

The Trajectory of Ethnic Mobilisation among the Morans in Assam: Politics of Reclassification and Demand for Scheduled Tribe Status

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Abstract:

This article investigates the politics of ethnic resurgence among the Moran community in the post-colonial Assam. The research traces the reasons of ethnic bifurcation of the Morans from the Matak community and the Moran's demand for the Scheduled Tribe Status. The article contends that though for a long period (1939-1965), both the Moran and the Matak communities were represented by the *All Assam Matak Sanmilitan*, the growing ethnic resurgence among the Morans led to the birth of the *Asom Moran Sabha* in 1965, and the All Moran Students' Union in 1968, which became exclusive ethnic forums of the Moran people. The article highlights that the lack of political representation of the Morans in the legislative assembly, socio-economic backwardness of the community, aspiration for the Scheduled Tribe status and other material benefits resulted in the bifurcation of the Morans from the Matak community. Framing the Moran's case within the broader politics of reclassification in Assam, the article explores the relation between the Moran's claims of indigeneity and the community's demand for the Scheduled Tribe status.

Keywords: Moran, Matak, Post-colonial, Scheduled Tribe, Indigeneity

Introduction:

"The concept of boundary does not necessarily imply that the world is composed of sharply bounded groups.....ethnic distinctions may be fuzzy and boundaries soft, with unclear demarcations and few social consequences, allowing individuals to maintain membership in several categories or switch identities situationally. The concept of boundary does not imply closure and clarity, which vary in degree from one society, social situation, or institutional context to another."¹

The above-mentioned statement of Andreas Wimmer portrays the dynamic and flexible nature of the act of defining and redefining ethnic boundaries between various sectional groups inhabiting within a broader societal structure. Such soft and fragile boundaries of ethnicity,

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¹ Andreas Wimmer, "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multilevel Process Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 113, no. 4 (2008): 976.

according to Wimmer, enable individuals to acquire and retain variety of identities simultaneously. It also empowers them to shift their ethnic identities to a relatively advantageous category according to the prevailing and changing circumstances. Hence, collective identities are not essentially exclusive of one another until the ethnic boundaries become politically defined. Accordingly in the context of the Matak-Moran binaries of Assam, one can perceive that the extent to which the Morans see themselves as a sub-group within the Matak, the broader category, the 'identity' of the Morans at least to that extent is associated with that of the Matak people. That is why the Morans are still unofficially and culturally known as 'Moran-Matak'.

The Morans and the Mataks are famous in the history of Assam as the creator of the *Moamoria Rebellion* (1769-1805). This prolonged protracted rebellion paved the way for decline and fall of the Ahom Monarchy by breaking its backbone economically and militarily. Currently, the Morans are recognised under the category of More Other Backward Classes (MOBC) by the Government of Assam.² The Morans along with their brethren Borahis, were the first tribes which were confronted by Sukapha, the founder of the legendary Ahom dynasty of Assam. The Morans are generally ascribed Bodo-Kachari alias Kirat-Kachari origin that represents Tibeto-Burman, a huge language family comprising around 300 languages that extends over a vast geographical area of Asian continent.³ The composite Matak community historically included the Morans also. The Matak community is being described as 'Moamaria' alias 'Moamaria-Matak' in different chronicles written in the last days of Ahom monarchy.⁴ By the mid-1960s, however, most of the Moran leaders became reluctant to see the Morans politically and officially as a part of the Matak society. They went on to officially portray the Morans as a distinct ethnic group or tribe which has its own 'past' and distinct cultural traits. This resurgence was aimed at reformulating the political identity of the Morans by separating the group from the rest of the Matak people. The year 1965 marked a watershed in the joint ethnic journey of the Mataks and the Morans. The formation of *Asom Moran Sabha* (AMS) in that year paved the way for official bifurcation of Morans from the *All Assam Matak Sanmilian* (AAMS), which served as the common ethnic forum for both the communities before the birth of the AMS.⁵ The process of this ethnic bifurcation was completed in 1968, when the Moran student leaders who had been working under the banner of the *All Assam Matak Yuba Chatra Sanmilian* (AAMYCS), constituted their own students' organisation called the *Moran Chatra Sabha* (literally meaning Association of Moran Students). This students' body would later

² The intermediate castes listed under MOBC category are considered more backward than the other intermediate castes that are simply listed as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) by the government. The former enjoys certain special privileges in terms of education and employment as compared to the OBC groups.

