⁷ The leaders and observers of Indian politics suggest that despite their close relationship the BJP, the RSS and the VHP maintain considerable organizational and functional autonomy. Each seems to have its own goals, functionaries and area of operation. Each has created its various supportive organizations and agencies which provide them with workers as well as finances to operate in their respective areas.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS)

The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh is a Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh-affiliated trade union and one of the largest labour organizations in India. It has got more than three million members. It was established to counter the communist influence among the working classes. It has been successful among the white collar workers, although it has considerable following among the

³⁶ Angelo Panebianco. (1988). *Political Parties- Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁷ P.C. Swain. (2001). *Bharatiya Janta Party; Profile and Performance*, New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation, p. 72.

textile and transport workers.³⁸ Its strong base is confined to the Hindi-speaking states of North India.

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) is another affiliate of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh-BJP Coalition. In July 1948 Balraj Madhok, a teacher favoured the infiltration of student organizations and formed in Delhi, the ABVP.³⁹ This organization, working within the framework of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh philosophy was to evolve certain kind of collaboration among all those involved in the University education.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad is another support group of BJP. It is an important organisation of the Sangh parivar. The VHP was established in 1966 in the sacred city of Prayag (Allahabad).⁴⁰ Its main goals are to consolidate and strengthen the Hindu society, to protect and promote ethical values of Hindus, and to establish contacts with the Hindus living in other parts of the world.

Vidya Bharati

The Vidya Bharati is an educational organization. It is being run by the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh which has set up hundreds of secondary schools in India. It is providing education to more than 1.2 million students and has also given jobs to many teachers. It is a powerful tool of indoctrination and political socialization.⁴¹ Vidya Bharati

³⁸ Organizer. (1992). Delhi (India), October 18, p.9.

³⁹ Christopher Jafferlot, *Op.cit*, p.127.

⁴⁰ MP Degvekar. (1990). The origin and the growth of Vishva Hindu Parishad. *Hindu Vishwa*, Vol. 25, (12), p.11.

⁴¹ India Today, Jan. 15, 1993, p.35.

educational system is recognised as an alternate model of education. Though they provide Education in both English and Vernacular languages but their main focus is on vernacular languages. Because of vernacular language as medium of instruction in the schools, they are able to attract large number of students in different states.

Seva Bharati

The Seva Bharati is also a RSS run organization. It is working for the upliftment of downtrodden and Schedule Caste's. It has undertaken work among the slum dwellers by introducing various schemes for their welfare. It has been working among the economically weaker sections of Indian society which includes tribal and indigenous communities. It has set up more than 10,000 centres. Seva Bharati also offers welfare and social service programs, such as free medical assistance, free education, and vocational training. It is also spreading the virtues of Hinduism among the people. Its services were recognized by the Central government with a cash award and a certificate of merit.

Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram

Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram is also known as Centre for Tribal's Welfare. It has been formed by Ramakanta Keshav Despanda in 1952, a Brahmin lawyer from Amraoti, with the support of Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh. It aims at protecting the tribal population, who are part of the Hinduism, from conversion into Christianity by the missionaries. It is working for the tribals in various regions. It has opened its centres in more than 31,000 tribal villages in India. Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram is an organization based in Jashpur, in the Chhattisgarh is working for the social welfare.⁴² The organization gives importance to the welfare activities of Janjatis or Scheduled Tribes in remote areas of India. It has branches all over the country.

⁴² P.C. Swain, *Op.cit*, p.88.

The branches of the organization give emphasis on agriculture, healthcare, child education, and sports. Ashram works to create cultural awareness among tribals and also facilitates the idea of preservation of their tradition and customs followed by various groups.

Bajrang Dal

In May and June 1984 the Vishwa Hindu Parishad formed its militant wing, the Bajrang Dal under the leadership of Vinay Katiyar who had been the organizational secretary of ABVP from 1970 to 1974, to liberate the site at Ayodhya.⁴³ Since its inception it has spread its base all over India, But its important base is mainly concentrated in northern and central part of the country. It has almost runs 2,500 *akhadas*, similar to the *shakhas* (branches) of the RSS. The term "Bajrang" is derived from the name of the Hindu deity Hanuman.

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:-

Paul Wallace in his book, *India's 2014 Elections: A Modi-led BJP Sweep*,⁴⁴ has described how a Modi led strong majority party is governing India. As a consequence of 16th Lok Sabha election, a peaceful transfer of power in terms of parties and structure has indicated a notable degree of political maturity. According to the author when Bharatiya Janata Party with its clear majority replaced the 10 years old Congress-led coalition government, was one obvious result of what he considered as a historic election. This book partially helps in understanding the phenomenon of 2014 elections.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Paul Wallace. (2015). *India's 2014 Elections: A Modi-led BJP Sweep*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Partha S. Ghosh in his book, *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre*,⁴⁵ has traced the rise and growth of Hindutva and Hindu nationalism from the initial days of Indian renaissance of the late 19th century to the present. According to the author, Hindu nationalism flourished in this period against the background of a progressive competition amongst several social forces which do not want India to become a Hindu Rashtra. This book is an attempt to critically analyse the future prospect of political Hinduism in general and the BJP in particular. This book helps in understanding the growth of Hindu Nationalism in political context in India.

G.N.S. Raghavan in his book, *A New Era In the Indian Polity a Study of Atal Behari Vajpayee and the BJP*,⁴⁶ described the wisdom of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the former Prime Minister of India. In this book Vajpayee's values and ideologies are celebrated as a revival of political values in the Indian politics which degraded peoples aspiration during the freedom struggle. These values were needed after independence to the devastated and poor navigation of India. Further, the author also mentioned about the vital role of Vajpayee in BJP. Vajpayee also had a role in the BJP's vision of social equality and harmony, non-appeasement, economics of mutual sharing, Antyodaya and Swadeshi. This book partially helps to understand BJP's Policies.

Manish Anand in his book, *The Enabler Narendra Modi: Breaking Stereotypes*,⁴⁷ has written how Narendra Modi became the second RSS pracharak (bachelor preacher) Prime Minister of India. Before him, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had flung open the office for a saffron outfit. Vajpayee firmed up the BJP as a reliable alternative at the national politics. Yet he

⁴⁵ Partha S Ghosh. (1991). *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre*. Delhi: Manohar Publisher's.

⁴⁶ G.N.S. Raghavan. (1998). *A New Era In the Indian Polity a Study of Atal Behari Vajpayee and the BJP*. Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.

⁴⁷ Manish Anand. (2015). *The Enabler Narendra Modi: Breaking Stereotypes*. Delhi: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.

could not knock out the Congress. In the 2014 verdict, Modi gave near mortal blows to the Congress. The journey down the hill for the Congress is not yet over. The Congress leaders are aware that a decade of Modi rule would break down the life support of the party. As Narendra Modi is also aware of the fact, so BJP has accommodated regional political parties to keep congress party away from the power. The script of confrontational Indian polity with the arrival of Modi was written in the 2014 verdict. This book helps in understanding the BJP,s rise with Modi and debacle of Congress party nationwide.

Kingshuk Nag in his book, *The Saffron Tide: the Rise of the BJP*,⁴⁸ 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. The origin of BJP can be trace back the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, which was established by Syama Prasad Mookerjee in 1951 in order to take up the issue of Hindu Bengalis in the erstwhile East Pakistan. In order to defeat Indira Gandhi in 1977, a small player like Jana Sangh which formed alliance with several other parties to form Janata Party started playing significant role in Indian politics. In 1980 when the Janata party was collapsed, leaders from Jana Sangh background formed the BJP. The party has all India presence with a substantial support base, not only in India but also among the Hindu Diaspora worldwide. This book helps partially in understanding the BJP's journey from a small political force to a powerful national political party.

Rajat Sethi & Shubhrastha in their book, *The Last battle of Saraighat: The Story of the BJP's Rise in the North-east*,⁴⁹ has written about the BJP's landslide victory in the 2016 Assam legislative assembly elections. The title refers to the famous battle of Saraighat that

⁴⁸ Kingshuk Nag. (2014).*The Saffron Tide the Rise of the BJP*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications.

⁴⁹ Rajat Sethi & Shubhrastha. (2017). *The Last battle of Saraighat: The Story of the BJP's Rise in the North-east*. Delhi: Viking.

the Assamese soldiers, led by legendary general Lachit Borphukan who fought against the mighty Mughals and the victory of Ahom army. In the book, the author duo tried to draw a comparable line between the BJP's landslide victory in 2016 Assam assembly election and the decisive victory of the Ahom's in 1671. There is no contradiction to the fact that the 2016 Assam assembly polls were a turning point in Assam's political history. According to the author, this election marked the end of 15 years of the Congress regime which was full of corruption and miss governance. It was clear that the internal conflict in the Gogoi cabinet in the last few years of Congress rule had affected the functioning of government. This has added fuel to the mass rage against the Congress that was gradually building up in Assam's polity. The 2016 assembly election was transformed by BJP as a local vs. illicit Bangladeshi Muslims and also as a last chance to save Assam from the intrusion of Bangladeshis. The authors are also critical about the Federal system and stated that because of over centralization separatist tendencies have increased in Assam. They overemphasize the role of RSS on the victory in the Assembly elections. This book is written by insiders and helpful in understanding the insiders view and also the phenomenon of 2016 Assam election.

Sava Naqvi in her book *Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi*⁵⁰ has stated that in the contemporary Indian politics BJP is a predominant political player. In its journey from coalition politics of 1998, when it first came to power to single-party hegemony in the post 2014 periods, the BJP has emerged as a very different entity. The author has stated the story from party's formation in 1980 to its two governments. The book examines the role of RSS cadre and its relations with elected leaders, the issue of political finance and the social expansion of the party. Further, the personality cult like, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and then Narendra Modi remained influential in the BJP. In this book, the author has provided an

⁵⁰ Sava Naqvi. (2018). *Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi*. Chennai: Westland Publications Private Limited.

account of the party's difficult journey from 'untouchability' means when allies were unwilling to join then its presumed 'invincibility' today. The book reveals interesting details about the inner working of the Vajpayee administration. However, when it comes to the Modi years, the book is not as revelatory as one would like it to be.

Radhika Ramaseshan in her article "The BJP and RSS: Family Squabbles Turn Intense,"⁵¹ has analysed the intense relations between the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the BJP. It has been explained by the author that the Bharatiya Janata Party is always being controlled by the RSS. It is important to mention here that there have been many changes in the relationship between the RSS and BJP in last two decades. But in the recent time the current RSS chief, Mohan Bhagwat favoured "regional" leadership of the party than the Delhi-based leaders. The run-up to the Parliamentary elections of 2014 will tell if the BJP will assert its identity or the RSS will try to regain complete control. This article helps us to understand the link between BJP and RSS.

Shaila Seshia in her article, "Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata party,"⁵² has critically looked into the rise of BJP in India over the years emphasising on divide and rule policy. According to the author, though the secularism is the basic characteristics of the Indian state, but one cannot deny the presence of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics. In the 19th century itself the concept of Hindu nation, which is a central tenet of Hindu nationalism originated. But before the BJP no political party which supported this ideology has such level of mass support. She also discussed how and why has the BJP moved from the political fringe into the centre and why its politics of Hindu

⁵¹ Radhika Ramaseshan. (2013). The BJP and RSS: Family Squabbles Turn Intense. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 48(6), pp. 12-15.

⁵² Shaila Seshia. (1998). Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38(11), pp. 1036-1050.

nationalism overtly or covertly articulated is so prominent now. This article provides critical understanding of the BJP and how its policies led to polarisation in the society.

Sutapa Lahiri 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”,⁵³ has analysed the close relationship between BJP and Jana Sangh. The work on the paper is divided into five sections. The First section of the paper inspects the governing factors leading to the evolution of two parties; the second section looks into the ideological affinity between the Jana Sangh and BJP; the third section deals with the similarity in the pattern of organizational arrangement of the Jana Sangh and BJP; the fourth section of the paper examines the strategies of electoral mobilisation as adopted by Jana Sangh and BJP. Finally, the last section conclusion covers, in brief, the salient results and analysis emerging principally from previous works. This article helps one to partially understand ideology and organisational setup of the BJP.

H. Srikanth in his article, “Communalising Assam: AGP's Loss Is BJP's Gain”,⁵⁴ has stated that in last two decades the politics of regional identity has kept the politics of Hindutva at distance in Assam. But the poor performance of the AGP government's and the rise of Muslim fundamentalism led the Bengali and Assamese caste Hindus to vote for the BJP. The AGP tried to play the same game and succeeded in driving the Muslims to the Congress fold. Thus with majority of caste Bengali and caste Assamese Hindus turning to the BJP whereas, the Muslims and other minority groups rallying behind the Congress Party, Assam state is set for yet another political experiment, perhaps, with more disastrous consequences ahead for the state as well as the people. The ethnic-linguistic division in

⁵³ Sutapa Lahiri. (2005). 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. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 66(4), pp. 831-850.

⁵⁴ H. Srikanth. (1999). Communalising Assam: AGP's Loss Is BJP's Gain. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34(49), pp. 3412-3414.

Assam may further led to the religious division among the communities. According to the author peoples dissatisfaction with the AGP and AGP government's failure to handle the Bangladeshi issue properly has further made the core voters of AGP isolated from the party. This article helps in understanding BJP's growth in Assam along with the decline of AGP.

Sandhya Goswami in her article "Mixed Verdict"⁵⁵ has highlighted that though the 2004 Lok Sabha elections results were victorious for the Congress, it also marked the revival of the AGP. It was a triangular contest between the Congress, the BJP and the AGP. While the support base of Congress among the minorities remained intact, the linguistic Hindu minority supported the BJP and the indigenous people have rallied behind the AGP. According to Goswami, success of the BJP in the state was not to be attributed for its organisational strength. The results in a way reflect the resurgence of regionalism to a certain extent in the state. The electoral verdict of Assam in 2004 presented a mixed scenario. The result indicated that the Congress had reasons to worry about the May 2006 assembly elections. It all depends upon the Congress government to addresses inherent deficiencies despite the overall success it achieved compared with other parties and make amendments to retrieve its eroded social base.

Sandhya Goswami's "A Fractured Verdict"⁵⁶ was an attempt to analyse the verdict of 2009 Lok Sabha elections to study the social pattern of voting in Assam. According to the author, the term social pattern refers to a significant transformation in the alignment of social groups displaying a deep-rooted fractured politics with almost every community asserting its identity. The political parties opted for state level alliances with the intent of increasing individual seat tallies while they have totally ignored ideological position. The author has also stated that there was multipolar competition and explosion of ethnicities in Assam at that

⁵⁵ Sandhya Goswami. (2004). Mixed Verdict. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39(51), pp. 5523-5526.

⁵⁶ Sandhya Goswami. (2009). A Fractured Verdict. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44 (39), pp. 159-163.

time. There was realignment in the relationships among various kinds of social cleavages which already existed also emerged. The Congress Party in Assam, in 2009 Lok Sabha election had to face loss of two seats from its earlier tally of nine. However the AGP and the BJP had struck a seat-sharing deal so as to avoid a split in their votes. The alliance was expected to sweep Assam by consolidating the Hindu votes, but it did not bring the desired result. Then the BJP's seat tally went up to four against two in 2004, although its vote share has dropped to 16.21% compare to 30.8% in 2004. The AGP contested six seats winning only one and polling 14.60% of the total votes. A number include the AIUDF, BPPF led by Hagrama Mahilary played a crucial role in the election. Furher, the Congress has faced a strong challenge from the newly formed AIUDF, particularly in the minority areas. The understanding between the AGP and the BJP in 2009 election has naturally brought about a new equation in the electoral politics in Assam. Election results clearly established the fact that possibility of a combine with ethnic-based parties rather than with the BJP could have made regionalism much stronger to assert its ingenuity and the dignity of its political and cultural ideology.

Udayon Mishra in his article, “Victory for Identity Politics, Not Hindutva in Assam”,⁵⁷ has stated that during the 2016 Assam assembly elections, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s role was inflated to build up the impression that the Assamese have finally yielded to the Hindutva ideology. This notion is neither supported by the most of the successful BJP candidate’s condition nor by the overall voting pattern of the state. In this election focus was clearly on the protection of the identity and culture of the indigenous people, who are facing rapid demographic change because of the illegal infiltration from the Bangladesh and there was no agenda of Hindutva as such .This was also certainly not the result of a Modi wave. Rather, it was the result of the BJP’s success in making coalition with

⁵⁷ Udayon Mishra. (2016). Victory for Identity Politics, Not Hindutva in Assam. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 51(22), pp. 20-23.

the regional forces like the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and the Rabha, Tiwa and other plains tribal organisations. This article helps to understand how BJP's 2016 victory is victory of Identity politics, but not that of Hindutva agenda.

V. Bijukumar in his article "BJP's Mobilization and Consolidation in North East India"⁵⁸ 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.

Nani Gopal Mahanta's article "Lok Sabha Election in Assam, Shifting of Traditional Vote Bases to BJP"⁵⁹ has highlighted the picture after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections in Assam. Mahanta has stated that, the State has witnessed a notable shift in the electoral politics in the parliamentary elections as the BJP has emerged as the strongest party. The author also argued that, the BJP was successful in bringing together the support of different social groups. In this article, the causes of rise of BJP and its possible consequences have also been outlined systematically. The BJP in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, redeemed its earlier losses, by gaining the support of several social, ethnic and tribal groups of Assam. As most of the Tea Tribes community, Assamese Hindus and Tribals voted for the BJP in that election. The main reasons for the debacle of Congress have been intra-party division, rampant corruption and a lack of governance in the state. Though the BJP gained some seats in other areas but in Barak valley, a Bengali dominated region which was its earlier base, it got a setback. The author has made an important statement that Assam has been polarised on

⁵⁸ V. Bijukumar. (2016). BJP's Mobilization and Consolidation in North East India. *Man and Society, A Journal of North East Studies*. Vol XIII, Winter, 2016.

⁵⁹ Nani Gopal Mahanta. (2014). Lok Sabha Elections in Assam Shifting of Traditional Vote Bases to BJP. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIX (35), pp. 19-22.

religious lines, which will hamper the identity of Assamese and may further restore the Assamese- Bengali division through this Hindutva politics. The first casualty of Hindutva politics in Assam could be the Assamese identity itself.

Malini Bhattacharjee in her article “Tracing the Emergence and Consolidation of Hindutva in Assam”⁶⁰ discusses the origin of RSS and overall activities of Sangh Parivar in Assam. The RSS has been working in Assam since 1946. It has built social networks and established various educational institutions. It also helped the 1950 earthquake sufferers, also supported the Assam movement. It also projected Saint Srimanta Sankardev’s beliefs, ideologies and work. This article becomes significant because Assam, unlike the “Hindi Heartland” states was never a fertile ground for the rise and growth of the politics of Hindutva. Given the fact that this region is demographically complex as it consists of a various races, ethnicities, faiths, customs and cultures, and the multiplicity of issues. This complexity has made it extremely difficult for any ideology which is based on cultural nationalism to find a common ground. In this article attempts have been made to outline how the ideology of Hindu nationalism had come across this tough road to establish itself both institutionally and ideologically at the social and cultural domain of Assam.

Ronojoy Sen in his Article “Assam Assembly Elections: BJP has momentum”⁶¹ 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

⁶⁰ Malini Bhattacharjee. (2016). Tracing the Emergence and Consolidation of Hindutva in Assam. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol LI (16), pp. 80-87.

⁶¹ 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.

illegal migration issue raised by BJP and high turnout in voting percentage strengthened the BJP's position in Assam.

The review of literature reflects that a lot of work has been done on the rise of BJP in India but very few works have nailed the detailed on the rise of BJP in Assam and the role of BJP regime and its implications on society and politics of Assam. Therefore the proposed research work, deals with the rise of BJP not only as a ruling party in Assam, but beyond to cover its socio political implications.

Statement of Problem

The BJP started gaining ground as a non congress force, following the gradual decline of support base of the AGP in the politics of Assam. Increasing Muslim population in the state is a factor which attracted the local people towards the BJP. This trend was clear from 1998 election onwards, and then in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, when the BJP won one seat and two (Lok Sabha) seats respectively. Whereas the AGP, the then ruling party in the state drew zero seat. Thereafter, the BJP gradually strengthened itself. On the other hand, leaders of the AGP were engaged in inner fighting and thus party also faced several splits. This led to the further decline of AGP and weakening of its support base. The BJP had successfully filled that political vacuum. Along with Assam, the BJP was also working on establishing an organisational base in the other North Eastern states, mainly after 2014 general elections when formation of NDA II government was complete.

The BJP came into power in Assam in 2016, with the slogan of “JATI, MATI, BHETI” which means the protection of Land, Identity and Culture of indigenous people. Unlike the Congress, the BJP supported the Assam movement (1979-1985), which was against the illegal immigrants (mainly the Bangladeshis).The Immigration issue remains the most prominent issue in Assam for the last four decades. This issue led to the transformation

of politics of Assam and also resulted in the formation of regional political party like the AGP in Assam. Against the “appeasement policy” of Congress towards the Muslim community, the BJP's agenda was “Development for all and appeasement of none”. With the protection of indigenous people, the BJP also came into power on the issues like price rise, corruption and misrule of Congress government. With these issues and to bring about change and development the BJP led alliance won 86 out of 126 seats in the Assam Assembly Elections of 2016.

As far as the role and functioning of the BJP led government is concerned, there were lot of differences between the agendas and functioning of the BJP before the election and after it gained power. Before the election the BJP was against illegal immigration in Assam. But after coming into power it is criticised for taking a different stand on the whole immigration issue. The BJP is trying to polarise the immigration issue into Hindu Bangladeshis and Muslim Bangladeshis. The BJP led government has some positive implications also, as it is acting positively in the process of NRC upgradation. The BJP led government's stand against corruption is also remarkable. For instance, arrest of the then Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) chairman and other commission members along with many Assam civil service and police service officials. If one analyses the Assamese society one observe that it was very sensitive in nature as it comprises of different communities and various social groups, besides different religions. After the BJP came into power, a clear rift mainly between Hindu and Muslim communities is visible. Because of few controversial policies of the BJP government, and its ideological stand, the indigenous people remained dissatisfied. In any case, there are both positive and negative aspects of BJP led government in Assam.

Significance of the Study

The Present study has focused on the emergence of BJP as a strong political force and its effort to become the ruling party in Assam. It has also tried to assess the contribution of BJP led government in Assam and its socio economic implications. In the study, four sub regions of Assam are also studied which covers all the districts (South Assam, Upper Assam, North Assam and Lower Assam). This study is limited, due to paucity of time and funding. The study is significant as it analyses the rise of the BJP in Assam and its growth elsewhere in the North East India in recent times.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows

1. To study the factors responsible for the rise and growth of BJP in Assam
2. To analyse the performance of BJP led government in Assam
3. To study the implications of BJP regime on the society and politics of Assam

Research Questions

The main research questions of the Study are

1. What factors are responsible for the rise and growth of BJP?
2. What sort of role that the BJP as a ruling party had played in Assam?
3. What are the socio political implications of BJP regime in Assam?

Methodology

The present study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The study estimates the growth of BJP in the state and functioning of its regime. It is both descriptive and analytical. Both primary and secondary sources are used in order to collect requisite data.

In order to collect the primary data, interview has been conducted with fifty selected respondents on the basis of random sampling. Respondents include leaders and MLA's of various political parties, academicians from Gauhati University, Tezpur University, Dibrugarh University and Assam University, besides other institutions were also interviewed to study the subject. Research scholars from various universities, Advocates of High Courts and various district courts, leaders of various student groups and youth organisations were also interviewed. Apart from this, interview has been taken from some randomly selected respondents from the masses in order to get their views on the rise and growth of the BJP and also on the functioning of the BJP led government. Interviews were conducted with structured questionnaire.

Secondary data includes government records like Gazette, Election commission data, Assembly Proceedings, Books, Newspaper, Magazines, Journals, Election Manifestoes, Party records.

Chapterisation

Chapter I: Introduction

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

Chapter II: Rise and Growth of BJP

The second chapter discusses the electoral politics of BJP in Assam and in the last two decades how it gradually strengthened its organisation, popular support, vote share and seat

share in the successive Lok Sabha and Assembly elections (Till 2016 Assembly elections). In this chapter discussions have been made on the role of various Sangh Parivar organisations and also on the factors responsible for the growth of BJP.

Chapter III: Performance of BJP Regime

The third chapter discusses the policies, programmes, and major decisions that has been taken by the BJP regime after forming the government in Assam. This chapter also discusses the performance of the BJP led state government and its socio-political contribution to the state of Assam.

Chapter IV: Socio Political Implications of BJP Regime

The fourth chapter discusses the socio political implications of the BJP regime in Assam. This chapter covers the changes with reference to the socio political aspects of the Assamese society. The data collected from the field survey also constituted major part of this chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusion

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

Conclusions

To sum up for a healthy democracy political parties are important. In the parliamentary form of government, political parties play a vital role, either as a ruling party or an opposition party. So, emergence of the BJP as an alternative political force is significant for Indian democracy. Its ideological position and strong leadership also make it different from other political parties. The BJP also draws its strength from its strong cadres and strong Organisational structure. Regarding its strength, the RSS and other Sangh Parivar

organisations also played a vital role. The BJP can choose its leaders from vast network of Sangh Parivar so it is in a position to choose the strong leaders at various levels. The BJP gradually made its foothold strong in Assam. From 1991 the BJP made its presence felt in the politics of Assam, beginning from Bengali dominated region that is Barak Valley to other parts of the state of Assam. It formed its first govt in Assam in 2016. The party won seven seats in Assam in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and it utilised the issues like anti incumbency against Congress government, misrule, corruption, increase of Muslim population. Thereafter with the help of a rainbow coalition with the regional parties like the AGP and the BPF and other smaller groups the BJP won the Assembly elections. The BJP has also raised the “Illegal Bangladeshi infiltration” issue which is a burning issue in the politics of Assam from the 1970s. The BJP has also taken the opportunity of weakening of the regional party like the AGP. Hence, it is clear that over the years the BJP have emerged as an important factor in the politics of Assam. Hence it became significant to study the rise and growth of the BJP as a party and the role of the BJP regime in Assam.

Chapter II: Rise and Growth of BJP

The second chapter discusses the electoral politics of the BJP in Assam 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.(Till 2016 Assembly elections)

Electoral Politics of BJP in Assam

Electoral politics is an index of popular consciousness, articulation and participation of the electorate in the decision making process.⁶² In a participatory democracy, electoral politics assumes utmost significance since it is the primary mechanism of citizen mobilization. Electoral politics provides the ideas and actions in the process of electing the representatives to govern the state are an important part of the functioning of a democratic state.⁶³ Therefore electoral politics plays a major role in the process of governance in democratic states.

Election plays a vital role in any democracy. Elections are held periodically so that the individuals could elect their representatives according to their preferences. In this context, one can refer the right to vote, which is essentially an individual right as it allows one to elect according to his/her own choice. Therefore, there is a close relation between the study of politics in general and elections in particular. For that the community, association, group, ideology, resources, language, symbols, communication, mobilization and local issues assumes significance.⁶⁴ The channels between the polity and the society, the elites and the masses, the individual and his government are opened up by the elections.⁶⁵ These are instrumental in the process of political socialization and political participation.

Political parties play a vital role in the electoral politics of any democratic country. In the democratic countries like India political parties play an instrumental role. In India, there are many national, regional and local political parties which are influential. Among them, the Bharatiya Janata Party acquires a dominant position in the present day electoral politics of India. The gradual rise and growth of the BJP in various parts of the nation such as the recent

⁶² V. Grover. (1982). *Elections, Electoral Mechanism and Behavior*. New Delhi: Deep & deep Publications. pp. 479-480.

⁶³ *Ibid*

⁶⁴ Bishnu N Mohapatra & Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya. (1996). Tribal-Dalit Conflict Electoral Politics in Phulbani. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XXXI. (2 & 3). p 160.

⁶⁵ N. Palmer. (1976). *Elections and Political Development*. New Delhi: K P Bagchi & Co. p 54.

victory in Assam after continuous 15 years of the Congress rule draw the attention to study the electoral politics of BJP in Assam. The rise and growth of the BJP in Assam can be studied in three phases.

First Phase: 1991-1999

The BJP did not get the support of the Assamese Hindus, as early as in 1991. But it was successful in building its stronghold among the people of Bengali dominated Barak valley, and it won Silchar and Karimganj parliamentary seats.⁶⁶ Further, the influx of a large number of Bengali Hindu refugees after the partition and the presence of a sizeable Muslim population helped to form a strong social base for communal politics. In 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).⁶⁷ During the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, coincided with the anti-Bengali riots in the North- East, the BJP gained considerable foothold among the Hindu Bengalis in the Barak valley. As a result of which in the 1996 assembly elections, the BJP won a few seats from the Barak valley. In the 1996 assembly elections, the BJP contested 117 seats and won four out of 126 seats and secured the vote share of 10.41 per cent.⁶⁸ In this period the BJP improved its vote share and made its presence felt in other regions also.

The BJP however, gained its hold in the Brahmaputra valley from the 1998 parliamentary elections. The BJP offered an attractive package to the whole of north-east in its election manifesto. Further, the BJP talked about the dangers of illegal immigration and promised to stop illegal infiltrators. It also pledged to detect the illegal immigrants who are already settled as well as to delete their names from the voters' list. Abolishing the Illegal

⁶⁶ Jaideep Mazumdar . (2016). "BJP's Emergence In Assam: A Short History," *Swarajya*, April 27, 2016.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸ H. Srikanth, *Op.cit*, pp. 3412-3414.

Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) “IM (DT)” Act and strengthen the existing immigration laws and rules were also the part of electoral manifesto of the BJP. Further, the BJP promised to provide national register of citizens (NRC) and identity cards to all the genuine and legal citizens of Assam. With these promises, the BJP successfully gained the support of Assamese middle class Hindus, particularly in the urban areas.⁶⁹ Therefore in the parliamentary and municipal elections the performance of the BJP is comparatively better in urban areas.

The BJP’s vote share further increased in the state in the parliamentary elections of 1998 to 24.5 per cent, though it won only from Silchar. Contrary to that, the failure of AGP in the 1998 parliamentary elections to win even a single seat indicates future prospects for the BJP. However, this new political development in the state towards a new direction was ignored by the intellectuals of that time.⁷⁰ They were failed to trace the BJPs gradual emergence in the politics of Assam.

Further, along with the state BJP leadership, the national leadership also played an important role to strengthen its support base in Assam. When the NDA came into power at the centre in 1998, special attention was given to Assam. Reference can also be made to the fact that around 90 crore rupees was sanctioned to Assam to control the immigration by the Central govt, which was promised by the BJP during the elections. Apart from that, important initiative was taken by the then Assam Governor, Lt Gen S K Sinha to highlight the issue of growing illegal infiltration in Assam. In a report of 42-page to the home minister, which was published in 1998, he revealed the fact that demographic pattern of Assam had been changed by the continuous illegal infiltration.⁷¹ The report also showed a serious picture that how it

⁶⁹ Jaideep Mazumdar, *Op.cit.*

⁷⁰ H. Srikanth, *Op.cit.*

⁷¹ Namrata Goswami. (2010). “Bangladeshi Illegal Migration into Assam: Issues and Concerns from the Field,” *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, January 11, 2010.

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.⁷² The Governor also suggested that IM (DT) Act should be removed and all detected illegal immigrants should be declared stateless citizens without any voting rights and property rights.⁷³ He was also in the favour of taking some practical measures to resolve the issue of illegal immigration. This report was welcomed by organisations like AASU, which was demanding action against illegal immigrants. After the report, the then home minister promised to take appropriate measures to resolve the issue of immigration.⁷⁴

It is noticed that the illegal immigration issue remained instrumental in generating Political support for the BJP among the 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 the 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 stand point. The Kargil war aided the state BJP leaders in projecting Vajpayee as a national hero, who was capable of dealing with infiltrators.

Further, it can be said that all the developments that had been mentioned earlier provided a fertile ground for the growth and development of the party. The BJP sought to consolidate the Hindu vote bank once they started getting support from the people in the

⁷² *Ibid*

⁷³ *Ibid*

⁷⁴ H. Srikanth, *Op.cit.*

state. In addition to that, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement had tremendous impact on the electoral status of BJP in Assam, as it was influential in mobilising Hindu voters. At first, the BJP began with the minimal support of the Hindu Bengalis of the Barak valley and gradually it started accommodating all other sections of the society. In this way, the BJP made its stronghold in the society and politics of Assam and became an important factor in the electoral politics of Assam.

Apart from the section of religious minorities the politics of Assam was hardly influenced by communal politics. In this context, reference can be made of the parliamentary elections of 1999, when the Congress Party managed to retain all its 10 seats with the help of minority votes. But in that election, the BJP lost its Silchar parliamentary constituency seat because the Congress successfully polarised minority votes to its favour. However, the BJP gained ground in the Brahmaputra valley for the first time after it won both the parliamentary seats of Guwahati and Nagaon. With this achievement, the vote share of BJP increased from 24.5 per cent in 1998 to almost 30 per cent in 1999 elections. After this election the BJP became one of the key opponents to the Congress in most of the parliamentary constituencies.⁷⁵

In Brief, growth and development of the BJP in the first phase revolves around the issues of immigration, communal politics and failure of the regional parties. Historically, the diverse characteristics of Assam never provided the ground for flourishing the seeds of communal politics. But, the gradual growth of Muslim population, especially after the publication of the then Governors report on illegal infiltration, people were apprehensive about the demography and politics of Assam. Further, failure of the regional forces like AGP to tackle the issue of immigration and population growth had certainly led to increasing distrust among people for them. On top of that, appeasement of the Congress towards the

⁷⁵ "Election Results: Full Statistical Reports". Election Commission of India.

Muslim community and soft corner for the Bangladeshi immigrants caused to decline popularity of Congress among the people. All these factors were instrumental in paving the way for the BJP in the electoral politics of Assam.

Second Phase: 1999-2014

The second phase of the BJP in Assam began from the year 2001 Assembly elections, when it contested (in alliance with the AGP) 46 seats and won 8 out of 126 seats and secured the vote share of 9.35 per cent (26.31 per cent votes in seats contested). Later on, in 2004 there was a triangular contest between the Congress, the BJP and the AGP in the Lok Sabha elections. In that election, minority Muslims remained the support base for the Congress, while the BJP was supported by the linguistic Hindus, and the AGP was supported by the indigenous people. The election results of 2004 showed a mixed picture. In these elections, the Congress won maximum number of seats that is, nine but it lost its earlier one seat. Number of seats for the BJP remained the same as before with two seats. On the other side, the AGP won two seats from its earlier intact which was Zero. The 2004 elections ensured the recovery of seats for the AGP and also the BJP maintained its earlier mandate.

In the 2006 Assembly elections, the BJP contested 125 out of 126 seats and won 10 seats and secured the vote share of 11.98 per cent. Assembly elections were held in the year 2011. Though the BJP contested in 120 seats out of 126 seats and was able to win only five seats and it secured 11.27 per cent share of votes. If one compares this with the earlier vote share of BJP it can be seen that there was little progress in it.

In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the AGP and the BJP contested the elections in an alliance to avoid a split in the opposition votes. It was expected that the alliance would gain most of the seats in Assam, with the consolidation of the Hindu votes, but result was not as expected. In the election, the BJP's seats increased to four seats from two. But its vote share

decreased to 16.21% compared to 30.8% in 2004. The principal opposition party, the AGP contested in six seats but able to win only one seat and securing the vote share of 14.60%.⁷⁶ The seat sharing between the BJP and the AGP in this election has brought new political equation in the politics of Assam and together won five seats.

The BJP has witnessed a rapid growth of vote share from 1991 elections onwards, with a decline in 2004 and 2009 Lok Sabha elections. In 2009, it has contested in alliance with the AGP, which got 14.6% vote share. The party got the profit of its alliance with the AGP during the 2006 assembly and 2009 Lok Sabha elections. The Assamese Hindus, the Assamese Muslims and tribals which constituted the support base of AGP had slowly shifted its support to other political parties. Main political agenda of the AGP, the anti illegal immigrants stand and demand for the deportation of illegal immigrants was in the last two decades, gradually seized by the BJP.⁷⁷ This also proved helpful for the BJP in gaining peoples support.

The BJP set the illegal migration as a major agenda in the 2011 assembly elections. As a result, the party suffered a setback in the Barak valley, a Bengali dominated region, where the party has had a stronghold. While the Hindu Bengalis were the support base of the BJP, they voted for the Congress party, as the party lost its all five seats. In the Barak valley out of the 15 seats, Congress won 13 and the AGP and the AIUDF won one each respectively.⁷⁸ Because of the BJP's focus on illegal immigration its support base shifted to the Congress party and Congress emerged as the largest party in Barak valley.

In other words, during the period of 1999 to 2014, the BJP has expanded its base and strengthened its organization as well as its support base. Slowly and gradually, from a

⁷⁶ Sandhya Goswami, *Op.cit*, pp. 159-163.

⁷⁷ Nani Gopal Mahanta, *Op.cit*, pp. 19-22.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

political party of third or fourth position, it established itself as a key player and alternative to the INC in the politics of Assam. In this phase, the party has gradually increased its vote share and the number of seats. The BJP was also successful in raising the regional issues like illegal migration from Bangladesh, which also helped the party in creating its support base even in the second phase.

Third Phase: 2014-2016

The 2014 Lok Sabha elections in Assam were remarkable in the process of Political growth of the BJP in Assam. The party recorded the highest number of seats in this election. It was primarily due to the mis governance, misrule and corruption of the Congress led UPA government, a strong anti incumbency emerged against the government. Together with this, a strong pro Modi wave across the country and the appeals of the BJP to bring about change worked so well as to mobilise people to vote for the party in large numbers.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP won seven seats (half of the total 14 seats) and secured the vote-share of 36.86 per cent. The BJP recovered itself from previous losses in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, it gained the support of several social, ethnic and tribal groups of Assam. Infact the BJP gained among the tea tribe communities. The tea tribal workers felt alienated from the Congress, when they remained deprived for years from employment opportunities education and health services.⁷⁹ For instance, in the Dibrugarh parliamentary constituency, the BJP has secured the largest vote share in all the nine legislative assembly segments which is dominated by tea tribes. The party has also gained Tezpur and Jorhat parliamentary constituencies, dominated by the tea garden (tribes) from the INC. Along with the voters of tea garden areas, the party also gained among the Assamese Hindus and the tribal population of the state. Yet, the Autonomous District (ST) parliamentary seat dominated by the Karbi, the Dimasa, the Kuki, the Zeme Nagas and others tribes was won by

⁷⁹ Udayon Mishra, *Op.cit*, pp. 20-23.

the Congress. The plain tribes' communities like the Mishings and to some extent the Bodo voters voted in favour of the BJP.⁸⁰

However the BJP lost its Silchar seat in 2014 to the INC. The party remained in second position in both Silchar and Karimganj seats of Barak valley. In the lower Assam the BJP's position was not strong. Though, it came second in the Barpeta parliamentary constituency and third in the Dhubri parliamentary constituency, both of these are basically dominated by the Muslims.⁸¹

Meanwhile, in the municipal polls held in February 2015, the BJP made a clean sweep by winning 21 municipal boards and 24 town committees, which is better than its performance in the previous elections held in 2009 when it was able to win only five municipal boards and 11 town committees. Thus the BJP has gradually projected itself as a credible alternative to the INC by the 2016 Assembly elections.⁸²

In the 2016 Assembly elections, out of 126 seats, the BJP won 60 seats with a vote-share of 29.51 percent, its coalition partners the AGP won 14 seats and the BPF secures 12 seats, with a vote-share of 8.14 per cent and 3.94 per cent respectively. It was a memorable victory for the BJP in Assam. Former alliance partner of the Congress, the BPF moved towards the BJP for the development of the Bodo Territorial Council (BTC). Infact the BPF ended its alliance with the Congress and thereby instigating the Bodo peoples against the illegal immigration of Bangladeshi Muslims raising the bogey of threats from migrants. However, in the 2011 assembly elections, the BPF secured 12 seats and joined the Congress Government but ended its alliance with the Congress in 2014. Moreover, the anti- Muslim

⁸⁰ V. Bijukumar , *Op.cit.*

⁸¹ Nani Gopal Mahant, *Op.cit.*

⁸² V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

sentiment generated in the Bodo areas of Assam describing it as anti-Muslim went in favour of the BJP.⁸³

In the 2016 Assembly elections, the BJP and its allies, the AGP, the BPF and other small local parties, formed a government which has ended the 15 year long Congress rule in the state. This is the first time the BJP became a ruling political party in the North Eastern part of India. In this election, the BJP contested 89 seats and won 60 seats with a vote share of 29.51 per cent (NDA won 86 seats in total).

The ruling Congress party won only 26 seats with a vote share of 30.96 per cent. However, the AIUDF, which is regarded as the party of East Bengal origin Muslims, won 13 seats with a vote share of 13.05 per cent. In the previous (2011) assembly elections, the BJP won only five seats and the ruling Congress party won 78 seats. The AGP, the AIUDF and the BPF won 10, 18 and 12 seats respectively. The AGP has strengthened its position in the assembly elections by forming an alliance with the BJP.

Table No: 2.1

Political Parties	Year of Election			
	2011		2016	
	Vote Share	Seat Share	Vote Share	Seat Share
BJP	11.47	5	29.51	60
INC	39.39	78	30.96	26
AGP	16.29	10	8.14	14
AIUDF	12.57	18	13.05	13
BPF	6.13	12	3.94	12

Source: Election Results: Full Statistical Reports. Election Commission of India.

Further, it is observed that in this phase, the BJP has emerged as a major political force in the politics of Assam. It won seven seats in the Lok Sabha elections of 2014 and

⁸³ *Ibid.*

formed the first BJP-led government in Assam in particular and North-East in general. The BJP has made its foothold strong in both the Brahmaputra as well as in the Barak valley. In the assembly elections the party won seats in almost all areas of the state, it may be Hills or plains for that matter. The rainbow coalition done by the BJP with the AGP, the BPF and Rabha and Tiwa groups also helped the BJP to a great extent. It helped the BJP to gain support of several the groups, irrespective of their ethnicity, identity or language.

Organisational Growth and development of BJP

Appropriating Sankardev by RSS

At present, the Sangh Parivar's vast network is spread in almost all aspects of the society and politics of Assam.⁸⁴ The Sangh Parivar was active in appropriating Sankardev, a popular socio-cultural and religious reformer of Assam. Sankardev, in the 15th and 16th centuries, led neo-Vaishnavite reform movement to simplify Hinduism, which is called "Ekasaraniya Nama Dharma".⁸⁵ He established the *sattras* (monasteries) throughout Assam. The *Sattras* became socio-cultural and religious centres for organizing community prayers, providing religious discourses and a platform for performance of the *Bargeet* (devotional songs), the *Ankiya Naat* (one kind of drama) and the *shravana-kirtanas*. The *Sattriya* dance, a dance form was also created by him. The institution of *sattras* emerged as centre of equality as their simplicity draw people irrespective of castes, class or religion.⁸⁶ The *Sattras*, *Sattriya* culture and the institution related with Sankardev have been given high respect and position in the society of Assam.

⁸⁴ Malini Bhattacharjee, *Op.cit*, pp. 80-87.

⁸⁵ H. Deka. (2006). *The Assamese Mind: Contours of a Landscape. Where the Sun Rises When Shadows Fall*. G Sen. (ed.) New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

⁸⁶ U 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.

The popularity of Saint “Sankadev” was extensively used by the Sangh Parivar. In the year 1979, RSS’s primary education wing Shishu Shiksha Samiti was established. In the same year in Guwahati, on Sankadev’s birth anniversary, its first school was established and named Sankardev Shishu Niketan. They have tactfully selected the timing, name and the medium of instruction in Assamese. Their basic objective was to attract the Assamese students in large numbers. In a short time, these schools became popular. On the other hand, in the Bengali dominated areas like Barak valley, the medium of instruction was Bengali. Many *acharyas* (teachers) of these schools are *swyamsevaks* of the RSS, from different parts of the country but they are fluent in local languages. Syllabuses of these schools are same as that of RSS run *shishumandirs* throughout the country. This syllabus includes mainly Sanskrit, Vedic mathematics, geography, history, science. Along with chanting of Saraswati Vandana, Shanti path and Gayatri mantra, Sankardev’s ethos was also incorporated. Singing of Borgeet and events to celebrate Sankardev’s birth and death anniversary are also mandatorily observed in these schools. Along with the RSS founders like Hedgewar and Golwalkar, and pictures of Bharat Mata, the picture of Saint Sankardev was also placed. At present, 490 such schools are under operation across Assam under the banner of Shishu Shiksha Samiti.⁸⁷

A Powerful organisation of Vaishnav devotees, the SankardevSangha, invites important leaders of RSS and SanghParivar in their programmes.⁸⁸The Sangha Parivar in various Hindu *sammelans*(assemblies) organized by the VHP also invites *sattradhikaris* (chief of the *Sattras*).Illegal immigration of Muslims from Bangladesh and conversions by Christian missionaries are the common concerns among these organisations. Infact, some of the *sattradhikaris* are of the VHP background and they are crucial in communicating a feeling

⁸⁷ Source: Vidya Bharati website: <http://www.vbassam.org/docs/schools/List%20of%20Schools.pdf>, accessed on 20 September 2018.

⁸⁸ H. 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.

of strong Hindutva to these institutions. Reports have clearly mentioned that Borduwa *Sattra* has suffered massive encroachment by the Bangladeshis, and therefore needs to be rescued.⁸⁹ A report published in the “Organiser” also glorifies the role of Saint Sankardev in incorporating several tribal groups within the fold of Hinduism.⁹⁰

It is important to mention that Mahapurush Sankardev was a proponent of Hinduism and who also prevented conversion to Christianity among the tribes.⁹¹ In the state, the impact of Neo-Vaishnavism is visible regarding the softening, and in many aspects abolition of unequal or biased orthodox practices, and rituals of Hindu society and caste system.⁹² Hence, by and large Assam is free from social evils like communalism and casteism.

Therefore, from the beginning, proponent of Hindutva have adopted unique techniques for operating in the region and to establish it in the Peoples cultural and political imagination as the region is much more complicated than other parts of the country. In Assam, the Sangha Parivar has taken traditional cults and symbols that are linked with Kamakhya and Sankardev *Sattra* traditions instead of its traditional mass mobilization techniques of appeals in the name of Hindu gods like “Lord Ram” or “Ram Mandir of Ayodhya”. Along with this by providing welfare services in the sphere of education, health and cultural development, by its affiliated organizations, it consolidates its support base.⁹³ Sangh Parivar has used the local icons so that they can connect with the people easily.

⁸⁹ “18 Satras in Assam encroached by illegal Muslim Bangladeshis,” *Time8*, Exclusive, May 23, 2018.

⁹⁰ Organiser, (2006a): “Bangladeshi Infiltration: Borduwa, Shankar Dev’s Seat of Vaishnavism in Assam, under Siege,” 21 May.

⁹¹ Malini Bhattacharjee, *Op.cit.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Christophe Jaffrelot. (2016). “BJP’s Assam win is proof Hindutva has reached areas where it was marginal,” *The Indian Express*, June 11, 2016.

Hindutva: The Role of various socio cultural organizations of Sangh Parivar

While analyzing the BJP's rise in the state, role of various socio cultural organizations of the Sangh Parivar in spreading the ideology of Hindutva can be recognized. In Assam, the BJP and RSS's gradual emergence and the AIDUF's establishment in 2005 has a contribution in transforming the Assamese-Bengali division to a Hindu-Muslim division. Issue of Illegal immigration of Bangladeshis has been used by various Sangh Parivar organizations to mobilize the people.⁹⁴ They successfully picked up this sensitive issue and able to gain the confidence of the people.

On the issue of immigration the stand of Sangh Parivar and other regional organization like the AASU and the AGP is quite different. The Sangh parivar always maintains a distinction between the Hindu Bangladeshis and the Muslim Bangladeshis. They consider Hindus as refugees and Muslims as infiltrators.⁹⁵ However AASU and AGP favors deportation of illegal foreigners or Bangladeshis irrespective of any religion.

The RSS successfully controlled the BJP leadership which is mostly of the non RSS background. Because of this victory of the BJP in Assam is regarded as exceptional. It was a great success for the BJP in Assam as it became a favorite from the beginning of 2016 assembly elections, whereas few years ago its presence was negligible. Credit for this also goes to the RSS pracharaks, karyakartas and the persons who made such political strategies. The feeling of Hindutva 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.⁹⁶ By using anti Bangladeshi card, it prepared a fertile ground for the BJP

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Malini Bhattacharjee, *Op.cit.*

⁹⁶ "How the RSS plans to win Assam for the BJP," rediff.com. April 11, 2016.

The BJP for the first time made an alliance with the BPF and other tribal groups. It also welcomed the talented and mass based leaders from the AGP as well as the INC who never had ideological affiliation towards the RSS. This has created a new set of leadership in Assam ignoring the ideological aspect.⁹⁷ These new leaders have also helped BJP in gaining ground in many areas.

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 areas of Assam from the colonial days also provided ground for them to play the anti- Christian card.⁹⁸ These issues all together helped the RSS and the BJP to make its stronghold.

The above discussions have clearly stated the important role of the RSS and its affiliated organizations in building a strong support base for the BJP. They have not only utilized the political sentiments of people but they have also reached out to the socio cultural emotions of people in the region. To highlight that for any political party to flourish it is important to gain the confidence of the people. The RSS has done that ground work for the BJP to some extent through its organizations and various techniques.

Support Base of BJP in Assam

The BJP’s emergence in Assam is remarkable. The party understood that Assam could be a fertile ground for its growth and development as Assam was already having a division and antagonism between the Assamese-speaking Hindus and the Muslims of East Bengal origin. Though the hill and the plain tribes have serious differences with the Assamese, they can be

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

united on the issue of “*Aboidha Bideshi*” or “Bangladeshi” or Illegal immigrants. The Congress governments at the center as well as in the state never gave importance to solve the issue of illegal immigration and deportation of the infiltrators. It was alleged that the Congress party had always used the illegal Muslim population as a vote bank and patronized them. After the release of population census data 2011, the increase of Muslim population has become a major issue.⁹⁹The People of Assam are worried about a “Tripura like situation” where the immigrants outnumbered the local tribal population.¹⁰⁰

The BJP got support from the majority communities like the Assamese Caste Hindus, tea tribes, the hills and plain tribes. On the other hand, the Muslims of East Bengal origin in order to protect their interests had supported the AIUDF. In Assam, the INC was regarded as the traditional protector of the Muslims. But, with the Supreme Courts scrapping of the IM (DT) Act in 2005 and later with the rise of the 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. Just before the 2006 assembly elections, IM (DT) Act of 1983 was scrapped by the Supreme Court, and it greatly worried the Muslim community of the state. By introducing the Foreigners (Tribunal for Assam) order of 2006, the INC tried to appease the Muslim community but failed to satisfy them.¹⁰¹After the Supreme courts decisions, in the month of October 2005 AIUDF came into existence. It virtually replaced the Congress party in the Muslim dominated areas in the subsequent assembly and parliamentary elections.

The Population Census 2011 claims that since 2001, Assam witnessed the highest growth in Muslim population. Fearing the implications of report, the UPA government delayed it for two years and the NDA government also delayed it for one year. So, the BJP

⁹⁹ “Census 2011: Assam records highest rise in Muslim population,” *Times of India*, January 22, 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Nani Gopal Mahanta, *Op.cit.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

led NDA governments timing of release of the data was very crucial. After this the BJP and other political parties and civil society organizations had taken up the census report and blamed the incumbent Congress government in the state for the failure to stop the infiltration from the Bangladesh. The census report was released just few months prior to the assembly elections. Even during the 2016 assembly elections this issue was raised.¹⁰² The census reports data regarding growth of Muslim population has been thoroughly used by the BJP in the election campaign.

The INC has lost its support base among the tea tribes in the last 15 years and the BJP gained the most. The BJP was trying to make inroads among the tea garden workers, as they played a vital role in the elections. At the same time, it is important to note here that the tea tribes or tea garden workers community are fighting for the Scheduled Tribe status.¹⁰³ They are not regarded as immigrants by political parties or any student organization even though they had a clear history of migration from the undivided Bengal, Bihar and present day Jharkhand. In the year 1979, while the Assam movement (movement against the illegal immigrants) was at its peak, the Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All Assam Tea Tribes Students' Union (ATTSA) declared in a joint statement that tea tribes or tea garden workers were an integral part of the Assamese community as they merged into the local society.¹⁰⁴ So Tea tribe community is not regarded as outsiders in Assam.

Issue of the illegal immigrants remained at the centre and played a decisive role in the 2016 assembly election. In the last four decades, during elections the issue of illegal immigrants played a vital role. But, in the 2016 assembly elections the issue played a bigger role. The BJP along with its coalition partners the AGP has made the illegal immigration a

¹⁰² Uddipta Ranjan Boruah. (2015). Winds Of Change In Assam's Politics: Advantage BJP? – Analysis. *South Asia Monitor*, September 13, 2015.

¹⁰³ Maitreyee B Chowdhury. (2016). "How The BJP Is Steadily Growing In Assam, *Swarajya*," April 04, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

major issue and also promised to take action against illegal infiltrators (Bangladeshi). As in the present time with the emergence of AIUDF, as a key player in the politics of Assam and rise of the Muslim population, a sense of fear of being marginalized is clear among the Assamese Hindu population. Thus, the BJP is utilizing this fear psychosis among the people.¹⁰⁵ It has successfully played the Hindu card during 2016 assembly elections.

The BJP has kept aside its national agenda and issues, and took up the regional issues like illegal migration, and deportation of the illegal immigrants, which were actually the issues of AGP. Further, the BJP has taken over regional or the local issues of the AGP. The BJP mainly focuses on the illegal immigration of Muslims, not of the Hindu Bengalis. The Hindu Bengalis of Assam are considered as the major support base of the BJP. The BJP supports the Hindus coming or migrating to India from the Bangladesh on the grounds of religious persecution. Further, the statement of the BJP's National president Amit Shah, in his Assam visit said that the BJP would provide all support to Hindus who came to India because of religious persecution. He also promised that if the party came to power in the 2016 Assam Assembly elections, it would provide the Indian Citizenship.¹⁰⁶

Growth of the BJP in the state's politics of Assam, is related with the anti incumbency against 15 years of Congress rule and loss of the AGP's support base among the masses. With the changing of times and weakening of regionalism, the AGP gradually lost its prominence. During the Assam movement regionalism and regional feeling was at its peak. It also resulted in the formation of the AGP in the 1985 and also forming the government after 1985 assembly elections. The AGP came into power on the issue of "Illegal immigration" but the regional party failed to deliver on its promises and gradually its supporters became disappointed and this became a golden opportunity for the BJP. Issue of illegal immigration

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

of the Muslims has been given the prime focus by the BJP for the expansion of its support base in Assam. Furthermore, the alliances between the BJP and the AGP in both the 2006 Assembly and 2009 Lok Sabha elections have benefited the BJP. The political vacuum created by the AGP was filled by the BJP. Many prominent leaders of the AGP joined the BJP before the Lok Sabha and assembly elections, which also benefited the party.¹⁰⁷ The BJP has virtually replaced the AGP as a principal non congress political party.

The above highlight the fact that the BJP's agendas such as "Illegal immigration" and growth of Muslim population, Development and to preserve "*Jati Mati Bheti* " and the BJP's success in making inroads among various groups and communities helped the BJP to mobilise people. Further peoples disillusion with the Congress party as well as the political vacuum created by the AGP, also helped the party to strengthen its support base in Assam.

Factors responsible for the growth of BJP in Assam

The most important factor responsible for the growth of the BJP in Assam was the debacle of the Congress, due to the intra-party division, massive corruption and the absence of good governance in the state. The then Education and Health Minister, powerful Congress leader Himanta Biswa Sarma along with 45 MLAs was carrying an anti Tarun Gogoi operation for two years to remove Gogoi from the chief ministers post. But he was failed in his attempt .At least in three of the parliamentary constituencies that is, Tezpur, Lakhimpur and Barpeta impact of the dissidence proved costly for the INC. Another blow for the Congress was Sarma's (NEDA convener) joining the BJP along with nine MLAs and many party leaders.¹⁰⁸ Sarma, a former cabinet minister in the then Congress government, present NEDA convener, is regarded as an important factor in the politics of Assam. It has been said that

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Wasbir Hussain. (2016). A Vote For A New Assam? *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* , 14 Apr,2016.

during Sarma's term as minister of health and education, both the departments had seen progression.¹⁰⁹

Further, the BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi's extensive campaign on the issues like illegal migration, Big dam, Boarder Fencing and his commitment to bring solution to these issues have naturally attracted the people of Assam to vote for the BJP. However, the election results of 2014 Lok Sabha clearly indicated that the people largely voted against the INC, which subsequently became beneficial for the BJP. As people were not satisfied with the performance of INC in its third term under the leadership of Tarun Gogoi. One can refer here to the massive ethnic and community clashes which took place during the Congress rule in various parts of Assam. For example, the four districts of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) area, Darrang, Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao were the districts which had seen the wrath of communal clashes many times where both life and property were lost.¹¹⁰ In the BTAD it was mainly between the Bodos and the Muslims. It was because of the failure of Gogoi administration to control the increasing hatred between the communities and rehabilitate the victims in time.¹¹¹

In Assam, the upsurge of BJP is very interesting. The party was successful in adjusting in the local and regional atmosphere. Sarbananda Sonowal, Chief ministerial candidate of the BJP was fielded from Majuli, which is regarded as the centre of Vaishnav *Sattras* (monasteries) in Assam; it is also called the *Sattra Nagari*. Besides, throughout Assam, the existences of the *Sattras* have been threatened by land encroachment by immigrants from Bangladesh¹¹². Another important connection with the *Sattra* is about the Hindutva ideology. Thus, the contest of election from Majuli by the Chief ministerial

¹⁰⁹ Uddipta Ranjan Boruah, *Op.cit.*

¹¹⁰ Nani Gopal Mahanta, *Op.cit.*

¹¹¹ V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

¹¹² Maitreyee B Chowdhury, *Op.cit.*

candidate of the BJP has given the message that the BJP wanted to free the *Sattras* land from the encroachers and is in favor of protecting the *Sattras*.

