

Identity Assertion of Nath Yogi Community of Undivided Jorhat District of Assam: Role of Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani and Nath Yogi Development Council

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Abstract :

India attains independence and established a parliamentary Democratic system. The constitution gives us the right to freedom and right to equality to all its citizens without any discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and religion etc. India, being a developing nation is currently facing a number of challenges and identity assertion is one of them. In India, the present scenario clearly depicts that the lower castes are still discriminated in day-to-day life in the society. Other Backward Community (OBC) is a collective term used by the government of India to recognize the people who are socially, economically and culturally backward and in a disadvantageous position. According to Mondol Commission's Report, 1980, 52% of the total population of India belongs to the Other Backward Community. Accordingly, 27% reservation has been suggested and provided for the Other Backward Community of people. In spite of that also some sections of the OBC's like the Nath Yogis are still deprived of and suffering from identity crisis in the state of Assam in general and the Jorhat district in particular.

In the late 19th century, the stalwarts amongst the Yogi community felt the need for organizing themselves to seek better opportunity for Yogi Community. This awakening started from Bengal in United India. The Sanmilani is the effort of some dedicated members of the Yogi community and an urge to something spread amongst the educated people. The Assam –Bongo Yogi Sanmilani was born due to their united efforts. In 1910, the first conference was held in Coomille in East Bengal (present day Bangladesh).

Objectives of the study- The objectives are:

- 1) to understand the nature of identity assertion of the Nath Yogis in undivided Jorhat district and
- 2) to examine the role of the Nath Yogi organisations (AsomPradeshik Yogi Sanmilani and Nath Yogi Development Council) for the protection of identity and culture of Nath Yogis.

Research Questions-

- 1) What is the nature of identity assertion of the Nath Yogis in Jorhat district?
- 3) What are the roles played by the APYS (AsomPradeshik Yogi Sanmilani) and NYDC (Nath Yogi Development Council) for the protection of identity and culture of the Nath Yogis in Jorhat district?

Methodology-

The study had conducted based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources of data had been collected from the field study and interview to the selected sample respondents. The sample respondents had selected mainly from the Jorhat district and interview had been conducted through an interview schedule. The selected leaders of the Nath Yogi Community of the Assam had also be taken as a sample respondent who had be interviewed through questionnaires to collect information about the political crisis and identity assertion including the role of the Nath Yogi Community. Role of the Nath Yogi Political organizations in political mobilisation of the Nath Yogis for protection of culture, tradition and identity had also be considered for sample study. A sample of 200 respondents had been taken for sample study. The variables that had been taken as age, sex, literacy, socio-economic status, political affiliation, income etc.

The sample respondents had been selected through purposive sampling method. So, Historical method, Interview method and Field study method were used in this regard.

The secondary sources included all sorts of published books, journals, magazines, articles, and government records, various document of the Nath Yogi Socio Political and Cultural organization. Descriptive and analytical methods used for analyzing and interpretation the data. The universe of the study had been of undivided Jorhat district of Assam. A total of 10 villages selected and 20 from each village had been taken as sample respondents for interview.

Sampling Frame and Sampling Design:

The samples were drawn from each district through purposive sampling method. The sampling technique was purposive as it was considered that a little section of the Population of Nath Yogi Community People in Undivided Jorhat District who had comprehensive knowledge on Nath Yogi Community, Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani and Nath Yogi Development Council. The Present study mainly targeted 10 villages from Undivided Jorhat District where majority of the people were from Nath Yogi Community

Table 1.1 Distribution of Respondents in the study area

Sl. No	Districts	Village Name	Total Respondents
1	Jorhat	Bhuyan Chuk Nath Gaon	20
2		Karanga Katoni Gaon	20
3		Bahana Nath Gaon	20
4		Hollow Chuk Nath Gaon	20
5	Majuli	Rongasahi Nath Gaon	20
6		Guxaibari Nath Gaon	20
7		Borguri Gaon	20
8		Sonari Ati Gaon	20
9		Pohgumora Nath Gaon	20

10		Nagaon Guxaibari	20
		Total Village -10	Total Respondents-200

Source- From Field Study

Distribution of Sample by Sex:

Table 1.2 reflects the sex-wise distribution of the respondents. Out of 200 Respondents, 100 (50%) respondents were male and 100 (50%) respondents were female.

Table 1.2 Distribution of respondents by Sex

Gender	Respondents
Male	100 (50%)
Female	100(50%)
Total	200(100%)

Source- Field Survey

Distribution of Respondents by Age:

Table 1.3 shows the distribution of respondents by their age. Respondents were categorised into six categories for the study on the basis of their age.

Table 1.3 Distribution of Respondents by age

Age	Number	Percentage
18 Years	20	10
18-25 Years	30	15
26-35 Years	40	20
36-45 Years	10	05
46-55 Years	80	40
55 and above	20	10
Total	200	100

Source- Field Survey

(Percentage were in parentheses)

Table 1.3 shows that the present study had covered 40% respondents from the age group 46-55 Years, 20% of the respondents from the age group 26-35 Years, 15% of the respondents from 18-25 Years, 10% respondents from both 18 years and 55 and above and a lowest number of respondents from 36-45 Years with 5% of the total Respondents.