³ Tibeto-Burman languages are spoken in Western China, Tibet, and in the South and Southeast Asia.

⁴ Unlike the terms 'Matak' and 'Moamaria', the term 'Mayamora' is found neither in Ahom chronicles nor in the biographies of Vaishnava saints of Assam. According to Sristidhar Dutta, only one official record, a letter written in July, 1802 by King Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811) to the then Governor General Lord Wellesley, used the term 'Mayamora'. But in course of time, according to Dutta, the term 'Mayamora' became more popular than 'Moamaria', perhaps because the heads of the *Mayamara Satras* gave wider publicity to this term through their published biographies.

⁵ Munindra Das, *Janajatikaranar Dabi aru Janagosthiya Andolan* (Demand of Scheduled Tribes Status and Ethnic Movement) (Guwahati: Assam Book Trust, 2015), 9.

become today's All Moran Students' Union (AMSU) in the 1980s.⁶ The Morans are mainly concentrated in the Tinsukia district of Assam, and in the adjoining districts of Lohit and Namsai of Arunachal Pradesh.⁷ The present study is an attempt to understand the politics of ethnic resurgence among the Morans and their long-standing demand for the Scheduled Tribe status.

Methodology:

The present study has primarily adopted historical, analytical and descriptive methods to understand the ethnic resurgence among the Morans in the post-colonial India. For this study, the Tinsukia district has been taken as an ethnographic region. In order to ascertain various aspects of their resurgence, the study has employed objective analysis of the available materials. The study involves analysis of both the primary and the secondary data. The primary sources include periodical mouthpieces and souvenirs published by the ethnic forums of the Morans. The secondary sources include relevant books, scholarly articles, and newspaper reports. Certain online sources have also been consulted for the overall enrichment of the study.

The Birth of the *Asom Moran Sabha* and *All Moran Students' Union*: Causes and Consequences

The ethnic boundary between the Morans and the Matak was largely demarcated by their socio-cultural division in terms of two historic categorisations namely the "*Mokolial Matak*", i.e. Matak from the *Mukoli* (denoting 'open areas' in Assamese) and the "*Haabitolia Moran*" (Morans from '*Haabi*' which means 'jungle' in Assamese). Currently, the Morans and the Matak are mainly concentrated in the districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh and Sibsagar. The term '*Habitolia Moran*' refers to the 'ethnic Morans' who currently officially introduce themselves as 'Moran', and not as 'Matak'. Both the Morans and Matak are historically associated with the *Mayamara* (*Moamaria*) sect, a branch of the Assamese *Vaishnavism* propounded by Aniruddhadeva, a saint of the early Seventeenth Century Assam. Owing to this sectarian relation between the Morans and the Matak, for a long period encompassing the last days of Ahom Monarchy and the British era, the Morans were largely considered as a branch of the Matak community. During the last colonial decades, political consciousness was rapidly growing among various ethnic groups of Northeast and they formed their respective ethnic forums. Subsequently, following the model of the Tribal League of Assam, the Matak League became a common ethnic forum for both the Morans and Matak. However, most of the Moran leaders were always conscious about the distinct culture and degraded social status of the Morans, though they were working under the banner of the Matak League, which was later renamed as the *All Assam Matak Sanmilan*.