Tremendous victory of the BJP in the Assam assembly elections is not only remarkable for its huge margin but also for the aspirations it carries. The Party's first victory in Assam in particular and North East in general was extensive. The BJP led alliance won 86 out of 126 seats with a total vote share of 41.5 per cent. The mandate was a strong reaction against the 15 years of Congress rule. The same sort of happiness and high expectations among the people was seen last time in the 1985 assembly elections, when the newly formed the AGP (Now alliance partner of the BJP) defeated the Congress party on the issue of detection and deportation of "Illegal immigrants" mostly from the Bangladesh. Even after three decades of Assam Accord, issue of Illegal immigrants was unresolved. Therefore, the BJP in the whole election focused on solving the problem of Illegal Infiltration or Foreigners issue and also promised all round development or *SarbanginVikas* of the state. Sarbananda Sonowal and Campaign Committee convener Himanta Biswa Sarma were also regarded as credential faces for this two poll promises. As Sonowal was known for his legal fight in the scrapping of the IM (DT) Act in 2005 by the Supreme Court, as the act was regarded as the main hindrance in the way of solving the foreigners issue.¹¹³ On the other hand, Sarma was known for his achievements as the minister of Health and Education in the Congress government led by Tarun Gogoi.¹¹⁴ Sonowal and Sarma worked hand in hand successfully to overthrow the INC which was already weakened by intra party rift. The BJP used the anti incumbency and went into elections with the agenda of development and identity. The party appealed the masses to vote in the name of safeguarding their "*maati, bheti and jati*" (land, hearth and nationality).¹¹⁵

¹¹³ "IMDT Act is the biggest barrier to deportation, says Supreme Court," *The Hindu*, July 14, 2005.

¹¹⁴ "Inclusion plus development," Editorial, *The Hindu*, May 23, 2016.

¹¹⁵ Udayon Mishra, *Op.cit.*

In brief, it can be summed up that various factors together helped the BJP to strengthen its hold in Assam. Those factors were strong anti incumbency against the Congress government, issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh, corruption and RSS and BJP's systematic effort to build its mass base by adopting various techniques were responsible for the rise and growth of the BJP in Assam.¹¹⁶

Another narrative

The story line of the victory of the BJP may fall in another direction. If one looks into the matter from another perspective, some different factors may come out for the Victory for the BJP. In the above section, one can argue that rise and growth of the BJP basically revolves around the issue of Hindutva. But unlike rest of India, Hindutva was not the only factor, along with Hindutva emphasis was also given on preserving the Identity and culture of the indigenous people of the state.

There is another narrative that states about how the 2016 assembly election was fought mainly on the issue of Identity. Therefore, the ideology of Hindutva was not the soul factor of this election. In other words, the focus was given mainly on the preservation of identity and culture of indigenous people. It was mainly because of demographic change that has been taken place over the years because of Bangladeshi infiltrators. Religious data of 2011 population census released on August 2015 shows 34.02 % Muslim population in the state, this census data creates another existential threat in the minds of indigenous people.¹¹⁷ Various student and civil society organizations voiced their concern that if this continued then the local people would be completely marginalized in the politics of state. The AGP was a powerful regional party which had almost lost its relevance in present context. This has brought the issue of identity and culture into focus. The BJP realizing the political under

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Census 2011, *Op.cit.*

current had formed an alliance with the regional powers. The alliance between regional forces and the BJP had become a game changer. However the fear of Congress of losing Hindu vote, the alliance between the INC and the AIUDF did not take place.¹¹⁸

The Political decision to make an alliance with the AGP worked as an advantage for the BJP. After its pathetic performance in the 2011 assembly elections and 2014 Lok Sabha elections where it was able to win nine seats and draw a zero respectively, people who thought that the AGP had lost its mass base totally failed to understand that there was still public sentiment with the regional force. Though the AGP could not win a single seat in the 2014 Lok Sabha, it got more than five lakh votes in the whole state. Further, the regional party still have its organisation in different areas of the state even if it is unable to win more seats. As the alliance was declared between the BJP and the AGP, things started changing. In the assembly elections, concentration of opposition votes proved costlier for the Congress, because divided opposition and division of anti congress votes always helped the Congress party. This resulted in the AGP's winning of 14 seats, with victories of many of its top leaders.¹¹⁹

The alliance with AGP provided the BJP a secular outlook which further helped the party. As many of the AGP leaders already shifted to the BJP, so it made the coalition more comfortable. Many former AGP leaders who contested the election on BJP tickets are still regarded by the voters as supporters of regionalism. Further, at present, a majority of the leaders in the state BJP are coming from AASU and the AGP activists. Even the BJP's chief ministerial candidate Sarbananda Sonowal was a former AASU and AGP leader. Sonowal's projection as the CM candidate was quite beneficial for the BJP, as his image was clean and having acceptability among various sections of the society in Assam. He is regarded as a

¹¹⁸ Udayon Mishra, *Op.cit.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

major voice of the indigenous people and a champion against illegal immigration of Bangladeshis.¹²⁰ Sonowal is credited for his legal fight against the “Illegal Migrants (DT) Act” of 1983, which created hindrances in the process of detection and deportation of illegal immigrants or foreigners. After a long legal battle IM (DT) was scrapped by the Supreme Court in the year 2005.¹²¹ This legal victory against the act made him the true leader of Assamese masses, then he was given the title *jatiyanayak* (national hero). Sonowal represented the AGP in the Assam assembly from 2001 to 2004 and in the Lok Sabha from 2004 to 2009. He was always regarded as a torch bearer of regionalism, even when he joined the BJP in 2011. Sonowal was also regarded as a main factor behind the joining of many AGP leaders.¹²²

Development or *Vikash* was definitely a key issue during the 2016 assembly elections. But the issue of preservation of indigenous peoples land, identity and culture was given a prime focus during the election. “Last battle of Saraighat” or “*Saraighator Shesh Ron*” term was also used during elections by the BJP and this means, the last battle against the illegal immigrants. It was said that along with this election, the issues of identity, land and language again came to limelight.¹²³ And the memories of the “antiforeigner movement” or “*Bideshi kheda Andolan*” or Assam Movement of 1979-85 was also revived.

Along with the AGP, the BJP leadership’s alliance with the BPF, the Rabha and the Tiwa organizations provided the party a tribal friendly image. It helped the BJP led coalition not only in Bodo, Rabha and Tiwa areas but also in the hill tribes areas of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. The BJP nearly replaced the INC which was winning seats in these areas for decades. The alliance with the AGP had neutralized the BJP’s communal image and its

¹²⁰ V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

¹²¹ “IMDT Act is the biggest barrier to deportation, says Supreme Court”, *The Hindu*, July 14, 2005.

¹²² Udayon Mishra, *Op.cit.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

alliance with the BPF helps the party in gaining the support of the Bodo voters across the state along with BPF's victory in 12 seats of BTAD.

When the alliance was declared between the BJP and the AGP, in the beginning there were some protests within both the BJP and AGP workers some areas like Sivasagar, Sonitpur, Bongaigaon, against the alliance. But the leadership of both the parties easily managed this dissent.

Assam is regarded as the entry point of Northeast region. At least for the last two decades the BJP leadership was observing the developments in the politics of state and was trying to fill up the vacuum created by the AGP.¹²⁴ The BJP's entry into Assam also helped the party to get rid of its image as party of Hindi Heartland and established itself as a national party in the true sense of the term.¹²⁵ As after forming the government in Assam the BJP has made its presence in all parts of the Country.

The Bangladeshi infiltration is a major issue in the society and politics of Assam. Because the illegal immigration had already changed the demography of the state and it is having deep rooted impact on the political, economic and socio-cultural life of the people.

The IM (DT) Act was repealed in the year 2005 by the Supreme Court, but the importance of it can't be denied in the present day politics of Assam. Congress was always accused by the BJP of appeasement which created a serious security concern for the nation. The BJP stated that the large scale influxes of illegal infiltration had brought demographic change in Assam and had serious long term impact.¹²⁶ Even in the 2014 Lok Sabha election, in the Vision document the BJP's promise to put end into the illegal immigration and to

¹²⁴ V. Bijukumar, *Op.cit.*

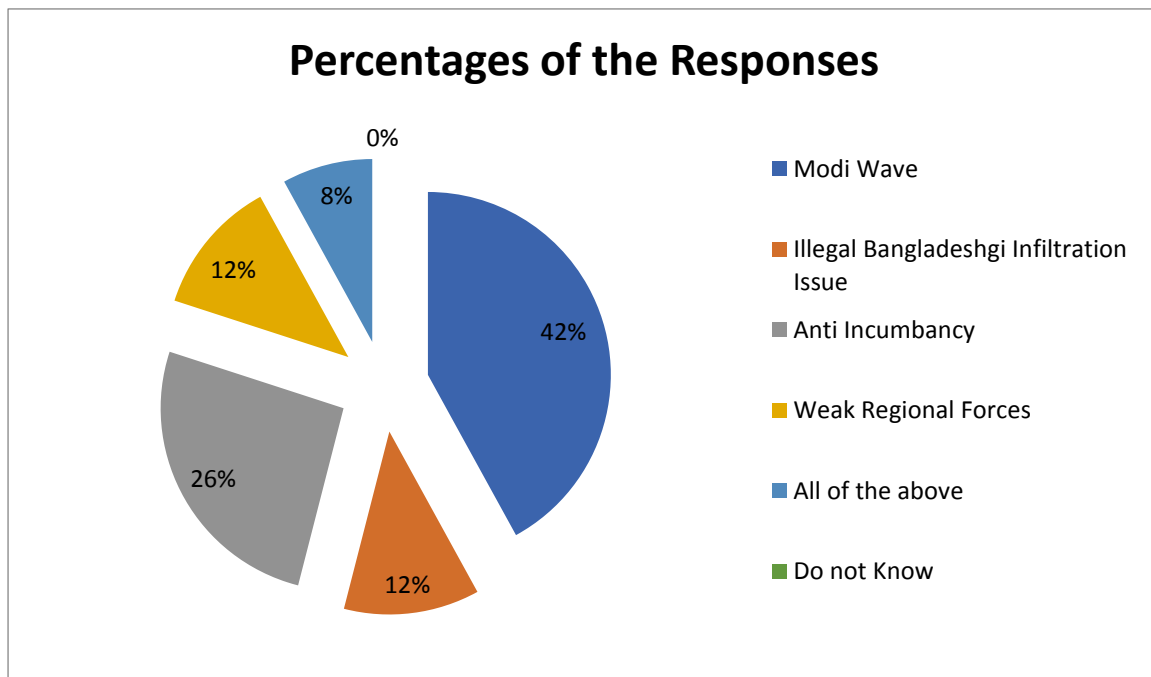
¹²⁵ Wasbir Hussain. (2016). India Election Analysis 2016: Assam –Analysis. *Eurasia review news and analyses*, May 21, 2016.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

follow formula of three Ds, that is Detect, Delete and Deport the illegal infiltrators from Assam.¹²⁷ In the 2016 assembly elections, the Vision document also, of the party promised to stop the infiltrators and to completely seal the Indo-Bangla boarder.¹²⁸ The party also assured of taking strict action against those who employed illegal immigrants.

Questions asked to respondents on the rise and growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party regime in Assam.

Table 2.2: Factors Responsible for the Consolidation of BJP in 2014 Elections in Assam



Source: Data collected from my field study.

Questions were asked to know the view of the respondents on the factors responsible for the consolidation of BJP in 2014 elections in Assam. From the interview it came to notice that 42% respondents believes Modi wave as a most important factor for the resurgence of the BJP in Assam. Another important factor according to the 26% respondent is anti incumbency.

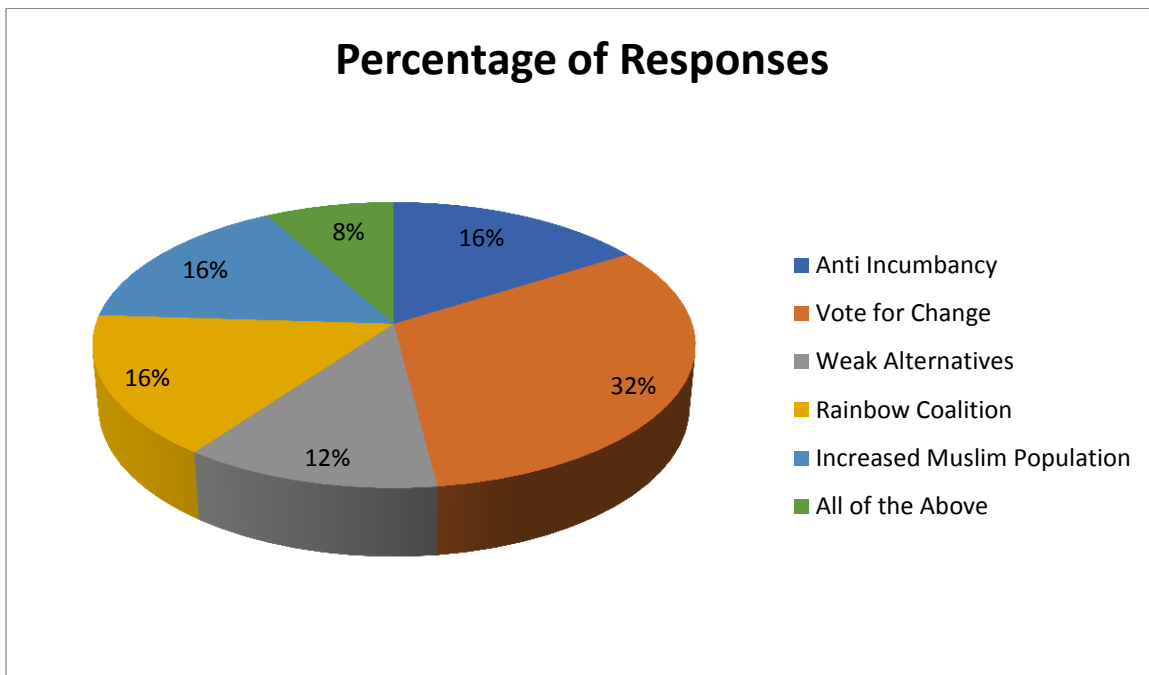
¹²⁷ BJP (2014). Vision Document, 2014.

¹²⁸ Wasbir Hussain ,*Op.cit.*

However 12 % believes that weak regional forces were also a major factor. Among the total respondents only 8% replied that all the factors are together responsible for the BJP’s success in 2014 elections.

From the responses it is clear that Modi wave remain a determining factor in the rise of the BJP in Assam in 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Followed by the factors like anti incumbency, illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue and weak regional forces. During the 2014 Lok Sabha elections even the BJP did not have so strong organisation, but these factors help in gaining ground and won seven seats. This resulted into the mass mobilisation of people in favour of BJP.

Table 2.3: Factors Responsible for the Success of BJP in 2016 Assembly Elections



Source: Data collected from my field study.

To the queries related to the Factors responsible for the success of BJP in 2016 assembly elections in Assam. 32% respondents replied that people basically voted for change which is responsible for the victory of BJP in 2016 Assam assembly elections. Whereas 16 % remarks anti incumbency as a major factor, another 16% replied that rainbow coalition is the main

cause behind the victory of BJP. The study has also shown that around 12 % respondent have selected that weak alternative is also a reason for the victory of BJP in the assembly elections. Apart from this increase of Muslim population also happens to be a major factor behind the success of BJP as per the views of 16% respondents. About 8 % respondent have selected all the factors together responsible for the victory of BJP.

The responses made it clear that unlike the Lok Sabha elections, in the 2016 Assembly elections people basically voted for change. Apart from that anti incumbency, rainbow coalition, increase of Muslim population and weak alternative remain influential for the success of the BJP in 2016 Assembly election in Assam. It can be seen from the responses that there were various factors which triggered the voters to opt for the BJP.

Conclusion

To conclude it, the political parties play an important role in the electoral politics of any functioning democracy. Therefore electoral politics of BJP in Assam is of high importance. From the 1991 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections the BJP gradually started making inroads in the politics of Assam. In the beginning from the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, BJP started to make stronghold in the Bengali dominated Barak Valley region of Assam. Thereafter the BJP gradually started gaining ground in other parts of the state also that is in the Brahmaputra valley which is an Assamese dominated area. With the passing of time BJP's vote and seat share also increased. With the gradual weakening and erosion in the mass base of the main regional party, AGP, it created a vacuum in the opposition space in the state politics. So, the BJP tactfully strengthened its organisation. And various organisations of the Sangh Parivar had also contributed to the building of a support base for the BJP. Increasing number of the Muslims due to the illegal immigration from Bangladesh and the politics of appeasement by the Congress had contributed to the growing mass base of the BJP. Moreover, the 15 years rule of the Congress party has resulted in a strong anti incumbency

that helped the BJP. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections results, when the BJP won seven seats out of 14, it was clear that the BJP has already made a strong base in the state.

Further leaders from across the party also had joined the BJP before and after the Lok Sabha elections, which further enlarged the support base of the BJP. In the form of the BJP, people of Assam got an alternative to the Congress. To end the misrule, corruption, and mis governance of the Congress party, people of Assam largely voted for the BJP led alliance. For the BJP, its alliance with the AGP, the BPF, the Rabha and Tiwa organisations also helped in the consolidation of the anti-Congress votes. Further, the people across the communities voted for the BJP led rainbow coalition. For the BJP, it was its first government in Assam in particular and North East in general.

From the interviews it is clear that behind the consolidation of the BJP in Assam in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections Modi wave played an important role. But factors like Illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue, anti incumbency, weak regional forces also cannot be denied. The study also reveals that more or less all these factors- anti incumbency, weak alternatives, rainbow coalition, increase of Muslim population equally played important role in the success of BJP in 2016 Assam assembly elections. The study shows that most of the respondents have also voted for change.

Chapter III: Performance of BJP Regime

The third chapter will study the policies, programmes, major decisions and performance of the BJP led state government and its socio-political contribution to the state of Assam.

Public Policies are a reflection of the purpose of government without which no government can sustain. Policies are the set of guidelines which are helpful in the process of governance. The success of a government can be assessed by the people through its policies. Public policies are important so that government can be held accountable for that by the people. Policies are the records of the mission and vision of each and every department of the government.¹²⁹

Public policies are dynamic, complex, and interactive which are meant to identify and resolve the problems of people by formulating new policies or by reforming existing policies.¹³⁰ The problems of people are multifaceted, which need to be addressed through various policies.¹³¹ Policy making can be influenced by various factors such as socio-political, economic, cultural and religious.¹³² Public policies are extensively helpful in the process of decision making for governments as they provide widespread direction and broad outlook.

Policy making process is a part of politics and political action. According to Gabriel Almond, political system is a set of interaction having structures, each of which performs its functions in order to keep it like an ongoing concern. It is a set of processes that routinely converts inputs into output. Output activities are those which are carried on by a political system in response to demands or stresses placed upon the system in the form of inputs. Outputs can take the form of governmental policies, programmes, decisions.¹³³ Therefore policy making and its implementation plays a vital role in the process of governance.

¹²⁹ “Importance Of Public Policies,” *The Shillong Times*, Jun 12, 2012.

¹³⁰ Peter John. (1998). *Analysing Public Policy*. New York: Continuum.

¹³¹ Ira Sharkansky, & R. Hofferbert. (1969). Dimensions of State Politics, Economics, and Public Policy. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol 63 (3), pp. 867- 879.

¹³² Michael Hill. (2005). *Public Policy Process*. New Jersey: Pearson.

¹³³ Gabriel Almond. (1978). *Comparative Politics: System, Process, and Policy*. Boston: Little Brown & Co.

Public Policy, according to Robert Eyestone is the relationship of government until to its environment.¹³⁴ Thomas R. Dye stated that public policy is whatever government chooses to do or not to do.¹³⁵ According to Richard Rose public policy is not a decision, it is a course or pattern of activity.¹³⁶ In Carl J. Friedrich's opinion the public policy is a proposed course of action of a person, group or government within a given environment providing opportunities and obstacles which the policy was proposed to utilize and overcome in an effort to reach a goal or to realize an objective or purpose.¹³⁷ Public policy is a statement of governments future action.

Therefore for any government it is very important to make proper and effective public policy to deliver proper services and also for good governance. Furthermore, Public policies are essential for effective decision making process. In order to understand the performance of the BJP government in Assam, reference can be made to the policies that had been taken by the BJP government after acquiring power. This chapter basically deals with the policies, schemes, programmes and the performance of the BJP led government in Assam with reference to the effects of these policies on the society and politics of Assam.

Policies and Programmes of the BJP Government

The major Policies that had been taken by the BJP led government after acquiring power in 2016 has been elaborated. There are several policies and programmes that had been taken by

¹³⁴ Robert, Eyestone. (1971).*The Threads of Public Policy: A Study in Policy Leadership*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co.

¹³⁵ Thomas R. Dye. (2016).*Understanding Public Policy*, New Jersey: Pearson.

¹³⁶ Richard Rose. (2004). *Learning From Comparative Public Policy: A Practical Guide*. Oxford shire: Routledge.

¹³⁷ Carl J. Friedrich. (1950).*Constitutional Government And Democracy : Theory and practice in Europe and America* .Boston: Ginn publications.

the newly formed BJP led state government immediately after forming government the state party has adopted some policies as per the promises that were mentioned in its electoral manifesto. It has been categorized into two sections and first category incorporates the policies and programmes which are extensively undertaken by the state government. The second category includes all the new initiatives and major decisions taken by the BJP government.

Major Policies of State Government

These policies are newly initiated by the BJP led government after coming to power.

Atal Amrit Abhiyan

It is mainly a health care scheme launched in December, 2016 for providing health insurance for people in Assam only for those people whose annual income is less than 5 lakhs. At present almost 1.6 crore beneficiaries have already been enrolled in this program which has covered almost 92% of Assam's population.¹³⁸ This policy is largely beneficial for the poor people.

Free Diagnostic Services and Mobile Medical Units

The state BJP government has provided free diagnostic services under National Health Mission Assam for X-rays and CT scans. Further various mobile medical units have been stated to provide essential and emergency services to people. This policy has been criticised as a copy and new version of earlier government 108 policy, although it is helpful for the common masses.

¹³⁸ "Assam Budget: Rs 980 crore allocated for school infrastructure, skill training programme for youth" *Scroll.in*, March 12, 2018.

Major Decision of the State BJP Government

Apart from the above mentioned policies BJP Government in Assam has taken certain major decision which are being widely discussed. These initiatives are constantly discussed and debated both within and outside the state. Here an attempt has been made to highlight all those important decision of BJP Government in Assam to get a picture of the situation.

Free higher education

In order to boost the literacy rate in the state the Sarbananda Sonowal government for the first time introduced free higher education for any student whose family income is less than one lakh rupee a year. In 2016, the education department of Assam made education free for students in higher secondary, three years degree and diploma courses.¹³⁹ Through this move, the Assam BJP government has tried to solve the demands of students' organisations including the Left wing ones to reduce college fees.

Protection of land rights to indigenous people

To protect the land rights of the indigenous people of Assam, the BJP led state government has been playing a very significant role. Therefore a committee was formed under the chairmanship of Harishankar Brahma, former chief election commissioner of India to give suggestions in this regard. In the Report provided by Harishankar Brahma it has been stated that almost 90 percent of Assam's indigenous population does not have land documents which is very shocking.¹⁴⁰ Land right in the state has been one of the most controversial issues for long period of time which also causes of much social unrest.

¹³⁹ "Assam announces free higher education for the poor," *The Times of India*, June 11, 2016.

¹⁴⁰ "Dispur mulls new land policy for locals," *The Sentinel*, July 01, 2018.

Free education for Girls

Soon after the new population policy which faced severe criticism from feminist groups and public policy experts, the government of Assam came up with few changes in it. One of those changes was providing free education for girls upto university level. Sarma said that facilities like, fees, transportation, books and mess dues in hostels will be free for girls which will encourage girls to complete their education.¹⁴¹ The policy also increased the legal age of marriage for both boys and girls, as well as 50 percent reservation for women in government jobs and elections. Interestingly, the policy aims at providing skill development training and pension to Muslim women who are victims of triple *talaq*.

Making Sanskrit Mandatory in Schools

Assam government pronouncement to make Sanskrit mandatory in schools till Class VIII is also a controversial decision. It has been criticized by the indigenous literary body and other organizations like AASU and AJYCP as they assume this policy as a conspiracy to wipe out local languages. Further the tribal bodies also threatened to launch a statewide protest if the BJP led state government does not withdraw its decision.¹⁴² But a week after the decision to make Sanskrit compulsory in schools, Sarma, then education minister of the state said that the state did not have enough number of teachers to make Sanskrit compulsory and hence the decision could not be implemented immediately.

Care for old parents

The BJP governments another important decision is to link elderly care with government employee's pay. Sarma, who also handles the finance minister portfolio in the state, announced that it is mandatory for the government employees to take care of his or her

¹⁴¹ "Two child norm tied to jobs in Assam," *The Hindu*, April 10, 2017.

¹⁴² "Assam govt. makes Sanskrit compulsory," *The Hindu*, March 03, 2017.

parents. If this is not done, then the government will deduct a portion of the employee's salary and will give it to the neglected parents.¹⁴³ This was also highlighted in the budget session for the year 2017-18 in the Assembly

Cancer Control Programme in Partnership with Tata Trusts

Another significant decision in the health sector under the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government was the launch of an inclusive cancer control programme in partnership with Tata Trusts. Various reports over the years have shown the increasing rate of cancer patients in the North East region among which Assam accounts for a majority of these cancer patients which needed immediate response. Therefore, the present state government decided to strengthen the infrastructure of six government medical colleges and 11 district hospitals with reliable levels of cancer care treatments. The Tata group will contribute Rs 830 crore to this project over two financial years, while the government will contribute Rs 1080 crore.¹⁴⁴ This decision of the government to collaborate with Tata trust for the cancer control programme has been welcomed by people at large. It is expected that it will benefit the cancer patients of the entire North East region.

Focus on Education Sector

Initiatives has been taken to establish three new medical colleges, three new Universities, 21 new polytechnic, an All India Institute of Ayurveda and completing construction of ongoing projects. In addition to the completion of the construction of medical colleges at Kokrajhar and Diphu, the budget visualized establishment of three more medical colleges at Nagaon, Dhubri and Lakhimpur under centrally sponsored scheme. It has been declared by the health minister that an All India Institute of Ayurveda would be set up at Raha. With that he also

¹⁴³ Prabin Kalita. "Assam government staff who don't take care of elderly parents will face salary cuts," *The Times of India*, July 27, 2018.

¹⁴⁴ "Assam Budget: Rs 980 crore allocated for school infrastructure, skill training programme for youth," *Op.cit.*

stated that three new universities and 21 new polytechnic institutes will be set up and three engineering colleges at Karimganj, Golaghat and Dhemaji are going to be fully functional in the current financial year.¹⁴⁵ It was also proposed in the budget to convert gender-specific schools to co-educational ones. Further, it was declared that students of Class IX and X of government schools would get free textbooks. The state government also stressed on the improvement of primary and secondary school. 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 the infrastructure of schools that still lack basic facilities such as separate classrooms and electricity, Sarma announced. It is seen that this measure by the government to improve the educational sector has benefitted the students of various age groups.

Introduction of Gunotsav

The state government has started Gunotsav as a quality enhancement initiative to improve the learning levels of students at Elementary level. It was basically started to evaluate the performance of the schools and their students so that necessary strategies can be made to improve the quality of learning as well as the environment of the school. Four core areas that is Academic achievement of children of Class-2 to 8, Co-scholastic activities, Availability and Utilization of School Infrastructure and other facilities and Community Participation will be assessment¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Samudra Gupta Kashyap. (2016). "Assam budget: Sonowal govt's focus on healthcare, education," *The Indian Express*, July 26, 2016.

¹⁴⁶ <http://gunotsavassam.org/>.

New Industrial and Investment Policy

The BJP led state government has adopted the new industrial and investment policy to attract investors and to promote industrialization. The government has announced a new industrial and investment policy in a bid to boost industrialisation and promote investment in the state.¹⁴⁷ The basic objective of this new policy is to attract both domestic and foreign investors and industrialists to invest in the state. Himanta Biswa Sarma, the state finance minister also declared that the state government would provide special concession as well as benefits to those who will come to the state for setting up industry or for investment. He further informed that the concession would be provided to all the investors and industrialists who would come to invest at least rupees one hundred crore in the state. But the new policy excludes tax exemption facility due to the GST, the minister added. He said that the eligible investors as well as industrialists would get concession in the form of reimbursement. It is necessary to mention about the Assam Global Investor's Summit which was the largest investor's summit in Assam organized by the government of Assam in February 2018. India's Act East Policy (AEP) was enhanced through the summit's development programme which has opened up doors of tourism sector. The Global Investment Summit was organised so that with technical expertise and required funds industrialisation can be improved which may lead to more employment opportunities for the youth. This approach is not only helpful for Assam but it may also have positive impact on other Northeastern states as well.¹⁴⁸ It can be said that MOU has been signed between government of Assam and many Industries, but because of lack of communication and road transportation and other issues it could not attract more investors.

¹⁴⁷ "Assam government announces new industrial policy," *Merinews*, January 22, 2018.

¹⁴⁸ Riddhi Mahanta. (2018). Advantage Assam': Instrumentalising Development through Tourism. *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*. 09 Jul, 2018.