Tool of Data Collection:

Primary Data were collected through a structured interview Schedule. The Interview Schedule consists of two parts, Part A- includes basic information of the Respondents, Part B-on Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani (APYS) and Nath Yogi Development Council (NYDC) and their role on Identity formation of Nath Yogi Community.

Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani:

Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani is one of the major organisations of Nath Yogi Community people in Assam. During 27-28 December 1919, Asom Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani (APYS) was formed at Baseria in Darrang district of Assam. Lambodar Nath and Holiram Nath Saharia were the President and the General Secretary of the first Sanmilani respectively. Since the time from establishment Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani fought for their community development. Specially they are playing a vital role to safeguard their tradition, language and culture.

Nath Yogi Development Council:

In the present context of Assam we have noticed various development councils constituted by the Govt. are as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of Development Councils
1	Barak Valley Hill Tribes Development Council
2	SaraniaKachari Dev. Council
3	AmriKarbi Dev. Council
4	Bengali Speaking Dev. Council
5	Kalita Dev. Council
6	Karbi people outside KarbiAnglong Dev. Council
7	Brahmin Dev. Council
8	JolhaDev Council

9	Goria Dev. Council
10	Barman DimasaKachariDev Council
11	SC Dev. Council
12	Hindi Speaking Dev. Council
13	Tea Garden & Ex Tea Garden Dev Council
14	Bishnupriya Manipuri Dev. Council
15	Maimal Dev. Council
16	Moran Dev. Council
17	MotakDev Council
18	MoriaDev Council
19	Gorkha Dev. Council
20	Adivasi Dev. Council
21	Koch Rajbongshi Dev. Council
22	ChutiaDev Council
23	Nath Yogi Dev Council
24	Tai AhomDev Council
25	MechKachariDev Council
26	Manipuri Dev Council
27	SadharanJati Dev. Council
28	Singpho (Man Tai) Dev Council
29	Sut Dev. Council
30	Kumar Dev Council
31	Modahi Dev. Council

32	HajongDev Council
33	ChaodangDev Council

Source- <https://directorwptbc.assam.gov.in>

Among 33 Development Council of Assam Government Nath Yogi Development Council is one of the major development council for the Nath Yogi Community. The Development Council was formed in the year 2011. Especially with the help of former Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Tarun Gogoi) they finally enabled to form the Nath Yogi Development Council (NYDC) in 25 March, 2010. In the early time of the establishment the headquarters of Nath Yogi Development council located in Rukminigaon, Dispur and in present scenario NYDC is operating directly from Office of the Director and WPT & BC (Welfare of plain Tribes and Backward community).. There are 25 members in Nath Yogi Development Council: where one is elected as the chairman and another is elected as the Vice chairman. Other important organs of Nath Yogi Development Council are office of the Director and WPT & BC (Welfare of plain Tribes and Backward community).

Discussion:

The concept of identity is perhaps the most misused concepts in the contemporary times. There has been a complex trajectory of the identity studies from psychology to anthropology, from individual to collective, and from self to communal. In common parlance and everyday life the term ‘identity’ is conveniently used without often being aware of its nuances and implications. The concept of Identity assertion is not a new phenomenon for Assam Perspective. Assam has an influencing kind of experience. For Example – Bodo Movement, Karbi Movement, Movement of the Tiwa’s, Miching;s , Deuri’s etc. Nath Yogi Community is one of the oldest communities of Assam. They are the worshiper of Yoga and their ideal lord is Lord Shiva. As one of the oldest community of Assam they are not getting much more facilities from the government in comparison to other communities of Assam. To noticed this big gap in 2011 Assam former chief minister late Tarun Gogoi formed Nath Yogi Development Council for the Nath Yogi Community people. The first Chairman of Nath Yogi Development Council was Dhiren Nath and present chairman of the Nath Yogi Development Council is Benudhar Nath.

As one of the important organization and similarly as only Development Council of the Nath Yogi Community people the question arises whether the respondents know about Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani and Nath Yogi Development Council. After having the field survey, the data has found among the 200 respondents-

Table 1.4: Total Number of respondents who are and who are not the members of Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani and Nath Yogi Development Council

Gender	They are the Member of APYS/NYDC or Both	They are not the Member of APYS/NYDC or Both
Male	20(10%)	80 (40%)
Female	25 (12.5%)	75 (37.5%)

