

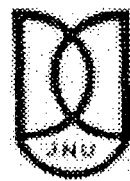
**MIGRATION AND CONFLICT: A CASE STUDY OF
BANGLADESHI MIGRANTS IN ASSAM
FROM 1975 TO 1985**

**Dissertation
Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree**

Of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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Certified that dissertation entitled “Migration and Conflict: A Case Study of Bangladeshi Migrants in Assam from 1975 to 1985,” has been submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** has not been previously submitted for any other degree or other universities and is my own work.

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Dedicated
to
My Ma, Pita, Poppy, Jitu
&
My Lt. Grandma

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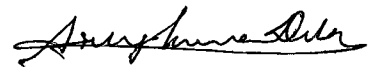
I really feel privileged to complete my study under the able supervision of Prof. Mahendra P. Lama. His invaluable guidance, advice and cooperation remained with me as a beacon, while I was completing my study. He not only spent his valuable time in improving this work but also guided me to have an overall better understanding of the subject. I am greatly indebted to him for bearing with me and my mistakes.

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Arup Kumar Deka

New Delhi

PREFACE

Migration has become the common phenomenon in the world. It's a permanent or semi permanent movement of population. People migrate from one place to another either to accelerate the living standard or to save themselves from the socio-political upheavals. Generally migration from a particular country or place can contribute to the development of the host country. But migrating people having different culture and customs can also generate conflict in the host country. Conflict becomes inevitable when migrants and the native people resort to competition for resources and employment. Migration is supposed to have taken place when a portion of a definite populace moves from one geographic territory to another in search of greener pastures for their development, which might be for the protection of one's identity, finding employment opportunities, place to live, better facilities for personal development and so on. Migration of people leads to major demographic changes in the host country. If there is proper settlement and the migrated flock is able to gel with the indigenous races, then they contribute immensely to the host nation. However, if such migration gives birth to ethnic identity crises either in the migrated group or amongst the indigenous races, then that sort of incompatibility normally takes a violent turn.

Assam can be considered to be the mother state within the seven states of the north eastern region of India. Economically, population wise as well as in the development index, Assam has always been taking a leading role in the region. It is for that reason also, it becomes susceptible to hosting a major migrant populations either from the Indian states or from the neighbouring countries. The migration of the Bangladeshis into Assam has been taking place since the annexation of the British. However, after the birth

Bangladesh, there was a major influx of population from that country. The conflict that has aroused in Assam was due to the migration of Bangladeshis which induced the identity problem among the Assamese people. The conflict in Assam took an alarming shape and even got transfused into other states of the region. The study aims at understanding the issue of migration and conflict that occurred in the state basically during the Assam movement period. The study will focus on the problem of demographic imbalance leading to a crisis situation between different ethnic groups in Assam. And it will also consider discussing the consequence of the movement which was responsible for the growth of insurgency in Assam. Basically the study will also focus on the causal factors that triggered migration of Bangladeshis into Assam. The study will also try to examine linkages between migration and conflict, and try to analyse it in the context of Assam.

The present study is divided into five major chapters. The first chapter will be theoretical in nature and a major effort is made to link up between migration and conflict. The second chapter will deal with the causal factors that have triggered Bangladeshi migration into Assam. This chapter is also tries to discuss the history of Bangladeshi migration. It assesses the demographic changes that came with such migration. Chapter 3 will focus on the extent of migration that took place in Assam from Bangladesh. It tries to assess the demographic imbalance that came about with such migration. The fourth chapter will try to analyse the violence that took place in Assam due to the migration of people from Bangladesh. And finally the concluding chapter would test the hypothesis and would attempt to develop a broad argument and suggestions to end the conflict.

ABBREVIATION

AAGSP:	All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad
AAMSU:	All Assam Minority Student Union
AASU:	All Assam Student Union
A-B:	Ashuganj-Bakhrahad
ABSU:	All Bodo Students Union
ADB:	Asian Development Bank
AGP:	Assam Gana Parishad
AJBD:	Assam Jatiyata Badi Dal
AJD:	Assam Jatiyatabadi Dal
AJYCP:	Assam Jaliyatabadi Yuva- Chatra Parishad
ASF:	Adivasi Security Force
ASS:	Assam Sahitya Sabha
AYS:	Assam Yuvak Samaj
BAC:	Bodo Autonomous Council
BDRCS:	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
BJP:	Bharatiya Janata Party
BLT:	Bengali Tiger Force
BLT:	Bodo Liberation Tiger
BSF:	Bodo Security Force
CEC:	Chief Election Commissioner

CH:	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CIDA:	Canadian International Development Agency
CIS:	Commonwealth Independence States
CPI:	Communist Party of India
CPI (M):	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPP:	Cyclone Preparedness Programme
CSPS:	Cyclone Shelter Preparatory Study
DHD:	Dima Halim Daoga
DNSF:	Dimasa National Security Force
GNP:	Gross National Product
HDI:	Human Development Index
HPC:	Hhar People's Council
HPI:	Human Poverty Index
IMDT:	Illegal Migration Determination Tribunal Act
JICA:	Japan International Co-operation Agency
JJAP:	Janata Juba Chatra Parishad
JJCP:	Janata Juba Chatra Parishad
JMBA:	Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority
KLO:	Kamtapur Liberation Organization
MMC:	Million Meter Cube
MPO:	Master Plan Organization
MULTA:	Muslim Unites Liberation Tiger of Assam

NDFB:	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NSCN:	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
ODA:	Overseas Development Authority
PLP:	Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad
PULF:	People's United Liberation Front
RNSF:	Rabha National Security Force
RSS:	Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh
TNRF:	Tiwa National Revolutionary Force
ULFA:	United Liberation Front of Assam
UNCRM:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Migrants
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UPDS:	United People's Democratic Solidarity
USAID:	United States of America for International Development
UTNLF:	United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front
VHP:	Viswa Hindu Parishad
VPA:	Vested Property Act
WB:	World Bank

Chapter 1

Theoretical Background of Migration and Conflict

Traditionally migration has been defined as the movement of population from one place to another internally or externally in search of better life as well as for income acceleration. Migration means crossing over the boundary of a political country in a certain minimum period of time.¹ In its most general sense 'migration' is defined as the relatively permanent movement of individuals over a significant distance. Migration comprises a change of residence by a person or a family or household. The concept is congenitally geographical because it indicates a change of residence from one location to another. Migration is relatively a recent phenomenon dating back to two or three hundred years since the idea of nation state originated in Europe and spread to the rest of the world.

Migration can be both internal as well as external. The movement of population within a country is known as internal migration. On the other hand, external or international migration refers to the movement of population over the frontiers that separate one of the worlds approximately 200 states from one another. Some scholars even argue that both internal and external migrations are part of the same process and they should be analyzed together.² Migration has become common in present day as people move in search for better livelihood and security.³

Migration is one of the most significant of all human behavior. There is a wide range of variables that have been discussed as possible determinants of migration. These

¹ M.L. Borgatta, and E.F. Borgatta, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Vol. 3, as cited in Naveen Misra, *Population in South Asia; Migration as a Survival Strategy*, (New Delhi: Authors Press, 2001), pp. 1-2.