Beginning of Act East Policy and Skill Development Departments

Sonowal led government also opened Act East department to promote India's Act East policy. The state government decided to construct twin towers in Guwahati and plan to make the city the business hub of South East Asia. Assam's Minister for Act East Policy Department Chandra Mohan Patowary said that the state government has planned to establish business relations with South east Asian countries and Act East Policy Department has been set up to prepare policies and plans for achieving that goal. Central government has taken the initiatives to increase connectivity by road, air and water in the North Eastern region and steps were also taken for modernising Guwahati Airport.¹⁴⁹

Skill Development Training Centres has been launched by the Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal throughout the state.¹⁵⁰ To carry forward the PM Modi's 'Skill India' vision, skill development training centres has been established in the state. It has been informed by the Chief Minister of Assam that MoU has been signed between the state government and the government of Singapore. 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. Assam Government also planned to set up canter for the learning of foreign language in the state so that new job opportunities will be available for the youths abroad.¹⁵¹ It is expected that the opening of Act East Policy department and skill development department will help in generating employment opportunities as well as business opportunities.

¹⁴⁹ Bikash Singh. (2017). "Assam has set up 'Act East' dept for time bound implementation of Policy- Assam CM," *The Economic Times*, October 06, 2017.

¹⁵⁰ "Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal launches Skill Development Training Centres across the state," *The Economic Times*, December 28, 2017.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Completion of Dhola-Sadia bridge across rivers Brahmaputra and Lohit

India's longest Dhola-Sadia bridge across rivers Brahmaputra and Lohit known as Dr. Bhupen Hazarika Setu has been completed in the tenure of BJP government in Assam.¹⁵² This is a biggest achievement for the state government as it is very significant for connectivity and security concerns of India. Dhola-Sadia bridge has made the transportation within Assam as well as Assam and Arunachal Pradesh smooth and also reduced the communication gap.

Digital Modes of Financial Transaction among Tea Garden Employees

The government has also allotted money for a scheme to promote the use of digital modes of financial transaction among tea garden employees. According to Himanta Biswa Sarma, every tea garden employee who opened a bank account will receive Rs 5,000.¹⁵³ The government will also provide each “line sardar,” the leaders of the labourers in tea gardens, with smart phones that cost about Rs 3,000 which will uphold digital literacy and usage. It can be said that out of 7.8 lakh maximum permanent tea garden laborers has opened bank accounts.

Special Facilities for Girls and Women

The government decided to provide sanitary napkins to the girls and women of poor family. Girls and women between 12 to 20 years old, whose family income is below Rs 5 lakh, can avail of an annual remuneration of Rs 600 to buy sanitary napkins. The government has also

¹⁵² “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.

¹⁵³ “Assam Launches Cash Award Scheme For Tea Garden Workers,” *The Shillong Times*, January 02, 2018.

introduced scheme for unmarried daughters of pensioners.¹⁵⁴ Further they will be eligible to avail of the money in case the pensioner in their family dies.

Improvement of Road and Water Ways

The state government announced a programme for improving state highways and the major roads in district. The minister also announced a programme for improving state highways and the major roads in districts. Context reference can be made to Namami Brahmaputra, in the lines of 'Namami Ganga', organised by the BJP led government in Assam on March 31 to April 4 in 2017. The event which was held in 21 districts across the state through which river Brahmaputra flows was inaugurated by the then President of India, Pranab Mukerjee. The five day programmes have many activities to showcase Assam's art, heritage and culture.¹⁵⁵

This five day event has brought business, fun and festivities for all. Brahmaputra is regarded as the 'lifeline of Assam' for continuing flowing from the heart of the state, the river also has incredible opportunities for business. The National Waterways, mainly NW 2 and NW16 will play a vital role for the economic development and prosperity. As a part of the Act East Policy, National Waterways 2 (NW-2) from Dhubri to Sadiya will play the role of a bridge for the economic progress in the market of Southeast Asia. It is expected that these waterways will make Assam the centre of India-ASEAN collaboration and will also able to attract major investments throughout the world. The Brahmaputra river is also a source of current and potential hydroelectric power generation and it will definitely improve the power

¹⁵⁴ "Assam government to give money to girls for buying sanitary napkins," *The New Indian Express*, March 12, 2018.

¹⁵⁵ Bikash Singh. (2017). "Namami Brahmaputra event to showcase Assam's rich art, heritage and culture," *The Economic Times*, March 23, 2017.

sector of the state.¹⁵⁶ Recently government has bought ships for the water way connectivity and also started its service in some parts of Assam.

Awareness programme called “Sanskar” to Counter Social Evils

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.¹⁵⁷ 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 districts. Further various local bodies, women organisations, voluntary organizations, media persons, leading citizens, academicians, MPs and MLAs from ruling and opposition parties will be the stake holders of the programme.

Social activist like Birubala Rabha who has been fighting tirelessly against witch-hunting will be involved in the programme. Sonowal also asked the concerned authority to devise modalities of the programme and a suitable roadmap should be created to implement the programme at all levels of the state so that any unfortunate situation does not arise in the state due to superstitions. Chief Minister Sonowal informed people about the programme. This programme basically started after the death of two young artistes in Karbi Anglong District of the state who were mistaken for child abductors. People are also advocated for generating awareness throughout the state so that the society can be empowered to create a shield against the recurrence of such an incident in future.

¹⁵⁶ http://prepareias.in/current_affair/31/3/2017/namami-brahmaputra-festival-2017

¹⁵⁷ “Assam government to start Sanskar programme to fight superstitions,” *The Economic Times*, June 11, 2018.

Major Decisions in Agricultural Sector

In the agriculture sector, the BJP government has announced to provide I-cards to farmers along with installation of 61,000 shallow tube-wells. Above these the government has also promoted organic farming, under the group insurance scheme it has covered 1.50 lakh fishermen. Government also decided to set up 40 new milk cooperatives and 244 rural godowns.¹⁵⁸ As majority of people in Assam are dependent on agriculture, so it can be said that these policy decisions will help the masses.

Chief Minister's Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana (CMSGUY)

The Sonowal led BJP government in Assam has also launched a 5-year mega-mission named Chief Minister Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana (CMSGUY) in the 2016-17 Financial year, which is scheduled to climax in the 2021-22, when India will celebrate 75 years of India's Independence. The principal objective of this mission is to double the income of the farm. This policy is inspired by the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In order to boost the agriculture sector of the Assam the state government has taken this ambitious scheme. It is expected that it will help the farmers with inputs on the condition of the soil to augment better yield. In this regard in last two years, almost 11 lakh soil health cards have been distributed by the state government.¹⁵⁹

Witch Hunt Bill

With the assent of the President Ram Nath Kovind to the bill against witch-hunting which was passed by the Assam Assembly three years ago has revived the campaign of a barely

¹⁵⁸ "Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Says 'Government Committed to Growth of Agriculture Sector'" *The Sentinel*, August 02, 2018.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

literate 65 year old woman against superstition that has claimed scores of lives.¹⁶⁰ On June 2013 the Principal Secretary (Home and Political) L. S. Changsan received the President's approval for the Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015 and it became an Act.

With the inputs of Birubala Rabha under this act any offence is cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable. The Act prescribes a prison term of up to seven years and upto 5 lakh in fine for calling a person witch. It also has provisions to come with section 302 of the IPC (punishment for murder) if someone is killed after being branded a witch. The punishment for leading a person to suicide may be extended to life imprisonment and up to 5 lakh in fine. It can be said that passing of this bill will help a large number of victims of "witch hunt" or *Daini Hatya* to get justice. It will also help in reducing the crimes related to witch hunting.

Five major issues have been highlighted in this chapter

NRC Upgradation in Assam and Role of the BJP Government

The demand for NRC upgradation for the first time came from All Assam Student Union (AASU). Assam movement (1979-85), the longest student movements in the history of India, led by AASU on the demand of identification and deportation Illegal Immigrants (Aboidha Bideshi) and particularly against the Illegal Immigrants from Bangladesh. AASU and other organization were in favor of deporting the immigrants irrespective of religion (Hindu or Muslim). As an upshot in 1985 Assam Accord was signed between the leaders of Assam movement and the then Prime Minister of India Rajiv Gandhi. Their key demands were- detection of foreigners and their deportation, NRC upgradation in Assam and sealing the Indo

¹⁶⁰ Rahul Karmakar. (2018). "Kovind cleans Assam Bill against witch-hunt," *The Hindu*, July 16, 2018.

Bangla boarders. 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. In last 33 years of Assam Accord, this provision has never been properly implemented and therefore failed to check the illegal immigration of Bangladeshis into Assam. Though after Assam Accord, Asom Gano Parishad was formed under the leadership of AASU leaders and came to power in 1985 Assembly elections, but they failed to tackle the issue of Bangladeshis. It is because of the lack of interest and will of the State as well as Centre governments. However AASU and other organizations like Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) were demanding the full implementation of Assam Accord and the deportation of Illegal Bangladeshi Immigrants and in several times they sat for meeting with respective state and union governments after 1985.

It is also essential to state the central government's decision to set up the Illegal Migration (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 (IMDT) on December 12, 1983 under an act of Parliament in order to tackle the issue of illegal migration into Assam which was applicable only to the state of Assam. 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 cutoff date for getting citizenship of India. Apart from that the IMDT Act provided for some discriminatory status for the state of Assam. Such as the Act laid the obligation on the complainant rather than on the accused to prove the latter's citizenship status. In contrary to that the Foreigner's Act, 1946, lays the responsibility on the accused. This let the failure of the IMDT Act to effectively identify and deport illegal migrants.

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. In contrast, under the Foreigners Act, 1946, West Bengal, which is also facing a problem of illegal Bangladeshi migrants, has successfully deported almost half a million infiltrators till date. The Bench termed the IMDT Act as unconstitutional and contrary to the Article 355 of the Constitution. It can be referred that Article 355 of the Indian Constitution entrusts upon the Union of India the duty to protect every state against “external aggression and internal disturbances”. Further the Supreme Court also directed for the setting up of new tribunals under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunal Order) 1964.

However, the usefulness of these legal procedures to deal with the issue of illegal immigrants is under suspicion. It has been reported that around 12 lakh Bangladeshi nationals who legally came to India with visas were subsequently vanished without trace. This indicates the failure of the law enforcement agencies to carry out the tasks of detection and deportation of these Bangladeshi citizens.

In 2005 Assam government announce of its decision to update NRC. Only with the involvement of the Supreme Court the process of NRC upgradation picked up little pace in recent days. With the direction of Supreme Court the first draft of NRC was published on 31st December 2017 which covers 1.9 crore people of Assam out of 3.29 crore applicants. The long awaited, historic final draft of NRC for Assam got published on 30th July in pursuance of a Supreme Court-monitored exercise to identify Indian nationals living in the state had left out 12 per cent of its population. 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.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh made it clear in the Lok Sabha that the draft is totally impartial and the persons whose names are not included should not panic as an opportunity will be given to them to prove their Indian citizenship. He also stated that such sensitive issues should not be politicized and assured that Government will not take any coercive action.

Upon the successful publication of final draft of NRC Chief minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal, Congratulated the people of Assam and mentioned that a historic day. However, he urged that after the publication of NRC people should maintain peace and harmony. He appealed to the people of Assam to maintain communal harmony in the state and not to follow any inflammatory statement.

Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016

Another controversial issue is the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill by the central government which also has been placed in the state legislative assembly for consideration. This bill remained the centre of many criticisms of BJP's role in the state. The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill seeks to grant citizenship to persecuted minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan after six years of their residence in India. This bill has created controversies particularly in Assam as it has become a threat to language and culture of indigenous people. The civil society organizations and other various student and peasant organisations are opposing the bill. They state that this bill encourages Hindu Bangladeshis to enter Assam from Bangladesh and will provide citizenship to the existing foreigners. The fear psychosis of "Tripura like situation" where tribals were outnumbered by the migrants is also a cause of huge protest movements against the bill. Even the alliance partner of BJP, the AGP is also protesting against the amendment bill in various platforms. During the ongoing protests in Assam over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, the Chief Minister assured that the government will not go against the interests of its people.

The proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, in Assam has been opposed by various sections of the people in Assam as there is the fear of being reduced to a minority in one's own homeland. The recent visit by a parliamentary committee to Assam to know the opinion of the people on the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, has 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.¹⁶¹ Wide spread protests took place throughout Assam against the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. The protesters also burn the images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, and also take out processions and blocking rail and road traffic. Protestors across the state were carrying banners against the bill were shouting slogans and marched throughout towns and cities. The protester also submitted memorandum to the respective deputy commissioner of the district, which are actually addressed to the prime minister. The protestors while refusing to take the "burden of foreigners" were criticizing the BJP led state government for supporting the Centre's plan to amend the Citizenship bill. They termed the bill as "a destroyer of ethnicity, culture and language of the local indigenous people of Assam".

The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) has been protesting against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, throughout Assam, as it proposes to give citizenship to non-Muslims from neighbouring countries¹⁶² AASU chief advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya stated that various organisations, individuals and various other forums are unitedly fighting against the Citizenship bill. As the Bill may harm political future of Assam and which may also become a threat to the land, identity and culture of indigenous

¹⁶¹ Ankush Saikia (2018). "Citizenship Amendment Bill- What is it the Assamese fear the most?" *Daily O*, May 22, 2018.

¹⁶² "Massive protests across Assam against Citizenship Bill," *The new Indian Express*, May 29, 2018.

people.¹⁶³The Asom Yuba Chatra Parishad, the All Boro Students' Union, the All Assam Adivasi Students' Union, 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. Recently in 8th November 2018 AASU along with other 28 ethnic student bodies held a protest rally in Dispur against the Amendment bill and warned the government to face consequences if it works against the indigenous people's interest. KMSS along with other 46 organisations also called "Assam *Bandh*" on 23rd October 2018 against the Citizenship bill, which was fully supported by people.

It is also important to mention here that even number of MLAs from the ruling BJP also opposing the bill. For them if the Hindu Bangladeshis will be given citizenship it may create a threat to the identity of the people of Assam and will also harm the interest of the indigenous people.¹⁶⁴ Naba Kumar Doley, Assam Cultural Affairs Minister stated that "the issue is related to people's emotions and the government would not do anything to harm the interests of Assam." Further BJP MLA Binod Hazarika from Chabua also made it clear, "We cannot accept the Bangladeshis. I will not remain as an MLA if they are allowed to come in. We will force them to leave." Bokajan MLA Numal Momin said that "the Assamese people could not become a minority community in their own state and that he would always work for the indigenous people of the state."¹⁶⁵ Other BJP MLAs such as Suren Phukan, Terash Gowalla, Jogen Mohan and Debananda Hazarika, said "the chief minister would not do anything that would impact the interests of Assam and its people".

¹⁶³ "Citizenship Bill an attempt to jeopardize Assamese community," says Dr. Samujjal Bhattacharya" *The Sentinel*, September 13, 2018.

¹⁶⁴ "Massive Protests Across Assam Against Citizenship Bill," *NDTV*, May 28, 2018.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

In Contrary to that the Assam Congress has spoken out against the Centre's proposed Citizenship (amendment) Bill. Interestingly, some BJP allies too have also voiced their disapproval of the bill.¹⁶⁶ Debabrata Saikia, the leader of opposition in the state assembly from Congress party said that "his party is ready to do anything to save the Assam Accord that was signed between All Assam Students Union, centre and state government in 1985 under then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that brought an end to a six-year-long anti-foreigners' movement."

Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), present ruling coalition party which was formed on the demands of deportation of Bangladeshis, is in favour of NRC update on the basis of 25th March 1971 as a deadline (According to Assam Accord). They even threatened their ruling alliance partner BJP to snap ties with the Government if the Centre pushes for passage of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 which seeks to grant citizenship to Hindu Bangladeshis, who have entered Assam illegally post 1971 period.

AGP leader and former Assam chief minister Prafulla kumar Mahanta, has threatened to quit the coalition with the BJP in the state if the Centre passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. He said "the Assamese people will become a minority in their own land if the government decides to pass the bill. For him it will be a dangerous thing for the people of Assam."¹⁶⁷ AGP president and Assam agriculture minister Atul Bora opposed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, at the North East Democratic Alliance's (NEDA), third conclave in the presence of BJP president Amit Shah. In the conclave, Bora said "the bill is a threat to the

¹⁶⁶ Prabin Kalita. (2018). "Assam: Cong, BJP ally AGP oppose new Citizenship Bill," *The Times of India*, May 25, 2018.

¹⁶⁷ Mohua Chatterjee. (2018). "Assam ally AGP threatens to quit NDA over Citizenship bill," *The Times of India*, August 11, 2018.

identity of the indigenous people of the state. The AGP is opposed to the bill since it violates the Assam Accord.”¹⁶⁸

Eviction Drive

Following the order of the Gauhati High Court and also to fulfill pre poll promises, the BJP government started eviction drive in various parts of the state. The process started from Kaziranga National Park and Vaishnavite *sattras* and later on extended to other areas such as the eviction drive held in the Amcheng reserve forest. It was basically initiated to evacuate those places which were illegally captured by people either in the land of *Sattras* or in reserved forests.¹⁶⁹ Thousands of families have been evicted till today which caused immense hardship for them. The Kaziranga National Park and Vaishnavite *sattras* in Assam are seen as the manifestations of Assamese pride and encroachment in these areas had been an election issue for more than a decade. But for some factor these eviction drive are the centre of controversy as it has been pointed out that incorrect mapping of those areas by the government employees also led to the eviction of innocent people which areas do not fall under reserved forests.

Controversies have been created around the performance of BJP regarding various issues and eviction is one among them. On 19th September 2016 Eviction drive was carried by the state government in three fringe villages—Banderdubi, Deosursang and Palkhowa after the order of the 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. The supporters of the eviction drive directed suspicion to the identity of these people by using phrases like “illegal Bangladeshis,” “rhino poachers,” and “suspected citizens”. “Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS),” an

¹⁶⁸ Pankaj Sarma. (2018). “AGP opposes citizenship bill at meet,” *The Telegraph* (online edition), 21 May 2018.

¹⁶⁹Samudra Gupta Kashyap. (2016). “Freeing Kaziranga, satra land priority, says Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal.” *The Indian Express*, October 13, 2016.

influential peasants' organisation in the state, opposed the eviction without releasing compensation to the people of the villages, drawing flak from different quarters.¹⁷⁰ KMSS leader Akhil Gogoi was criticized for his stand on this issue.

After almost a year eviction drive started in Sipajhar on 24th November and almost 60 families were evicted. However eviction did not stop with Sipajhar. On 27th November, a similar drive was carried out in the Amchang Reserve Forest around Guwahati. This also displaced more than 700 families who allegedly encroached upon reserved forest land. The Amchang eviction was a response to a High Court order while the Sipajhar eviction was mostly carried out due to the demands of local Bajrang Dal activists. The Amchang eviction unlike the Sipajhar incident received much flak from every section of Assamese society and media as the evicted people were largely from Mishing and Bodo communities. These are people who lost their lands in Majuli, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji due to river erosion. However eviction was carried out without any assurance of rehabilitation. Left with no roof upon their head, survival in the open is becoming difficult for these people.¹⁷¹ Both the instances of eviction have raised the questions on the intention of the government.

Coming to the Amchang eviction, tribal communities which have co-existed with nature for ages and sustained them were accused of ruining forest resources. There is gross discrepancy with the very procedure of the Amchang eviction. This eviction was carried out in response to a High Court order on a PIL for ecological conservation. Many activists including Gana Shakti leader and MLA Bhuvan Pegu raised serious allegations regarding the eviction.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Pinku Muktiar , Prafulla Nath & Mahesh Deka.(2018). The Communal Politics of Eviction Drives in Assam. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 53(8).

¹⁷¹ Parvin Sultana. (2017). The Politics of Eviction In Assam. *Counter Currents.org*, December 02, 2017.

¹⁷² Parvin Sultana. *Op.cit.*

Similar concerns were raised by the KMSS a year back during the Kaziranga eviction. Revenue villages were randomly marked as part of the National Park and then evicted. Sadly protestors were fired upon and two people shot from closed range. While the government initially justified the drive by calling the settlers illegal immigrants, eight months later the government did pay a compensation of around 15 crores as these people were genuinely displaced by erosion and were settled there by erstwhile governments.¹⁷³

The Assam government claimed that the Gauhati High Court had allowed its prayer to suspend the ongoing eviction of residential areas inside the Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary, but asked it to continue with the drive against commercial structures.¹⁷⁴

Anti-corruption drive

The action against corruption taken by BJP Government just after attaining power is remarkable. In the last two years of term BJP government, the Chief Ministership of Sarbananda Sonowal has carried out the anti-corruption drive successfully. Though these are not sufficient to root out corruption totally, but have tremendous impact in the process of good governance. In this phase, several anti- corruption initiatives by the government has captured the limelight. Among those the most important initiatives were the arrest of Assam Public Service Commission chairman Rakesh Pal who took money to provide the job illegally¹⁷⁵. Combined with that the arrest of Kuzendra Doley, secretary to the Irrigation Department of Assam, for demanding bribes from contractors had also become very significant.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ "HC has allowed Assam gov'ts prayer to suspend eviction drive," *Outlook*, November 29, 2017.

¹⁷⁵ "Assam government to highlight PSC reforms in panchayat polls," *The Economic Times*, May 22, 2018.

Furthermore the CM also urged all the government officials to adopt zero tolerance policy towards corruption and ordered proper investigate for various cases of corruption to root out the social evil from government machinery. 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. Sonawal also made reference to the cash-for-job scam that remained in limelight for quite a long time in the state. The state government was successful in sending APSC chairman Rakesh Kumar Paul, and members of the Commission, including Samedur Rahman and Basanta Kumar Doley to jail.¹⁷⁶ In this case 56 officers from state civil service, state police services and allied services and five other government employees have been arrested. Hence the BJP-led government in Assam has been claiming that they have successfully cleaned up the most corrupt department of Assam that is Assam Public Service Commission (APSC).¹⁷⁷

Population control policy

Continuous growth of large number of population has remained a matter of concern in Assam for many decades. In order to control the unabated population growth in Assam, the Sonawal government has introduced a new population policy with a two-child norm. As per these norms, parents having more than two children will not be qualified for government jobs or to contest in panchayat and civic body polls.¹⁷⁸ After heated debates this bill got passed in 2018 with the support of majority members. 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 may result in slanted sex ratio

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Jaideep Mazumdar. (2017). "Assam's Carrot and Stick Policy To Check Population Growth," *Swarajya*, May, 10, 2017.

and more physical and emotional violence against women to produce a male child. State Health and finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also announced that the Assam government would request the centre to disqualify members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assembly having more than two children.¹⁷⁹ The government has also renamed the policy as "Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam." This policy was renamed so that it won't be limited only to control of population but it will also be helpful for empowering women.

This policy made reference to the United Nations' Programme of Action on Population Policy, which emphasizes "development planning in order to promote social justice and to eradicate poverty through sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development"¹⁸⁰ Reference was made to the National Population Policy (NPP), 2000 where it was stated "to achieve a stable population by 2045 at a level consistent with the requirements of sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental protection"¹⁸¹. The references that have been mentioned here clearly demonstrate that population policy of the Government of Assam is for inclusive and sustainable well-being of the population which may also result in population stabilisation. The population control policy has 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. The objective of the policy is not only to control population but also to improve the quality of life of the people. Through the adoption of the PWEPA, 2017 these broad concerns have been strengthened. Reference can be made to the statement by Assam Minister of Health and Family Welfare Himanta Biswa Sarma that for the success of any population

¹⁷⁹ "Assam wants to bring lawmakers under its two-child population policy," *The new Indian Express*, May 04, 2017.

¹⁸⁰ Department of Health and Family Welfare 2017a: 1

¹⁸¹ Department of Health and Family Welfare 2017a: 2

policy and for achieving sustainable development, recognition of women's empowerment is very important. In order to include some features which may lead to Women empowerment some changes has been made to the draft population policy and subsequently renamed the policy as Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam.¹⁸²

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. As per as the 2011 population census, the population of Assam has increased from 2.66 crores in 2001to 3.12 in 2011. It has been clearly stated in the policy that continuous growth of the population in the state has created pressure upon the natural resources and environment and it also created obstacle to the efforts of the government to improve the quality of life of its people. The most important reason behind this massive population explosion is the early marriage in the communities living in the char (riverine) and tea garden areas. In order to prevent early marriages this government has taken strict laws relating to minimum age for marriage.¹⁸³

The health minister asserted that to achieve the goal to provide high quality life to the people which will ensure access to quality education, healthcare and employment opportunities this new population policy is a positive move in this regard. Along with this the policy has also ensured 100% immunisation, empowerment of women, free education for girls upto university level and introduction of population and sex education in school curriculum which is also appreciable.

¹⁸² Akhil Ranjan Dutta. (2017). Assam's Population Policy, 2017Overstated Numbers and Underlying Agendas. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LII (48), 19-21.

¹⁸³ Draft population policy: Assam govt proposes strict two-child norm," *The Indian Express*, April 11, 2017.

The PWEPA provides certain incentives to people as well. There are certain provisions to provide additional grants and projects to the district or gram panchayat that cross targets decided under the population policy. Apart from that provisions are also there to provide special award to districts and public healthcare units for innovative strategies and performance in population control. The policy to reserved 10 per cent of the total allocation for panchayats for performance based disbursements in the fields of reproductive health, child health services and female education. Further Special grants will be given to the members of self –help groups who are having two kids.¹⁸⁴

As stated in the population policy targeted intervention will be done in the riverine areas which are socially and educationally backward and also lack in proper health care facilities. The policy quotes that “religious prejudices and conservative values against family planning is high among some communities” and within such communities male sterilisation is culturally unacceptable.¹⁸⁵

According to Health minister Sarma, coming decade will 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,”. It can be said that 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.

¹⁸⁴Jaideep Mazumdar, *Op.cit.*

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*

Performance of the BJP government

The Performance of the BJP led state government will be analyzed in this section. Since the BJP has formed the government in Assam for the first time and emerged as an alternative force against the existing INC, expectations of the people from BJP was much higher. There are both positive and negative aspects of the performance of the BJP government. While the performance of the BJP, it is important to state the achievements that have been mentioned by the chief minister after completion of two years of his government.

It has been claimed by the chief minister that most of the promises that made before the election such as improvement of economy, insurgency, corruption and issue of illegal immigrants has been taken into account with seriousness. Referring to the commitment to serve people with integrity and efficiency, Sonowal also stressed that major initiatives have been undertaken to update the National Register of Citizens (NRC) under the directions of the Supreme Court.¹⁸⁶ With this Assam became the one and only state in the country which has undertaken the process of documentation of bonafide citizens of the state.

These initiatives by the BJP government have fulfilled one of their pre-poll promises that had been made throughout the 2016 assembly elections campaign. While talking about anti corruption move by the state government, Sonowal clearly stated that not a single, corrupt person will be forgiven, be it minister or MLA or anybody else.¹⁸⁷ The anti corruption drive therefore has become remarkable achievement on the part of the BJP government in Assam. The Sonowal government has also asserted that his government through a transparent process gave jobs to 45,000 youths. He also added that more than four lakh bogus job cards issued by the previous Congress government has been cancelled¹⁸⁸.

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/bjp-led-govt-completes-2-yrs-in-assam-cm-lists-achievements-2575387.html>

¹⁸⁷ "Assam government to highlight PSC reforms in panchayat polls," *Op.cit.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Apart from all these activities, several important projects have been accelerated with the pro active role of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. One biggest example of such is successful completion of India's longest Dhola-Sadia bridge across rivers Brahmaputra and Lohit, which has prompted new economic upheaval in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and entire Northeast.

Assam has now become the first state of the country which announced a new Industrial Policy after implementation of the GST.¹⁸⁹ With this Assam government has initiated various investment centric policies at a time in order to attract and invite global investors which may possibly enhance the industrialization process in Assam.

Criticism from Opposition Political parties

The BJP government in Assam has also faced lots of criticism from various sections of people. BJP government has faced severe criticism for limiting the number of children to two to avail government services and to contest civic elections. Opposition parties are critical of the government's new draft population policy.¹⁹⁰ 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 are strongly opposed to implementing the two-child norm. The Congress has also opposed the policy with former chief minister Tarun Gogoi questioning the need for a separate population policy for Assam.¹⁹¹

Assam Pradesh congress committee (APCC) president Ripun Bora said the Congress did not have any reservation against any population control policy but insisted that it should not violate fundamental and Constitutional rights. Secondly, the policy is meant

¹⁸⁹ "Assam comes up with new industry promotion policy to attract investment in state" *The Northeast Today*, January 19, 2018.

¹⁹⁰ "Assam Opposition slams government's two-child policy for job," *The new Indian Express*, April 10, 2017.

¹⁹¹ Jaideep Mazumdar, *Op.cit.*

only government employees. But it is an important question that why private sector people were not covered in this policy. They should also be brought under the purview of policy according to Bora.¹⁹² He alleged that the government's move was aimed at diverting people's attention from the burning problem of unemployment in the State. The government has not been able to give jobs to the unemployed. So through such a move, the government is trying to divert people's attention from the issue.

Minority-based party like All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) also opposed the policy. For them there are certain points in the draft proposals where they have disagreement.¹⁹³

Congress and Communist Party of India (M) has criticised the decision of the state government to provide pension to Muslim women divorced through triple talaq.¹⁹⁴ According to Randeep Surjewala, Congress spokesman "discrimination among destitute women on the grounds of religion was unfair and unwarranted." He questioned "Why should destitute or abandoned Hindu women be not given similar pension and assistance by the state government?" Further Brinda Karat, CPM politburo member stated "the Assam government had proved itself 'unlettered' in the area of women's rights and had turned the 'sabka saath sabka vikas' slogan on its head." She further added "the percentage of Hindu women abandoned or deserted without maintenance or support is much higher than among Muslim women." Karat objected the decision to link women's rights and empowerment with population policies. She argued that linking women's rights with population has been rejected ages ago in official government population policies.