Source- Field Survey

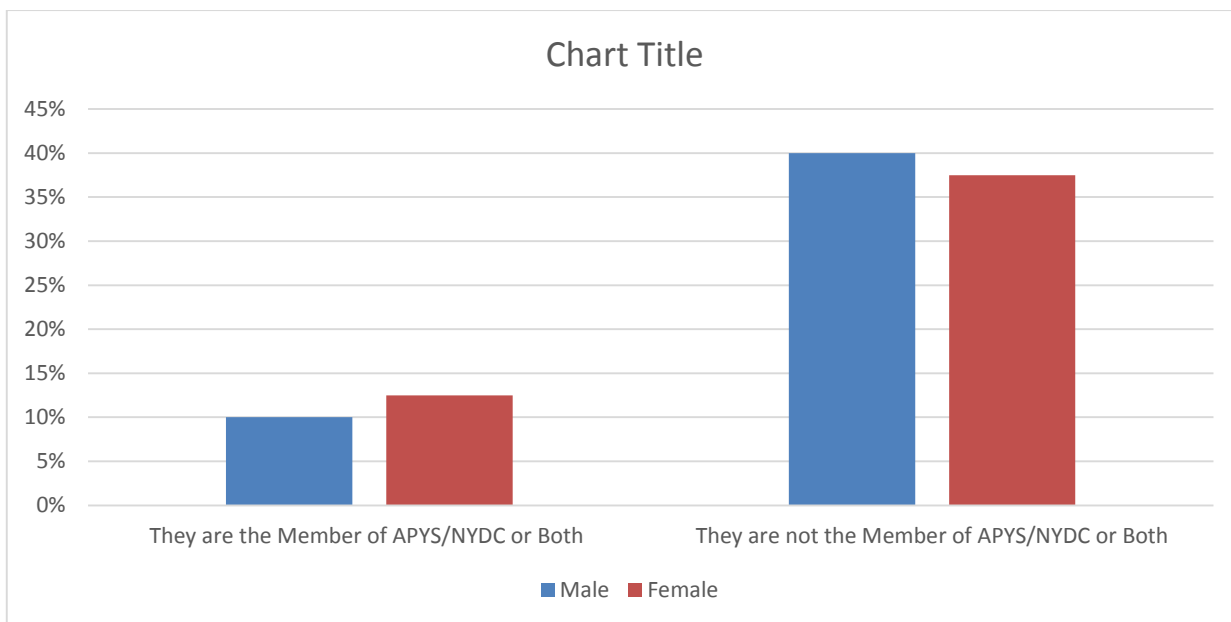


Table 1.4 has shown that 20 of the male and 25 of the female respondents were the members of Nath Yogi Development Council and Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani and 80 of male and 75 of the female respondents were not the members of Nath Yogi Development Council.

Similarly, another important question rose among the respondents whether they know about Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani . Because Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani was the guardian organization for Nath Yogi Community people in Assam. After having the field survey the study has shown interesting data. Which mentioned in the below-Table 1.5 : Total Number of respondents who know about Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani

Gender	They Knew about Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani	They Did not know about Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani
Male	40 (20%)	60 (30%)
Female	20 (10%)	80 (40%)

Source- Field Survey

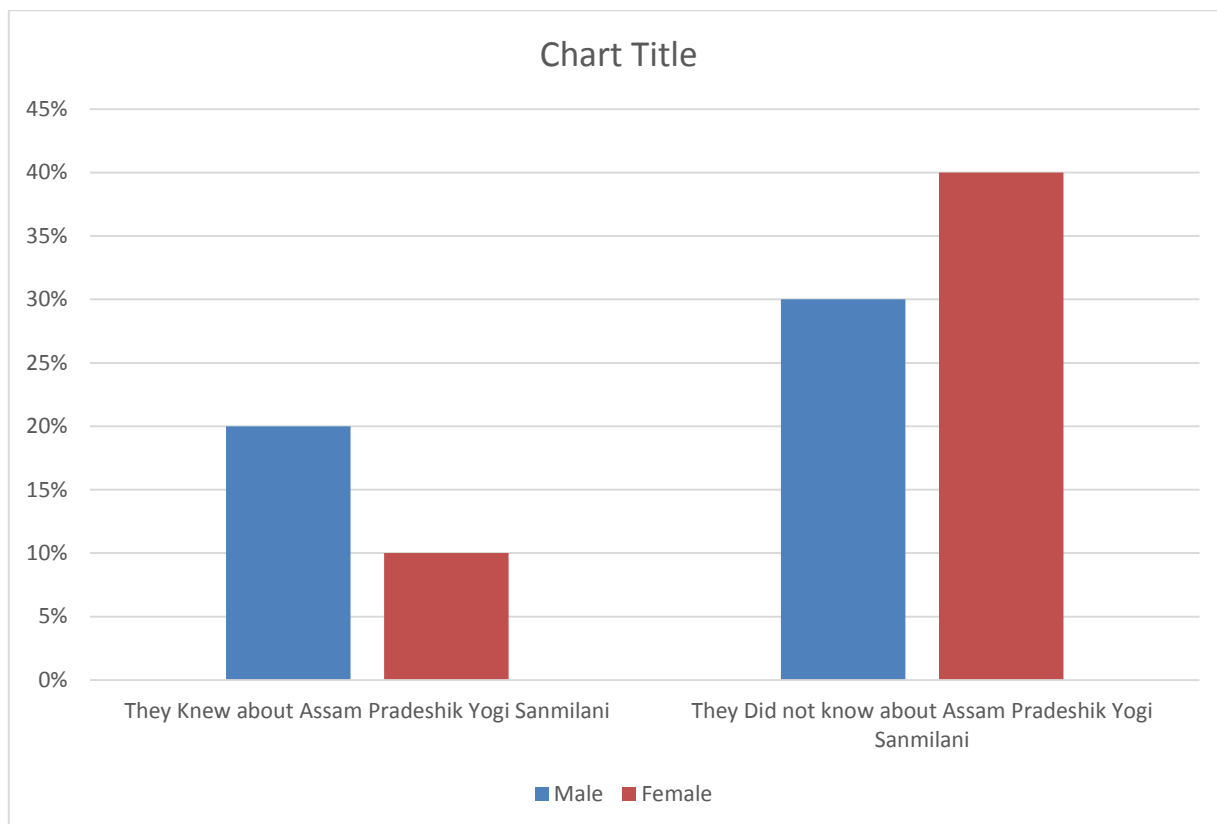


Table no 1.5 has shown that 40 of the male and 25 of the female respondents knew about the Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani and 60 of the female and 75 of the female respondents did not know about the organization.

