

STUDENTS POLITICS IN ASSAM: A HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This research article explores the dynamics of student politics in Assam from a historical and sociological perspective. It delves into the evolution of student activism in the region, tracing its roots to the pre-independence era and examining its role in shaping the socio-political landscape of Assam. The article also analyzes the key factors that have influenced student politics in Assam, including regional identity, language, and socio-economic issues. Through a comprehensive review of literature and historical analysis, the article aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities of student politics in Assam.

Keywords: Assam, student politics, historical perspective, sociological perspective, regional identity, socio-economic issues.

Introduction:

A. Background of student politics in Assam:

Student politics in Assam has a long and vibrant history, dating back to the pre-independence era. During the freedom struggle, students played a significant role in mobilizing support for the independence movement and protesting against British colonial rule. After independence, student politics continued to be a prominent feature of Assam's political landscape, with students often at the forefront of movements advocating for social justice, linguistic rights, and regional autonomy.

B. Significance of Studying Student Politics in Assam:

The study of student politics in Assam is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into the role of youth in shaping the socio-political dynamics of the region. Students are often seen as agents of change, capable of challenging established power structures and advocating for social justice. Studying student politics in Assam can therefore provide valuable insights into the aspirations and concerns of the youth in the region.

Secondly, student politics in Assam is closely intertwined with larger political movements in the state, such as the Assam Movement of the 1980s and the more recent protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). By studying student politics, we can gain a better understanding of these larger movements and the role that students have played in shaping their outcomes.

C. Research Questions and Objectives

The primary objective of this research article is to provide a comprehensive overview of student politics in Assam, tracing its historical evolution and examining its sociological dimensions. Specifically, the article seeks to answer the following research questions:

- What are the key historical events and movements that have shaped student politics in Assam?
- What are the main ideological currents and political affiliations of student groups in Assam?
- How do students in Assam engage with issues such as regional identity, language, and socio-economic development through their political activism?
- What role have students played in larger political movements and protests in Assam, and how have these movements influenced student politics?

By addressing these questions, this article aims to provide a nuanced understanding of student politics in Assam and its broader implications for the region's socio-political landscape.

Historical Overview of Student Politics in Assam:

A. Pre-independence Era:

Student politics in Assam has its roots in the early 20th century, when students began to actively participate in the freedom struggle against British colonial rule. Students in Assam organized protests, boycotts, and rallies to demand independence and social reform. The All-Assam Students'

Association (AASA), formed in 1917, was one of the earliest student organizations in the region and played a significant role in mobilizing support for the freedom movement.

B. Post-independence Period:

After independence, student politics in Assam continued to evolve, with students increasingly becoming involved in issues of regional identity and autonomy. The 1960s and 1970s saw a surge in student activism in Assam, with students leading movements for the protection of Assamese language and culture. The GanaSangramParishad, formed in 1968, was one of the prominent student organizations during this period and played a key role in advocating for the rights of the Assamese people.

C. Key Movements and Leaders:

Several key movements and leaders have shaped student politics in Assam over the years. The Assam Movement of the 1980s, led by the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU), was one of the most significant movements in the state's history. The movement, which aimed to protect the rights of the indigenous Assamese people against illegal immigration, galvanized the entire state and eventually led to the signing of the Assam Accord in 1985.

Another key figure in Assam's student politics is Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, who emerged as a prominent student leader during the Assam Movement and later served as the Chief Minister of Assam. Mahanta's leadership during the Assam Movement and his subsequent political career have had a lasting impact on the state's politics.

Sociological Perspectives on Student Politics:

A. Role of Students in Societal Change:

Student politics in Assam has played a significant role in driving societal change. Historically, students have been at the forefront of movements advocating for social justice, linguistic rights, and regional autonomy. The role of students in the Assam Movement of the 1980s, for example, was pivotal in shaping the demands for the protection of Assamese language and culture. Similarly, in more recent times, students have been actively involved in protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), highlighting their role as agents of change in the region.

One of the key reasons for the influential role of students in societal change is their idealism and passion for social justice. Students are often driven by a strong sense of moral purpose and a desire to create a more just and equitable society. This idealism motivates them to take a stand on issues that they believe are important, even in the face of adversity.

Furthermore, students also have a unique position in society that allows them to mobilize support and bring attention to important issues. As members of educational institutions, students have access to resources such as campus infrastructure, networks of fellow students, and platforms for expression. This enables them to organize protests, rallies, and other forms of activism that can have a significant impact on public opinion and policy-making.

B. Influence of Political Ideologies:

Political ideologies play a crucial role in shaping student politics in Assam. Students are often influenced by a variety of ideological currents, ranging from nationalism to socialism to regionalism. These ideologies not only inform the goals and objectives of student groups but also shape their strategies and tactics.

For example, students influenced by nationalist ideologies may focus on issues related to national identity and sovereignty, while those influenced by socialist ideologies may prioritize issues of economic inequality and social justice. Similarly, students influenced by regionalist ideologies may advocate for the protection of regional languages and cultures.

The influence of political ideologies on student politics can also be seen in the alliances and coalitions that students form with other political groups. Students in Assam have often aligned themselves with larger political movements, such as the Assam Movement and the protests against the CAA, based on shared ideological beliefs. These alliances can amplify the influence of student politics and contribute to broader political change in the region.

C. Interaction with Other Social Groups:

Student politics in Assam is not isolated from the larger social context but is deeply intertwined with other social groups. Students often interact with various social groups, such as farmers, workers, and indigenous communities, to build alliances and mobilize support for their causes.