¹⁹² Samudra Gupta Kashyap "Why Assam wants to replace central population policy with its own, and why Opposition questions it," *The Indian Express*, April 18, 2017.

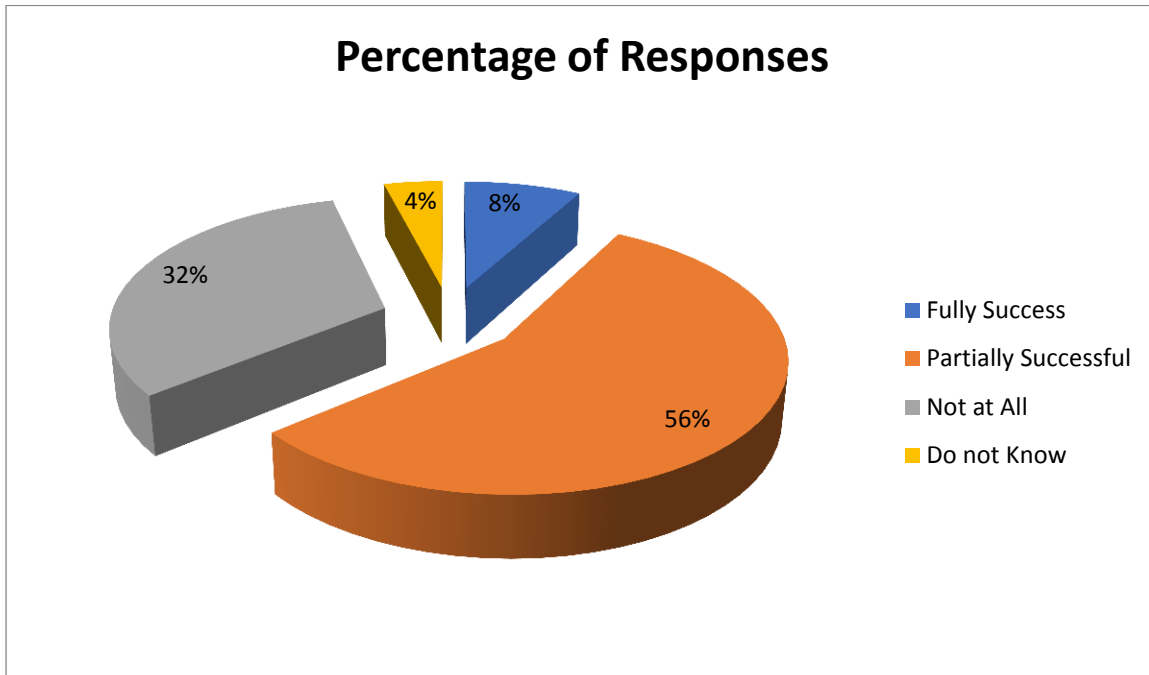
¹⁹³ "Assam Opposition slams government's two-child policy for job," *Op.cit.*

¹⁹⁴ "Assam pension plan for triple talaq victims draws criticism," *The Times of India*, May 6, 2017.

Apart from this, in order to get the views of the people primary data has been also collected.

Questions asked to respondents on the performance of the Bharatiya Janata Party regime in Assam.

Table 3.1: Success of the BJP's Developmental Agenda



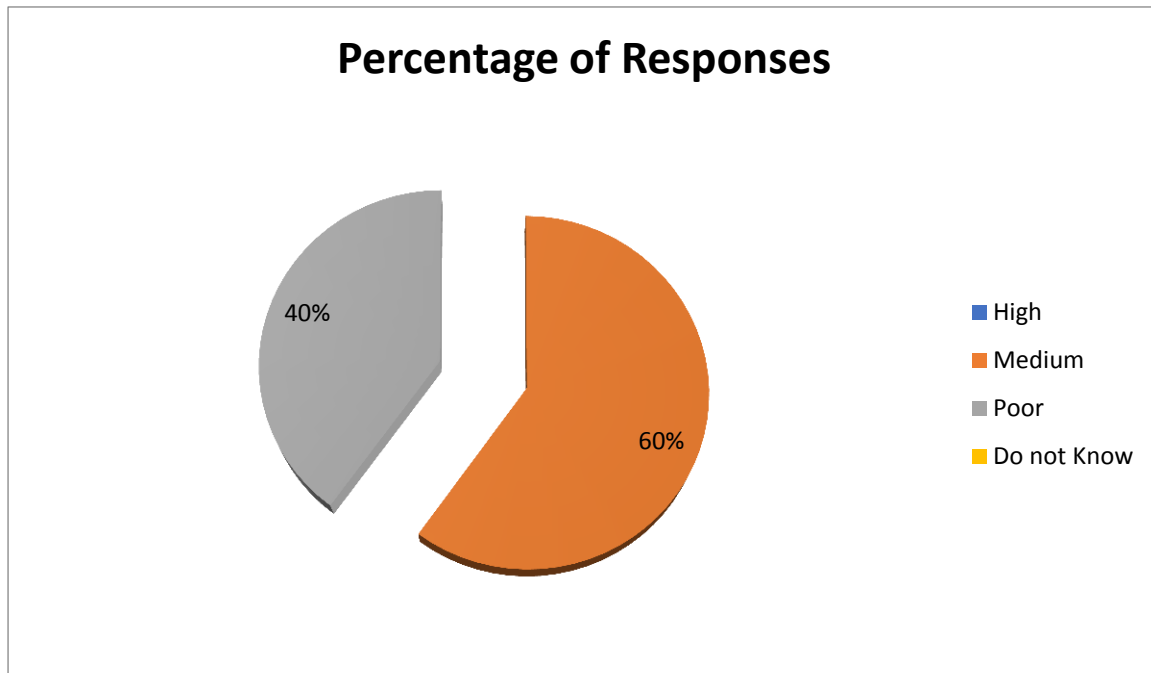
Source: Data collected from my field study.

This research work further tried to analyse whether developmental agendas of the BJP are successful or not. As a response to the queries in this regard 56% respondent believes that BJP's developmental agendas are partially successful. Whereas out of the total respondents 32% believes that developmental agendas taken by the BJP govt are not at all successful. However, only eight percent believes that BJP government's agendas are fully successful. Out of the total respondents four percent respondents do not have any knowledge about this.

It is evident from the responses that BJP led governments is not that successful in its developmental agenda. People are not completely satisfied with the BJP regime regarding development. At policy level, BJP government has taken several developmental agenda, but in the reality maximum of them are not properly implemented. This made a section of people

totally disappointed with the activities of the BJP government regarding development. The BJP government should focus on implementation part rather than only formulating policies.

Table 3.2: Performance of the BJP Government on Health and Education



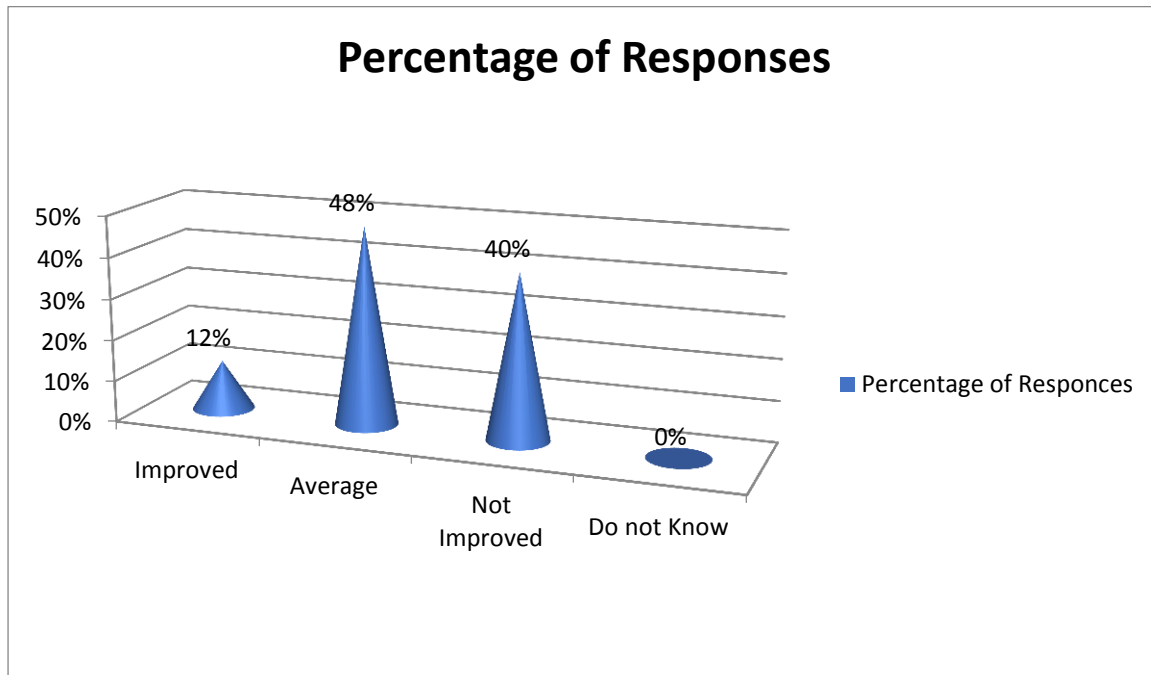
Source: Data collected from my field study.

Questions were asked to the respondent regarding the performance of BJP government on health and education. It is seen that 60% respondents believes that performance of the government in these two sectors is medium. However another 40% is of the view that performance of BJP led government on health and education is poor.

From the responses it is clear that BJP government's performance in the health and education sector is still lacking. Since large number of people believes that BJP governments performance in the sector is very poor. Regarding health sector the governments hospitals are still not equipped with modern technology, insufficient beds, insufficient medicines, insufficient doctors specially in rural area is a major problem. Cleanliness is also a major problem in the government hospitals. For which a large section of people refrain from going to public health care centres. In education sector lack of teachers and lack of infrastructural

facilities is a major problem beginning from primary to higher educational institutions. Government need to introduce vocational training courses, sports, swimming, music and yoga for the overall development of the students in order to compete in the larger world.

Table 3.3: Women’s Participation and Representation under the BJP regime



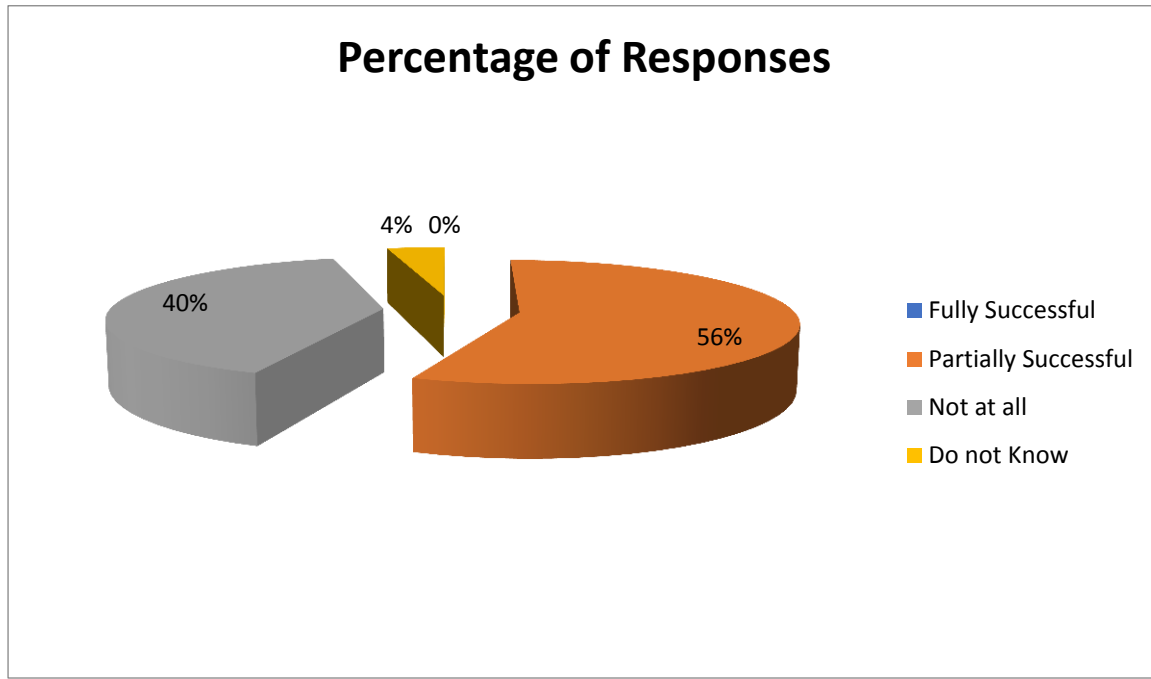
Source: Data collected from my field study.

In reference to the question which was asked to know the views of the respondents on women’s participation and representation under the BJP regime 48% respondents replied that the rate of women’s participation and representation is average. Contrary to that 40% respondent believes that women’s participation and representation has not improved at all. Whereas other 12% respondent believes that it has improved.

The study has clearly shown that women’s participation and representation has not improved under the BJP regime. It is clear that there is no improvement in the number of women representatives in the assembly. There are only two women MLAs out of 61MLAs of BJP and one MP out of seven MPs. In the Sonowal Ministry, there is only one women

minister that is also from its alliance partner BPF. The government should work for the empowerment of women by encouraging more participation and representation.

Table 3.4: The BJP Government’s Success in Poverty Alleviation Policy

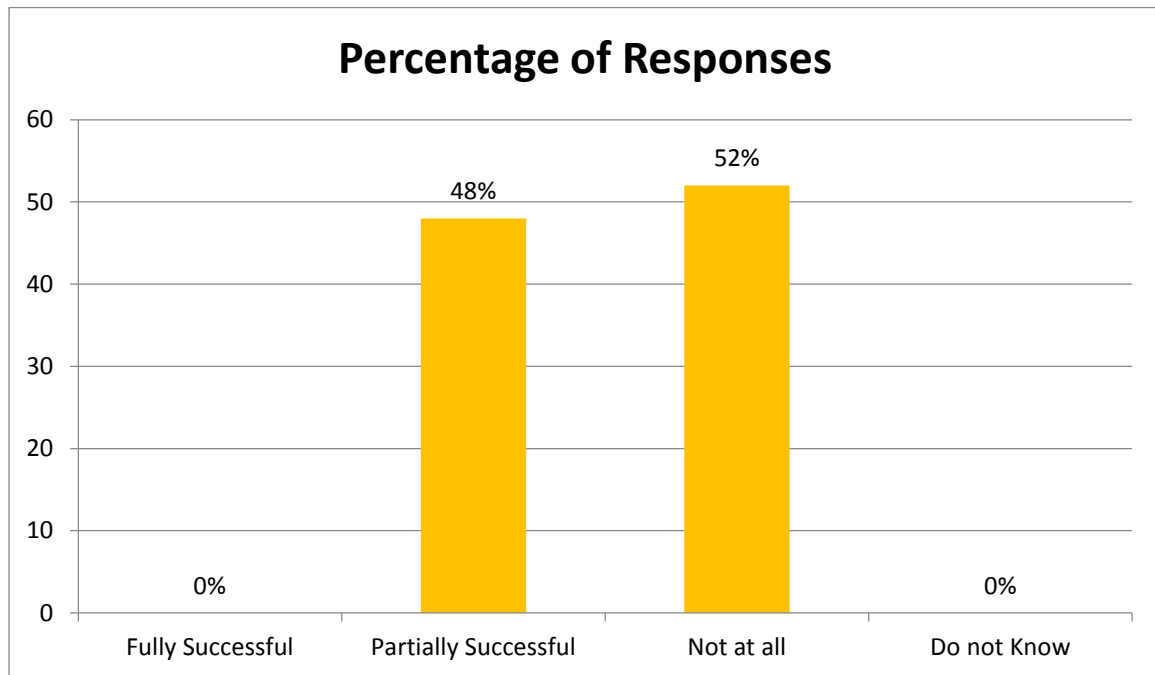


Source: Data collected from my field study.

To the queries related to the success or failure of the Poverty alleviation policy of the BJP govt 56% respondents replied that their policies are partially successful. However other 40% respondents believe that BJP governments policies related to poverty alleviation are not all successful. Another four percent respondents replied that they do not have any knowledge about this.

Poverty Alleviation Policy of the BJP regime is regarded as partially successful by majority of the respondents. But the BJP government need to do more on areas like rural employment. It has been observed that with the change of government the functionality of the panchayati raj institutions are reduced as it is still ruled by opposition parties. Policies such as MGNREGA should be given primacy so it will help in the alleviation of poverty.

Table 3.5: The BJP Government's Success in Generating Employment Opportunities



Source: Data collected from my field study.

Questions were asked to know the view of the respondents on the success or failure of the BJP government in generating employment. Out of the total respondents 48% respondents believes that BJP government is partially successful in generating employment. However 52% respondents replied that the government is not at all successful in employment generation.

From the responses it can be stated that the BJP government is failed in generating employment opportunities in the state as per their poll promise. But some respondents also commented that the government is partially successful in employment generation. The government need to work to create employment opportunities so the unemployment problem can be addressed.

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be said that after coming to power in May 2016, the BJP led state government has adopted numerous policies, programmes and initiatives for the betterment of

the people of Assam. There are both positive and negative aspects of the performance of the Sonowal government. 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 successful initiative. It is also expected that unlike earlier Congress government under the BJP regime the recruitment process under APSC will be clean.

Contrary to this positive role of BJP, population control policy and eviction drive have created lot of controversies. Regarding these initiatives the government has been supported by the people in some special cases but largely criticised for not undertaking the eviction process with proper planning and rehabilitation facilities for the indigenous people who are living there for years. Further government schools are also being evicted in some areas which raises many important questions regarding the ability of the government departments. Moreover recent reports of eviction in some areas which are actually revenue villages and only because of mistakes of government officials who assumed those areas as reserved forest have also raised the question of credibility of government officials. This type of irresponsible actions has caused hardship for thousands of people living in those areas. Some people also become homeless for this carelessness by the government. However eviction of illegal encroachers from the *Sattras* is largely appreciated by the people.

Apart from this government's decision to provide free education to girl child upto the University level has been appreciated by people. But for organising the events like "Namami Brahmaputra" has been criticised by the large section of people and is also seen as the cultural imposition by the BJP regime upon the Assamese society. The Policies of the government on the Health and Education are also regarded as positive moves. But the state governments inability to oppose Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 and statements of the state BJP chief and many BJP leaders including Ministers and MLA's had created dissatisfaction and distrust among a larger sections of people. There is a fear of

marginalisation among the indigenous people if the amendment bill becomes an Act. Therefore, the protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) bill is still going on. Regarding the NRC upgradation on the role of the state government is minimal. But, it is alleged that through the Citizenship bill, the government is trying to legalise the Hindu Bangladeshis. The allegation of biasness on religious grounds has been made against the government by opposition parties as well as various civil society organisations. State government's initiative on Act East policy, industrialisation and skill development programmes can be seen as positive move for the development of region. Sonowal government's initiative towards agriculture sector, road way and water way, to provide social security and to fight against social evil is regarded as a positive step.

According to the most of the respondents BJP government's developmental agenda is partially successful. The study shows that the performance of the BJP government in health and education sector is average for more than half of the respondents, however according to more than one third respondents it is poor. It is important to note here that BJP led Union government has programmes like "BETI BACHAO, BETI PADHAO" (Save Daughters, Educate Daughters) but regarding the representation of women BJP government is still lacking in Assam. As only 12% respondents said that women's participation and representation has improved. The study has also highlighted that it is believed by more than 50% respondents that BJP government's poverty alleviation programmes are partially successful in Assam. The study also shows more than half of the respondents believe that the government is not successful in generating employment.

Chapter IV: Socio Political Implications of BJP Regime

The fourth chapter will study the socio political implications of the BJP regime in Assam.

This chapter will discuss the changes with reference to the socio political aspects of the Assamese society.

In this chapter the socio political implications of the BJP regime has been discussed on the basis of information collected through the secondary as well as primary sources. The BJP government has completed two and half years of its rule and has adopted many policies and programmes. In the earlier chapters elaborate discussions have been made on the policies, programmes and the major decisions of the BJP regime. The BJP regime has various implications on the society and politics of Assam. In order to know the ground reality, the views of opposition parties, various organisations and academicians have been taken into consideration.

Eviction drive

One of the major controversial actions of the BJP regime is eviction drive. Eviction drive has affected people immensely; BJP government has to face lots of criticism for evicting people who have had even governmental documents. Further govt did not carry out appropriate surveys about which people were evicted from the revenue villages. Certain major criticisms came from Congress and KMSS in this regard.

The main Opposition party INC under the leadership of Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Ripun Bora on seventh January 2017 led a 10 member delegation to Raj Bhawan. The party has also submitted a memorandum to the then governor Banwarilal Purohit, and claimed that the BJP-led state government during the eviction was targeting a religious minority community in Kaziranga, Guwahati, Bardowa, Mayong, Sipajhar and Barkhetri in the last four months of 2016.¹⁹⁵

It was also mentioned in the memorandum that despite the govt promised to the effected people of Kaziranga to compensate within 40 days, but nothing has been provided. According to the Congress party they were mostly Bengali-speaking Muslims and

¹⁹⁵ “Assam Cong files memo on eviction,” *The Telegraph* (Online edition), January 07, 2017.

descendants of paddy farmers. The memorandum reads, “many people, who are having land-holding documents and pay government revenue, are being indiscriminately evicted without providing an alternative means of livelihood.”¹⁹⁶ The PCC termed it as the violation of human rights and insist on the Governor to discontinue the eviction to avoid the disintegration of “the social fabric” through “religious and linguistic” division.

The eviction drive was started with the direction of Gauhati High Court and initially govt has evicted people who encroached the land of various *Sattras*. This step was welcome by the people at large. But the unplanned eviction in Kaziranga, Sipajhar and Amchang where even the revenue villages, government schools were evicted, erected lots of criticism of the government from various sections of the people.

Imposition of Sanskrit Language

The decision of the Assam government to incorporate Sanskrit as a mandatory subject till Class 8 has faced serious criticism from various students’ organisations and opposition political parties of the state. AASU was critical of this decision as instead of promoting Assamese in schools government is promoting Sanskrit. AASU chief advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya made it clear, “We are not against the Cabinet decision of making Sanskrit compulsory in schools under the state board and asked the government to clarify whether now there will be the four-language formula in Assam instead of the three-language formula followed in other states.”¹⁹⁷ He further added there cannot be any compromise with the teaching of Assamese in schools and the language has to be a part of the syllabus in the state.

Apart from AASU, The Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) also alleged that the move to impose Sanskrit as compulsory subject till Class 8 was a “well-

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ “Row erupts after Assam govt decides to make Sanskrit compulsory in schools,” *Hindustan Times*, March 02, 2017.

orchestrated conspiracy being micro managed and monitored from Nagpur” Moreover the state governments decision to recruit Sanskrit teachers from outside was criticized. They also added that since the state lacks the required number of teachers but they will not allow teachers from other states to be recruited in the schools.¹⁹⁸ The AJYCP also stated, “We do not oppose the teaching of Sanskrit in schools and colleges as it is the ancient language which needs to be preserved and promoted.” But they are concerned about the fact that sanskrit has been imposed in the state by the government after knowing that there is shortage of Sanskrit teachers in the state.

State Government’s decision to make Sanskrit compulsory in the schools has faced series of criticisms. People are not against the learning and preservation of Sanskrit language. But already Assamese medium schools are facing various problems and without resolving the problems of Assamese medium schools, steps taken for promoting Sanskrit is not acceptable. At present there are no sufficient Sanskrit teachers in Assam. Thus employing Sanskrit teachers from outside the state will also victimize the unemployed youths of the state.

Namami Brahmaputra

The Namami Brahmaputra was criticised by ULFA, militant outfit of Assam, for spending Rs 14 crore. They demanded justification for spending of public money in organising festivals, whereas large sections of the people are struggling to meet daily needs.¹⁹⁹ The militant outfit assumed that organizing Namami Brahmaputra on the lines of Namami Gange could be a prelude to linking the Brahmaputra with the Ganges. They also feared that under the direction of Union water resources minister, Uma Bharati the interlinking of rivers is going to commence very soon. The outfit vowed to oppose linking of any river of Assam with any

¹⁹⁸ “Decision to make Sanskrit compulsory draws criticism: Assam,” *India Today*, March 03, 2017.

¹⁹⁹ “Ulfa-I slams govt on festival,” *The Telegraph* (online edition), March 25, 2017.

river outside the state since they termed river linking as a harmful initiative for the people of Assam.

Further Assam government also faced criticisms from academicians for organising the Namami Brahmaputra festival. According to Chandan Sharma, a professor of Department of Sociology, Tezpur University it was a conspiracy to impose Hindutva on Assamese culture.²⁰⁰ He also explained that Namami Brahmaputra was not successful because of the failure of the Assam government to give the clear message about the objectivity of the festival. Further common people were confused whether it was organised to initiate the river linking project or it was for promotion of Assam as a tourist destination. Apart from creating a festive like situation there was hardly any mention about the infrastructural developments to entertain and attract tourists so far. To bring improvement in tourism sector basic facilities should be provided. Tourists need basic facilities which the government have failed to create. He stated that the roadmap for all these was not clear at all which led to the failure.

People of Assam further feel alienated government called priests from Haridwar to conduct *aarti* which was similar to the *aarti* conducted at Dashashwamedh ghat in Varanasi. This was seen by many as an insult to Assam's Satriya culture of Srimanta Sankardev which does not propagate idol worship. The *aarti* happened when many Satradhikars, the heads of different Neo-Vaishnavite monasteries from all over Assam, were present at the banks of the Brahmaputra, specially invited for the festival. Unlike Ganga indigenous communities of Assam doesn't worship river Brahmaputra. They consider it as the lifeline of the community. There was a feeling of cultural imposition on the people of Assam by this festival from the forces outside the state.

²⁰⁰ "Namami Brahmaputra: Rains, Hindutva controversy inundate Assam festival," *FIRSTPOST*, April 08, 2017.

Further the tribals communities, Christians or the Muslims felt left out since they do not indulge in such activities. Even the act of importing priests from Haridwar to worship the river has not gone down well. According to Sharma there has been a mix up of many things because of lack of adequate planning. Namami Brahmaputra has been conceived by many as a soft strategy by Bharatiya Janata Party-run Assam government to spread Hindutva ideology under the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's one of the agendas of spreading Hindutva across the nook and corner of the country. However Sharma suggested, "Indeed, the focus should be on the use of the river system along with its tributaries in a sustainable manner for which there has to be a plan for a sustained engagement with the river. Without a proper study of the river system, festival of this nature won't mean much even if the intent is good".²⁰¹

The State government's decision to organise the event called *Namami Brahmaputra* has also faced serious criticisms. Although some section of people participated in the event organised by the government. But the event did not serve any real interest of the state and its people. Thus it was wastage of public money by the government. This event or festival is also seen as an imposition of North Indian culture to the people of Assam.

Population Control Policy

Another important policy of BJP governments is Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam (PWEP) which has serious socio political implication. Former Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi statement in this regard bears significance. According to him there must be a national policy to this effect and this norm should not be applied only to Panchayat and other local bodies' elections. Instead it should cover MPs or MLAs as well. The Congress also criticised the policy stating that the policy reflected a RSS "line of thought".²⁰² The Congress found a 'link' between the policy and the BJP's move to bring Hindu migrants

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² "Two Child Policy for Govt Jobs, Panchayat Elections Creates Controversy," *North East Today*, June 05, 2017.

from Bangladesh to counter the perceived demographic invasion by Muslims who constitute 34% of Assam's total population. Tarun Gogoi further raised a very prominent question to the Assam government in this regard, "If the BJP is sincere about controlling population, why does it want to bring in non-Muslims from neighbouring countries."

Apart from Congress the statement of Badaruddin Ajmal, All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) president, is also remarkable. For him the proposal to deny government jobs to those having more than two children is a violation of fundamental rights and it is undemocratic. He also added that birth rates of more than two child is mostly found among Muslims, SCs and STs. Therefore the policy will affect that section of the society the most and they will be deprived from availing fundamental rights.²⁰³ For that Ajmal vehemently opposed the draft bill in Parliament and also threatened government to drag the issue to the Supreme Court if required.

Non-governmental Organisation such as Grassroots charity organization Oxfam was vocal in this policy. Oxfam India CEO, Nisha Agrawal cited the example other state where the policy was failed to produce any fruitful result. Instead she pointed out that such population control policies led to women bearing the burnt of it.²⁰⁴ She suggested that the government of Assam needs to focus on enabling measures to improve women's education, healthcare and access to contraception. For him only these measures can bring change in a developing country like India. Referring to China, Agarwal warned the government that such policy may backfire also.

At the same time, Runumi Gogoi, chairperson of Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, applauded the policy and she is hopeful that it will become

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Rahul Karmakar. (2017). "Assam population policy criticised for being 'anti-minority,'" *Hindustan Times*, Sep 16, 2017.

fruitful. She also termed the policy as the need of the time as the over explosion population in some areas has been seen as a major problem. This policy will really help children as rising population has led to many being forced into child labour or abandoned.

Apart from controversies and criticisms it has been agreed by most of the people that population control policy was a serious requirement of the time in order to check unusual growth of population in the state. In order to implement this policy in a proper order a scientific approach must be taken to prioritize the basics of sensitisation, awareness and education. Further political will must be translated into sustained campaigns instead of rhetoric.²⁰⁵

Though the State government's Population and Women Empowerment Policy of Assam (PWEP) has also faced criticisms from various corners, but people at large have welcomed this move of the government to control population. As Assam is facing the population explosion so it is the need of the hour to check the population growth. It is expected that linking the population control policy with the eligibility of government job and to contest panchayat elections will also help in the implementation of this policy.