Although from the time of Establishment in 1910, Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani had tried to play a significant role for the upliftment of their Community People. Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani on the leadership of Holiram Nath Saharia, Monobor Nath, Khuli Devi and Konwali Devi always tried hard to develop their rich identity, Culture and tradition. Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani always thought due to the negligence of the government and due to the impact of globalization somehow their rich identity and tradition will be in challenge. As when various ethnic groups were demanding for separate autonomy, separate state on the other hand Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani strongly advocate the equitable development of all communities of Assam. They never want separate state.

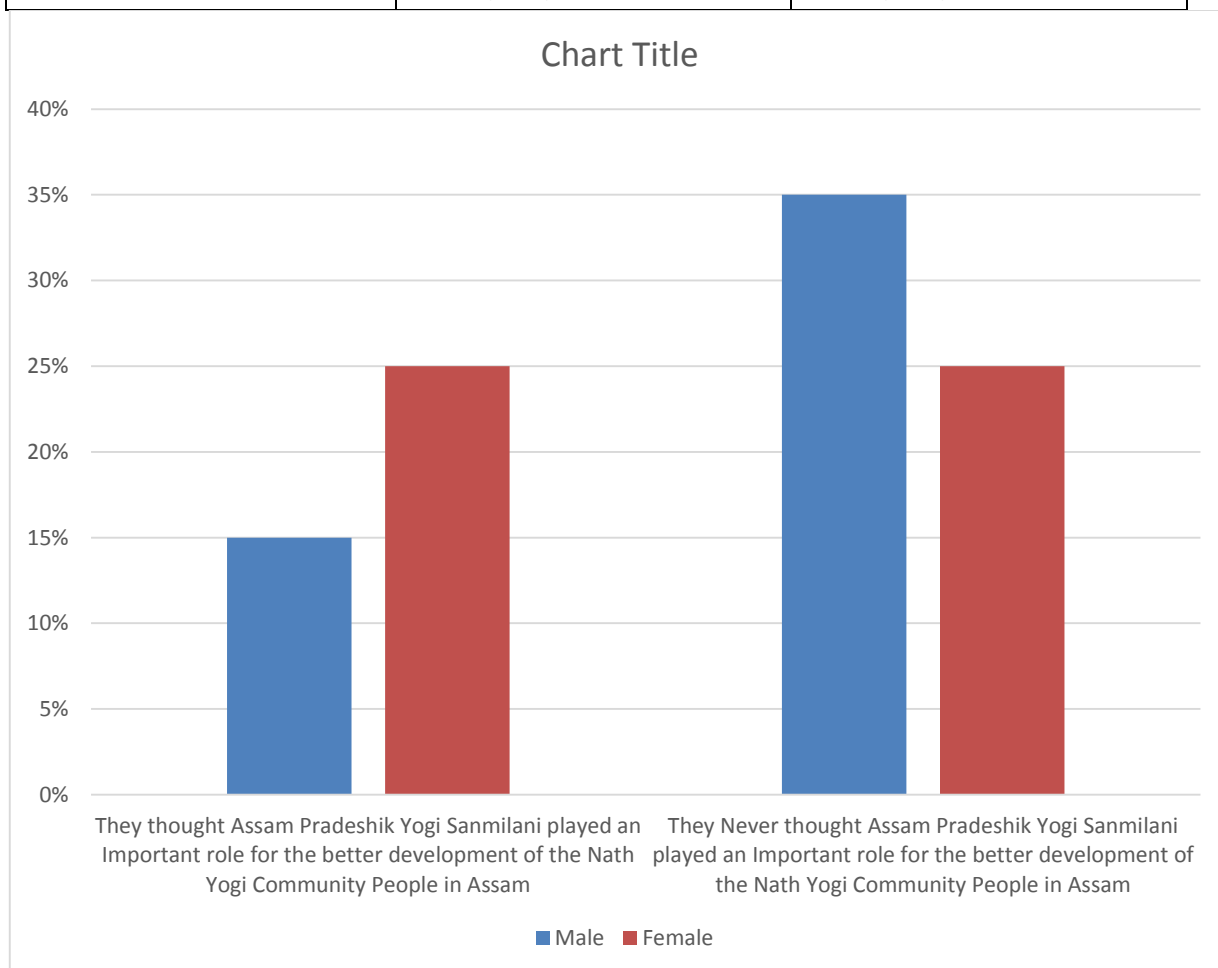
Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani believed the concept of equality, brotherhood, one state one mind concept. They always believed the unity of the State. So, they totally denied the Concept of Separate State. Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani also not happy with the role of the government and their development council as well. Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani believed the present Development council which known as Nath Yogi Development Council only has very limited power. The council only looks after the economic development of their community. But Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani felt this only one dimension of Development. As one of the oldest communities of Assam they have rich

tradition and cultural identities. Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani felt to cover up all those dimensions of their community development.

