

# Adivasi Leadership And Electoral Politics Of Assam: An Overview

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## Abstract:

The tea industry in Assam has had a severe labour shortage since its inception. As a result, large-scale labour recruitment took place from all across India, including areas far away from tea estates of Assam. The majority of this labour force was made up of groupings and communities known as tribes in administrative parlance. In Assam, however, they are referred to as 'Adivasis.' Because most Adivasis are recruited from West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and the Chota Nagpur Plateau, they come from a variety of linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. In this context, the present article will primarily address two issues: first, why and how the concept of leadership emerged among the Adivasis in political domain of Assam, and second, to what extent trade unions i.e. Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) aid in the development of leadership among the Adivasis in Assam. Despite their political mobilization and participation in electoral politics of Assam, the article reveals that there is a significant gap in Adivasi leadership in terms of intellectual, organizational and mobilization.

**Keywords:** Adivasis, Adivasi Leadership, Electoral Politics, ACMS

## Introduction:

The history of the tea industry is said to be the history of the tea tribes in Assam. According to various accounts, tea was consumed by certain Northeast Indian tribes prior to the annexation of Assam by the British during the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 and this marked the beginning of tea's established production. In the second part of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the penetration of colonial capitalism in India resulted in the establishment of a wage-earning industrial labour force. Due to the establishment of wage-earning labour-intensive industry, it requires a large number of workers for it. But, the tea industry of Assam has had a severe labour shortage since its inception. As a result, large-scale labour recruitment took place from all across India, including areas far away from tea estates of Assam. The majority of this labour force was made up of groupings and

communities known as 'tribes' in administrative parlance. Like other tribal groups in the northeast Indian state of Assam, the "tea tribes" live in places that are hard to reach and far from the noise and activity of cities.<sup>i</sup> Because of this social and political distance, the history of the tea tribes in Assam is unique.<sup>ii</sup> Tea tribes are one of the oldest groups of workers in modern times. Tea tribes have been an important part of the history and economy of Assam for a long time, and they continue to make important contributions to the region's growth. In Northeast India, especially Assam, the tea tribes are also called 'Adivasis'. This means that they are the descendants of the slaves who worked on the tea plantations in Assam. In Assam, they are classified as "Tea Garden Labourers, Tea Garden Tribes, Ex-Tea Garden Labourers & Ex-Garden Tribes."<sup>iii</sup> Ex-Tea Tribes designate those who were once active as labourers but have now retired and sought out newer ventures; the term is still used

to denote active tea garden workers and their dependents who live in labour quarters assembled inside approximately 1000 Tea Estates dispersed across Assam. As a result, the contradictory terms "Tea-Tribes" and "Ex-Tea Tribes" are used to refer to a large group of people who are descendants of British indentured labourers who come from predominantly tribal and underprivileged areas. On the other hand, in modern India, the word "Adivasi" refers to the people who lived there before anyone else. Despite these differences, they banded together (i.e. Indian Aboriginal Tribal People) as 'Adivasis', which was their common identity.<sup>iv</sup> These contradictory terminologies have led to a rich debate about the definition of Adivasi, indigenous, tribal, and aboriginal among noted scholars. In this article, the words "Adivasi" and "tea tribes" are used the same way. In Assam, most Adivasis are recruited from West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and the Chota Nagpur Plateau, they come from a variety of linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>v</sup> Thus, the characteristics that define the Adivasis in Assam have a long history. This, in and of itself, creates severe challenges to emergence of any sort of leadership among the Adivasis.

From the outset, the working conditions, wage structure and living conditions of the Adivasis at tea estates have been unpleasant. Throughout the colonial era, there has been some pushback to these measures. In general, however, resistance was either individual or group of people. Of course, there were periods when it included kin/ethnic-based groupings. In general, such opposition remained localised. In post-independence India, the basic focus of state policy regarding tribes/Adivasis has been one of integration or inclusion into many spheres of national life. At least, if one closely reads the provisions for tribes in the Indian Constitution, this seems to be the prevailing mindset. The Constitution has many clauses aimed at protecting and promoting the interests of tribal community of India. Reservations in politics (Parliament and state legislatures), employment (government and semi-government sectors), and education, particularly in higher education and learning institutions, are examples of such provisions. There is some obvious presence of Adivasi leadership where reservation has been provided. Where there isn't, though, there is a

noticeable lack of leadership. That explains why they are prominent in electoral politics. Tribes would have been represented by non-tribes rather than tribes if there had been no political reserve. It is important that Adivasis be represented in institutions such as Parliament and state legislatures. As a result, numerous political parties mobilised the Adivasis in attempt to gain their support. In this regard, political parties used novel strategies by launching numerous platforms in the form of "tea trade unions" to look after "Labour Welfare." 'Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha' (hereinafter to be referred as ACMS) is one of the numerous trade unions that serves as a platform for leadership development among the Adivasis in Assam.