² Peter, Berton, "International Subsystems; A Sub Macro Approach to International Studies", *International Studies Quarterly*, (Detroit-Michigan). Vol. 13, No. 4, 1969, as cited in Naveen Misra, n. 1, p. 3.

³ Julius G. William and L. Koeb (ed.), *A Dictionary of Social Science*, (New York: The Free Press, 1967), as cited in Naveen Misra, n. 1, p. 4.

include factors like demographic, political and psychological factor, environmental degradation, political upheavals and ethnic conflict. However regardless of whatever the variables may be operating, migratory streams generally seem to flow from a place of origin where economic opportunities are relatively less.⁴ Apart from the above-mentioned causes, poverty, human rights abuse such as state repression, communal conflict associated with poor governance has also been the key factors impelling migration. It is a coincidence that conflict-ridden countries are often those, which have severe economic difficulties. In many parts of the world, people are forced to abandon their homes due to severe breakdown of economic and social conditions. In addition to environmental devastation and lack of access to natural resources increasingly propel people to migrate. Other scholars find that the growing inequalities in wealth between and within countries make migration the only viable option in order to secure better economic prospects and upward social mobility.⁵

The UN *Convention on the Rights of Migrants* defines a migrant worker as a 'person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.' Thus migrants can be understood as covering all cases where the decision to migrate is taken freely by the individual concerned may be for reasons of 'personal convenience' and without intervention of an 'external compelling factor.'⁶ This definition indicates that 'migrant' does not refer to displace or others forced or compelled people to leave their homes. Migrants are people who make choices about when to leave and where to go, even though these choices are sometimes extremely constrained.

Malthus found migration as an inevitable consequence of over population. According to him, migration takes place because of the growth of population in geometrical proportion and while resources increased only in arithmetic proportion.⁷ Lee holds

⁴ Frisbie, Parker, "Illegal Migration from Mexico to the US: A Longitudinal Analysis", *International Migration Review*, Vol. IX, No. 1-4, Spring/Winter 1975, pp. 3-13.

⁵ Nyberg, N. S, *Migration, Development and Conflict Perspectives of the Sending Country*, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Second Workshop on Global Migration Regimes, Stockholm, June 11-12, 2004, see http://www.diis.ninnanyberg_sorensen.com/pdf.

⁶ Migrants and Migration, *International Migration and Multicultural Policies*, Glossary, see http://www.unesco.org/most/migration/glossary_migrants.htm.

⁷ Malthus, Thomas R, "An Essay on Population", Vol. 2, (New York: Dutton), First Published as an Essay on the Principles of Population. A Paper back Edition was published in 1963 by Irwin/Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, as cited in Anthony H. Richmond, *Immigration and Ethnic Conflict*, (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 30.

that migration is a permanent or semi-permanent change of residence.⁸ He does not place any restriction upon the distance of the move or on the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act. He also refrained from making any distinction between internal and external migration. Lee tried to explain the factors affecting migration in terms of the positive and negative characteristics of both the origin and destination. According to him, migrants must expect to receive some added advantages in moving from one place to another. There are several factors, which influence migration. These are associated with the area of origin, the area of destination intervening obstacles and personal factors. He assumed every origin and destination to have some positive factors that hold the people within the area or pull others to it and some negative forces that repel or push people from the area. Lee's theory of migration is more non-economic and it offers little practical policy guidance for decision making in developing nations.⁹ Weinberg viewed migration as the changing of place, permanently or temporarily for an appreciable duration like the case of seasonal workers.

Ravenstein put forward his view of migration, what is known as the laws of migration on the basis of patterns of migration in Great Britain as well as the United States. According to him the main cause of migration are economic. Most migrants travel short distances for the acceleration of their income. He also admitted that those who travel longer distance belong to agricultural areas and prefer to go to great centre of commerce or industry. The volume of migration increases with the development of industry and commerce as well as improvement of transport.¹⁰

From the above discussion it could be concluded that migration is a movement by an individual or a family or a group of population from one place to another either permanently or temporarily to a significant distance. The basic aim of migrants is either to increase their level of income or to get rid of the natural, man made disasters or repression in the sending country.

⁸ Lee, Everett S, "A Theory of Migration", *Demography*, Vol. 3, 1966, pp. 47-50.

⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 47-50.

¹⁰ *Campus Anglia, Migration Theory*, files/edu. css. see
<http://www.angliacampus.com/public/sec/geog/migrate/page13.htm>

Why People Move

There is a common belief among lawmakers, policy specialists, and the public is that migration stems from the developing countries because of slow economic development or poverty. People leave their places of origin because their countries are poor, underdeveloped, and consequently lack economic opportunities. They migrate to wealthy, developed nations to seek wider opportunities for employment at higher wages. In other words economic conditions in the developing countries are volatile, and poor families in rural communities face serious risks to their well being. In addition to the usual hazards of drought, crop failure and natural disasters, the social and economic transformations that occur during development create a highly uncertain and unpredictable economic environment. In the absence of any other way to ensure against these risks, the migration of family members to foreign labour markets invariably adopted to reduce the overall risk.¹¹

There are several causes of migration. The most obvious causes are the disparities in the level of income, employment and social well being differing areas. Most people move for economic reasons, but some people also migrate to escape from political or religious persecution or simply to fulfill a personal dream. Some experts divide the reasons of migration into push and pull factors. Push factors include widespread unemployment, lack of farmland, famine, or war as well as state repression at home. The Great Depression (1929–1939) is a good example of a push factor, as hard times encouraged more residents to leave the United States. In the 1980s and 1990s, hundreds of thousands of Africans were pushed out of their homelands to neighboring countries because of famine and civil war.¹²

Individuals are most likely to migrate when economic conditions decline and least likely when these conditions improve.¹³ There are several factors that contribute to the individuals desire to migrate. Differential characteristics of sending and receiving countries provide a potential incentive for an individual or family to migrate.

¹¹ Massey, Douglas S, "Economic Development and International Migration in Comparative Perspective", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3, September 1988, pp. 383-413.

¹² *Human Population: Fundamentals of Growth Effect of Migration on Population Growth* see www.prb.org/Content/NavigationMenu/PRB/Educators/Human_Population/Migration2/Migration1.

¹³ Jenkins J. Craig, "Push and Pull in Recent Mexican Migration to the US", *International Migration Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer 1977, pp. 178-189.

Individual's personal characteristics including accumulated job skills and language learnt also triggered migration.¹⁴

It is therefore, concluded that migration could be interpreted as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. The main cause behind migration is the individual's desire to maximize his income by moving from low wages to high wage economies. The individual migrates in search of better life both pushed by lack of opportunities at home and pulled by economic gain and freedom abroad. In this process they often risk their savings, lives and health. Migration has both positive and negative impact. It can contribute to the host country by bringing about positive changes in the economy. Migration can also have negative consequences including trafficking and smuggling, security and racism.¹⁵

Types of Migration

On the basis of the causes and reasons of migration, migration can be classified as voluntary, forced, legal and illegal migration.

