



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

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SHORT ABSTRACT

The thesis deals with factional politics in the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) which is a prominent regional political party in India. The AGP was formed after the Assam movement (1979-1985) with the primary objective of safeguarding the regional identity of the people of Assam. The party enjoyed power in Assam twice, viz., in 1985 and in 1996. But factional politics and consequently split in the party (three times) within a period of twenty years weakened its political base. Therefore, the case of factional politics in the AGP is researched to know the dynamics of factionalism in a regional political party operating in a multi-ethnic social setting.

The study is based on qualitative methodology. Personal interview using structured schedules and non-participant observation method was quite useful in collection of primary data from the field. Besides, content analysis of the party proceedings, pamphlets, manifestos, debates in the Assam Legislative Assembly also helped in understanding intra-party politics in the AGP. Information on the elections collected from the Election Commission of India and various scholarly publications on electoral trend in Assam consist of the major secondary data sources.

After analysis of the data collected from the field, it is found that factionalism in the AGP was self-serving and degenerative. The roots of factionalism in the party can be traced to the Assam movement itself which provided the ideological and leadership base for the party. In fact, factionalism in the AGP represents various socio-political factions which joined hands in the Assam movement despite their ideological difference. This difference of personal orientation between the top leaders increased in the party which was not controlled by a 'high command structure'. The AGP was new in politics and its organization was backed and supported by other social organizations of Assam. Due to inexperience and incapacity, civil administration during the reign of the AGP suffered a lot in Assam, because of which the social organizations withdrew their support mechanism. As a result, political bickering started culminating in factional politics and split in the party. However, like in other parts of India, factional politics in the AGP had no influence of caste or religion. Instead of that location and region played a catalyst role in the AGP. The changing social environment in the backdrop of the autonomy and identity movements in the 1980s had also shaped factional politics in the AGP. Creation of personality cult in the wake of factional politics alienated some influential tribal leaders from the AGP. As a result of all these, the party had to face humiliating defeat in the elections.

Factional politics in the AGP was mostly, bi-factional; but there were four main factional groups in the party which grew in prominence in different point of time. As the factional interests in the AGP were personal and self-serving, the journey of the party as an epitome of regionalism in Assam is now questioned.