In this context, the present article will primarily address two **objectives: first**, why and how the concept of leadership emerged among the Adivasis in political domain of Assam, and **second**, to what extent trade unions i.e. Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) aid in the development of leadership among the Adivasis in Assam.

This article divided into different sections, firstly, the history of the Adivasis in Assam is traced in introductory part of this article, from their early migration to modern existence. It also discusses how colonial tea planters exploited them in tea estates of Assam during the colonial regime. In the following sections, we look at the importance of tribal politics in India, with subheadings on the importance of community representation in electoral politics and the emergence of Adivasi leadership in India in general and Assam in particular, and then we look at Adivasi political engagement as a leader with mainstream democratic politics and to what extent trade unions i.e. Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) aid in the development of leadership among the Adivasis in Assam. The last half of this study i.e. conclusion part explores into the patterns, situations, and challenges that face Assam's Adivasi leadership.

### **Materials and Methods:**

This article seeks to contextualise Adivasi leadership in electoral politics of Assam with the use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been sourced from the Election Commission of India and Assam,

Ministry of Tribal Affairs and department of tea tribes of the Governments of India and Assam. Secondary sources drawn from a substantial number of scholarly works, archival documents, and various government and non-governmental reports. Both the historical and analytical methods are used to collect data, with the historical method studying the origins and evolution of Adivasi leadership in India in general and Assam in particular. However, an analytical method is utilized to analyse the increased influence of ACMS as a platform for leadership development among the politically ambitious section of Adivasis in electoral politics of Assam. Furthermore, the descriptive approach is used to shed light on many topics of Adivasi leadership and electoral politics of Assam from critical perspectives.

### **Emergence of Adivasi Leadership in India and in Assam: Revisiting the Existing Literature and Theoretical Framework**

#### **i. Emergence of Adivasi Leadership in India**

Leadership is an important aspect in the progress of any community. The more enlightened and foresighted is the leader, the more rapid is the progress of the community. Community representation in politics argues for the readjustment of rules for electoral competition so that the outcome would be more representative. In politics, it is believed that their own community members would be in a better position than other legislators to comprehend the problems faced by tribal communities if they were represented as a group or community. As John Burnheim writes 'Our interests are better preserved when we are represented by others who share our experience and interests, and this similarity of circumstance is much better predictor than whether people could share our fairly questionable ideas.'<sup>vi</sup> While Phillips advocates group or community representations and distinguishes between 'politics of presence' and 'politics of ideas'. Politics of presence supports democratic equality and believes that all communities should have an equal and balanced political presence. It believes in the idea of democratic inclusion and calls for the political inclusion of ethnic groups that have been left out. On the other hand, the politics of ideas shows what the basis of representation is

or should be, even though it doesn't do enough to address the issues and concerns of groups that aren't represented politically. Hence, the politics of ideas and the politics of presence should work towards ensuring an adequate representation of politically excluded communities.<sup>vii</sup>

The existing theoretical underpinnings strongly advocate group as well as community representation and contend that 'others' cannot represent marginalized and excluded groups in politics, such as the tribes in India. There is a high support for the inclusion of tribal communities in the political arena since they have been previously excluded. In order to meet the objective of the celebrated principle of democracy, 'one man one vote, one vote one value', there is a need to extend the group rights to the tribals in India. Kymlicka asserts that no one else could represent minorities in politics.<sup>viii</sup> McMillan underlines that group representation for the tribals tends to be justified in the context of persistent political exclusion and past discrimination perpetuating separate community identities.<sup>ix</sup> Within this context, the Adivasi representation in the electoral politics can be analysed through the above-mentioned theoretical underpinnings.