(i) Voluntary Migration

If the migrants have the opportunity to exercise his own discretion in deciding whether to migrate or not and also in the matter of selecting the place of migration, it is regarded as voluntary migration.¹⁶ Voluntary migration may be temporary or permanent; one may be temporary migrant either because he is unwilling to settle down permanently in the host country or because the circumstances in the host country do not permit him to be a permanent immigrant. For example many migrants to the Middle East have no inclination to settle down there permanently. They would rather prefer to work there for a short period and return home with a good savings.¹⁷

¹⁴ Greenwood, M. J, "Human Migration: Theory Models and Empirical Studies", *Journal of Regional Science*, Vol. 25, No.4, November 1985, pp. 521-544.

¹⁵ *Quality of Life and Migration Technical Aspects and Results of Social Modeling*, Center for Environmental System Research, University of Kassel, Germany, see http://www.cesr/quality_migration.com.pdf.

¹⁶ Francis, Cherunilam, *Migration Causes, Correlates, Consequences, Trends & Policies*, (New Delhi: Himalayan Publishing House, 1987), pp. 4-5.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 35-36.

(ii) Forced Migration

Forced migration is the migration which is caused by compulsion and coercion like separation, political or religious persecution of people etc. According to William Bood forced migration is caused by the following reasons 1. Political instability, war, persecution-these conditions usually create political refugees. 2. Life threatening economic decline and ecological crisis-these conditions are usually blamed for producing international economic migrants such as guest workers, illegal migrants and inaptly named Environmental Refugee. 3. Ethnic, religious and tribal conflicts, the conditions that give rise to intense territorial and nationalistic emotions intolerance of 'foreigners' and 'ethnic cleansing.'¹⁸

Many international movements of population involving a very large number of people have occurred due to the compelling reasons of political, religious or racial character. The largest movement of such kind has occurred in the Indian subcontinent itself. The partition of India led to a large exodus of people. Another large scale forced migration took place in 1971 in the Bangladesh liberation struggle when around 10 million people migrated to India. They were mostly the victims of Pakistani government repression. Another example of forced migration is the flight of Rohingya Muslim to Bangladesh due to Burmese's government repression. The example of Chakma refugees from Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh to the Northeastern part of India cannot be excluded in this context.¹⁹ Forced migration comprises about 1% of the world's population not an alarming figure in the aggregate; this percentage rises rapidly in several key regions. Forced migrants make up a significant minority in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caucasus, the Balkans, the Middle East, Central America and central south and Southeast Asia.²⁰

(iii) Illegal Migration

Illegal migration also known as the undocumented migration refers to the migration that occurs circumventing the regulations governing migration and without the knowledge of the authorities concerned. There are varieties of reasons for such

¹⁸ Wood, W. B, "Forced Migration: Local Conflicts and International Dilemmas", *Annals of the Associations of American Geographers*, Vol. 84, No. 4, December, 1994, pp. 607-635.

¹⁹ Francis, Cherunilam, op. cit. n.16, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 36-37.

migration including the absence of explicit immigration policies or of an administrative efficiency, imprecise or incompatible laws or complex regulations. In many cases migrants, with or without the collusion of their employers, knowingly circumvent or break unambiguous admission, stay or employment laws or regulations of the host country.²¹ In other cases, they are the victims of illegal human trafficking.

(iv) Legal Migration

People who enter to a country usually in search of employment with the necessary travel documents and permits are called the legal migration. Legal migration refers to the process where people migrate to another country through a proper governmental and legal mechanism.²²

Theoretical Framework

International migration is too diverse and multifaceted, and cannot be explained solely with a model that rests on a particular level of analysis at a particular point of time. A variety of studies have been proposed in such cases. These theories differ from the disciplinary perspectives and the level of analysis (e.g. micro-macro level). The reigning theories of international migration that have an economic basis are the neoclassical economic theory of migration, the equilibrium theory, dual labor market theory, economics of labour migration, world system theory, system approach etc. These theories apply classic supply and demand paradigms to migration at the individual level and the household unit.²³

Todaro highlighted the paradox of migration. According to him people move not because of the immediate prospect of improving their living standards but because of the hope of obtaining better life or better standard of living through a good job and an acceptable level of income. Thus, people might be willing to endure short-term

²¹ United Nations, *Population Distribution, Migration and Development*, (New York: United Nations Publication, 1984), p. 17.

²² Massey, D. S, et. al, "Migration Theory, Ethnic Mobilization and Globalization," in Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex (ed.), *The Ethnicity Reader Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997); pp. 257-289.

²³ Todaro, M. P, "Models of Labour Migration and Urban Unemployment in Least Developed Countries", *American Economic Review*, Vol-59, No.1, 1969, pp. 138-48.

difficulties in the hope of better prospects for economic gain and improved welfare in the longer term.²⁴

Push and Pull Factors

Lee advocated the model of push and pull factors of migration. He labels the weighing of options at home and abroad as “push-pull” factors. The push factors are those, which make staying in the state undesirably. According to him, push factors are more likely to be present in developing or least developed countries and the pull factors are more likely to exist in an advanced economy. For instance, people can be pushed out of regions after repeated droughts while others can be pulled towards the city as urbanization and industrialization emerge alongside societal development.²⁵ The push factor often refers to economic considerations such as wages and unemployment. It can also be negative social factors such as crime and religious persecution, repressive government, environmental degradation like soil erosion, cyclone, flood etc. For example the disintegration of the Soviet Union placed ethnic Russians residing in CIS²⁶ states in a precarious position. Much of the repatriation movement of ethnic Russians was a result of their decreased civil and political rights and restrictions on their private activities in the newly independent CIS states.

The “pull” factors are the maximizing opportunities abroad relative to those at home. In the economic sense, this means higher wages and employment. In the social sense, it means greater prospects for personal development.²⁷ For example, in the migration of Mexican citizens to the USA, the pull conditions are the gap of wage differential between these two countries, the high standard of living, and social and political security the latter provides.²⁸

²⁴ Ibid, p. 140.

²⁵ Lee, Everett S, op.cit, n. 8, pp. 47-50.

²⁶ Commonwealth of Independent States refers to the newly independent countries which emerged after the disintegration of the former USSR.

²⁷ Jenkins J. Craig , op. cit. n.13, pp.178-89.

²⁸ Harris, J.R. and Tadaro, M.P, “Migration, Unemployment and Development: A Two Sector Analysis”, *American Economic Review*, 1970, Vol. 60, pp. 126-142.

The Equilibrium Theory

The equilibrium approach to the study of international migration epitomizes a main direction in explaining the causes and consequences of international movement of people. It primarily focuses on the rational characters of the individual actor's decision to migrate.²⁹ The theory regards migration as the outcome of a choice process of individuals or households. It conceptualizes migration as the geographical mobility of workers who are responding to the sensitive and the changing environment and imbalances in distribution of land, labour, capital and natural resources that exist in an area. When there is a case of unemployment, migrants are expected to be sensitive to observe differences in unemployment rates since these determine expected earnings of the migrants. Thus migration can be seen as the decisions of an individual based on rational evaluation of the benefits to be gained and the costs entailed in moving from one place to another. It is expected that migrants move from low to high wages areas.³⁰ Being seen as primarily a form of arbitrage in the labour market, migration is considered to raise wages in the sending countries (because immigrant withdraw their labour) and lower wages in the receiving countries. This is how a situation of equilibrium is achieved at. The equilibrium approach is considered to be more useful in understanding free internal migration patterns and also international migrations between culturally and economically similar countries.