Dual Standard of the Government

Debabrata Saikia, Leader of the Opposition, alleged that, the BJP-led government headed by Sarbananda Sonowal was harassing a section of intellectuals of the state for taking part in a meeting where Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind chief Maulana Syed Arshad Madani had made some controversial remarks.²⁰⁶ Saikia also accused the BJP-led government of maintaining "double standards" and showing "dictatorial tendencies" by not taking action against some of its own

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Samudra Gupta Kashyap. (2017). "Sarbananda Sonowal govt 'harassing' intellectuals, showing 'dictatorial tendencies': Congress," *The Indian Express*, November 19, 2017.

leaders who had allegedly made communally inflammatory statements. Leading Assam intellectual Hiren Gohain, former ‘AsomiyaPratidin’ editor Haider Hussain, retired Gauhati University professor Abdul Mannan, former North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU) professor Apurba Kumar Barua and former journalist Manjit Mahanta have been facing condemnation for having been on the dais when the Jamiat chief had made certain provocative statements and allegedly not raising a voice of protest.

The state government has shown pro activeness in the case related to the intellectuals who shared dais with Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind chief, Madani who delivered inflammatory speech. Whereas many BJP leaders including the MLA’s who have been making communal statements in the regular interval are given free hand by the government and no action has been taken against them. This somewhere shows the dual stand of the state government.

Governments Failure in All Fronts

Leader of the Opposition, Debabrat Saikia made serious allegation on BJP government just before the Sarbananda Sonowal-led government was preparing to celebrate its second anniversary that the present government has failed on all fronts and it couldn’t fulfil any of the electoral promises made by the party.²⁰⁷ He alleged that the BJP government promised good days and parivartan. Instead of good days the Assamese people are now fighting for their identity and existence.

He said the state government has failed to deal with corruption even when the ministers have admitted about the presence of syndicates. Recent days have witnessed many instances of law and order and terrorism-related incidents, Saikia added. Citing the example of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, in this regard, he accused the ruling BJP of harbouring some “hidden agenda”. “They assured to solve the problems plaguing the

²⁰⁷ “Opp leader says BJP has failed on all fronts,” *The Assam Tribune*, May 23, 2018.

education sector within 45 days of assuming power, but the problems in the sector remain unsolved. Guwahati continues to be affected by flash floods while they talk of Smart City. Work of water supply schemes in the city is also getting delayed,” said Saikia.

He made a serious allegation against BJP rule state government that not even a single tractor has been distributed in the villages in last two years under the government scheme the Chief Minister Samagra Gramya Unnayan Yojana. This is a major accusation of corruption and mismanagement in the implementation of government policies under the present government. In other instance, old schemes are still continuing under the current government by just changing their names. People expect better monitoring of schemes and better performance from the government. He added that youths are not getting placements though the government has announced training programmes in the name of employment generation. For Saikia the government has been failed 90 per cent.

At the policy level the state government has made various policies, but at the ground level, except in few sectors no revolutionary change has been noticed so far. Regarding the major problem of the state like flood and land erosion, the issue of illegal immigration, and unemployment no major policy decision has been taken by the government.

NRC Upgradation

The opposition alleged that the Supreme Court-monitored exercise to identify genuine Indian nationals living in Assam which has excluded over 40 lakh people from the final draft list, elicited a political ruckus which is the BJP's “gameplan” to divide the people for electoral gains.²⁰⁸ This situation has generated fear among the four million people who were failed to

²⁰⁸ “Assam NRC: Opposition Raises Alarm as 40 Lakh Risk Losing Citizenship, Centre Says Don't Panic Yet,” *News18*, July 31, 2018.

enter incorporate their names in the final draft of NRC. It could pave the way for one of the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world as it has been assumed by many that it would create the world's largest stateless population. Both houses of Parliament were stormed by oppositions with arguments and counter arguments. This situation compelled Home Minister Rajnath Singh to appeal to the opposition not to politicise the "sensitive" matter. He made it clear that as the list has been published with the directives of the Supreme Court, the Central government has no role to play in it. He further assured opposition that no "coercive" action will be taken against those whose names are not included in the draft NRC.

Thereafter, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused the Centre for playing "vote bank politics". She took the issue to another level by commenting, "This divide and rule policy will finish the country and alleged that it was a gameplan to isolate and throw out Bengali speaking people and Biharis from the state of Assam." Banerjee claimed, "Names of people who have passports, Aadhaar and voter cards have also been excluded from the final draft."²⁰⁹

Congress chief Rahul Gandhi's statement in this regard also bears significance. He termed the move "sluggish" and asked the government to "resolve the crisis".²¹⁰ By stating that the move was initiated by former PM Manmohan Singh, Gandhi made a point that the manner in which this exercise has been undertaken by the BJP governments at the Centre and in the state may lead to problematic and chaotic situation in Assam.

In spite of the criticism, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said "It was a historic day for the state, which will abide by all the directions of the apex court." Whereas

²⁰⁹ "Stripping People Of Citizenship Could Lead To Bloodbath: Mamata Banerjee," *NDTV*, November 15, 2018.

²¹⁰ "Assam NRC: Opposition Raises Alarm as 40 Lakh Risk Losing Citizenship, Centre Says Don't Panic Yet," *Op.cit.*

Assam Pradesh Congress president Ripun Bora alleged, “It was a motivated action under the BJP which was trying to play politics of polarisation.”²¹¹

On the other Badruddin Ajmal, AIUDF president, has taken a cautious approach as he asked everyone to wait till the final list is out. But he said, “Exclusion of 40 lakh people was not a small matter and he also assured those people whose names were not in the final draft to provide assistance.”²¹²

Former Assam chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta welcomed this development. He was in the forefront of the six-year-long Assam agitation against foreigners and was a signatory to the historic Assam Accord.²¹³ He demanded that the central government "must deport people who have come after March 24, 1971 to their original country".

The exclusion of the 40 lakhs people from the 2nd draft of NRC, has created chaos. For that opposition parties like Congress, TMC, SP, RJD and Left parties criticised the BJP led central and state government. Many has also described it as a humanitarian crisis and also blamed the government for making lakhs of people stateless. Though the process of NRC upgradation was monitored directly by the Supreme Court, but the BJP led state government also tried to take the credit. In the draft NRC it was seen that many genuine Indian citizens names were also missing. It was also alleged that thousands of foreigners are also successful in enrolling their names in the NRC. This led to the questions regarding the accuracy of NRC up gradation process.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² “Maulana Badaruddin Ajmal softens stand on Assam NRC, now says ‘religion or language’ shouldn’t be linked with list,” *FIRSTPOST*, August 06, 2018.

²¹³ “Mahanta calls for pan-India NRC,” *The Telegraph* (Online edition), August 01, 2018.

Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

Tarun Gogoi, former chief minister of Assam and Debabrat Saikia, leader of the opposition, warned the government that violence could take place as the atmosphere had charged up in the state regarding the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016. He also stated that they have already warned the government that serious violence may occur because of the government's divisive policy. Already because of this bill serious repercussions have been seen in the state. But Saikia showed his disappointment from Sarbananda Sonowal government which failed to take action at time and allowed the situation to deteriorate. All these information's have been provided by All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary and the party' in-charge of Assam, Harish Rawat on 4th November to Reporters.²¹⁴

Furthermore, Sonowal's government is increasingly facing criticism after five persons belonging to the Bengali Hindu community were gunned down by unidentified persons at Bisonimukh Kherbari village in eastern Assam's Tinsukia district on 1st November 2018. Although Ulfa (Independent) was initially suspected, the outfit denied its role in the attack that has shaken the nearly 72 lakh Hindu Bengali population in the state.²¹⁵ But after investigations Assam police confirmed the involvement if ULFA in this killing.

In the midst of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill by various indigenous organisations, ULFA's warning to government and war of words between leaders of political parties and other organisations versus ULFA, the killing of five innocent people in Tinsukia by ULFA is of high significance. It indicates that government is unable to control the hate speeches by the leaders of various organisations which creating a tense situation and communal tension in the state. The recent incident also indicated the resurgence of banned

²¹⁴ Sumir Karmakar. (2018). "Assam government ignored our warnings: Congress," *Deccan Herald*, November 05, 2018.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

ULFA in various parts of the state and is also the failure of the State government to check this.

All the indigenous communities residing in Assam are against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. For them the bill would reduce them into minorities in their own land if the Bengali Hindu illegal migrants living in the state are given citizenship.

AASU took the lead along with 29 organisations representing various groups and communities, assembled at Dispur seeking immediate steps from the State government for withdrawal of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, Foreigners (Amendment) Rules, Passport (Entry into India) Amendment Rules and the rule to provide long-term visa for migrants.²¹⁶ All these organisations gathered together at Ganesh Udyan which was adjacent to the Dispur secretariat campus. This was followed by a protest march where thousands of students and youths coming from various parts of the State took part. However Police, stopped the rally in the Dispur Last Gate area. But the leaders of 29 organisations vowed to carry out large scale protest at Dispur in the near future if the State government remained inactive to their demands. Addressing the gathering, the leaders asked Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and the BJP-led State government to make their stand clear on the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. AASU chief adviser Samujjal Bhattacharya, addressing the gathering, stated that earlier they were protesting at Latasil and Chandmari, but now they have shifted to Dispur.²¹⁷

The leaders were disappointed at the state government because the attitude of the state government is indifferent demands of indigenous people. Therefore they have marched to Dispur to warn the government and all the MLAs. Bhattacharjya further asked the Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal to make his stand clear in this issue". He also urged Sonowal to follow the path of Meghalaya government. He also raised an important question that even

²¹⁶ "Protest by 29 organisations shifts to Dispur," *The Assam Tribune*, November 09, 2018.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

after massive protest against the citizenship Bill, why the BJP-led State government has not taken any step yet? He further stated the example of the Meghalaya government, where the BJP is also a coalition partner, who opposed the Bill by taking a cabinet decision. He therefore suggested the Assam government to follow the path of Meghalaya. Bhattacharjya vehemently criticized the ruling BJP that the party fought the last Assembly election as the last battle of Saraighat. But soon after getting power they have fought the battle to welcome illegal migrants. At last he warned the state government that if they don't respond to the voice of indigenous people then the situation will become worse soon.”

From 10th November, 2018, delegations of these 29 organisations started meeting the State's MLAs, MPs and their families in their residences and requested them to oppose the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, Foreigners (Amendment) Rules, Passport (Entry into India) Amendment Rules and the rule to provide long-term visa for migrants.²¹⁸

The KMSS and AJYCP, is also leading as many as 70 organisations, to protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, and they are demanding that it should be scrapped. While speaking to Asian News International (ANI), KMSS leader Akhil Gogoi, said that if the proposed bill is passed, then the Assamese people will become a minority in their own state.²¹⁹ Therefore they are protesting against the bill. While talking about Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, Akhil Gogoi blamed the BJP and RSS for attempting to create a “Hindu Nation” which has underlined the protest organised to save democracy in the nation. In this regard he has referred to the secularism provision of the constitution.

The protest rally was halted by the security forces when thousands of people marched towards the Assam Secretariat in Guwahati, on 17th November, 2018, against the

²¹⁸ “Aasu to lead renewed stir against citizenship bill,” *The Times of India*, November 01, 2018.

²¹⁹ “Assam NRC: 70 organisations protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016,” *The New Indian Express*, November 16, 2018.

proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.²²⁰ They have also criticised the Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal for remaining silent on the issue despite repeated protests against the bill. The protestors claimed that it will nullify the provisions of the Assam Accord which fixed March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date for deportation of illegal immigrants irrespective of religion. Palash Changmai, AJYCP general secretary, accused the Chief Minister that he is functioning under the orders of the RSS. He further added that Sonowal should give up his Hitlerian rule as it is against the people of Assam.

Huge mass protests led by various organisations are continuously going on against the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016. The main reason of the protest is, a large section of the people believes that it may encourage mass migration of the Hindu Bangladeshis to Assam. This may harm the interest of the indigenous people as it threatens the language, identity and culture of the indigenous Assamese people.

The BJP led state government has faced lots of criticisms on various issues which are controversial. From the study it is clear that through Namami Brahmaputra, by making Sanskrit compulsory and proposing Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 the BJP regime is somewhere trying to implementing its ideological agenda upon the state of Assam. The regime is also tagged as anti Muslim for its population control policy and eviction drive. Apart from few issues the BJP led state government is yet to deliver its poll promises.

Socio-Political Implication of BJP regime: People's perception

In order to get better understanding of the present scenario interview has been conducted with various sections of the people in Assam. Total 50 respondents have been selected on the basis of simple random sampling to collect primary data. Interviews were conducted with a structured questionnaire with the selected respondents. The respondents were chosen from

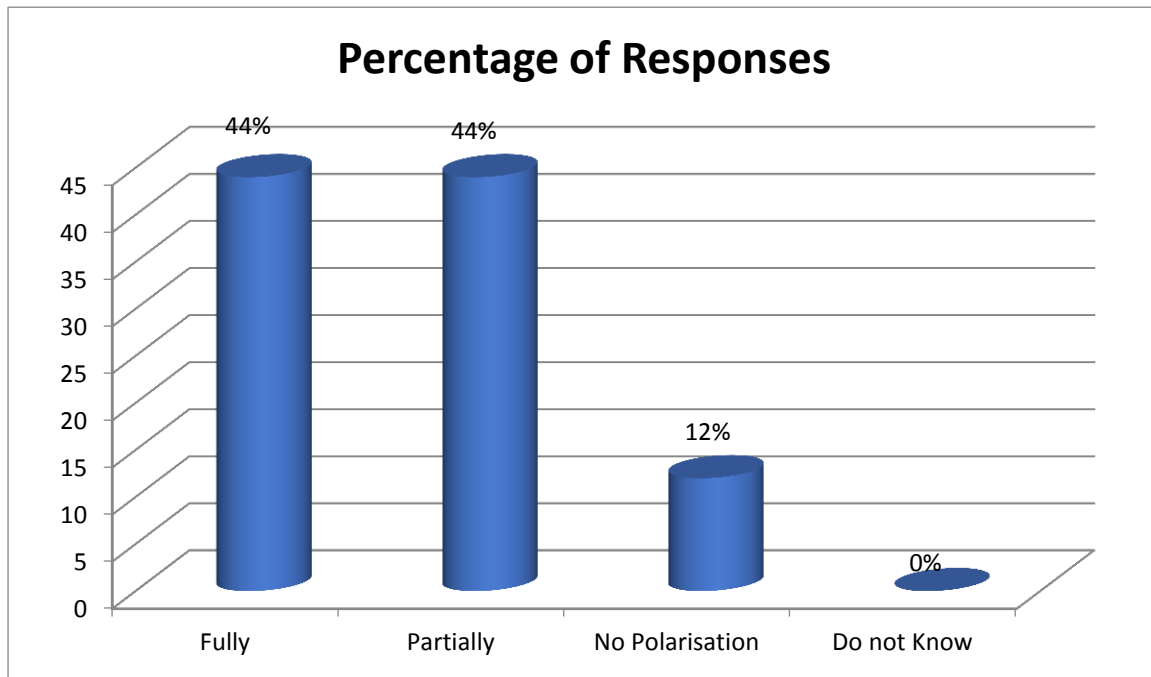
²²⁰ "People protesting Citizenship Bill stopped from proceeding towards Assam secretariat," *The Indian Express*, November 18, 2018.

various disciplines which comprise of Academicians, Political leaders, Lawyers, Research scholars and farmers. The views and responses of the selected respondents have been analysed to get a comprehensive picture of the situation. Among them 10 each from academicians, political leaders, lawyers, Research scholars and Tea farmers were selected. Out of 10 respondents, five were male and five were female. Academicians were selected from Gauhati University, Tezpur University, Dibrugarh University, Assam University and also from various colleges of Assam. Politicians and youth leaders from the INC, BJP, AGP, AIUDF and CPI (M) were interviewed. Lawyers were selected from Gauhati High courts and various Districts courts. Research scholars from Gauhati University, Tezpur University, Dibrugarh University and Assam University were also interviewed. Farmers were selected from various regions of the state that is four sub regions of Assam which covers all the districts (South Assam, Upper Assam, North Assam and Lower Assam).

The responses of the interviewed people constitute major part of the chapter. The questions that were asked have been categorised on three issues- factors responsible for the rise and growth of the BJP in Assam, performance of the BJP led government in Assam and socio-political implications of the BJP regime. To the queries regarding the knowledge of rise, growth and performance of the BJP, it has been noticed that respondents were aware of the situation and they have responded thoroughly which is full of information's and facts.

Questions asked to respondents on various issues related to the Bharatiya Janata Party regime in Assam.

Figure 4.1: Communal Polarisation after the BJP Regime



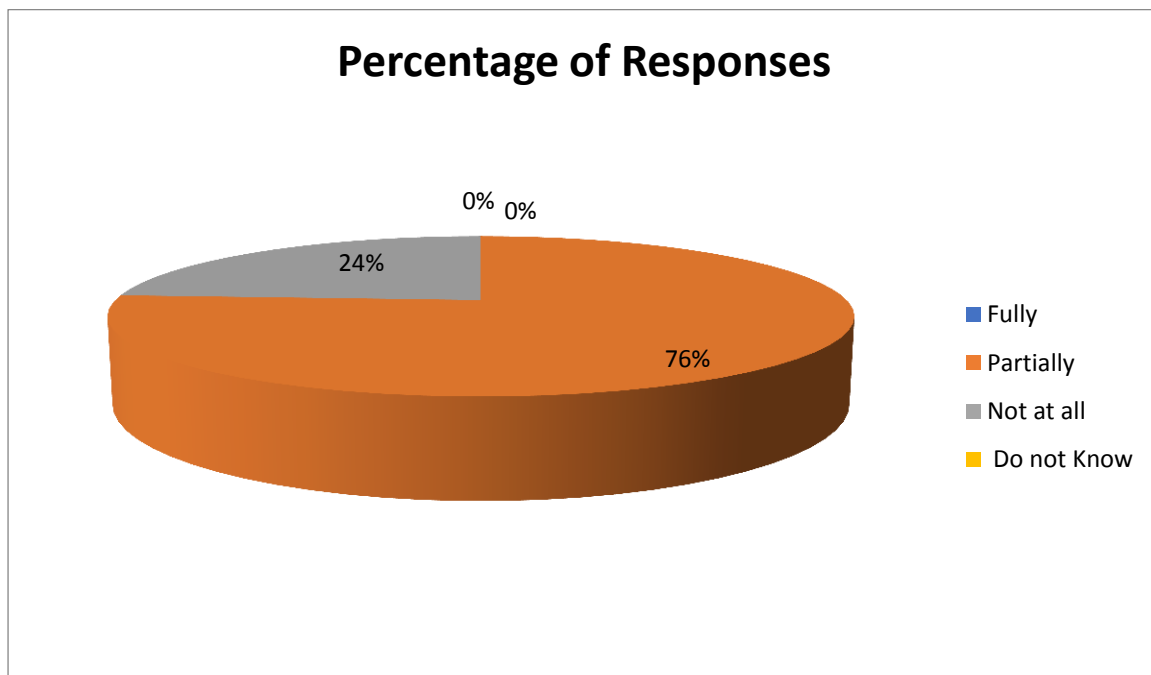
Source: Data collected from my field study.

In the question of communal polarisation after the BJP regime came to power, 44% respondents replied that communal polarisation has been fully noticed. Whereas another 44% out of the total respondents believe that it is only partially noticed. On the other hand 12% respondents believe that there is no communal polarisation at all in the BJP regime.

It is evident from the responses that polarisation is there. Because majority of the respondents partially or fully agree that polarisations has been noticed. After the BJP regime the division between the Hindu and Muslim has widened. By nature society of Assam is not communal, because in Assam, Assamese Muslims follow the same language and culture and has a cordial relation with the indigenous people. They were regarded as an integral part of the Assamese society. So between Assamese Muslims and the Hindus there was no such division. But with the growing number of East Bengal origin Bengali speaking Muslims, who

do not have any cultural similarities has somehow contribute in the Hindu Muslim division. Cultural dissimilarities with the Bengali speaking muslims has generated the perception of existential threat. With the rise of AIUDF and then the BJP the communal polarisation has increased. The “Hate speeches” of various political and non political leaders including few MLAs have also fuelled in the division.

Figure 4.2: Ethnic Polarisation in the BJP regime



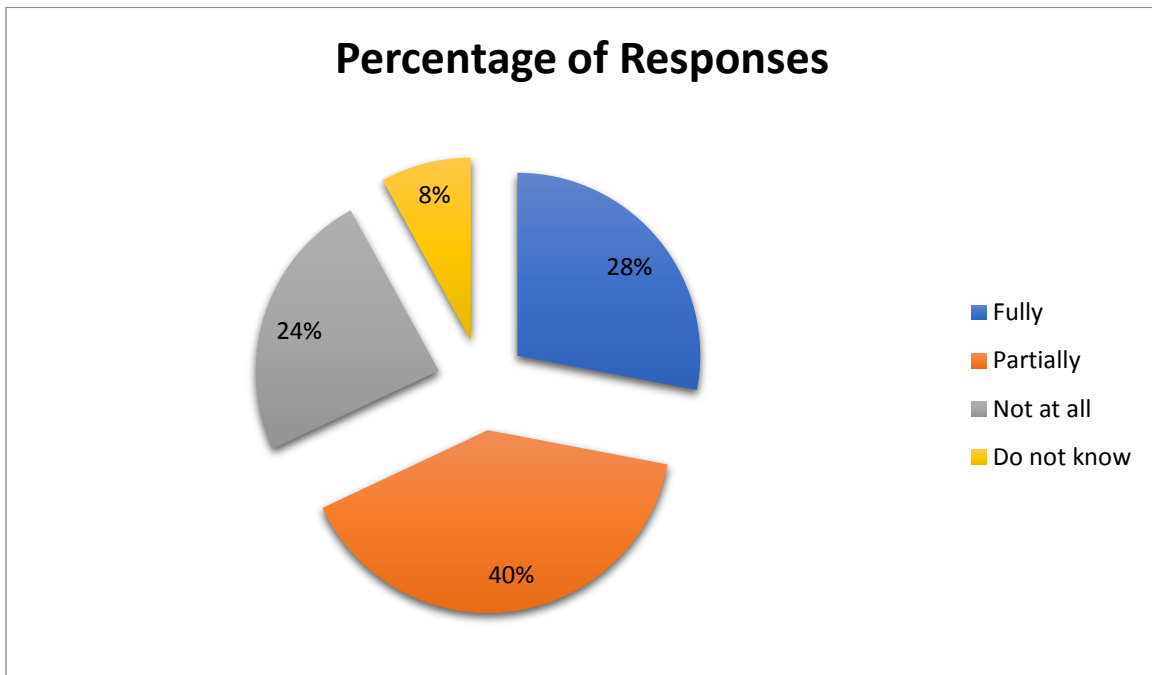
Source: Data collected from my field study.

To the queries related to the ethnic polarisation in the BJP regime, out of the total respondents 76% respondents believes that ethnic polarisation has been partially noticed. On the contrary other 24% respondents replied that in the BJP regime there is no ethnic polarisation at all.

As per as ethnic polarisation is concerned small communities are already organised and working for their progress and development at their own level. Regarding ethnic polarisation statuesque has been maintained in the present political scenario. Though the ethnic feeling is there but at present, it is not visible as per with religious and linguistic

polarisation. But statehood demand by the Bodo peoples is at the peak, and from Assam to Delhi they are protesting for the demand of Bodoland. But they are yet to get any concrete result.

Figure 4.3: Linguistic Polarisation in the BJP Regime



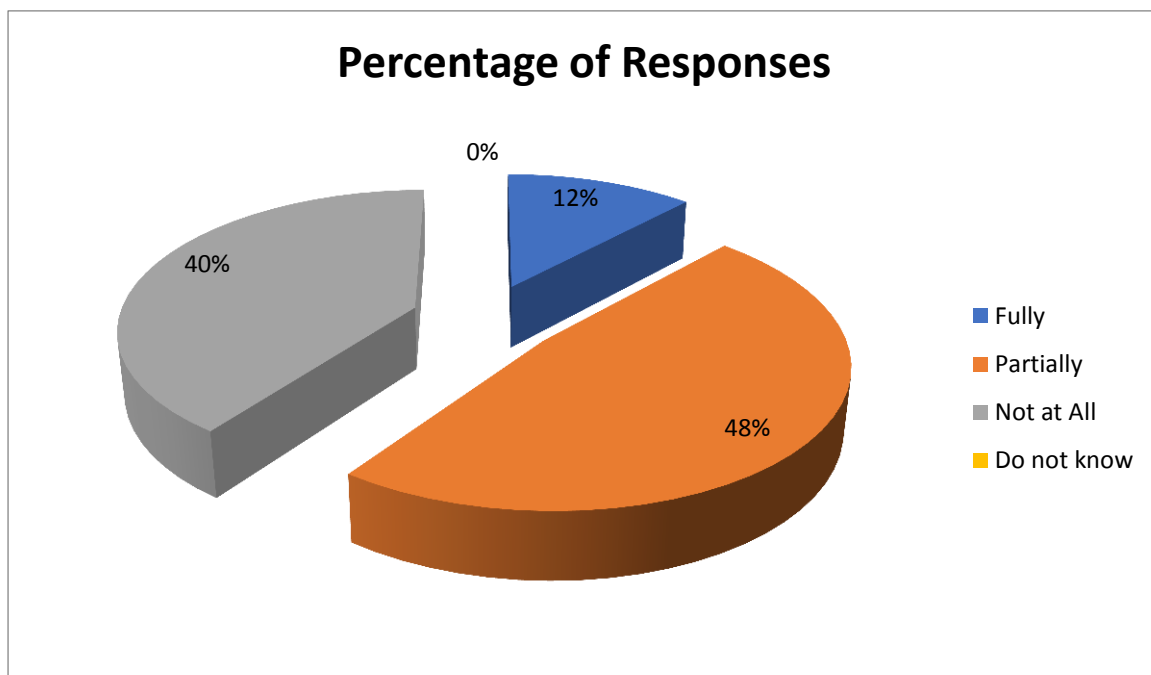
Source: Data collected from my field study.

In reference to the questions of Linguistic polarisation in the BJP regime, 28 % respondent out of the total respondents replied that it is fully polarised in the linguistic line. Another 40% respondents believes that it is only partially polarised. However 24 % of the respondents are of the view that there is no linguistic polarisation in the BJP regime. Out of the total respondents eight percent respondents do not have any knowledge about this.

In recent times, because of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016, the linguistic polarisation between Assamese and Bengali speaking people is at the highest level after the “Bhasha Andolan” or Linguistic movement of 1960s. (In Assam, the anti foreigners movement was against the Illegal immigration of Bangladeshis.) But the BJP government’s decision to provide citizenship to Hindu Bangladeshis has divided Bangladeshis into Hindu

and Muslims. Before the Citizenship bill came into limelight, people were opposition and protesting against the Bangladeshis as a whole. But after this bill came into focus, protest movements by various organisations shifted against Hindu Bangladeshis only, which has at some point turned anti Bengali. And, the reactions of this has been seen in the Bengali dominated region of Barak Valley.

Figure 4.4: Reduction of Democratic Space under the BJP Regime

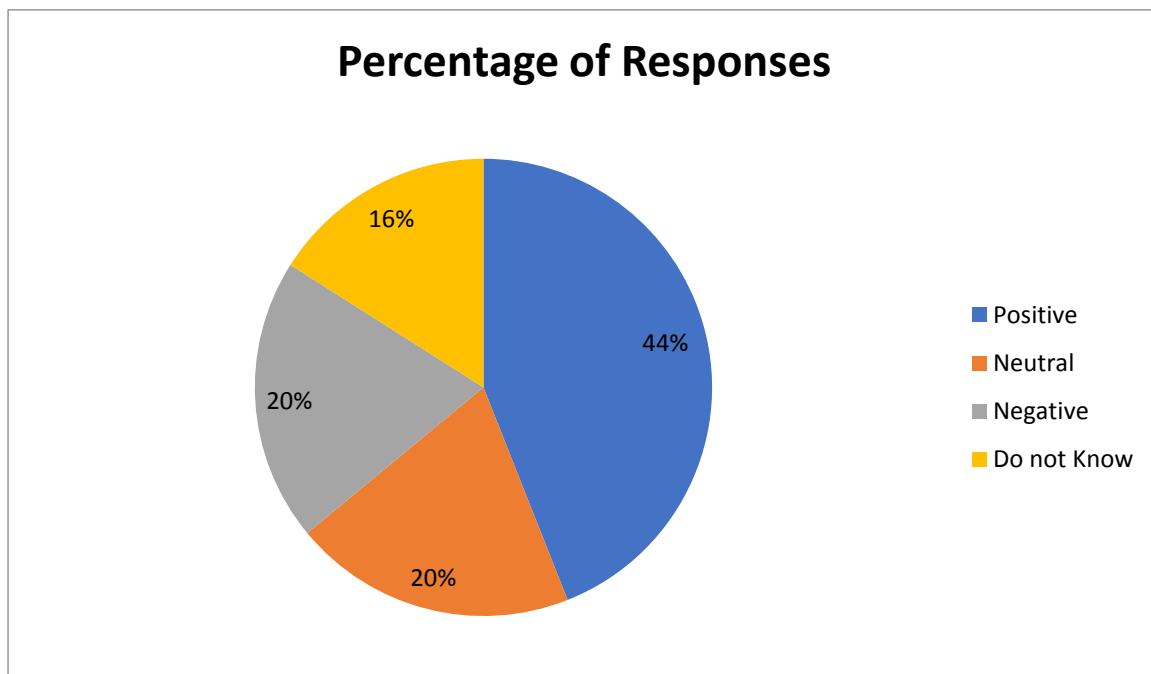


Source: Data collected from my field study.