The *Asom Moran Sabha* (AMS), the first exclusive mouthpiece body of the Moran community, was born on November 28, 1965 in Kakopathar, situated in the present-day Tinsukia district of

⁶ C. J. Sonowal and Ghanakanta Moran, "The Morans and their Struggle for Political Space," in *Quest for Identity, Autonomy and Development: The Contemporary Trends of Ethnic and Tribal Assertion in Assam (Vol.1)*, ed. C. J. Sonowal (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2010), 144.

⁷ Upen Rabha Hakacham, "*Moran-Matak aru Moamaria Samaj*" (Moran-Matak and Moamaria Society), in *Gandhoi* (An Annual Mouth-piece of the All Moran Students' Union (Golden Jubilee Special Edition), ed. Girin Moran (Tinsukia: All Moran Students' Union, 2018), 78.

Assam. Initially the organisation was named as the *Moran Sabha Asom*.⁸ Certain socio-cultural differences between the Moran-Mataks and the rest of the Mataks, and economic backwardness of the Moran section of the Mataks were the major causes behind the birth of AMS. The organisation took birth under the auspicious of the *Tipuk Satra Dharmasabha* (*Tipuk Satras*’ Religious Assembly), an umbrella organisation of all the *Mayamora Satras*⁹ having only Moran disciples.¹⁰ Mohan Chandra Saikia, the former general secretary of *Tipuk Satra Dharmasabha*, was the chief convener of this inaugural meeting of the AMS. The meeting addressed some specific socio-economic problems of the Morans. Saikia became the founder general secretary of the organisation, and shouldered this responsibility for long fourteen years (1965 -1979). This inaugural meeting of the *Moran Sabha* excluded the non-Moran section of the Matak community. The meeting adopted a resolution which stated that “The Morans are one of the most backward communities of Assam which is an aboriginal community of the region. This community has its own specific grievances. Therefore, to address and solve these problems an organisation called the *Moran Sabha* is being formed in this meeting”.¹¹

Some Moran leaders initially wanted the *Asom Moran Sabha* to work as a sister-organisation of the *All Assam Matak Sasnmilan*, which served as a common platform for both the communities before 1965. In practice, however, the AMS started to work as an exclusive mouth-piece organisation for only the Morans.¹² Instead of seeking ST recognition for the entire Matak community, the AMS raised the same demand only for the Moran people, highlighting the distinct ethnic culture of the community. In this bifurcation, the ethnic elites of both the communities played a very crucial role. Paul Brass defining the role of the elites in political mobilisation states that “The process by which elites mobilise ethnic identities simplifies those beliefs and values, distorts them, and select those which are politically useful rather than central to the belief system of the group concerned”.¹³ The formation of the AMS was followed by the birth of the *Moran Chatra Sabha* on May 5, 1968.¹⁴ This association of the Moran students would later become the All Assam Moran Student’s Union (AAMSU), and finally the All Moran Students’ Union in the late 1980s. Thus, with the formation of the *Moran Chatra Sabha*, the process of organisational separation between the two communities became completed in 1968.

Pradip Kumar Moran, the founding president of the Talap-Kardoiguri (Tinsukia district) branch of the AMSU, argues that after National Independence, there was hardly any person among the Morans for almost two decades, who could lead the community to the path of enlightenment and socio-economic development. The leader contends that earlier a large number of Moran

⁸ Ibid., 259.

⁹ The *Mayamora Satras* of Upper Assam constitute branch of the *Vaishnavaita Satras* of the Brahmaputra Valley. The *Satras* are basically monasteries set up to propagate Vaishnavism. The chief of a *Satra* is called *Satradhikar*. Sankaradev is said to have established his first *Satra* at Bardowa, Nagaon. Most of the *Satras* are named after their geographical location.

¹⁰ C. J. Sonowal and Ghanakanta Moran, “The Morans and their Struggle for Political Space,” in *Quest for Identity, Autonomy and Development: The Contemporary Trends of Ethnic and Tribal Assertion in Assam (Vol.1)*, ed. C. J. Sonowal (New Delhi: Akansha Publishing House, 2010), 128-29.