Neo-Classical Theory

The most influential theory about migration emanates from the neo-classical economics. Adam Smith and Ravenstein advocated the neo-classical theory.³¹ According to this theory, migration is based on familiar tenets such as rational choice, utility maximization, expected net returns, factor mobility and wage differentials. The neo-classical economic approach to migration argues that migration is a process in which individual actors measure the opportunities offered to them in their current

²⁹ Ibid, p. 130.

³⁰ Smith, A, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nations*, (London: Strahan/Cadell, 1776) p. 32, and Ravenstein E, "The Laws of Migration," *Journal of Statistical Society*, Vol. 52, 1889, pp. 214-305, as cited in Gorter Cees, et. al, (ed.) *Crossing Borders: Regional and Urban Perspectives on International Migration*, (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1998), p. 96.

³¹ Massey, D. S, et. al, "An Evaluation of International Migration Theory: The North American Case", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4, December 1994, pp. 699-751.

state, against opportunities offered at a different location. Migration in this theory is a 'cost-benefit decision' undertaken to maximize income by migrating to places where income-maximizing opportunities are available. High levels of unemployment in developing states are a major factor of migration. Relative wage differentials in sending and receiving countries are found to have a positive correlation with migration.³² The theory combines micro perspectives of individual decision making and a macro-counterpart of structural determinants.

According to micro level theory of neo-classical economics, individual decides to migrate because of cost benefit calculations. This induces them to expect a positive net return, is usually a monetary form of movement. The theory conceptualizes international migration as a form of investment in human capital. People choose to move when they think that they can be most productive by investing their skills. However, before moving towards the high wages economy with greater labour productivity they have to undertake certain investments that include the natural cost of investment. These includes cost of traveling, the cost of maintenance while moving and looking for work, the effort in involving learning a new language and culture, the difficulty experienced in adapting to a new labour market and the psychological cost of cutting old ties and forging new ones.³³

At the macro-level, the theory emphasizes a spatial redistribution of the factors of production responding to different relative prices. Traditional neo-classical economics view migration as a simple sum of individual cost-benefit decisions undertaken to maximize income through migrating. It highlights that migration occurs from the uneven geographical distribution of labour and capital. In some countries or regions labour is relatively scarce than capital but its price and the wage level are correspondingly higher than other countries or regions. As a result the labourers from a poor wage countries prefer to go to labour scarce and high wage regions.³⁴

Some countries with a large endowment of labour relative to capital have a low equilibrium market wage, while countries with a limited endowment of labour relative

³² Ibid, p. 760.

³³ Massey, D. S, et. al, "Theories of International Migrations: A Review and Appraisal", *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3, September 1993, pp. 431-466.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 450-455.

to capital have a high wage. The resulting differential in wages causes movements of workers from the low wages country to the high wage country. As a result, the supply of labour decreases and the wages rise in the capital scarce country, while the supply of labour increases and wages fall in the capital rich country leading to an equilibrium point. The flow of investment from capital rich country to capital poor country begins due to relative scarcity of capital in the poor countries wherein it yields a rate of return, thereby attracting investment. The movement of capital also includes human capital with highly skilled workers moving from capital rich to capital poor countries in order to reap high returns on their skills. This particularly occurs in a human capital scarce environment leading to a parallel movement of managers, technicians and other skill labourers from both sides.³⁵

However, the neo-classical theory fails to explain why some countries have relatively high out migration rates and others structurally similar do not. It fails to explain why numerically, so few migrant populace, gains or makes significant positive differences in income, wages and levels of welfare in relation to their standard of living in their homeland. This can be termed as the Achilles heel of neo-classical theory. If migration flows between countries were to conform to the prescription of neo-classical theory, the number of international migrations should be many times higher than the one that obtains in reality. These shortcomings of the neo-classical theory of migration can be partly traced to the total exclusion of the political dimension from the picture, which has significant prominence. In essence being a theory of mobility of factors of production in accordance with relation prices, the neo-classical theory is incapable to come to terms, with a world with barrier that surely curtails the movement of labour.³⁶

New Economics of Labour Migration

The theory of new economics of labour migration came into being in migration studies as an inside criticism of the micro level neoclassical theory. The theory argues that international migration stems from failures in other markets that threaten

³⁵ Massey, D. S, op. cit. n.31, pp. 699-751.

³⁶ Massey, D. S. et. al, "Migration Theory, Ethnic Mobilization and Globalization", in op. cit. n. 22, pp. 257-269.

the material well being of the households and create barriers to their economic advancement. According to this theory, migration is a family strategy not so much to maximize income but as to diversify the sources of income in order to maximize risks such as unemployment, loss of income or crop failures etc. in their countries.³⁷ The theory doesn't paint complete and well functioning markets as the neo-classical model does. Indeed it recognizes that in many situations particularly in the developing countries markets for capital futures, and insurance may be absent, imperfect or inaccessible. In order to self-insure against risks to income, production and poverty, or to gain access to scarce investment capital, households send one or more workers to foreign labour market. Given the relatively higher wages in developed countries, international migration offers a particularly attractive and effective strategy for minimizing risks and overcoming capital constraints.³⁸ Thus the migrants aim at maximizing income however they necessarily send people or the whole family in absolute terms but rather in relative terms (one or two). Thus it can be inferred that more the unequal distribution of income in a given community, the more intensely relative deprivation will be felt and the more incentives will be there for further migration to occur.

Dual Labour Market Theory

Piore developed the dual labour market theory and contributed to a better understanding of contemporary realities of migrations.³⁹ The theory focuses attention to the receiving end of migrations only and explains it at the macro-level of structural determinants. According to this theory, international migration is caused by a permanent demand for foreign labour by certain advanced industrial nations. Dual labor market theory views that natives of a developed country are generally averse to jobs that involve lots of manual labor or drudgery. This aversion to secondary sector jobs will often result in policies within developed countries, assuming a comfortable level of unemployment, that allow or even encourage migration and make it much easier for people from other countries to migrate and find jobs.⁴⁰ On the other hand,

³⁷ Ibid, pp. 257-269.

³⁸ Piore, M. J, *Birds of Passage: Migration Labour in Industrial Societies*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 4-7.

³⁹ Smith, Thomas, *How well does Economic Theory Explain International Migration?*, Conference in Immigration, See <http://www.kimcp.kz/SSE/popdev-k/Topics/Conferences/Migration/Smith4a.html>

⁴⁰ Massey, D. S, op. cit. n.22, pp. 257-269.

migration out of a particular area occurs because of the surplus of labor. A surplus of labor often tends to concentrate wealth in the hands of a few individuals who control what work there is to be had. This leaves many in a state of economic deprivation, which encourages migration. When migration does take place, the result is a decrease in the surplus of labor that may continue well into a deficit. When the surplus decreases, and especially in the existence of a labor deficit, wealth tends to become more evenly distributed and leaves less people in a state of economic deprivation. Thus, even though the presence of migrant community and the existence of a dual-labor market in a developed country may encourage in migration, the outflow of migrants may have structural changes on the country of origin that ultimately abate the migratory flow. Overall, the dual labour market theory of international migration developed here to offer a reasonable approximation of migratory practices. However, it is important to consider other factors that may not have direct economic corollaries, such as war, politics, disease, famine, and geography.⁴¹

There exists unstable job conditions in an advanced economy due to division of the economy into labour intensive and capital intensive primary sectors, low productivity secondary sector that give rise to a segmented labour market. Local workers avoid such jobs because they confer low status and prestige and promise scant upward mobility because they entail motivation problems. The local workers for that reason remain reluctant to occupy such unattractive jobs. But migrant and temporary workers from low income countries, who entertain prospects of returning to their homeland some day, are willing to accept such jobs, because their standard of living back home is relatively much poorer.