When the question rose among the 200 respondents of the study the data has found-

Table 1.6: Total No of the respondents who though Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani has played a vital role or not for their community development

Gender	They thought Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani played an Important role for the better development of the Nath Yogi Community People in Assam	They Never thought Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani played an Important role for the better development of the Nath Yogi Community People in Assam
Male	30 (15%)	70 (35%)
Female	50 (25%)	50 (25%)



Source – Field Survey

Table no 1.6 had shown that 30 of the male and 50 of the female respondents thought that Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani has played a vital role in their community development instead 70 of the male and 50 of the female respondents never thought that the organization has played a vital role for their community development.

Nath Yogi Development Council was formed in the Year 2011. From the establishment Nath Yogi Development Council had done lots of activities for their community development. When they had asked about the Development Council interesting data has found. Majority of the respondents did not know that there is a development council for their community development although Nath Yogi Development Council had crossing one decade of Establishment.

Table No 1.7: Total No of respondents who know about their Development Council

Gender	They Know there is a development council for their community Development	They don't know there is a development council for their community development
Male	20 (10%)	80 (40%)
Female	25 (12.5%)	75 (37.5%)

Source – Field Survey

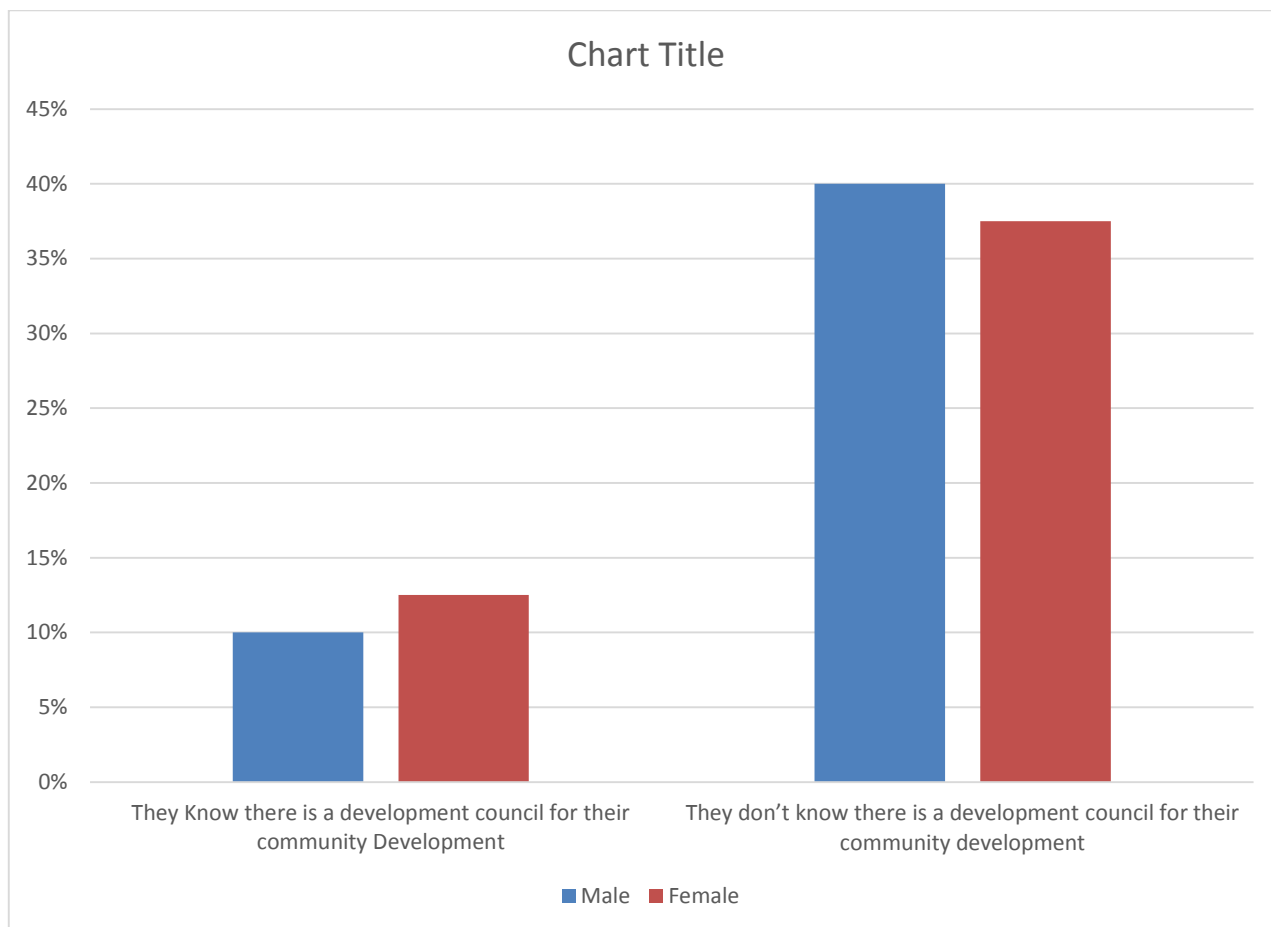


Table No 1.7 has shown that 20 of the male and 25 of the female respondents know the existence of their Development Council. On the other hand 80 of male and 75 of female respondents did not know about the Development Council.

In the field survey Majority of the respondents said that they don't know about the Development Council (known as Nath Yogi Development Council) although the Development council was formed in the year 2011.