The study also attempted to analyse whether democratic space has been reduced under the BJP regime in Assam. In connection with that question were asked to the respondents. Out of the total respondents, 48% respondents said that democratic space has been partially reduced under the BJP regime. Contrary to that 40% respondents are of the view that under the BJP regime democratic space has not been reduced. Further, it is interesting to know that according to 12% respondents under the BJP regime democratic space has been fully reduced.

Here democratic space means whether people are democratically free or not whether they can freely criticise government activities or protest against government or not. Whether government is suppressing peoples voice? Apart from the allegations of the opposition and left parties, democratic space so far has not been reduced in Assam. But in last two years few instances have been noticed such as government’s opposition to the protest against Citizenship (Amendment) bill, which is also seen by some sections as a reduction of democratic space.

Figure 4.5: Approach of the BJP Government in NRC Upgradation



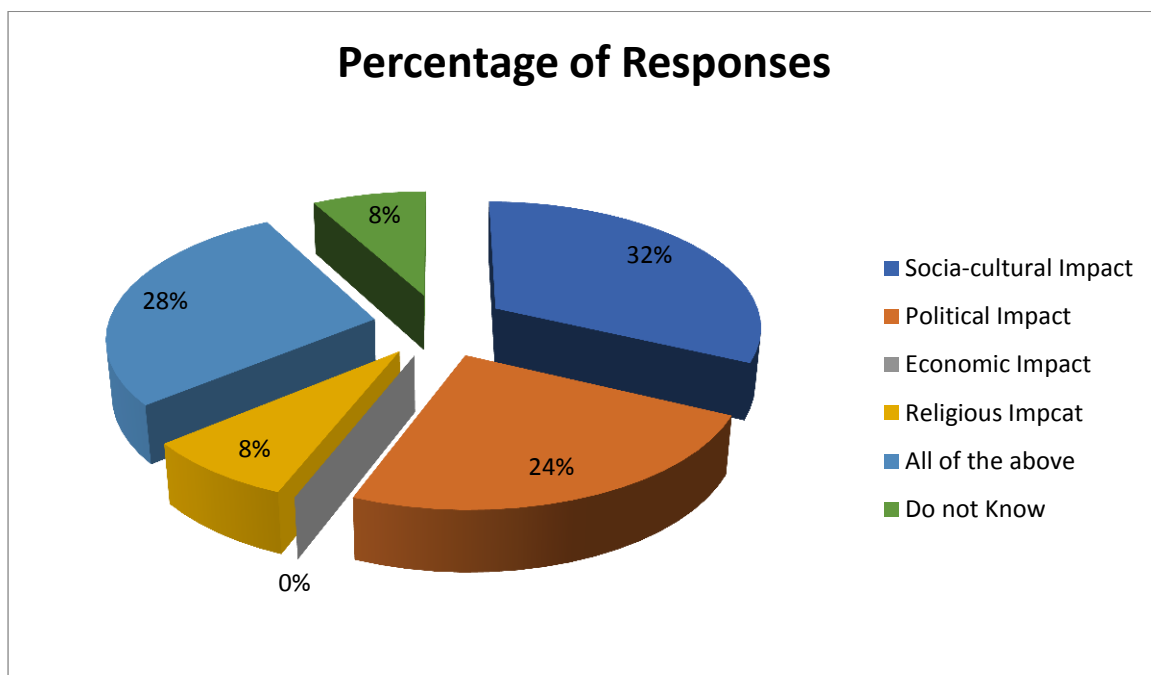
Source: Data collected from my field study.

Keeping in view the recent issue and controversy of NRC upgradation in Assam, a question was asked to know the approach of BJP government in NRC upgradation. As a response to this question, 44% respondents stated that the approach of the BJP government towards NRC upgradation was positive. Other 20% respondents said that BJP was taking a neutral stand in this issue. Whereas, according to 20% respondents, the BJP governments approach towards

the NRC upgradation is negative. The rest of the respondents, that is 16% does not have any knowledge about this.

In the beginning the BJP has a positive stand towards the NRC, even in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections the then BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi has announced that after the Lok Sabha elections results the Bangladeshis must go from Assam. But the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) bill, 2016 is against the basic spirit and objective of the NRC upgradation and detention of foreigners. After the NRC upgradation and publication of draft NRC, BJP's state president, ministers and other leaders are openly criticising the process of NRC. They are stating that many genuine Indians names are missed and lakhs of foreigners are successful in enrolling their names in the NRC. On these regards it can be said that at present BJP's role is dubious regarding the NRC upgradation.

Figure 4.6: Impact of the BJP Government Supporting the Citizenship (amendment) Bill, 2016



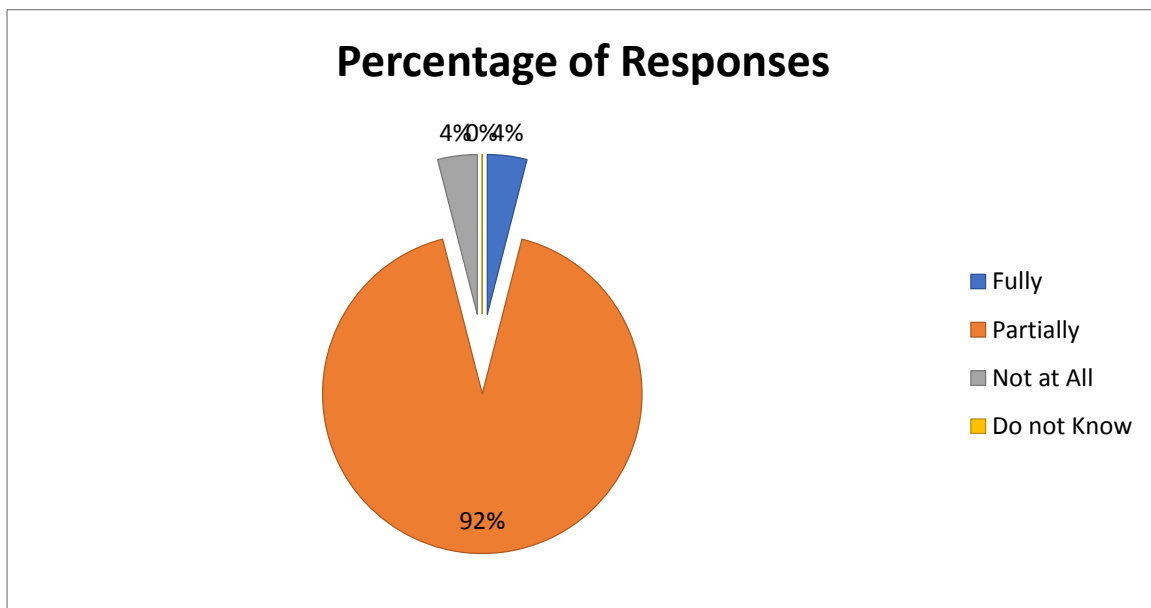
Source: Data collected from my field study.

The Citizenship (amendment) Bill, 2016 remained a matter of controversy in Assam from couple of months. To the queries related to the impact of BJP government support for the

Citizenship (amendment) Bill in the society and politics of Assam 32% of the total respondents are of the view that it has socio-cultural impact. Out of the total respondents 24 % replied that the amendment bill has serious political impact. However eight percent respondents think that it has religious impact. It is important to note here that 28% of the respondents think that it will have socio-cultural, political, economic and religious impacts. On the other hand eight percent respondents have no knowledge about the bill.

Regarding Citizenship (amendment) Bill, 2016 the state government is facing the widespread protest from various organisations across Assam and particularly in the Brahmaputra valley. People have a fear in their mind that if the bill becomes an act, then lakhs of Hindu Bangladeshis will get a permission to enter Assam and that will lead to “Tripura like situation” where the indigenous people will be outnumbered by the immigrants. If they become majority political power will also be taken away by the immigrants. The immigration of the Bangladeshis will also hamper the language and culture of the people of Assam. It will also have rampant impact on socio-political, economic and cultural aspect of the state and its people.

Figure 4.7: The Success of the BJP Government in Anti Corruption Drive

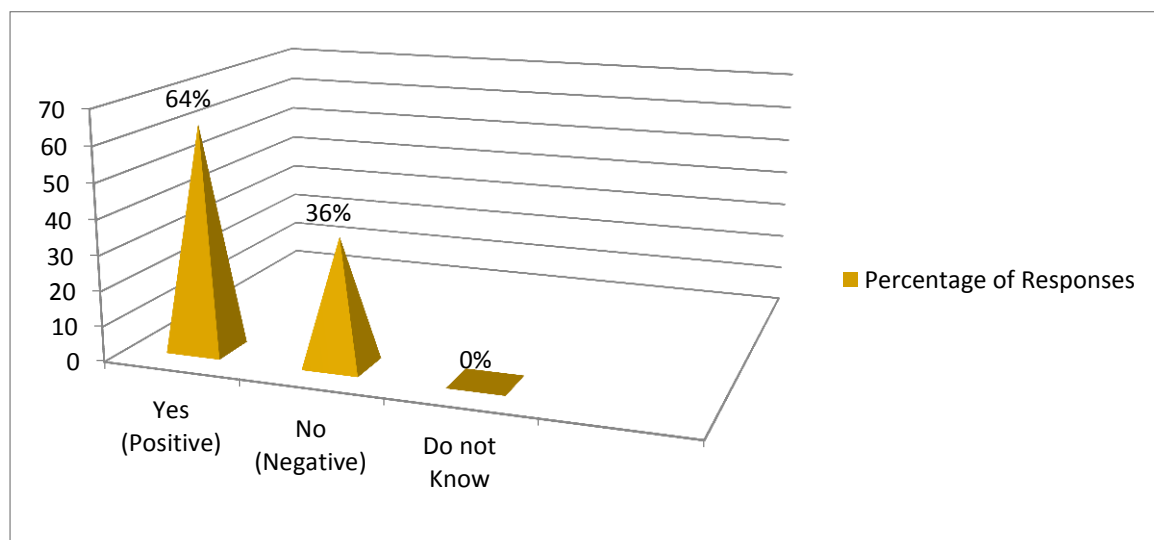


Source: Data collected from my field study.

The BJP government has taken many new initiatives and anti corruption drive is prominent. Questions were asked in order to get peoples perspective regarding the BJP governments anti corruption drive. The study has revealed that 92% respondents viewed BJP governments anti corruption drive as a partially successful move. On the other hand four percent respondents think that it is fully successful. However another four percent finds anti corruption drive not at all successful.

The BJP government came into the power as people were fed up with the corruption during the Congress rule. Soon after acquiring power BJP led government initiated investigation and start taking action against the APSC scandal. The BJP government was successful in sending then APSC chairman Rakesh Paul behind the bars. After him many civil service, police service and allied service officials who got job by using unfair means have also been arrested. Some of the arrested officials are dismissed but many officials are yet to be caught. Apart from APSC scandal few other corrupt officials were also sent to jail but corruption in the state is widespread and many areas are still untouched. Majority of the respondent agreed that anti corruption drive of the state government have been partially successful. But the government should work sincerely to make the state corruption free.

Figure 4.8 : The BJP Government’s Population Control Policy

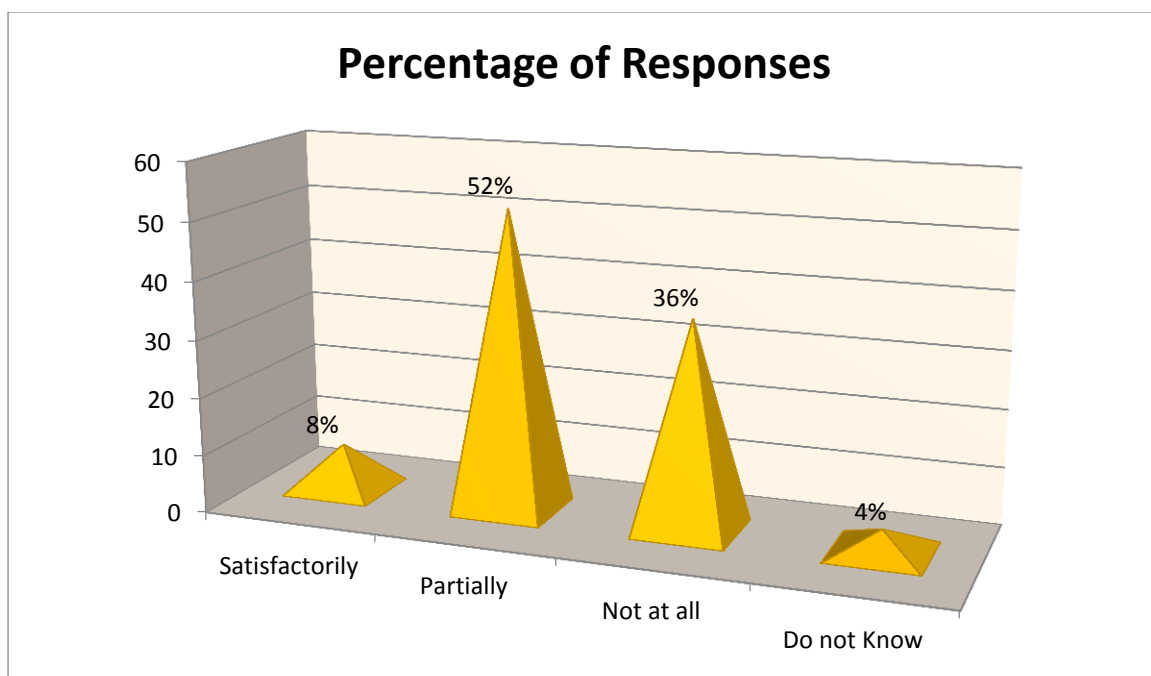


Source: Data collected from my field study.

To the queries on the BJP government's population control policy, 64% of the total respondents agreed that it is a positive initiative. Whereas 36% respondents said that population control policy is a negative and bias move. BJP,s population control policy has also become an issue of controversy.

Population Control policy of the BJP govt is one of the most controversial policy. Majority of the people are happy with the policy and regards this move of the government as a positive move and need of the hour. The population explosion has become a major problem in Assam which has led to unemployment and other problems. Therefore the population control policy have been largely welcomed. This policy has put certain conditions for getting jobs and also to contest panchayat elections. According to the policy a person having more than two children is not eligible to apply for jobs and contest the panchayat elections. Even though the policy have been criticised by some section of the people.

Figure 4.9: The BJP Government Success in Tackling the Bodo Issue

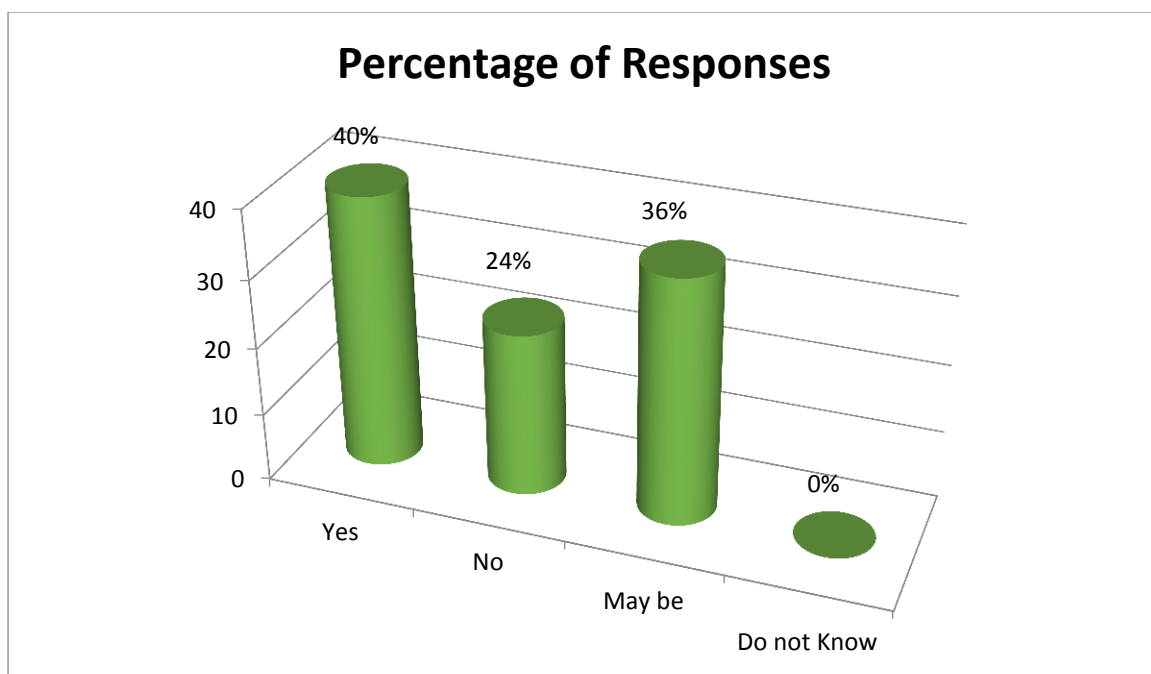


Source: Data collected from my field study.

On the question of BJP governments tackling the issues of Bodo tribes, out of the total respondents, 52% respondents are of the view that the government is partially successful in tackling the Bodo issue. On the contrary, 36% respondents believes that BJP government is not at all successful in handling the issue. However, eight percent respondent seems satisfied with the government's way of tackling the Bodo issue.

The BJP has promised to resolve the Bodo issue during 2014 Lok Sabha election and it also repeated the promise in 2016 assembly elections. Various rounds of discussions are going on between the Centre and NDFB (progressive) and also between the Centre and ABSU. But any concrete solution of the Bodo issue or the formation of Bodoland is yet to become materialised. Bodoland movement under the leadership of ABSU is continuously going on. According to a secret report from Delhi the long standing demand for separate Bodoland has been rejected.

Figure 4.10: Feeling of Cultural Imposition on Assamese Society under the BJP Regime

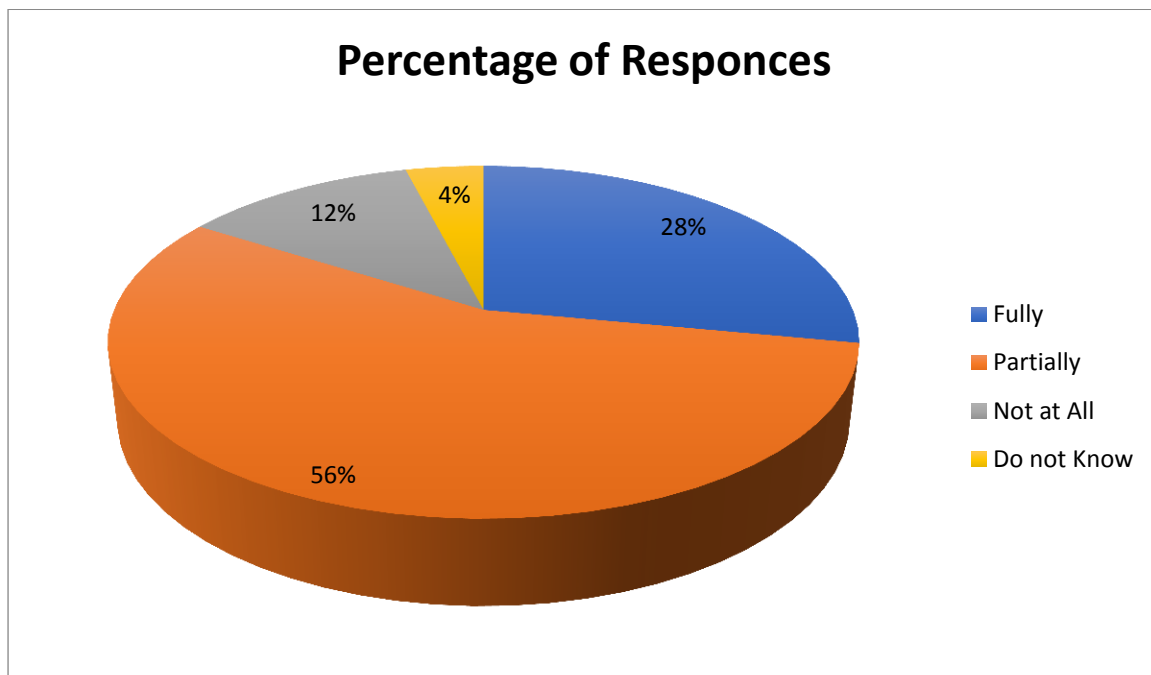


Source: Data collected from my field study.

Question was also asked on much talked issue of cultural imposition on Assamese society following the BJP regime. Regarding this issue 40% of the total respondents said that there is a feeling of cultural imposition under the BJP regime. On the other hand 36% respondents replied that there may be a feeling of cultural imposition. However 24% respondent denied any feeling of cultural imposition on Assamese society under the BJP regime.

Following the BJP regime, a strong feeling of cultural imposition upon the Assamese society has been felt by many. Programmes such as Namami Brahmaputra have resemblance with Namami Gange. It is seen by a section of people of Assam as an imposition of North Indian culture upon Assam. Traditionally there is no custom of “Brahmputra Arati” like that of “Ganga Arati”. The state governments sponsored “Namami Brahmaputra” which cost crores of rupees is also regarded as cultural imposition by the BJP led government. Therefore a majority of the respondents also agreed to it.

Figure 4.11: Fear Psychosis among Muslim Community towards the BJP Regime

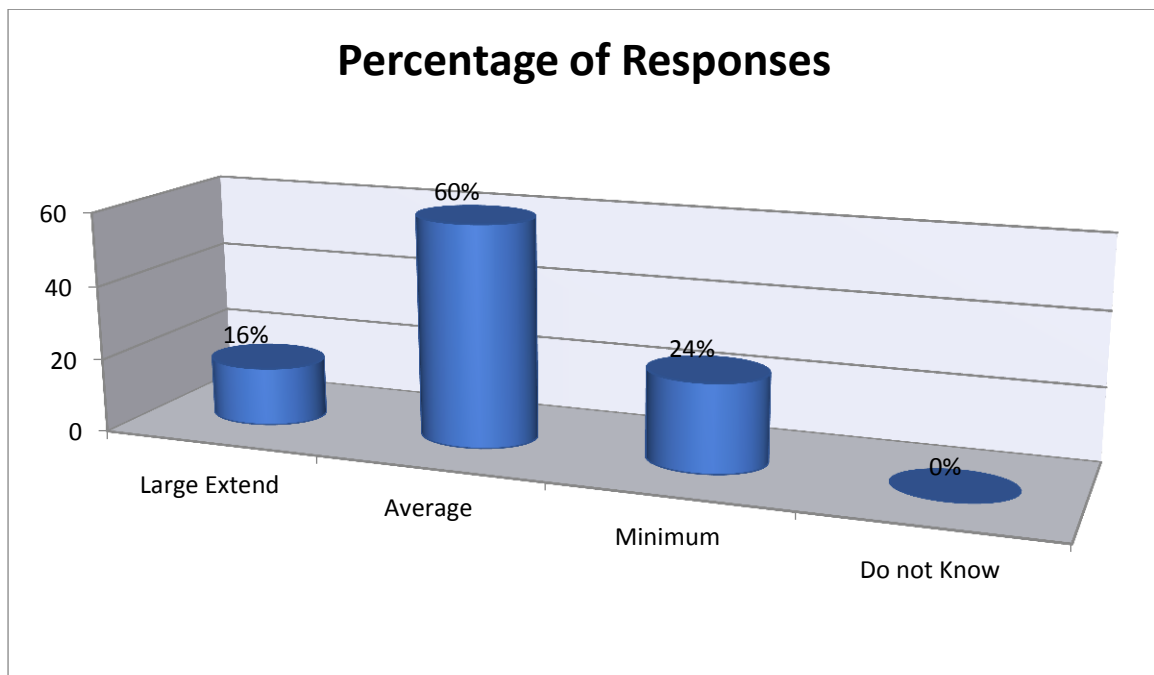


Source: Data collected from my field study.

To the queries on the fear psychosis among the Muslim community towards the BJP regime, Out of the total respondents 56% respondents said that there is a partial fear psychosis among the Muslims. Another 28% respondents believes that Muslim community is fully under fear psychosis. But 12% respondents feel there is no fear psychosis among the Muslim community towards the BJP regime. However four percent respondents have no knowledge about the bill.

It is clear from the responses that fear psychosis among the Muslim community towards the BJP regime exists. The BJP's agenda of the Hindutva and anti muslim posture by some of its leaders have created a sense of fear among the Muslims. Regarding population control policy of Government of Assam, a section of minority based organisations, the left parties and the AIUDF has alleged that the BJP led state government is targeting the Muslims. These statements have also created panic among the community.

Figure 4.12: Improvement of Law and Order under the BJP Regime

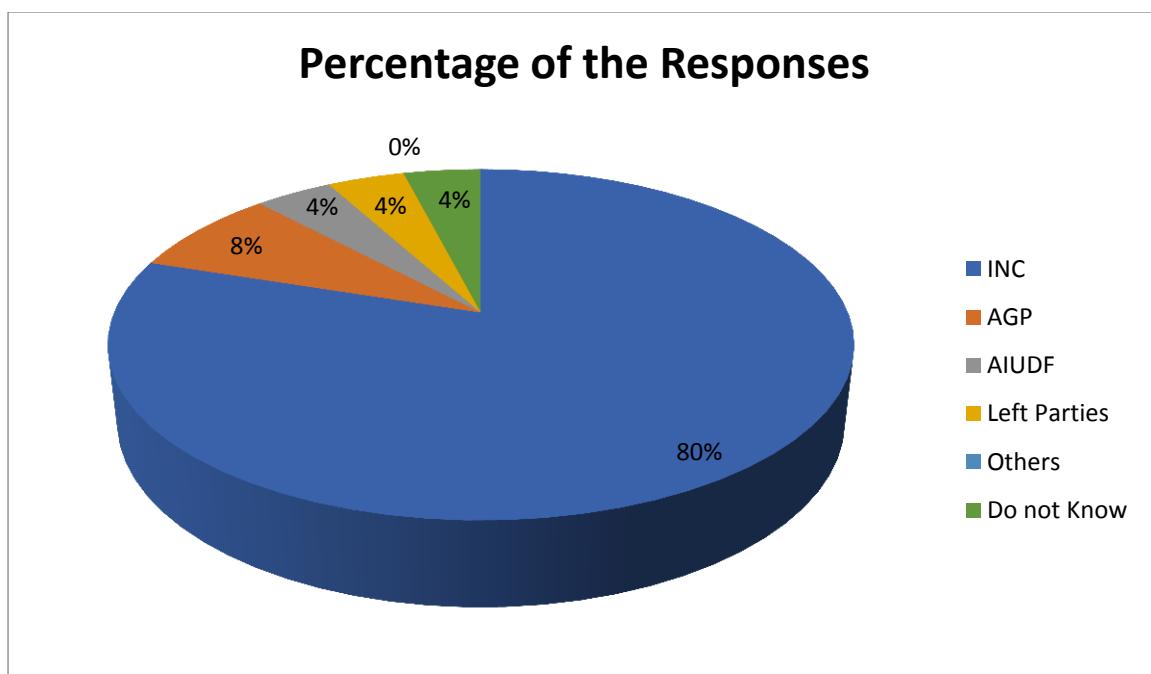


Source: Data collected from my field study.

On the questions of Law and order under the BJP regime, 60% of the total respondents are of the view that it is average. On the contrary, 24% respondents feel that there is no improvement in the law and order situation under the BJP regime. But on the other hand 16% respondents believe that under the BJP regime law and order has been improved to a large extend.

From the responses, it can be said that in last two and half years of the BJP regime law and order situation has been improved. As in the BJP rule no major ethnic or communal riots has been noticed compare to that of the previous Congress government. But the recent killing of five innocent people by the United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent) in the Tinsukia district has raised question on the law and order situation in the state and the ability of the BJP government.

Figure 4.13: Political Party that is Considered the Main Contender of the BJP



Source: Data collected from my field study.

Regarding the question of main contender or opposition party of the BJP, it is important to note that 80% of the total respondent said that it is the Indian National Congress (INC). Other 8% respondents believe it is the regional AGP, alliance partner of the BJP is the main contender. Another four percent of the respondents replied that it is the Left parties. While four percent respondents also believe the AIUDF is the main opposition. Rest four percent said that they do not know about this.

From the respondents it can be said that INC is regarded as the main contender of the BJP in Assam. From the organisational strength and present in the Assembly and Lok Sabha also the Congress party is regarded as the second largest party in Assam. Moreover Congress party,s organisation as well as its frontal organisations like Indian Youth Congress and National Students Union of India (NSUI) are still regarded as stronger than other political parties in Assam. These frontal organisations help the Congress party to connect with the new blood or the young people, where parties like Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) are miserably failed.