World System Theory

The historians and sociologists developed the concept of the world system theory on the notion of the modern world system as established in the mid 1970s.⁴² The theory has been influenced by the decade of the 60s and belongs to the historical – structural tradition. It says that migration is the product of the domination exerted by core

⁴¹ Prominent among them are Alejandro Portis, John Watson, Elizabeth M. Petros, Maxwell Castells, Saskia Sassen, and Ewa Morowska, as cited in Massey D. S, op. cit. n.31, pp. 699-751.

⁴² Massey, D. S, op. cit. n. 31. pp. 699-751.

countries over peripheral areas in the context of international relationship that are characterized conflict and tension.

The world systems theory views the world as a divided world of developing states and wealthy-developed states. The developed worlds are always in the centre and the developing worlds are always in the periphery. According to this theory, international migration is the extension of the capitalist mode of production from core countries to peripheral ones and to ensure incorporation of new regions into an increasingly unified world economy. As a displacement of capitalism the traditional occupations of the periphery states, sections of the population are pressed to migrate in order to find employment. This theory relates to dual labor market theory in that it is the periphery states that send migrants in order to fulfill the demands in the secondary sector jobs. Globalization has sped up the process of capitalization, an idea emphasized by the fact that labor market bifurcation is at its most extreme in the most globalize cities of the world. The world systems theory also captures the historical relationship between the formerly colonized and the colonizers. Migration into such former colonial powers such as Spain and Portugal reveal the strength of historical ties, with most of their immigrants coming from former colonies in Africa, Brazil, and Latin America.⁴³ Colonial regimes in the past assisted this penetration and at present neo-classical regimes and multi-national corporations assume this role.

The world system theory gives importance of past and present linkages between countries at different stages of development.⁴⁴ It also made some empirical observation that migration often involves countries that were linked in the past by colonial bounds. The world system theory is a by-product of univocal, reductionist and sense-loaded interpretation of history in which all countries pass through similar process of evolution. The theory is only applicable at the global level and migrants are little more than positive pawns in the hands of bigger powers.

⁴³ Massey, D. S, op. cit. n. 22, pp. 257 – 269.

⁴⁴ Kritz, M. M and Zlotnik H, "Global Interactions: Migration Systems, Process and Policies", in M. M, Kritz et. al, (ed.), *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 10-11

System Approach

The approach recognizes that the study of changing trends and patterns of contemporary international migration requires a dynamic rather than static perspective.⁴⁵ Kritz and Zlotnik advocated this theory. According to them, migration occurs within national context, its political, demographic, economic and social dimensions are changing partly in response to the feedbacks and adjustment that stem from migration itself.⁴⁶ The theory reveals that micro as well as macro elements are the part of migration analysis. They also include the time dimension, which allows a historical perspective on migration, an analysis of structural conditions and economic and political linkages.

Network also plays an important role in the system approach. They stress that network must be looked at dynamic relationships and variable social arrangements that vary across ethnic groups and shape migration and its sequel. They point out that networks of institutions and individuals link the various countries together into a coherent migration system. They also note that network at the origin restrain or encourage an individual to migrate, depending on the extent to which such networks provide economic and social support. Finally, networks between origin and destination countries can play a role in channeling information, migrants, remittances and cultural norms.⁴⁷

The system framework compared to other approaches has a better advantage as it tries to take into account a larger variety of factors that plays their role in the migration process. The theory do not restrict to any special type of migration. The theory not only explains the existence of migration but also discusses how the size of social networks is important.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁷ Safa, H. I & Tait B. M (ed.), *Migration and Development: Implications for Ethnic Identity and Political Conflict*, (The Hague: Morton, 1975), p. 8.

Migration and Conflict

It has been observed that individuals migrate to accelerate their level of income but in doing so they contribute for the development of the receiving country also. Migration has both positive and negative impacts on migrant destination areas. On the positive side, it has paced development process and stimulated economic growth in the host countries. On the negative side, migration from a country or a place can generate conflict and stagnation in the receiving countries. Migrants can become an economic asset in the host country and can develop the economy by providing relatively cheap labour for industrial expansions, the construction sector and the low-grade services in the host country.⁴⁸

The international migration has definite effect on the demographic, social and economic structures of sending and receiving countries. Several empirical studies have documented the positive contributions of migrations to economic development. Friedlander found that migration had a positive impact in Puerto Rico economy. Tribulous also found that migration had a positive impact on Algerian economic development. There are some exceptional cases where migration has taken place to low-income countries. The labour migration to Venezuelan economy gives us excellent opportunity to initiate such an examination.⁴⁹ Most of the migrants to Venezuela were Spanish national, Africans, Europeans and Indian labourers working in mining and plantation industry. The migrants were mostly engaged as skilled and unskilled labourers in oil companies, agriculture, and industries.

Migration however also, has the potential of triggering a conflict in the receiving state. Migration in Indonesia took place due to internal condition mostly related to the ethnic violence among the various ethnic groups living in country.⁵⁰ The migration of the people from Minahasa, Bali, and South Sulawesi to Bolaang Mangondow and the

⁴⁸ Kritz, M. M, "The Impact of International Migration in Venezuelan Demographic and Social Structure", *International Migration Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1-4, Spring/Winter, 1975, pp. 513-543.

⁴⁹ IDP is actually is a part of forced migration. See Martin, Susan F, *Global Migration Trends and Asylum*, Working Paper 41, New Issues in Refugee Research, April 2001, see <http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/pubs/pubon.htm>

⁵⁰ Noveria. Mita, *Internal Migration and Heterogeneous of Ethnic: Conflict Among Ethnic Groups (A Case Study on Migrant Receiving Areas in The North Sulawesi Province)*, Research Centre for Population- Indonesian Institute of Sciences, Jakarta. Paper Presented at the 2002 IUSSP Regional Population Conference, Bangkok, 10-13 June 2002, see http://www.mita_noveria.com/case_study_north_sulawesi.pdf

city of Bitung is an example of both development and conflict. In case with Bolaang Mangondow, migrants have made significant contribution to the growth of the district agricultural sector. Attempts made by migrants in agriculture had caused them to produce considerable amount of agriculture products, mainly rice, which made the district a main source of the commodity for North Sulawesi Province. On the negative side, the existence of migrants in the areas has inevitably sparked conflicts among various ethnic groups. Migrants' existence has stimulated conflicts between local people and local government; particularly those related to land acquisition that are prepared for transmigration resettlement. Conflicts among various (ethnic) groups in area were caused by many factors. One of the factors was the competing demand of income gain. As a typical rural society, control over land resources was a significant factor that influenced income. Therefore, it was not surprising to find that competition to control agricultural land became the prominent conflict in Bolaang Mangondow. Land ownership was a serious conflict among many parties, involving local people, migrants, and local government. The inconsistent land acquisition process for transmigration resettlement emerged to be the root of problems relating to land ownership.⁵¹

Migration of people from one place to another can induce violence and conflict in the host country. There has long been debate about the impact of migrants and refugees on the countries and communities that shelter them. Migration can arise from conflicting situations in sending countries and can generate conflict in the receiving state, particularly where different ethnic and racial groups are involved.⁵² According to Richmond, 'conflict in the host countries may arise out of competition for scarce resources, the differential distribution of power within the society, fundamental opposition of values supplies and inherent contradictions in the values held and the institutions serving them. Competition between migrants and the local population arises when there is a consensus on the value of given objects or goals, both material and symbolic and when these are in short supply.'⁵³

⁵¹ Malthus, Thomas R. op. cit. n. 7, p. 42.