Among the 45 respondents who knew about the Development Council one question was put forward to have their basic idea about the Nath Yogi Development Council and it's aims and objectives. The data had found –

Table no 1.8: The respondents who believed Nath Yogi Development Council has played a vital role for their community development

Gender	They believe Nath Yogi Development Council has played an important role in mobilising the feeling of identity-based culture, customs etc of Nath Yogi People	They are getting Proper facility and helping assurance from Nath Yogi Development Council whenever they needed	They believe Nath Yogi Development Council has successful in protecting the Identity of the Nath Yogi People
Male	10 (5%)	03 (1.5%)	07 (3.5%)
Female	18 (9%)	02 (1%)	05 (2.5%)

Source- Field Survey.

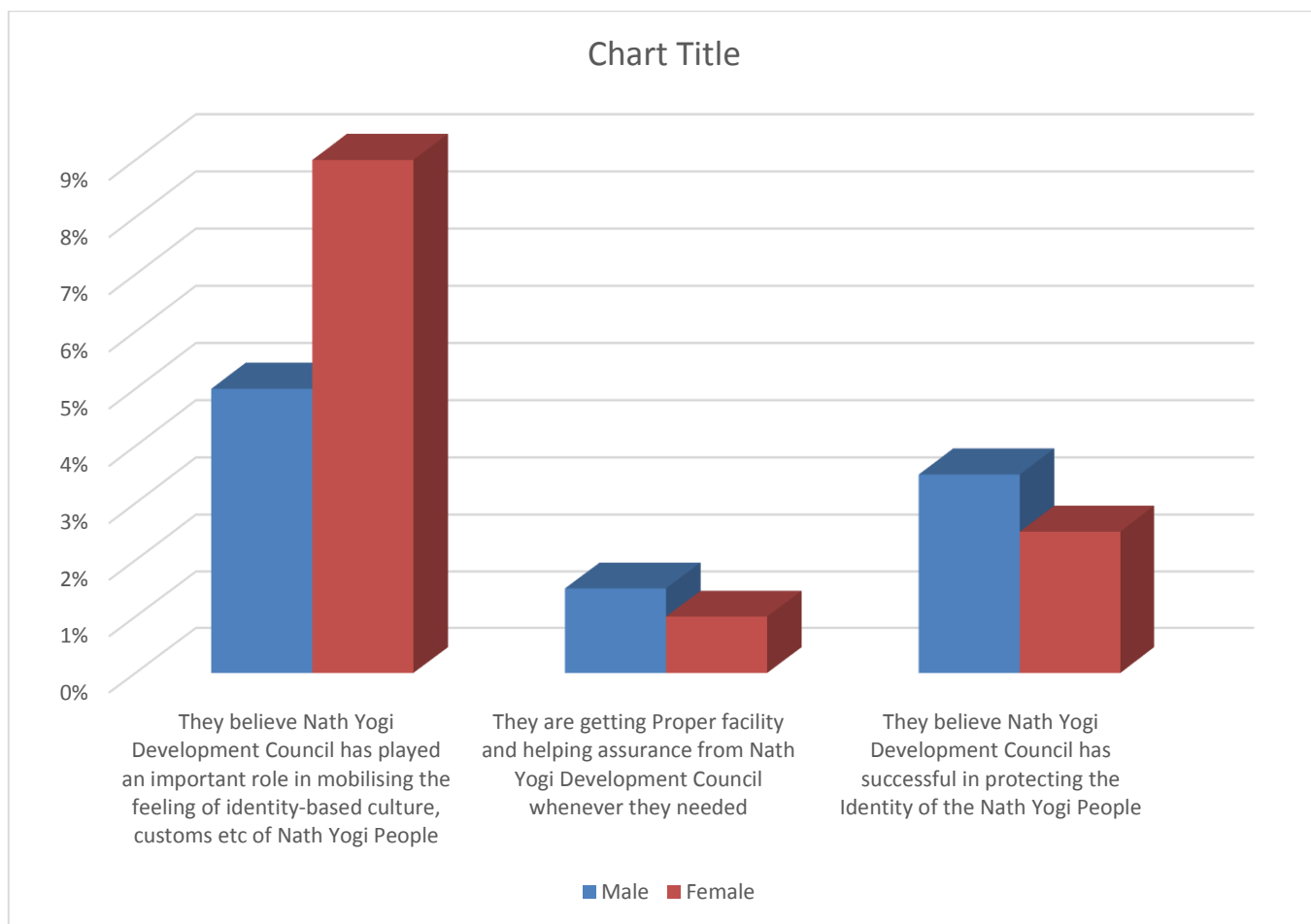


Table No 1.8 had shown that 10 of the male and 18 of the female respondents believed Nath Yogi Development Council has played an important role in mobilizing the feeling of identity-based culture,

customs etc of Nath Yogi People, 3 of the male and 2 of the female respondents believed they were getting Proper facility and helping assurance from Nath Yogi Development Council whenever they needed ,7 of the male and 5 of the female respondents believed Nath Yogi Development Council has successful in protecting the Identity of the Nath Yogi People

Among the 12 Respondents who believed Nath Yogi Development Council has successful in protecting the identity of the Nath Yogi Community people they were asked how the Development council able to protect the identity of the Nath Yogi Community People important data has noticed.