The emergence of Adivasi leadership in India have been at the forefront of some of the most militant movements aimed at achieving a variety of goals, including non-usurpation and alienation of land, exorbitant land rent and other exactions, extortion by moneylenders, self-serving outsiders, cultural dominance, and seeking access to forests and their resources, as well as a remunerative price for their produce.<sup>x</sup> Some of these movements were headed by traditional leaders, while others were led by charismatic people who tapped into their local communities' cultural resources and/or reconstructed new information they met in the broader world to speak to their concerns.<sup>xi</sup> In Central, Northern, and Eastern India, many Adivasi social movements were preceded by internal churning to weld the society together via internal reforms, referred to as Bhagat movements.<sup>xii</sup> We have movements, such as the Naga and Jharkhand movements, that have been organised and led by a vanguard selected from the affected people themselves to explicitly achieve definite modernist aims since the second decade of the twentieth century.

There have also been movements driven by intellectual currents and leadership not derived from the Adivasi community, despite the fact that their social makeup was mostly Adivasi. The Godavari Parulekar-led Warli struggle or the Maoist activity in Dandakaranya today are examples of this.<sup>xiii</sup> Apart from such movements, there are imperatives of daily social reproduction that need a particular style of leadership. Adivasis in India today are established groups, mostly agricultural, and many of them have been for centuries. Community leadership, often led by chiefs with varying titles between tribes, governs their internal affairs and relationships with other communities. In resolving and arbitrating over communal matters, such leadership often turns to customary laws and customs. Furthermore, tribal tribes have developed their own type of leadership as a result of India's national movement and democratic politics.

Based on reports and critical research on Adivasi movements, communal reproduction processes, and political engagement, there may be able to develop a typology of Adivasi leadership in India. As Max Weber's or W. H Morris-Jones' leadership categories can be utilised to categorise the Adivasis' present leadership.<sup>xiv</sup> But this article, on the other hand, this article has no intention of categorising anything. Its goal is to determine how successful Adivasi leadership has been in asserting its presence in India's and Assam's representative and participatory democracy, as well as its unique contribution to such politics, the issues that Adivasis have raised as their primary concerns through their movements, and the challenges that this leadership faces today.

## ii. **Emergence of Adivasi Leadership in Assam:**

Before discussing the nature of the emergence of leadership among Adivasis in Assam, it is important to first comprehend how the notion of leadership emerged among Adivasis of Assam, as well as the major factors that contributed to the development of leadership among Adivasis of Assam. To begin with, popular Indian nationalist leaders toured Assam's tea estates during colonial times as part of a bigger campaign against the tyrannical and repressive British administration. They offered the workers a feeling of independence and dignity

in the face of the Britishers' inhumane acts. Workers in the tea estates were given the motive and encouragement to speak out against the discriminatory practises of the British Planters. It is important to note that the majority of workers were not inspired or understood the message of the nationalist leaders. However, a newly educated group of Adivasis were very driven to break free from the worst forms of enslavement. And those leaders supplied the first impetus and platform for following generations of leaders to contribute to the Adivasis current problems.

Thus, in response to this, this new group of educated elites of the Adivasis attempted to unite and solidify the community by forming various organisations to aid in the combat of their problems. After independence, those who were part of the intelligentsia created a slew of political, cultural, and social organisations that have helped the Adivasi community become more united and expand on the political influence they have before independence.

Within Adivasis of Assam, the growth of educated and political elite was a slow process. Their shared experiences of colonial exploitation, anti-colonial resistance, migration, and enslavement allowed them to form a strong community. People started to recognise that they needed to organise to express their rights and demands as greater engagement, better conditions for exercising democratic rights, universal education, and other factors became available. As a consequence, a group of wise leaders realised that the Adivasi community needed strong structure to assist them solve their difficulties. This knowledge and understanding aided in the formation and development of numerous socio-political groups that have assisted the Adivasis in becoming more unified and building on the political strength they have before to independence. For example, on December 28, 1947, a group of Adivasi college students formed the Assam Chotanagpuri Chatra Sanmilan (ACCS), which aimed to bring all Adivasi students together on a common platform, foster socio-economic consciousness among them, and thus eliminate the various social prejudices that existed in their own communities. In truth, this was a well-known group among the Adivasi community. This

student group, however, decided to change its name to Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA). Since its establishment, the leaders of ATTSA have made a number of requests to the central and state governments in order to ensure the holistic development of Adivasis.<sup>xv</sup> Thus, in the post-independence period, the students' groups of Adivasis of Assam were able to create a new political class, which led to the development of the idea of leadership among the ambitious part, and subsequently, it was highly successful in both state and national politics.