⁵² Ibid, pp. 42-44.

⁵³ Weiner, Myron, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 265-266.

The conflict that has arisen between the natives of Telangana and the Andhra's in India is another example. The migration of people from the most prosperous agricultural delta districts of Andhra Pradesh to Telangana was a major factor of conflict. The local people were anxious over the migrants, because they were mostly engaged in the state administrative services, and were acquiring land in the countryside. They had a predominant power in the state government. These made the educated middle classes of Telangana jealous and they felt deprived. They thus turned against the Andhra's. They demanded greater power sharing in the state government and sought preferential rules for employment for the Telangana people.⁵⁴

Migration within and into a multi-ethnic society frequently has destabilizing effects and tends to perpetuate intense conflicts. In a multiethnic society migration has both an integrative and disintegrative potential. It can lead to a sense of awareness about benefits of the larger national polity and economy; or it can lead to civil strife as it did in Nigeria and Malaysia. Migration may precipitate self-awareness both on the part of the migrant and on the part of the indigenous population. Ethnic self-awareness takes place when individuals are able to contrast their cultural characteristics with those of others. Migration has a cumulative effect on the linguistic heterogeneity with those of others.⁵⁵ For example, the migration of people from across the international borders from Bangladesh to India is a peculiar and perennial phenomenon, which over the years caused various problems in Tripura. The most serious being ethnic conflict between the Boroks (indigenous people) and the migrants.⁵⁶ The imposition of Driglam Namzah (cultural code of conduct) in 1980s by the Bhutanese government forcing all Bhutanese to conform to the Drupka culture, language and dress is nothing but a policy to drive out the Bhutanese Nepalis (also known as Lhotsampas). These led to the exodus of thousands of Bhutanese Nepalis into Nepal. The Raison De Etre of the official policy of citizenship and other cultural measures adopted by Bhutan was made public saying that Bhutan would never compromise on one nation and one

⁵⁴ Ibid, pp. 3-31.

⁵⁵ Debabarina, K, "Migration as Source of Conflict in South Asia." in Sudhir Jacob (ed.), *India and Interstate Conflict in South Asia*, (New Delhi, South Asian Publishers, 2001), pp. 151-152.

⁵⁶ Baral, Lok Raj, "Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal: Quest for Confident Building Measures," *BISS Journal*, Vol.20, No.4, 1999, pp. 407-436.

people formula that aimed at long term security and integrity of Bhutan and its survival as a nation.⁵⁷

Migration from a country has serious and several implications on the host country. The influx of the people can create demographic changes, (both of size and composition of population) environmental degradation and serious security implications in the receiving countries.⁵⁸ Migration not only strains the economic resources and the administrative structure of the host country but also leads to political instability and ethnic polarization. It creates potential for security threat in the country.⁵⁹ For example, if there is a continuous large scale of influx from country A to country B for whatever the reason, and if the country A doesn't take any step to prevent the influx and in fact is tempted to encourage it, then country B may regard it as an interference in its domestic affairs. In extreme form, it may be left with no option but to forcibly push back the illegal migrants. This may escalate into inter-state conflict and even war. This is what happened between India and Pakistan in 1971-72 when millions of East Pakistanis crossed border and come to India to escape repression. This led to a war between India and Pakistan and finally the liberation of Bangladesh. It is well known that Chakma refugees have long been source of tension between India-Bangladesh relations, and Tamil refugees in Indo-Sri Lanka relations.⁶⁰

The environmental scarcity and the violence play a crucial role in determining migration in a particular place.⁶¹ The concept of environmental scarcity is composed of three dimensions supply induced scarcity; demand induced scarcity and structural scarcity.⁶² Supply induced scarcity exists when resources are reduced and degraded faster than they are reproduced. Demand induced scarcity is created by population growth or increased per capita consumption. Finally resources are inequitably

⁵⁷ Muni, S. D and Baral, L. R, (ed.), *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Konark, 1996), pp. 5-10.

⁵⁸ Ghosh, Partha S, *Unwanted and Uprooted: A Political Study of Migrants, Refugees, Stateless and Displaced in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Samskriti, 2004), pp. 107-110.

⁵⁹ Dubey, Muchkund, "Internal Dynamics in South Asia," in Nancy Jetly (ed.), *Regional Security in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Lancer Publication, 1999), pp. 5-6.

⁶⁰ Pericipal, V & Dixon, Thomas Homar, "Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict: The Case Study of South Africa", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1998, pp. 279-298.

⁶¹ Hauge, W. & Ellingsen, Tanja, "Beyond Environmental Scarcity: Causal Pathways to Conflict", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1998, pp. 299-317.

⁶² Tir Jaroslav & Diehl, P. F, "Demographic pressure and Interstate conflict: Linking Population Growth and Density to Militarized Disputes and Wars. 1930-89", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1998, pp. 319-339.

distributed when they are concentrated in the hands of a few people while the remaining population suffers from resource shortages. This is referred to structural scarcity. One of the major causes of migration is the population growth at national and global level, and also a major cause of environmental degradation. Growing population has been one of the factors thought to exacerbate poverty and starvation.⁶³

This may lead to armed conflict and violence in the receiving state in the same way they occur in the sending country. Environmental scarcity is one of the major causes of rural-urban migration in South Africa that generated conflict among the migrants and the local people. Conflict over scarce resources, such as minerals, water and particularly territory is a major source of armed struggle in the migrants receiving state. Recently wide ranging claims have been made to the effect that environmental degradation will increase resource scarcity and therefore, contribute to an increase in armed conflict.⁶⁴

The process of acculturation and social integration of migrants is complex as the societies are involved in the international movement of population. The process of socio-cultural adaptation and assimilation of migrants may occur without undue conflict when the receiving society is experiencing economic growth and relative affluence however it can give rise to problems when unemployment is high or there exist competition for scarce resources, such as affordable housing, access to higher education or the benefits of a welfare state.⁶⁵ Migration enables people from different groups to share place of residence. Migrants are also expected to tolerate the social, economic and cultural differences in order to make a harmonious living condition. But sometime this could not be achieved easily because in some cases there are resistant groups who will not accept other groups. These groups particularly in the host states demonstrate their nationality, ethnicity in different way and try to alienate the migrants. Inevitably, this attitude sparks conflict among different groups, either between migrants and local people⁶⁶ or among migrants itself.

⁶³ Gleditsch N. P, "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1998, pp. 381-399.

⁶⁴ Pericpal, V & Dixon, op. cit. n.60, pp. 279-298.