¹¹ Shrikumar Dohutia, *Moran-Matak-Mayamora: Samaj aru Sanskriti* (Dibrugarh: Banalata, 2016), 295.

¹² Ibid., 196.

¹³ Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1991), 17.

¹⁴ Shrikumar Dohutia (2016), Op. Cit., 278.

leaders joined hands with the leaders of the *All Assam Matak Sanmilian*, “Which is a *Jatiya Sangathan* (community-based organisation) of the Matak people, a composite community of the followers of the ‘Matak’ sect, which is a ‘religious category’ including people from different tribes, castes, and communities in Assam”. He added that with the passage of time, “due to the prevalence of Moran’s distinct cultural identity and separate territorial locations, the influence of ‘Matak’ identity began to decline among the community, and they preferred to officially recognise themselves as ‘Moran’ only”.¹⁵

Pradip Kumar Moran’s argument maintains that ‘Matak’ is a ‘religious sect’ and hence ‘not a tribe’. This argument is not without political significance, because this claim sharply contradicts the claims of the Matak ethnic forums, which claim that the Matak is a tribal community of Assam. However, it is worth-mentioning that from the late colonial to the early post-colonial decades (1939-1965), the Morans were officially considered as a branch of the Matak community by the government. The Morans also never officially claimed a distinct identity during this period, though some Morans were always conscious about their particular identity even when they were working under the banner of the *All Assam Matak Sanmilian*.

The formation of the AMS and the AMSU placed the joint ethnic mobilisation of the ‘Moran’ Matak and the ‘Non-Moran’ Matak at a critical juncture, as the Moran leaders began to portray their community as underprivileged and more backward than the rest of the Matak people, which included some Caste-Hindu members from the communities like the Assamese Brahmin, Kayastha and Kalita, and also some members from other groups like the Ahom and Chutia, who were perceived by the Moran leaders as relatively advanced.

When the phenomenon of intra-ethnic disparities prevails, the process of identifying the differences between the relatively advantageous group and the disadvantageous group begins. The members of the less privileged group excluding the former go on to assert that they are culturally distinct, and that being the ‘sons of the soil’ they represent the indigenous culture of the territory. If the relatively backward group concentrated in specific geo-political location considers itself as a minority in terms of culture and politics of the state, its members call for decentralization and redistribution of political power and economic resources, and sometimes they may even opt for secessionist activities.¹⁶ Such tendencies and political considerations have played their due part in creating an official ethnic rift between the Morans and the non-Moran section of the Matak community.

Politics of Scheduled Tribe Status and Challenges:

The Kaka Kalelkar Commission alias the First Backward Class Commission (1953) of India submitted its report in 1955, and recognised both the Matak and the Morans as a ‘most backward’ group, simultaneously the Commission identified both the groups together as a

¹⁵ Pradip Kumar Moran, “*Behangam Dristrere Moranhakalar Oitihask Dehkot kesu Centa*” (Some thoughts on the organizational dimensions of Morans from a bird’s -eye view), in *Soumar Bhumiputra* (Son of the soil of *Soumar*) (A Biennial Magazine with special reference to the vsources of the problem of present ‘Moran’ community including the socio-economic, Political & Cultural history), ed. Sailen Neog (All Moran Students’ Union: 2018), 74.

¹⁶ Girin Phukon, *Ethnicization of Politics in Northeast India* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 2003), 37.

‘Religious Sect’.¹⁷ Subsequently they were not included in the official list of the Scheduled Tribes which was revised in 1956. The ‘primitiveness’ and ‘backwardness’ were the general criteria for recognising a group as a ST in the official lists of 1950 and 1956, but the Morans were not considered as eligible for this recognition. Though the Morans did fulfil these criteria to a considerable extent, they were perceived only as a section of the Matak community by the state authority.