Finally, the establishment of another organisation, such as trade unions, may be seen as the climax of Adivasis working together to build a larger Adivasi community in Assam. Tea trade unions in Assam played a key role in politically organising the Adivasis, which helped the community address its many issues. The Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was the state's first trade union, and it played a key role in resolving different issues. Following that, a number of trade unions were formed to fight for Adivasis against various forms of exploitation. 'Assam Chah, Mazdoor Sangha', 'Bharatiya Chah Mazdoor Union', 'Bharatiya Chah Parishad', 'The Cachar District Chah Mazdoor Samiti', 'Purbanchal Chah Parishad', 'Upper Assam Tea Co. Labour Union', 'Rajmai Tea Co. Labour Union', 'Greenwood Tea Labour Union', 'Makum Tea Labour Union', 'Assam Janajati Cha Mazdoor Sramik Union', 'Assam Tea Workers' Union', 'Assam Tea Workers Union' etc.<sup>xvi</sup>

But it is the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) that has emerged as the most powerful force among Adivasis of Assam. In a strict sense, ACMS serves as a platform for many Adivasi leaders to participate in electoral politics, which has resulted in a sense of leadership development among them. Because of its large membership and officials, the ACMS is associated with a number of prominent labour groups throughout the globe. On September 3, 1947, the Assam chapter of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) was founded, with Kamakhya Prasad Tripathy as its President. Following the foundation of the INTUC in Assam, a number of trade unions dedicated to the cause of Adivasis of Assam were created on a district basis. On August 9, 1958, all of the District

Chah Mazdoor Sanghas were merged into one 'Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha'.<sup>xvii</sup> The ACMS backed the INC-led government in its efforts to find a solution to the long-standing challenges that have plagued Adivasis since independence. The organisational dominance of ACMS and the legacy of its early leadership development have aided in maintaining its grip over rival unions throughout practically the whole Brahmaputra valley. The term "trade union" is equivalent with ACMS in most Assamese tea estates.<sup>xviii</sup> Congress has been able to establish a significant presence in the tea plantations of the Brahmaputra Valley because to the Adivasis widespread support for ACMS. The formation of ACMS has provided the TGLs a legitimate strength to ventilate their grievances before the government and the plantation authority. The majority of the ACMS leaders have been elected to various constituencies of State Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha. As a result, an effort has been made in this paper to analyse how ACMS serves as a platform for leadership development among politically ambitious section of Adivasis.

### **Adivasi Leadership in Electoral Politics of Assam: The Role of Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS)**

With the democratization of the political system in post-colonial Assam, tea trade unions played a crucial role in organising the Adivasis of Assam politically. The involvement of the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha in this context is likewise not an exception. It has played a significant role in helping many Adivasi leaders win elections. The ACMS leadership was certain that their participation in electoral politics, in collaboration with the INC, was the most effective method of assuring "their security and development via the implementation of law," as stated in the ACMS constitution. The INC, on the other hand, believed it was expedient to organise the Adivasis under the flag of the ACMS in order to gain mass support and thereby seize political power in the state. As a result, on the eve of each Assembly election, the INC considers the requests of the ACMS when selecting candidates to run in different seats. It is clear from the fact that Sanu Kheria, the founding president of the ACMS, was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly (hereinafter to be referred as the ALA) as a congress

candidate in the 1967 elections, followed by Maliya Tanti (Doomdooma) and Upen Sanatan (Chabua). As a result, the ALA has chosen a number of ACMS-sponsored leaders, both Adivasis and non-Adivasis, from time to time. They include Bijoy Chandra Bhagawati, Kamakhya Prasad Tripathy, Biswadev Sharma, Jaganath Bhuyan, Durgeswar Saikia, Maliya Tanti, Upendranath Sanatan, Gojen Tanti, Chatra Gopal Karmakar, Bishnulal Upadhyay, Narendra Nath Sharma, Mohikanta Das, Lily Sengupta, and many more. Among them who Chatra Gopal Karmakar, the first induction into the Council of Ministers in the post of Minister of State for Labour, was elected to the ALA from the Sarupathar Constituency as an INC candidate.<sup>xix</sup>