Table 1.9: Respondents view on Nath Yogi Development Council, how the council able to protect their identity:

Gender	They believed giving financial fund for the Nath Yogi Community People can help their community development	They believed Providing financial assurance for poor Nath Yogi Community People can help their community development	They believed Through various Cultural and literature programmes	They believed through other development aspects they can help their community development
Male	06 (3%)	01 (0.5%)	00 (0%)	00 (0%)
Female	03 (1.5%)	02 (1%)	00 (0%)	00 (0%)

Source – Field Survey

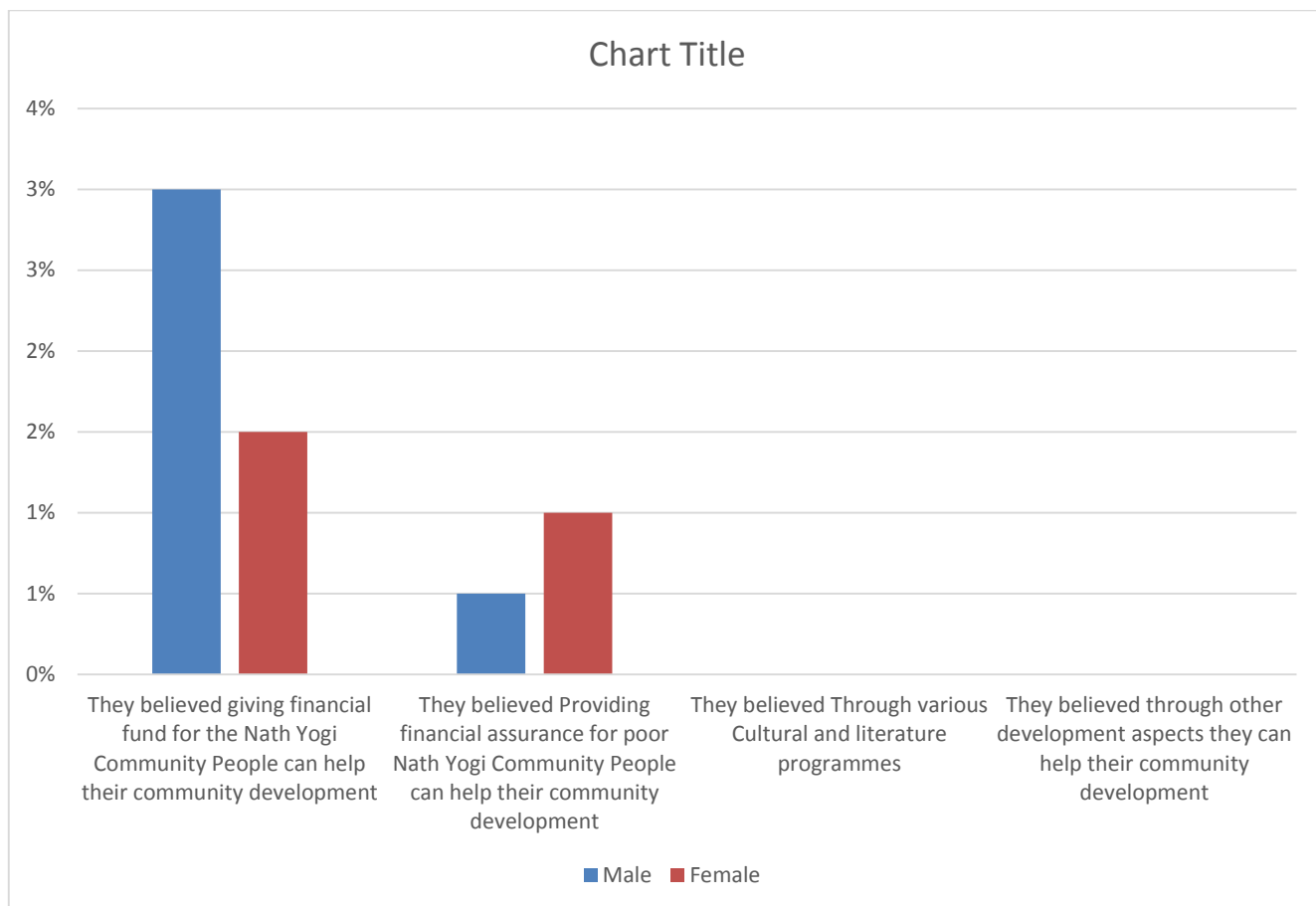


Table no 1.9 had shown that 6 of the male and 3 of the female respondents thought giving financial fund for the Nath Yogi Community People can help their community development, 1 of the male and 2 of the female respondents believed Providing financial assurance for poor Nath Yogi Community People can help their community development

The issue of identity had arisen in northeast India with states in an unequal state of development which definitely resulted in unequal opportunities to take advantage of the resources within the states. The less-developed communities felt threatened in the company of their more developed counterparts and thus started raising concerns over the imminent danger of extinction of their communities due to aggressive use of resources by the latter. If we see the history of Nath and Yogis in Indian perspectives than we found - The community began from AdiNath, Lord Shiva himself, who gave it to his consort, Parvati Nath, who gave it to ShanmukNath, Ganesh, and Nandi Nath. We also found in the linkage of Nath Yogis likewise-

Lord Krishna as Vishnu initiated Lord Vivasvat, the Spirit of our sun. The lineage was later guarded by the Kings of the Solar Dynasty, followed by Vaivasvat Manu, King Ikshavaku, Harishchandra, then to Lord RaghuNath (Rama), 47th in descent from Ikshavaku (he is the 8th Rudra, esoterically connected with Shiv Goraksha Babaji).