Conclusion

The above discussions underline the perception of the people regarding the performance of the BJP led Assam government. The study also highlighted the socio political implications of the BJP regime in Assam. From the study it can be said that the activities of the BJP regime are pro Hindutva. In the areas where the BJP has been criticised as bias, autocratic and communal by the opposition parties and several organisations of Assam, are somehow proved to be true. The BJP's stand on NRC upgradation and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 has labelled the party as a communally biased. Because of this factor the BJP is failed to gain the trust of the religious minority groups. Though the intention of the govt to carry out eviction was not bad but in the absence of proper planning the whole process went into vein and people suffered a lot.

The making compulsory of the Sanskrit language and celebration of Namami Brahmaputra are regarded as the cultural imposition of the BJP regime by the Assamese people at large. After so much of protest against the citizenship amendment bill BJP is not taking any action. This made people feel that BJP is so concerned about Hindutwa that they are overlooking the interest of the people of Assam. Moreover the role of the Chief minister in this regard is seen very minimal. Not much efforts have been taken to consider people's demand. Neither much action has been seen to gain the confidence of the people.

It has been revealed by the study that majority of the respondents believe that communal polarisation has been noticed either fully or partially. The division between Hindu and Muslim has been widened. From the study it can be noted that ethnic polarisation has also been noticed. At present because of the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016, the linguistic polarisation between Assamese and Bengali speaking people is at the highest level. The study reflected a mixed picture regarding the reduction of democratic space under the BJP regime. The approach of the BJP government in the NRC upgradation, was initially regarded as positive, but after the publication of the second draft BJP's stand regarding NRC has also changed. The study highlighted that there is a sense of dissatisfaction among the majority of people regarding the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, and wide protest is also continuously going on across the state.

The study highlighted that majority of respondents believes that corruption has been minimised either fully or partially. The reform in the APSC is successful in creating this impression. The study also shows that BJP government's population policy is regarded as a positive move by maximum respondents. As the population explosion has become a major problem in Assam which has led to unemployment and other problems related with this. Regarding the Bodo issue the study highlights that 60% respondents believes that govt is tackling it satisfactorily. The study reveals that there is a feeling of cultural imposition on

Assamese society following the BJP regime exists as maximum of the respondents somehow agree with this. The events like Namami Brahmaputra contributed to this feeling of the people. The study also highlighted the fear psychosis among Muslim community as more than 80 % respondents agreed that it exist under the BJP regime. The BJPs agenda of the Hindutva and anti muslim posture by some leaders have also created a sense of fear among the Muslims. The study shows that more than 75% respondents believe that law and order under the BJP regime has improved as the state is free from riots under this government. From the study it can be also said that INC is regarded as the main contender of the BJP in Assam, as 80% respondents opt for it. The organisational strength and present in the Assembly and Lok Sabha of the Congress party also supports this opinion.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The last chapter is the summary of the previous four chapters and incorporates the summary of the study. Major findings of the study are also incorporated in this chapter.

The study entitled “The Bharatiya Janata Party Regime in Assam: A Study of Socio Political Implication” is aimed at finding the factors responsible for the rise and growth of BJP in Assam. The study has been conducted to analyse the performance of BJP led government in Assam. The research work also aims to study the implications of BJP regime on the society and politics of Assam.

The first chapter underlines that for a healthy democracy political parties are important. In the parliamentary form of government, political parties play a vital role, either as a ruling party or an opposition party. So, emergence of the BJP as an alternative political force is significant for Indian democracy. Its ideological position and strong leadership also make it different from other political parties. The BJP also draws its strength from its strong cadres and strong Organisational structure. Regarding its strength, the RSS and other Sangh Parivar organisations also played a vital role. The BJP can choose its leaders from vast network of Sangh Parivar so it is in a position to choose the strong leaders at various levels. The BJP gradually made its foothold strong in Assam. From 1991 the BJP made its presence felt in the politics of Assam, beginning from Bengali dominated region that is Barak Valley to other parts of the state of Assam.

The BJP formed its first govt in Assam in 2016. The party won seven seats in Assam in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections and it utilised the issues like anti incumbency against Congress government, misrule, corruption, increase of Muslim population. Thereafter with the help of a rainbow coalition with the regional parties like the AGP and the BPF and other smaller groups the BJP won the Assembly elections. The BJP has also raised the “Illegal Bangladeshi infiltration” issue which is a burning issue in the politics of Assam from the 1970s. The BJP has also taken the opportunity of weakening of the regional party like the AGP. Hence, it is clear that over the years the BJP have emerged as an important factor in

the politics of Assam. Hence it became significant to study the rise and growth of the BJP as a party and the role of the BJP regime in Assam.

The second chapter highlights that political parties play an important role in the electoral politics of any functioning democracy. Therefore electoral politics of BJP in Assam is of high importance. From the 1991 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections the BJP gradually started making inroads in the politics of Assam. In the beginning from the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, BJP started to make stronghold in the Bengali dominated Barak Valley region of Assam. Thereafter the BJP gradually started gaining ground in other parts of the state also that is in the Brahmaputra valley which is an Assamese dominated area. With the passing of time BJP's vote and seat share also increased.

With the gradual weakening and erosion in the mass base of the main regional party, AGP, it created a vacuum in the opposition space in the state politics. So, the BJP tactfully strengthened its organisation. And various organisations of the Sangh Parivar had also contributed to the building of a support base for the BJP. Increasing number of the Muslims due to the illegal immigration from Bangladesh and the politics of appeasement by the Congress had contributed to the growing mass base of the BJP. Moreover, the 15 years rule of the Congress party has resulted in a strong anti incumbency that helped the BJP. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections results, when the BJP won seven seats out of 14, it was clear that the BJP has already made a strong base in the state.

Further leaders from across the party also had joined the BJP before and after the Lok Sabha elections, which further enlarged the support base of the BJP. In the form of the BJP, people of Assam got an alternative to the Congress. To end the misrule, corruption, and mis governance of the Congress party, people of Assam largely voted for the BJP led alliance. For the BJP, its alliance with the AGP, the BPF, the Rabha and Tiwa organisations also

helped in the consolidation of the anti-Congress votes. Further, the people across the communities voted for the BJP led rainbow coalition. For the BJP, it was its first government in Assam in particular and North East in general.

From the interviews it is clear that behind the consolidation of the BJP in Assam in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections Modi wave played an important role. But factors like Illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue, anti incumbency, weak regional forces also cannot be denied. The study also reveals that more or less all these factors- anti incumbency, weak alternatives, rainbow coalition, increase of Muslim population equally played important role in the success of BJP in 2016 Assam assembly elections. The study shows that most of the respondents have also voted for change.

From the third chapter, it can be said that after coming to power in May 2016, the BJP led state government has adopted numerous policies, programmes and initiatives for the betterment of the people of Assam. There are both positive and negative aspects of the performance of the Sonowal government. 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 successful initiative. It is also expected that unlike earlier Congress government under the BJP regime the recruitment process under APSC will be clean.

Contrary to this positive role of BJP, population control policy and eviction drive have created lot of controversies. Regarding these initiatives the government has been supported by the people in some special cases but largely criticised for not undertaking the eviction process with proper planning and rehabilitation facilities for the indigenous people who are living there for years. Further government schools are also being evicted in some areas which raises many important questions regarding the ability of the government

departments. Moreover recent reports of eviction in some areas which are actually revenue villages and only because of mistakes of government officials who assumed those areas as reserved forest have also raised the question of credibility of government officials. This type of irresponsible actions has caused hardship for thousands of people living in those areas. Some people also become homeless for this carelessness by the government. However eviction of illegal encroachers from the *Sattras* is largely appreciated by the people.

Apart from this governments decision to provide free education to girl child upto the University level has been appreciated by people. But for organising the events like “Namami Brahmaputra” has been criticised by the large section of people and is also seen as the cultural imposition by the BJP regime upon the Assamese society. The Policies of the government on the Health and Education are also regarded as positive moves. But the state governments inability to oppose Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 and statements of the state BJP chief and many BJP leaders including Ministers and MLA’s had created dissatisfaction and distrust among a larger sections of people. There is a fear of marginalisation among the indigenous people if the amendment bill becomes an Act. Therefore, the protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) bill is still going on.

Regarding the NRC upgradation on the role of the state government is minimal. But, it is alleged that through the Citizenship bill, the government is trying to legalise the Hindu Bangladeshis. The allegation of biasness on religious grounds has been made against the government by opposition parties as well as various civil society organisations. State government’s initiative on Act East policy, industrialisation and skill development programmes can be seen as positive move for the development of region. Sonowal government’s initiative towards agriculture sector, road way and water way, to provide social security and to fight against social evil is regarded as a positive step.

According to the most of the respondents BJP government's developmental agenda is partially successful. The study shows that the performance of the BJP government in health and education sector is average for more than half of the respondents, however according to more than one third respondents it is poor. It is important to note here that BJP led Union government has programmes like "BETI BACHAO, BETI PADHAO" (Save Daughters, Educate Daughters) but regarding the representation of women BJP government is still lacking in Assam. As only 12% respondents said that women's participation and representation has improved. The study has also highlighted that it is believed by more than 50% respondents that BJP government's poverty alleviation programmes are partially successful in Assam. The study also shows more than half of the respondents believe that the government is not successful in generating employment.

The fourth chapter underlines the perception of the people regarding the performance of the BJP led Assam government. The study also highlighted the socio political implications of the BJP regime in Assam. From the study it can be said that the activities of the BJP regime are pro Hindutva. In the areas where the BJP has been criticised as bias, autocratic and communal by the opposition parties and several organisations of Assam, are somehow proved to be true. The BJP's stand on NRC upgradation and Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 has labelled the party as a communally biased. Because of this factor the BJP is failed to gain the trust of the religious minority groups.

Though the intention of the government to carry out eviction was not bad but in the absence of proper planning the whole process went into vein and people suffered a lot. The making compulsory of the Sanskrit language and celebration of Namami Brahmaputra is regarded as the cultural imposition of the BJP regime by the Assamese people at large. After so much of protest against the citizenship amendment bill BJP is not taking any action. This made people feel that BJP is so concerned about Hindutva that they are overlooking the

interest of the people of Assam. Moreover the role of the Chief Minister in this regard is seen very minimal. Not much effort has been taken to consider people's demand. Neither much action have been seen to gain the confidence of the people.

It has been revealed by the study that majority of the respondents believe that communal polarisation has been notice either fully or partially. The division between Hindu and Muslim has been widened. From the study it can be noted that ethnic polarisation has also been noticed. At present because of the proposed Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016, the linguistic polarisation between Assamese and Bengali speaking people is at the highest level. The study reflected a mixed picture regarding the reduction of democratic space under the BJP regime. The approach of the BJP government in the NRC upgradation, was initially regarded as positive, but after the publication of the second draft BJPs stand regarding NRC has also changed. The study highlighted that there is a sense of dissatisfaction among the majority of people regarding the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, and wide protest is also continuously going on across the state.

The study highlighted that majority of the respondents believes that corruption has been minimised either fully or partially. The reform in the APSC is successful in creating this impression. The study also shows that BJP government's population policy is regarded as a positive move by maximum respondents. As the population explosion has become a major problem in Assam which has led to unemployment and other problems related with this. Regarding the Bodo issue the study highlights that 60% respondents believes that govt is tackling it satisfactorily. The study reveals that there is a feeling of cultural imposition on Assamese society following the BJP regime exists as maximum of the respondents somehow agree with this. The events like Namami Brahmaputra contributed to this feeling of the people.

The study also indicated the fear psychosis among Muslim community as more than 80 % respondents agreed that it exist under the BJP regime. The BJP's agenda of the Hindutva and anti muslim posture by some leaders have also created a sense of fear among the Muslims. The study shows that more than 75% respondents believe that law and order under the BJP regime has improved as the state is free from riots under this government. From the study it can be also said that INC is regarded as the main contender of the BJP in Assam, as 80% respondents opt for it. The organisational strength and present in the Assembly and Lok Sabha of the Congress party also supports this opinion.

Findings of the Study

- It can be summarised that Modi wave, Illegal Bangladeshi infiltration issue, anti incumbency, weak regional forces or alternatives, rainbow coalition and increase of Muslim population were responsible for the rise and growth of BJP in Assam. Further, leaders from across the parties also joined the BJP before and after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, which also enlarged the support base of the BJP.
- The study has come to the conclusion that performance of the BJP in Assam has both positive and negative aspects. Policies like anti corruption drive by the government is largely appreciated by the people and regarded as a successful initiative. Another major policy which has been appreciated by the people is Population control policy. State government's decision to provide free education to girl child upto the University level is also welcomed by the people. Initiative on Act East policy, industrialisation and skill development programmes is regarded as a positive step. Government's policy to provide social security and to fight against social evil is helpful for the people, on the other side, eviction drive have created lot of controversies. BJP led State government faced criticism for organising the events like "Namami

Brahmaputra”. It is evident from the study that the government has not taken any remarkable policy for employment generation.

- From the study it can be said that the activities of the BJP regime are pro Hindutva. Somewhere the government has failed to handle the socio political issues properly. Therefore, communal polarisation has been noticed which was minimal during the Congress rule. Linguistic polarisation has also been fuelled which is becoming ugly day by day. The BJP’s agenda of Hindutva to consolidate its vote bank is not as successful as it has been seen in other parts of the country. Because Assam is a land where language and ethnicity plays a vital role, rather than caste and religion. People came together and voted for the BJP for *Parivartan* or change, but after two and half years of its rule, it has been seen that the society has fragmented into segments. With the policies like Namami Brahmaputra and making compulsory of Sanskrit in schools the feeling of cultural imposition by the state government has been seen among the Assamese society. Without solving the basic problems like flood, transportation and communication and security issues, tourism sector will not grow and industrialisation too is not possible. Though the government has taken initiative to attract tourist and investment but the basic infrastructural facilities are yet to develop. In the economic front also no development has been noticed so far. After formation of the BJP govt in Assam, political discourse has changed. The major focus has been shifted from the problems like flood, unemployment to the politics of religion and language which was absent in last 15 years of Congress rule. In the last two and half year’s rule of the BJP in Assam, law and order situation has been deteriorated in last six months. Whereas law and order situation during the Congress governments 15 years of rule, has worsen only in its third term.

Bibliography

Books

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

Anand, Manish . (2015). *The Enabler Narendra Modi: Breaking Stereotypes*, Delhi: Create Space Independent Publishing Platform.

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

Deka, H. (2006). *The Assamese Mind: Contours of a Landscape. Where the Sun Rises When Shadows Fall*. G Sen. (ed.) New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

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

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

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

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

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

Ghosh, Partha S. (1991). *BJP and the Evolution of Hindu Nationalism: From Periphery to Centre*. Delhi: Manohar Publisher's.

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

- Guha, Ramachandra . (2007). *India after Gandhi: the history of the world's largest democracy*. New York: Harper Perennial.
- Hill, Michael. (2005). *Public Policy Process*. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Jaffrelot, Christophe. (1996). *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics*. New York: Colombia University Press.
- John, Peter. (1998). *Analysing Public Policy*. New York: Continuum.
- Kumar K. N. (1990). *Political Parties in India*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.
- Lane, Robert. (1962). *Political Ideology*. New York: The Free press of Glenco.
- Malik , Yogendra K & V.B. Singh. (1996). *Hindu Nationalists in India. The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party* .San Francisco: Westview.
- Nag, Kingshuk. (2014).*The Saffron Tide the Rise of the BJP*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications.
- Naqvi, Sava. (2018). *Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi*. Chennai: Westland Publications Private Limited.
- Palmer, N . (1976). *Elections and Political Development*. New Delhi: K P Bagchi & Co.
- Panebianco, Angelo. (1988). *Political Parties- Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raghavan, G.N.S. (1998). *A New Era In the Indian Polity a Study of Atal Behari Vajpayee and the BJP*. Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- Raj, Hans. (1981). *Indian Govt and Politics*. New Delhi: Surjeet Publications.
- Ram, Hari. (1983). *Special Status in Indian Federalism: Jammu and Kashmir*. New Delhi: Seema Publications, p.115.
- Rose, Richard. (2004). *Learning From Comparative Public Policy: A Practical Guide*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Sethi , Rajat & Shubhrastha. (2017). *The Last battle of Saraighat: The Story of the BJP's Rise in the North-east*. Delhi: Viking.

Sirsikar V.M. & L. Fernandes. (1984). *Indian Political Parties*. Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan.

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

Vajpayee, Atal Bihari & Christophe Jaffrelot. (2007). *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. New Delhi: Permanent Black.

Wallace. Paul. (2015). *India's 2014 Elections: A Modi-led BJP Sweep*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Journal Articles

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

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

Bhattacharjee, Malini. (2016). Tracing the Emergence and Consolidation of Hindutva in Assam. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. LI (16), pp. 80-87.

Bijukumar, V. (2016). BJP's Mobilization and Consolidation in North East India. *Man and Society, A Journal of North East Studies*, Vol. XIII, Winter, 2016, pp.33-64.

Boruah, Uddipta Ranjan. (2015). Winds Of Change In Assam's Politics: Advantage BJP? – Analysis, *South Asia Monitor*, September 12, 2015.

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

- Degvekar, MP. (1990). The origin and the growth of Vishva Hindu Parishad. *Hindu Vishwa*, Vol. 25, (12), p.11.
- Dutta , Akhil Ranjan .(2017). Assam's Population Policy, 2017 Overstated Numbers and Underlying Agendas. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LII (48), pp. 19-21.
- Encyclopaedia of America Int. edition. (1970). Vol I, New York, p. 744.
- Goswami , Namrata. (2010). Bangladeshi Illegal Migration into Assam: Issues and Concerns from the Field. *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses*, January 11, 2010.
- Goswami , Sandhya .(2004). Mixed Verdict. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39(51), pp. 5523-5526.
- Goswami , Sandhya .(2009). A Fractured Verdict. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 44 (39), pp. 159-163.
- Hussain, Wasbir. (2016). A Vote For A New Assam? *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 14 Apr, 2016.
- Hussain, Wasbir.(2016). India Election Analysis 2016: Assam –Analysis. *Eurasia review news and analyses*, May 21, 2016.
- Lahiri, Sutapa. (2005). 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. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 66(4), pp. 831-850.
- Mahanta, Nani Gopal. (2014). Lok Sabha Elections in Assam Shifting of Traditional Vote Bases to BJP, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLIX (35), pp.19-22.
- Mahanta, Riddhi. (2018). Advantage Assam': Instrumentalising Development through Tourism. *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*. 09 Jul, 2018.
- Malik , Yogendra K & V.B. Singh. (1992). Bharatiya Janata Party: An Alternative to the Congress (I)? *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32(4), pp. 318-336.

- Mishra, Udayon. (2016). Victory for Identity Politics, Not Hindutva in Assam. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 51(22), pp.20-23.
- Misra,U. (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.
- Mohapatra, Bishnu N & Dwaipayan Bhattacharyya. (1996). Tribal-Dalit Conflict Electoral Politics in Phulbani. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol XXXI. (2 & 3). p. 160.
- Muktiar, Pinku , Prafulla Nath & Mahesh Deka. (2018). The Communal Politics of Eviction Drives in Assam” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 53(8).
- Ramaseshan, Radhika. (2013). The BJP and RSS: Family Squabbles Turn Intense. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 48(6), pp. 12-15.
- Sen, Ronojoy. (2016). Assam Assembly Elections: BJP has the momentum. *Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. ISAS Brief, No 418*, pp. 1-3.
- Seshia, Shalia. (1998). Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 38(11), pp.1036-1050.
- Sharkansky, Ira & R. Hofferbert. (1969). Dimensions of State Politics, Economics, and Public Policy. *The American Political Science Review*, Vol 63 (3), pp. 867- 879.
- Srikanth, H. (1999). Communalising Assam: AGP's Loss Is BJP's Gain. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 34(49), pp. 3412-3414.
- Sultana, Parvin. (2017). The Politics of Eviction In Assam, *Counter Currents.org*. December 02, 2017.
- News Papers**
- “18 Satras in Assam encroached by illegal Muslim Bangladeshis,” *Time8*, Exclusive, May 23, 2018.

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

“5 reasons Assam voted for BJP” *DailyO*, May 19, 2016.

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

“Aasu to lead renewed stir against citizenship bill,” *The Times of India*, November 01, 2018.

“Assam announces free higher education for the poor,” *The Times of India*, June 11, 2016.

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

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

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

“Assam comes up with new industry promotion policy to attract investment in state” *The Northeast Today*, January 19, 2018.

“Assam Cong files memo on eviction,” *The Telegraph* (Online edition), January 07, 2017.

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

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

“Assam government to highlight PSC reforms in panchayat polls,” *The Economic Times*, May 22, 2018.

“Assam government to highlight PSC reforms in panchayat polls”, *The Economic Times*, May 22, 2018.

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

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

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

“Assam NRC: 70 organisations protest against Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016,” *The New Indian Express*, November 16, 2018.

“Assam NRC: Opposition Raises Alarm as 40 Lakh Risk Losing Citizenship, Centre Says Don't Panic Yet,” *News18*. July 31, 2018.

“Assam Opposition slams government's two-child policy for job”, *The new Indian Express*, April 10, 2017.

“Assam pension plan for triple talaq victims draws criticism” *The Times of India*, May 6, 2017.

“Assam wants to bring lawmakers under its two-child population policy”, *The new Indian Express*, May 04, 2017.

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

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

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

“Citizenship Bill an attempt to jeopardize Assamese community’, says Dr. Samujjal Bhattacharya” *The Sentinel*, September 13, 2018.

“Decision to make Sanskrit compulsory draws criticism: Assam,” *India Today*, March 03, 2017.

“Dispur mulls new land policy for locals,” *The Sentinel*, July 01, 2018.

“Draft population policy: Assam govt proposes strict two-child norm”, *The Indian Express*, April 11, 2017.

“HC has allowed Assam govt's prayer to suspend eviction drive,” *Outlook*, November 29, 2017.

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

“How PM Modi fulfilled Vajpayee’s ‘dream’ to build India’s longest Bhupen Hazarika Bridge between Dholai, Sadiya in Assam,” *Financial Express*, May 26, 2017.

“How the RSS plans to win Assam for the BJP,” *rediff.com*. April 11, 2016.

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

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

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

“Mahanta calls for pan-India NRC,” *The Telegraph* (Online edition), August 01, 2018.

Karmakar, Sumir. “Assam government ignored our warnings: Congress,” *Deccan Herald*, November 05, 2018.

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

“Maulana Badaruddin Ajmal softens stand on Assam NRC, now says ‘religion or language’ shouldn’t be linked with list,” *FIRSTPOST*, August 06, 2018.

“Namami Brahmaputra: Rains, Hindutva controversy inundate Assam festival,” *FIRSTPOST*, April 08, 2017.

“Opp leader says BJP has failed on all fronts,” *The Assam Tribune*, May 23, 2018.

“Opposition slams budget,” *The Telegraph* (online edition), February 02, 2017.

“People protesting Citizenship Bill stopped from proceeding towards Assam secretariat,”

The Indian Express, November 18, 2018.

“Protest by 29 organisations shifts to Dispur,” *The Assam Tribune*, November 09, 2018.

“Row erupts after Assam govt decides to make Sanskrit compulsory in schools,” *Hindustan Times*, March 02, 2017.

“Stripping People Of Citizenship Could Lead To Bloodbath: Mamata Banerjee,” *NDTV*, November 15, 2018.

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

“Two Child Policy for Govt Jobs, Panchayat Elections Creates Controversy,” *North East Today*, June 05, 2017.

“Ulfa-I slams govt on festival,” *The Telegraph* (online edition), March 25, 2017.

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

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

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

India Today, Jan. 15, 1993, p35.

Jaffrelot, Christophet. (2016). “BJP’s Assam win is proof Hindutva has reached areas where it was marginal,” *The Indian Express*, June 11, 2016.

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

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

- Karmakar, Rahul. (2017). "Assam population policy criticised for being 'anti-minority,'" *Hindustan Times*, Sep 16, 2017.
- Karmakar, Rahul. (2018). Kovind cleans Assam Bill against witch-hunt, *The Hindu*, July 16, 2018.
- Kashyap , Samudra Gupta .(2016). "Assam budget: Sonowal govt's focus on healthcare, education," *The Indian Express*, July 26, 2016.
- Kashyap , Samudra Gupta. (2016). "Freeing Kaziranga, satra land priority, says Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal." *The Indian Express*, October 13, 2016.
- Kashyap, Samudra Gupta. (2017). "Why Assam wants to replace central population policy with its own, and why Opposition questions it" *The Indian Express*, April 18, 2017.
- Kashyap, Samudra Gupta. (2017). "Sarbananda Sonowal govt 'harassing' intellectuals, showing 'dictatorial tendencies': Congress," *The Indian Express*, November 19, 2017.
- Mazumdar , Jaideep. (2016). "BJP's Emergence In Assam: A Short History," *Swarajya*, April 27, 2016.
- Mazumdar, Jaideep. (2017). "Assam's Carrot and Stick Policy To Check Population Growth," *Swarajya*, May 10, 2017.
- Organiser, (2006a): "Bangladeshi Infiltration: Borduwa, Shankar Dev's Seat of Vaishnavism in Assam, under Siege," 21 May.
- Organiser,(1992). Delhi (India), October 18, p.9.
- Saikia, Ankush. (2018). "Citizenship Amendment Bill- What is it the Assamese fear the most?" *Daily O*, .May 22, 2018.
- Sarma, Pankaj, (2018). "AGP opposes citizenship bill at meet," *The Telegraph* (online edition), 21 May 2018.

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

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

Internet and Other Sources

BJP (2014), Vision Document, 2014.

Department of Health and Family Welfare 2017a: 1

Department of Health and Family Welfare 2017a: 2

"Election Results: Full Statistical Reports". Election Commission of India.

<http://gunotsavassam.org/>.

http://prepareias.in/current_affair/31/3/2017/namami-brahmaputra-festival-2017.

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

<http://www.sabrang.com/cc/archive/2003/july03/spreport3.html> accessed on 26 January 2012.

<https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/bjp-led-govt-completes-2-yrs-in-assam-cm-lists-achievements-2575387.html>.

<https://www.time8.in/exclusive-18-satras-in-assam-encroached-by-illegal-muslim-bangladeshis/>.

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

Assam Vision Document 2016-2025. (n.d.) Retrieved April 10, 2018, from <http://assam.bjp.org/pdf/vision-document.pdf>.

"Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Encyclopaedia Britannica," <https://www.britannica.com>, Accessed on 13th October 2017.

Gohain, H. (2003). Sangh Politics in Assam. *Communalism Combat*, No 88, available at <http://www.sabrang.com/cc/archive/2003/july03/spreport3.html> accessed on 26 October 2018.

Appendix
Questionnaire
THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY REGIME IN ASSAM: A STUDY OF SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Name:

Occupation:

Gender:

1. Which of the factors is largely responsible for the consolidation of BJP in 2014 Lok Sabha elections?
 - a) Modi Wave, b) Illegal Bangladeshi Infiltration issue, c) Anti-incumbency, d) Weak regional forces, e) Do not know
2. Which of the factors is largely responsible for the success of BJP in 2016 Assembly Elections?
 - a) Anti-incumbency, b) Vote for change, c) Weak Alternatives, d) Rainbow Coalition, e) Increase of Muslim population, f) Do not know
3. To what extent the BJP's developmental agenda is successful?
 - a) Fully successful, b) Partially, c) Not at all, d) Do not know
4. How do you rate the performance of the BJP govt on Health and Education sector?
 - a) High, b) Medium, c) Poor, d) Do not know
5. What do you think about Women's participation and representation under the BJP regime?
 - a) Improved, b) Average, c) Not improved, d) Do not know
6. To what extent the poverty alleviation policy of the BJP govt is successful?
 - a) Fully successful, b) Partially c) Not at all, d) Do not know
7. To what extent the BJP Govt is successful in generating employment opportunities?
 - a) Fully successful, b) Partially, c) Not at all, d) Do not know
8. To what extent the Communal polarisation has been noticed after BJP regime?
 - a) Fully, b) Partially c) No polarisation, d) Do not know
9. To what extent the Ethnic polarisation has been observed in BJP regime?
 - a) Fully, b) Partially c) Not at all, d) Do not know

10. To what extent the Linguistic polarisation has been noticed in BJP regime?
 - a) Fully, b) Partially c) Not at all, d) Do not know
11. To what extent the democratic space has been reduced under the BJP regime?
 - a) Fully, b) Partially c) Not at all, d) Do not know
12. What has been the approach of the BJP govt in NRC upgradation?
 - a) Positive, b) Neutral, c) Negative, d) Do not know
13. What will be the impact of BJP led state Govt supporting the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016?
 - a) Socio-cultural impact, b) Political impact, c) Economic impact, d) Religious impact, e) Do not know
14. To what extent corrupt practices are minimised in the state?
 - a) Fully, b) Partially c) Not at all, d) Do not know
15. Do you think BJP Govt's population control policy is a positive move?
 - a) Yes, b) No, c) Do not know
16. Is the BJP Govt tackling the Bodo issue/problem satisfactorily?
 - a) Yes, b) Partially, c) No, d) Do not know
17. Do you think that there is a feeling of cultural imposition on Assamese society following the BJP regime?
 - a) Yes, b) No, c) May be, d) Do not know
18. To what extent fear psychosis among Muslim community towards the BJP regime is discernible?
 - a) Fully, b) Partially, c) Not at all d) Do not know
19. To what extent Law and order under the BJP regime has been improved?
 - a) Large extend, b) Average, c) Minimum, d) Do not know
20. Which political party (other than BJP) is considered the main contender?
 - a) Indian National Congress, b) AGP, c) AIUDF, d) Left parties, e) Other regional parties, f) Do not know.