INC candidate Gojen Tanti, representing the Mariani seat, was chosen as the first cabinet minister with the ministry of labour and supply in the 1972 ALA election. Another ACMS-backed INC candidate, Dipak Murmu, was elected from the Lahowal seat in this election. In the election, none of the labour candidates who were not endorsed by the ACMS were able to gain seats. This election reaffirmed the view that being elected to the ALA was almost impossible unless an Adivasi candidate was endorsed by the ACMS in tandem with the INC. Following that, there has been a growing race among Adivasi leaders to secure a position in the ACMS or one of its branches in order to gain the ability to barter with the INC for its nomination to run for election. Kumari Rabidas (Ratabari), Monilal Gowala (Patharkandi), Mithius Tudu (Gossaigaon), Dinesh Prasad Gowala (Lakhimpur), Silvius Condopan (Majbat), Rameswar Dhanowar (Digboi), Dileswar Tanti (Digboi), Dileswar Tanti (Digboi), Dileswar Tanti ( ( Doomdooma). Boloram Nag (Kaliabar), Aklius Tirky (Sarupathar), Rupam Kurmi (Titabar), Narad Kumar (Mahmora), Satya Tanti (Sonari), Dipak Murmu (Lahowal), Paban Singh Ghatowar (Tinkhong), Upendra Nath Santan (Chabua) were among the ACMS-backed Congress candidates that lost this election. As a result, the INC nominated all 15 ACMS-backed Adivasi candidates in the 1985 Assembly election.<sup>xx</sup> This tendency persisted in successive elections, prompting the INC (I) to nominate an increasing number of ACMS-backed Adivasi candidates in order to assure their win and maintain control. In reality, under

the umbrella of the ACMS, Adivasi leaders have developed an astonishing potential to play a significant role in contemporary electoral politics of Assam. The Adivasis essentially become "a traditional supporter of the Congress party."

As a result, the ALA in 2006 had a total of 10 Adivasi members, seven of whom were elected as ACMS-backed Congress candidates. Furthermore, two Adivasi congress members, Dinesh Prasad Gowala and Prithivi Manjhi, were inducted into the Council of Ministers as cabinet ministers, while Jibontara Ghatowar, the lone Adivasi woman member, was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary with the health and family welfare portfolio under Tarun Gogoi's then chief ministership. In reality, in the case of its nomination and creation of a Ministry, the INC (I) party has given significant weight to the Adivasi population in order to maintain their support for the party. Despite this, the Adivasi leadership seems to be dissatisfied with the representation they have had in the ALA thus far. In order to secure proper representation, the ACMS passed a resolution at its executive meeting on August 27, 2000 in Dibrugarh, requesting the allocation of 35 ALA seats and 15 parliamentary seats for Adivasis. In a memorandum sent to Sonia Gandhi on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2000, then-AICC President Paban Singh Ghatowar justified this demand. Adivasi voters now control at least 38 constituencies in Assam, and the ACMS has played a significant influence in the political affairs of the state. The tea community has been credited with providing the Congress with a strong foundation of support, allowing the party to consistently win in tea-dominated districts. Paban Singh Ghatowar, a prominent Congress politician, expressed his support for the Tea and Ex-Tea Gardens voters, saying, "The Tea and Ex-Tea Gardens voters have remained faithful to the Congress Party, whilst other individuals have abandoned the Congress Party."<sup>xxi</sup>

The ALA election results show how ACMS-backed candidates have played a significant impact in contemporary politics of Assam. ACMS serves as a platform for political party and leadership development among Adivasis in the ALA elections of 2011, 2016 and 2021 with political ambitions who want to promote, disseminate, and influence their views in order to mobilise public opinion. However,

the situation has drastically shifted after the ALA's general election in 2016. Because other political parties, such as the BJP and the AGP, have recognised the significance of the Tea Garden community's votes and have nominated a number of Adivasi candidates. The BJP established a significant presence in the predominantly TGLs population seats of Assam, i.e. Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Kaliabor, and Tezpur, where the main leadership in politics comes from the ACMS. However, the importance of ACMS as a platform for leadership among Adivasis in the ALA elections of Assam.