One of the key ways in which students interact with other social groups is through their involvement in broader social movements. For example, students in Assam have been actively involved in movements advocating for the rights of indigenous communities, such as the Bodo and Mising communities. By aligning themselves with these movements, students have been able to amplify their voices and push for change on a larger scale.

Overall, the sociological perspectives on student politics in Assam highlight the important role that students play in driving societal change, the influence of political ideologies on their activism, and their interactions with other social groups. By understanding these perspectives, we can gain valuable insights into the dynamics of student politics in Assam and its broader implications for society.

Factors Influencing Student Politics in Assam:

A. Educational institutions and their role:

Educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping student politics in Assam. Universities, colleges, and schools serve as breeding grounds for political activism, providing students with the platform and resources to engage in political activities. Student unions and associations often play a key role in mobilizing students and articulating their demands. However, the influence of educational institutions on student politics can vary depending on factors such as the institution's location, size, and political climate.

B. Socio-economic factors:

Socio-economic factors also play a significant role in influencing student politics in Assam. Students from marginalized communities or lower socio-economic backgrounds may be more likely to participate in political activism as a means of expressing their grievances and advocating for social justice. Economic factors such as unemployment and lack of opportunities can also fuel student activism, as students seek to address these issues through political means.

C. Political environment:

The political environment in Assam, including the presence of political parties and movements, also influences student politics. Students often align themselves with political parties or movements that resonate with their ideological beliefs or address issues relevant to them. The political climate in Assam, including issues such as identity politics and regional autonomy, can therefore shape the nature and direction of student activism in the state.

Evolution of Student Organizations in Assam:

A. Major student organizations and their ideologies:

Assam has been home to several prominent student organizations, each with its own ideologies and agendas. The All-Assam Students' Union (AASU), for example, emerged as a key player in the Assam Movement of the 1980s, advocating for the rights of the indigenous Assamese people. Other organizations, such as the Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), have also played significant roles in student politics, advocating for issues such as regional autonomy and cultural preservation.

B. Growth and impact of student movements:

Student movements in Assam have often had a significant impact on the state's political landscape. The Assam Movement, for example, led by AASU and supported by other student organizations, played a crucial role in shaping the debate on issues such as illegal immigration and regional identity. More recently, student organizations have been at the forefront of protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), highlighting the continued relevance and impact of student activism in Assam.

C. Challenges faced by student organizations:

Despite their significance, student organizations in Assam face a number of challenges. These include issues such as internal divisions, political interference, and repression by authorities. The politicization of student unions and associations can also undermine their ability to effectively

represent the interests of students, as they may become more focused on partisan politics rather than student welfare.

Overall, the evolution of student politics in Assam reflects the complex interplay of historical, sociological, and political factors. By examining these factors, we can gain a better understanding of the dynamics of student politics in Assam and its broader implications for the state's socio-political landscape.

Current Scenario of Student Politics in Assam:

A. Recent developments and trends:

The current scenario of student politics in Assam is marked by a number of developments and trends. One of the key trends in recent years has been the politicization of student bodies, with many student organizations aligning themselves with political parties or ideologies. This trend has led to increased polarization within student politics, with different groups often espousing conflicting agendas and strategies.

Another significant development in recent years has been the rise of social media as a tool for mobilization and activism among students. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have been used to organize protests, disseminate information, and mobilize support for various causes. This has led to a more decentralized and fluid form of student activism, with campaigns and movements often emerging spontaneously and gaining traction online.

B. Issues and challenges faced by students:

Students in Assam face a number of pressing issues and challenges in their political activism. One of the key issues is the lack of infrastructure and resources in educational institutions, which hampers the quality of education and limits opportunities for students. This has led to widespread discontent among students, who often feel marginalized and neglected by the authorities.

Another major issue facing students in Assam is the lack of job opportunities and economic prospects. Many students graduate from university only to find themselves unemployed or underemployed, leading to frustration and disillusionment. This has fueled demands for greater economic development and job creation in the state.

Additionally, students in Assam continue to grapple with issues of identity and belonging. The state's diverse ethnic and linguistic composition has led to tensions and conflicts, with students often at the forefront of movements advocating for the rights of their communities. This has added a layer of complexity to student politics in Assam, with identity politics often intersecting with other socio-political issues.

C. Future prospects:

The future of student politics in Assam is uncertain, with many challenges and uncertainties lying ahead. However, there are also opportunities for positive change and progress. One potential avenue for progress is greater collaboration and cooperation among student groups, which could help to overcome divisions and build a more unified and cohesive student movement.

Another potential avenue for progress is greater engagement with the political process. While student politics in Assam has traditionally been characterized by a degree of opposition to mainstream politics, there is an increasing recognition of the need to engage with the political process in order to bring about meaningful change. By working within the system, students could potentially leverage their influence to advocate for their interests and bring about positive reforms.

Conclusion:

Summary of key findings:

This research article has provided a comprehensive overview of student politics in Assam, tracing its historical evolution and examining its sociological dimensions. The article has highlighted the key role that students have played in shaping the socio-political landscape of Assam, and has identified a number of issues and challenges facing students in their political activism.

Implications for the future:

The findings of this research have several implications for the future of student politics in Assam. The politicization of student bodies and the rise of social media as a tool for activism are likely to continue

shaping the nature of student politics in the state. Additionally, the issues of infrastructure, job opportunities, and identity are likely to remain key concerns for students in their political activism.

Recommendations for further research:

Further research is needed to explore the role of student politics in shaping larger political movements in Assam, such as the Assam Movement of the 1980s and the more recent protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act. Additionally, more research is needed to understand the impact of social media on student activism in Assam, and to identify strategies for addressing the challenges facing students in their political activism.

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