The Government of India constituted another committee under the chairmanship of B. N. Lokur in June 1965, the aim of which was to advise the Central Government on the revision of the existing lists of both the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. The committee in its report highlighted that the specification of certain groups as ST was a problematic affair. The Lokur Committee reveals that “the difficulty in applying the criteria or characteristics in defining a tribe arose from the fact that the tribes in India were and had been for some decades ‘tribes in transition’”.¹⁸ For recognising an ethnic group as ST, the committee put forward certain criteria such as Indications of primitive traits, Geographical isolation, Distinctive culture, Shyness of contact with other communities at large, and Backwardness.¹⁹ It mainly concentrated its focus on certain technical changes in the list which featured minor inclusions and exclusions.²⁰ The Lokur Committee maintained that “tribes whose members have by and large mixed with the general population were not eligible to be in the Schedule”.

This recommendation of the Lokur Committee was technically very crucial to the erstwhile ethnic and organisational ties between the Matak and the Morans, as the Matak community includes certain relatively forward castes and communities in Assam. The Moran leaders consequently defected from the rest of the Matak “thinking that if they identified themselves with the rest of the members of the Matak community, which included some non-tribals also, their demand to get consideration as a scheduled-tribe by the national government would be weakened”.²¹ A major break came in 1972, when the Morans were separately included from the Matak in the official list of the backward classes by the Assam Government in response to the repeated demand of the Moran leaders. Hence, growing socio-economic and political aspirations among a section of the Morans resulted in the bifurcation of the community from the rest of the Matak.

The Morans culturally portray themselves as the *Soumar Giri*, meaning the ‘owner of the Upper Assam’.²² Unlike the separatist attitude nurtured by some other ethnic outfits of Assam, the demand for a separate state of ‘Moran Land’ has not yet found its place in the official agenda of the AMS and the AMSU. Such a territory, However, has indeed become a part of their historical and cultural portrayal in the 21st Century. The activities and demands of the Moran

¹⁷ Upen Rabha Hakacham, “*Moran-Matak aru Moamaria Samaj*” (Moran-Matak and Moamaria Society), in *Gandhoi* (An Annual Mouth-piece of the All Moran Students’ Union (Golden Jubilee Special Edition), ed. Girin Moran (Tinsukia: All Moran Students’ Union, 2018), 77.

¹⁸ Sharad Kulkarni, “Identifying Scheduled Tribes: The Gowari Tragedy,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, no. 49 (December 1994): 3073-74.

¹⁹ Ibid., 3074.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Sristidhar Dutta (1996), Op. Cit., 9.

²² In Assamese *Giri* means ‘owner’, and *Soumar* is an ancient historical and territorial division of the ancient Kamrupa Kingdom, which roughly corresponds to the modern-day region of the Upper Assam

organisations are aimed at ensuring justifiable political and official representations of the Morans in the state apparatus. Getting recognition as a Scheduled Tribe, according to most of the Moran leaders, will empower the community politically and economically.

On the other hand, the existing ST groups of Assam are not in favour of any step taken by the government to bestow official tribal status upon any new ethnic group in the state. In 2004, various organisations representing these ethnic groups including the Morans established the *Soi Janagosthiya Oikya Mancha* (united forum of the six ethnic groups) to strengthen their movement for tribal status. On the opposing side, there is the Coordination Committee of the Tribal Organisations of Assam (CCTOA). It is a forum of several organisations representing the recognised 'tribal' ethnic groups (ST) of Assam which constitute 12.45 percent of the total population of Assam as per the Census Report of 2011.²³ The ethnic groups that have already been enjoying ST status fear that the inclusion of more ethnic groups within the same constitutional category would slice away the benefits and concessions they currently avail. Thus, the entire issues of ethnic resurgence in Assam are primarily revolving around the perception or fear of 'relative deprivation' in the sphere of material gain and resource sharing. Sometimes, fear of deprivation becomes politically more influential and effective than the actual degree of the existing relative deprivation. M. S. A. Rao comments:

"A sufficient level of understanding and Reflection is required on the part of the participants, and they must be able to observe and perceive the contrast between the social and cultural conditions of the privileged and those of the deprived, and must realize that it is possible to do something about it".²⁴

The leaders of the state-recognised tribal groups assert that the quest of these six ethnic groups for ST status is against rules of Indian Constitution because these groups do not fulfil the criteria to be recognized as ST.²⁵ The irony is that the Indian Constitution has not fixed any specific criteria for recognizing any group as a 'tribe' unlike the SCs, and left the matter to the consideration of Executive. It gives opportunity to the political parties to make the matter of identifying and recognizing 'tribal' groups more politicized. A committee headed by Mahesh Kumar Singla was set up by the Central Government in March, 2016 to look into various demands and the counter-demands of the ethnic groups in Assam. The tribal leaders of the CCTOA wrote to the Singla Committee that the proposal to grant ST status to the six populous and advanced ethnic groups of Assam was a conspiracy to destroy the original tribal communities in Assam. It is worth-mentioning that the Office of the Registrar General, India (hereinafter ORGI) rejected the demands of these groups eight times between 1981 and 2006.²⁶ If the government grants ST status and reservation to the six ethnic groups, "the number of Assembly seats reserved for tribal people is expected to jump from the existing 16 to about 85-

²³ Census India, Assam Population- Census India 2011, accessed December 11, 2025, <https://www.censusindia2011.com/assam-population.html>.

²⁴ Ghanshyam Shah, *Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature* (New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2004), 28.

²⁵ Rahul Karmakar, "6 Assam communities enforce 2-day shut down," *The Hindu*, July 25, 2018, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/6-assam-communities-enforce-2-day-shutdown/article24507332.ece>.

²⁶ Ibid.

90 in the 126-seat House by way of fresh delimitation of constituencies”.²⁷ The Moran leaders and the leaders of the other ethnic groups demanding tribal status, believe that if the Centre grants ST status to the six communities, Assam would become a tribal state where these indigenous groups would be entitled to special constitutional safeguards in terms of political representation and land rights.²⁸ This recognition is expected to help in solving the complications arising out of the influx of immigrants into the state from both beyond the international borders and the other parts of India, which are affecting the political and demographic landscapes of the state. As a bid to calm these groups’ ethnic tempers, on January 8, 2019, Home Minister Rajnath Singh declared at the Lower Chamber of the Parliament that the Centre would introduce a Bill as soon as possible to confer ST status upon these communities which is supposed to change the political status of Assam by making it a tribal majority state. He assured the existing ST groups of the state of safeguarding their rights and interests simultaneously. The declaration, however, evoked mixed reaction among these groups because this move was being portrayed by a section of intellectuals and activists from these communities as a politics of appeasement on the part of the government to douse the flames of protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 that would become the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December, 2019. The CCTOA on the other hand, dubbed this move of the central government as a political conspiracy to destroy the ‘original tribal’ groups of the state.²⁹ Thus, the encroachment of state apparatus into the sphere of identity and its consequent material implications staged a confrontation between the tribal and the non-tribal ethnic groups of Assam, and the fulfilment of the latter’s demand for the ST status still remains a far cry.

Since the overwhelming victory of BJP in the assembly elections of 2016, Assam has been witnessing an upsurge of the Hindutva-centric nationalist politics. This resurgence is rapidly leading towards strong religious polarisation in terms of ‘Hindu versus Muslim’, particularly in the Lower and the Middle Assam. This growing communal polarisation is unprecedented in Assam history in the post-Assam Agitation era. However, this upsurge has hardly overwhelmed the ethnic aspirations of the indigenous groups of the state particularly in the Upper Assam region. The Muslim population is still not politically predominant in the Upper Brahmaputra Valley, and the practice of Hinduism among the preponderant Mongoloid ethnic groups of Upper Assam is still dominated by certain cultural traits that predates their conversion into Hinduism.