At a time when various ethnic groups are continuing their demand for separate states, the Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani(APYS), an organization representing the Nath-Yogi community of Assam, categorically opposed any division of the state. But, in the same breath, the APYS expressed its unhappiness with the Nath-Yogi Development Council that was set up for the community, and demanded a 'satellite autonomous council' to safeguard their interests. Although for the better development of the Nath Yogi Community in Assam there is a development council but still it is not proper enough.

Nath Yogi Development Council as the pioneer of the Nath Yogi Community development they have maintained some major aims and objectives like-

- 1) To uplift their community aspiration in every field of development,
- 2) To establish monuments on the Name of their ideal personalities who had done tremendous contribution to their community,
- 3) To develop their literature by publishing various literature mainly those literature which will carry forward the glorious history and ideal personalities of their community,
- 4) To provide financial Assurance to the poor patients. For example- Cancer, heart and kidney patients,
- 5) To make rich work on their rich culture like – Ojhapali Dance, Deodhani Dance etc,
- 6) To provide financial help to the poor students of their community,
- 7) To give financial assurance to the unmarried women, unemployed youths to create a better lifestyle for them,
- 8) To organise various seminars, workshop which will rich their literature, culture and tradition etc.

With the supporting hand from the Assam Pradeshik Yogi Sanmilani Nath Yogi development Council always tried a lot for the better development of Nath Yogi Community in Assam although they were getting a very less amount of financial assurance from the Government. For Example in the year 2010-11 they were getting 1 Crore, in the year 2014-15 they were getting 4 Crore and the year 2018 they were getting only 32 lakh. But this is not sufficient for their community development.

But still with the financial Assurance Nath Yogi Development Council tried a lot to protect their identity by doing some major activities which mentioned in the below-

- 1) They had bronze statue of their great personalities like – Monbor Nath, Khohuli Devi who had sacrifices their life for nation independence in the year 1942. Nath Yogi Development Council also made the bronze statue of their first M.L.A Khagendranath Nath and Holiram Nath Saharia as well who had tremendous contribution for women empowerment and establish many more school , colleges,
- 2) They had published 8 books which represented their rich tradition , culture and their great personalities,
- 3) They had provided financial assurance to the Ojha's of their rich culture od Deodhani and Ojhapali,
- 4) They had make one documentary entitled as “ Hate Mudra Mukhe Pod Mayur xoddish Nas” on the golden memory of Sahitya Academy winner Lalit Chandra Nath,
- 5) The Nath Yogi Development Council gave financial assurance of 1 lakh to various youths to open fishery,

- 6) They have also provided helping assurance to the Electrician, Carpenter and plumber by giving important tools to them,
- 7) They have provided financial assurance of 10000 rupees to the students of their community who have secured 70% in H.S and H.S.L.C and similarly they declared the award of 1 lakh to the first,second and third rank holder students of H.S.L.C and H.S. Two students able to gained the rank holder economical assurance by the Nath Yogi Development Council,
- 8) Nath Yogi Development Council also provided financial assurance of 50000, 20000 to the Cancer, Heart and Kidney patients etc.

So, with a very limited amount of financial help from the government Nath Yogi Development Council tried a lot for their identity formation and community development.

Conclusion: Social status is the standing one holds in society based on prestige. It is also affected by a number of factors such as occupation, wealth, education, and family background. In stratified societies, consisting of a hierarchical social structure, people are divided into social classes that are valued differently in the society. Certain types of society have a rigid social class system, with little or no social mobility and thus no opportunity to change one's social status. Others, although stratified, are more open to change in social status through marriage, education, talent, and hard work. Globalization has increased the opportunities for people to change their social status. However, a truly equitable society requires that all its members be equally valued, regardless of their family background, occupation, income level, or other factors.

'Identity politics' refers to social movements to gain recognition of historically oppressed ethno cultural groups. Historically, the politics of identity can be broadly categorized into two types: (1) politics of radical separatism, which involves a range of actions from violence to validation through conventional political means; and (2) identity politics under multiculturalism, through which minority and racial zed groups seek recognition within pluralist societies. The first sets the challenge of understanding and opposing violence in a context of historical oppression. The second sets the challenge of going beyond practices of accommodation and difference to redefine the basis of citizenship. The burning issues of identity crisis now days not only a regional problem rather it is spreading worldwide. The Ethnic identity signifies to the individual level of identification with a culturally defined collectively, the sense on the part of the individual that he or she belongs to a particular cultural community. From time immemorial Nath Yogi's played a vital role in socio economic scenario of Assam. But still Nath Yogi Community people are not getting much more privileges and economic assurance from the government as their expectations. So that's why they have started their identity assertion movement demanding of satellite autonomous council instead of present Nath Yogi Development Council and ST status. They believed if they were provided the ST status some while they will able to get some opportunities from the government.

Although Nath Yogi Development Council tried a lot for the Community Development by doing various major activities in every aspects of the development but still it is not enough because they were getting a very less amount of financial assurance from the government. So Government should focus on it by

giving proper facilities to the Nath Yogi Community people and Nath Yogi Development Council as the Nath Yogi Community were the oldest community of Assam.

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