In recent elections of ALA, it is obvious from the preceding discussion that the ACMS was created for two goals. First, to secure the Adivasis' en bloc support for the ruling Congress in order to assure their win and maintain power in the state. Taking note of this, the Adivasi educated elite began to connect with the ACMS and its affiliates, allowing them to develop their future political careers. As a consequence, a slew of Adivasi leaders closely affiliated with the ACMS were elected to the ALA and Parliament over time. As a result, the ACMS has essentially served as a platform for politically ambitious Adivasi leaders to further their careers.

Apart from playing a decisive role in Assam's state politics, the Adivasis of Assam have also been active in the country's parliamentary elections. The political leaders from this community have been elected successfully in parliament of India since 1977 to 2019, and they have been elected not only from the Congress but also from other political parties such as the AGP and BJP, and thus, the Adivasis have been able to make a significant impact in the politics of the state as well as the country as a whole.

### **Challenges Before Adivasi Leadership Today:**

Despite the prevalence of tribals among the leaders, they have been systematically denied important posts in political organisations. A crisis like this span across political parties of all stripes. This has not just been the case with political parties, but also with organisations such as trade unions. For example, tribes make up the majority of the tea garden labour force in Assam. It is a distinct thing that Adivasis in

Assam have not been granted Scheduled Tribe status. There are currently a considerable number of trade unions linked with various political parties that operate among the tea garden people or Adivasis in Assam. Despite this, trade union leadership has always been in the hands of persons from outside the tribe and outside the labour force, even at the block level. Adivasi leadership on tea plantations is limited to tea estates or tea estate levels at best; it seldom extends beyond that. In Assam, it is noteworthy that most of the prominent leaders in the ACMS are still outsiders' i.e. educated, middle class individuals who came into union work from outside rather than through the wage-earning ranks. It is essential to look at the reasons why this is the situation. There several reasons are found for this phenomenon, namely, the rank and the file are largely illiterate in the garden of Assam; as such they cannot effectively communicate with the management; the union's lack of formal power tends to put premium on the charismatic type of the leader, usually a politician, who can play the role of their defender of the workers against his enemies; for ensuring a measure of equation of power in collective bargaining, where the tea garden workers are generally uneducated and have a low status; for avoiding victimisation of workers office bearers of the trade unions; and at times for lack of financial resources to appoint whole time office bearers. Thus, in ACMS, most leaders combine political interest with union work, and, therefore, they cannot focus their entire attention on the internal functioning of their unions or on daily problems of the members in the work place. Besides, they hold multiplicity of offices. Despite all this, outside leadership cannot be altogether avoided. Recently, this tendency has begun to shift, and more internal leadership is forthcoming.

This isn't to say that only tribes may speak for the tribes' interests. Non-tribes can do it, and they can probably do it better than tribes since they have superior articulation, network, mobilisation, and manoeuvring capabilities. However, there has often been a wedge (social, political, economic, and cultural) between tribes and non-tribes, and tribes' interests have frequently been sacrificed in favour of 'others'. In the previous fifty years, this has been the history of the reserve for tribes. There isn't a

single political party that has produced national-level leadership from inside tribes.

In terms of intellectual, organisational, and mobilisation capabilities, the Adivasi leadership is severely lacking. This is an issue to which neither political parties, trade unions, nor non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating with the Adivasis have given any attention. Adivasi leadership is completely reliant on regional and central leadership for all

reasons. They are unable to take initiative and make judgments on their own about topics that are vital and critical to the organisation and programme. Outside leadership, no matter how charismatic or successful, cannot sustain an organisation or movement for long. The trade unions must investigate the situation thoroughly and devise strategies for resolving the issue and narrowing the disparity.

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<sup>xix</sup> Memorandum submitted to the Chairman, Backward Class Commission (ST & SC), Government of India jointly by Adivasi Council of Assam and ACMS dated 13 April 1978, Secretarial Report, 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary Conference of ACMS held at Tinsukia on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1967



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prepared and read out by Durgeswar Saikia, General Secretary ACMS, p.63

<sup>xx</sup> Kurmi Sushil (1997), Rajnitir Patharat Chah Janajatir Vote-Bank appeared in the Amar Asom, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1997

<sup>xxi</sup> The Memorandum presented Mrs Sonia Gandhi, President of All India Congress Committee by a group of Adivasi MLAs under the stewardship of Paban Singh Ghatowar, President of the ACMS, New Delhi, 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2000