For the communities like the Moran, Ahom, Chutia and Matak, the ‘Hinduism’ is an official identity, but this official identity is not capable of defining the ‘ethnic’ core of these communities. Moreover, the Hinduisation of tribal communities has not always been a decisive factor in retaining or losing their tribal status. The Dimasa Kachari community of the Dima Hasao District is predominantly still Hindu, and continue to be recognised as a Hill Tribe. The

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Fatik Chandra Neog, “*Khelangia Odhibasixakalar Arthanoitik, Samajik aru Sanskritik Adhikar*” (Indigenous Peoples’ Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), in *Bengmara* (The Mouth-Piece of All Assam Matak Yuba - Chatra Sanmilan), ed. Debajit Barua (Tinsukia: The Central Committee of All Assam Matak Yuba-Chatra Sanmilan, 2017), 36.

²⁹ “Protesters block highways, burn tyres during 12-hour Assam bandh, *Business Standard*,” January 11, 2019, www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2019/jan/11/protesters-block-roads-burn-tyres-during-12-hour-assam-bandh-1923742.html.

Sonowal Kachari community of the Upper Brahmaputra Valley is even more Hinduised and the group is recognised as a Plains Tribe. However, the case has not been the same with the Morans, who are also largely Hinduised. The Moran ethnic activists currently claim that like the Bodos, Dimasas, and the Sonowals, the Morans also constitute a branch of the greater Kachari community of Assam, and hence, the Morans should also be granted the ST status by the Government of India.

To accommodate the ethnic aspirations of various communities in Assam, even the ultranationalist BJP has developed certain alternative political strategies. After facing a major backlash over the CAA in the form of massive spontaneous protests by the common people of the Brahmaputra valley, the BJP Government became bound to pursue a policy of appeasement to satisfy the ethnic elites. In December 2019, when the anti-CAA protest was at its zenith in the Brahmaputra Valley, the Assam BJP government came up with a series of decisions for these communities– creations of Autonomous Councils for the Morans, Matakas and Koch-Rajbongshis, and creation of Development Councils for the Tai-Ahoms, Chutias and Koch-Rajbongshis. The BJP regained their lost ground to a considerable extent before the assembly elections of 2021, and again came to power in the state. Currently, the Moran leaders are demanding for reserving five assembly constituencies of the Tinsukia district for the Morans. They still resent the absence of a Moran representative in the Indian Parliament even after 78 of gaining national independence.

Conclusion:

The connection between ethnicity, state and nationality are due to the requirement that the political space of a nation must be shared. If the voice of some social groups remains unheard, and their grievances remain unnoticed, these marginalised groups in certain ways cease to be a part of the greater socio-political apparatus called ‘nation-state’. Such exclusions may lead to the politicisation of one’s social identity that results in ethnic resurgence. In Northeast India, ethnicity remains the pivot around which much of the local politics of the region revolves. Even the ruling BJP, a staunch nationalist political party, has become bound to take into consideration the demographic territorial distribution of various ethnic groups in of Assam in on the eve of the Assam Assembly and the Lok Sabha polls. In essence, the assertion of tribal identity by the Morans and some other ethnic groups of Assam is not essentially inclined towards seeking rejuvenation of a tribal past, nor they are necessarily secessionist. This effort is aimed at ensuring a justifiable position for the community in terms of political representation and resource sharing. The demands of the community are backed by its quest for acquiring constitutional safeguard in the fields of land, job, higher education, political representation and the overall resource sharing. It is evident that though the intra-group components like kinship, culture and tradition, have become an ideological and inspirational base for the Morans, one can easily notice that such ethnic mobilisations are originally triggered by materialist concerns. The struggles of the marginalised groups like the Morans highlight the challenges faced by the marginalised ethnic communities in the newborn nation-states that emerged after decolonisation.

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