⁶⁵ See <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~smdas/culture.htm>

⁶⁶ Local people refer to the indigenous people or ethnic groups or more specifically a person belonging to a particular village or locality.

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From the above discussions we can observe that migration can lead to development as well as conflict in the host country. If the host country lacks communal or ethnic cohesion, the migration of a different race or community might lead to conflict with the indigenous population. Migration of the Bangladeshis had an adverse impact on the demography because of the large-scale influx of population. It led to the violent conflict among the indigenous populace in Assam due to presence of large number of ethnic groups. It must be admitted that the feeling of alienation and the fear of being reduced to minority among the Assamese people were a major cause of violence. However we can't ignore the role of these people in development of the Assam's economy. It must be admitted that the Bangladeshi migrants are engaged in most of the petty jobs and agriculture. Though these people are unskilled labour, they immensely contributed to the economy of the state in terms of agriculture production etc.



Theoretical Understanding

It is evident from this review that a single paradigm is not sufficient to explain the different aspects of migration and its consequences in sending and receiving countries. It is also not possible to provide a single theoretical explanation to a situation of Bangladeshi migration to Assam. For better understanding, there is a need to assimilate various models and theoretical frameworks of migration.

In trying to understand Bangladeshi migration to Assam there are some contemporary theories of migration that also can be taken assistance of, like the equilibrium theory and the system theory. The equilibrium approach says that migration is the outcome of a choice process for individuals or households. The approach conceptualizes migration as the geographical mobility of workers who are responding to the imbalance in the spatial distribution of land, labour, capital and national resources. The equilibrium approach is useful in understanding the internal migration patterns or for understanding international migration between culturally and economically similar countries. This approach could be linked up with the case of Bangladeshi migration to Assam because it is almost true that migration from the former has been caused by

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uneven distribution of land, labour, capital and natural resources. The approach says that international migration takes place in a culturally homogeneous country. In that context Bangladeshi migrants chose Assam as their destination because it has cultural as well as ethnic homogeneity based on the long historical linkages.

To understand the reasons of migration from Bangladesh we can broadly follow Todaro's and Lee's model of migration. Bangladeshi migration took place not because of the immediate prospect of improving their standard of living but to accelerate their acceptable level of income. Hence the people were ready to face any difficulties in a host state, Assam. The push factors of Bangladeshi migration are mainly the conditions that prevail those which include high population growth, environmental degradation, large-scale poverty, poor economic condition, political instability and lack of communal cohesion. Bangladesh has faced population explosion, and remains a country with the highest density of population in South Asia. On the other hand, the pull factors of migration towards Assam, one equally attractive which include the low density of population, availability of plentiful and fertile land on easy terms, availability of employment (small) and cultural homogeneity. Assam had plentiful cheap and fertile land and her density of population was also small in comparison to that of Bangladesh.

The population of Assam is a broad racial intermixture of Mongolian, Indo-Burmese, Indo-Iranian and Aryan origin. The tribes of Mongolian origin mostly inhabit the hilly tracks of Assam. This broad racial intermixture is the native of the state of Assam, called their language and the people 'Asamiya' or 'Assamese' which is also the state language of Assam. The term "Assamese" is often used to refer to those who are citizens of Assam. Native Assamese, Mymenshingy settlers (from Bangladesh) and tea-garden laborers are thus included in its coverage.⁶⁷ The term can also be used to describe the indigenous or long-settled inhabitants of this northeastern state. The language of the native people of Assam is called Assamese. Assamese culture is a rich conglomerate of ethnic practices and assimilated beliefs. The Assamese language resembles with many other language like Bengali and Oriya. The cultural and linguistic homogeneity are a major factor that induced Bangladeshi nationals to choose Assam as their destination country.

⁶⁷ *Encyclopedia: Assam, culture, see <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Assam>*

Migration of Bangladeshis to Assam can also be explained by using the system approach. The system approach has an advantage because it takes into account a large variety of factors that play their role in migration. It is also not restricted to any special type of migration, and takes into account various social, political as well as micro and macro-level of economic causes of migration more importantly it discussed the migration networks. Bangladeshi migrants have a series of networks across border, which includes religious-cultural institutions, agro-economic agents and family linkages. It will not be wrong to say that United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) itself is now emerging as a migration network. This indicated by a significant change in ULFA's policy in 1992, which considers Bangladeshi migrants as the legal citizen of Assam as they have, a remarkable cultural affinity. Some reports do reveal that ULFA trains Bangladeshi citizen to speak Assamese in Bangladesh and push them to the Indian side of the border. ULFA does it because these migrants assist as well as acts as informer for them. Thus ULFA can be said to be a migration network as the system analysis reveals.

Chapter 2

Causal Factors Behind Bangladeshi Migration

The state of Assam is situated in the northeast of India and is connected to the rest of India by a narrow 18 mile wide corridor. Assam has common boundaries with Bangladesh, Bhutan, with China and Burma not far away. Assam has an area of 78,438 square kilometres with a population of over 2.67 crores. The density of the population per square kilometres is 340. Geographically Assam has been reduced to one third of its original size in 30 years. The Barak valley and the Brahmaputra valley are two most important physical regions. The Brahmaputra river dominates the state. Few decades ago all the seven states (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura) in the northeast were called Assam. Later on Assam was divided on the basis of ethnicity (except Arunachal Pradesh) as a result, seven states have come into being.¹ Assam is one of the richest states in natural resources. It produces a significant portion of Indian oil and natural gas, 55% of India's and 15.6% of the world's tea, 60% of India's plywood and about 30% of India's jute production. Assam was the first state where oil was struck in 1889 at Digboi. The land is suitable for tea, jute, rice, citrus, sugarcane and vegetable.² The major indigenous language of Assam is Assamese, an Indo-Aryan language closely related to, but different from Bengali and Oriya language. The state has a substantial indigenous tribal population.³

The population of Assam is a broad racial intermixture of Mongolians, Indo-Burmese, Indo-Iranian and Aryan origin. The tribes of Mongolian origin mostly inhabit the hilly tracks of Assam. This broad racial intermixture in the native of the state of Assam, called their language and the people "Asamiya" or Assamese which is

¹ Misra, Udayan, "Immigration and Identity Transformation in Assam". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.34, No.21, May 22, 1999, pp. 1264-1271

² Das, Amiyo Kumar, *Assam's Agony, A Socio-Economic and Political Analysis*, (New Delhi: Lancer Publication, 1982), pp. 1-7.

³ Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil, Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 79.

also the state language of Assam. Native of Assamese Mymensinghy settlers (from Bangladesh) and tea garden labourers are also included in its coverage of Assamese.⁴ The state of Assam is essentially an agrarian society. Around 70% of the total population is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture. Almost 3/5 of the total population lives in the rural area. The main occupation of the rural population is agriculture, forestry and fishery. Assam is the only state which has the scope for extension of cultivation and can therefore support a large agricultural population. Rice, jute, sugarcane, tea, maize, are the major crops in Assam.⁵ Assam has long history of migration from parts of the Indian subcontinent and East Bengal. Prior to the advent of Assam by the British power in 1826, (the valley of Brahmaputra), it was ruled by the Ahoms from the 13th century. An offshoot of the Tai or great Shan stock of Southeast Asia, Ahom was also attacked by the Burmese. From the middle of twentieth century the Ahom monarchy was on the decline. The Ahom dynasty was attacked by the Mughals and they occupied Assam in 1663. Mughals were expelled in 1682.⁶

Assam was an independent state till the advent of the British power in 1826, when the six hundred year old Ahom rule came to an end. There has been a continuous flow of non- Assamese Indians into Assam ever since the British occupation. In order to run the imperialist administration smoothly the Britishers hired clerks and officials familiar with company administration were brought from outside province. Moreover, they imported a large number of people to work in tea plantation, transport, road construction, oil fields, and coal mines. A certain number of other people also came within this flow to fill the various demands of colonial economic development. The aim of the Britishers of such migration was clearly to develop British owned plantation in order to export tea to United Kingdom and develop such other ancillary productive assets as necessary to sustain colonial economy. As a result of such migration from other province, development occurred indicated by the growth of

⁴ See <http://web.ics.produce.edu/nsmdas/culture.htm>

⁵ Hussain, Majid, *Encyclopedia of India*, Vol. xxiii, Assam. (New Delhi: Rima Publication House, 1994), pp. 96-127.

⁶ Borpujari, H. K, & Bhuyan A. C (ed.), *Political History of Assam*, (Guwahati: Government of Assam, 1977, pp. 1-6.

small townships, mostly peopled by middle class element from outside the province to cater the growing needs of the administration and trade.⁷

It may be noted the migration of the east Bengalis to Assam occurred not only because of the British policy. It was also due to the excessive pressure of land in East Bengal as well as *Zamindari* oppression and exploitation over the peasants and economic compulsion. Thus suffering from the oppression of Zamindars, these peasants were flocking to the Brahmaputra valleys in large numbers in order to settle down on its beckoning waste land.⁸

The British encouraged East Bengali peasants into Assam through the various policies; one of them was landlord Imperialism machination. The oppressed Muslim peasantry gradually became articulate to fight against the Zamindari and money lenders exploitation, who were mostly the Hindus. Migration has also been connected with the growth of jute industry in Assam and West Bengal mostly funded by the Britishers. Hence the migration of jute cultivation from east Bengal to Assam becomes imminent.⁹

There were some favourable situations which encouraged migrants. The Moamoriya peasant rebellion in the last quarter of the 18th century and the occurrence of disease like *Kala-Azar* affected in first quarter of the nineteenth century resulted into a loss of almost half of the population of Assam. Thus, the natural growth of the population was retarded for some time and consequently a large area of the valley remained vacant and uncultivated. As the cultivable land was much more in proportion to the inhabitants and as the government didn't want to be deprived of the land revenue from these lands, the British administration obviously encouraged large scale migration into Assam from the various famine stricken areas and provinces of India.¹⁰

⁷ Phukan, Girin, *Assam, Attitude to Federalism*. (New Delhi: Sterling Publication Pvt. Limited, 1984), pp. 1-7.

⁸ Goswami, Prafulla Ch. *The Economic Development of Assam*. (Bombay: Asia Publication House, 1963), p27, as cited in n. 7, p. 5.

⁹ Phukan, Girin, op. cit. n. 7, p. 4.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 10.

Even some Assamese Mahajan¹¹ provided substantial financial assistance to the migrants for cultivation in their land. At the same time most of the contractors encouraged the influx of East Bengalis to Assam with a view to employing cheap labourer in their field and home steads.¹² The British policy of importation of Bengali peasants to settle in the uncultivated tracts was one of the major causes of migration of the East Bengalis to Assam. The British enthusiasm for this policy was obvious, as it could mean a huge income in the British Raj. The Britishers started encouraging the east Bengali peasants. During nineteenth century the British organized this flow in a systematic manner. The Britishers provided fees to the recruiting agencies, travel allowances, revenue holidays for stipulated periods, ownership recording in favour of the land clearing peasants himself etc.¹³ These policies of the British constituted the primary cause of the population mix and migration of people into Assam. Between 1931 and partition, there was a further influx of Muslims from East Bengal and this was especially encouraged by the ministry headed by Sadulla which administered Assam after 1937.¹⁴

In the late 1930s political development in the British India unsettled the social fabric on communal harmony and the ideology of one nation. Intensification of the movement by the Muslim League for a separate land shattered the dream of a unified India. The communal ideology embedded in the "two nation" theory was flowing from the top to infect peoples visions and actions. Communal tensions and communal conflict was breaking out in the mid 40s. By March 1948, the number of refugees coming from East Pakistan was put to one million and by the end of June the same year the number reached 1.1 million. Drawing from the census report the number was estimate to be 3.5 million.¹⁵

Fresh migration followed because of the communal riot in different parts of the East Pakistan in 1950 and 1951. By 1952 about 1.93 lakhs refugees arrived in India particularly to West Bengal and Assam. Another round of communal violence broke out after 1960 between 1965. At least one million refugees migrated to West Bengal

¹¹ The Rich and the Wealthy People who are Land owners and control the Business of Assam is said to be as Assamese Mahajan.

¹² Phukan, Girin, op. cit. n. 7, P. 11.

¹³ Sharmah, K. M, "The Assam Question: A Historical Perspectives", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 15. No.31, 2 August 1980, pp. 1321-1324.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 1321-1324.

¹⁵ Chakravarthy, Prafulla Kr, *The Marginal Men*, (Calcutta: Naya Udyog, 1999), pp. 1-4.

and Assam between 1961 and 1965. This movement of refugees was the result of large-scale attack on the minorities in Rajshahi and Pabna districts in 1962 and in Dhaka and other areas in 1964-65. Around 10 million Bangladeshis came over to India during the war months in 1971. There was a lull in the refugee movement after the birth of Bangladesh.¹⁶

The population of Assam went up by 34.98% in 1971 census over the 1961 census figure. The 1991 census shows that Muslim population has grown at a much faster rate than the Hindus or the total population of the state. The growth rate of the total population of the state during 1971-91 has been 77.42%. According to former director of census in Assam, at least 10 lakh Bangladeshi migrants were recorded into Assam during 1971-91. This according to the experts indicates that the Muslims continue to migrate to the state from Bangladesh.¹⁷ Table shows the section wise population increase (Muslims) and decrease (Hindus) in Bangladesh. This table also indicates a steady decline in Hindu population in Bangladesh which could have migrated to the neighbouring Indian states. This table indicates a steady decline in Hindu population in which could have migrated to the neighbouring Indian states. (Table 2.1)

Table 2.1
Percentage Distribution of Population by Religious Communities
(1901-1991) in Bangladesh

Year	Muslims	Hindus	Others
1901	66.1	33	0.9
1911	67.2	31.5	1.3
1921	68.1	30.6	1.3
1931	69.5	29.4	1.2
1941	70.3	28	1.8
1951	76.9	22	1.1
1961	80.4	18.5	1.1
1971	85.4	13.5	1.1
1981	86.7	12.1	1.2
1991	88.3	10.5	1.2

Source: Government of Bangladesh, *Analytical Report of Population Census 1991*, Volume 1, Dhaka, May 1994, p. 103.

N.B. others include the Buddhist, Christians and animists

¹⁶ Dasgupta, Abhijit, "The Politics of Agitation and Confession: Displaced Bengalis in West Bengal", in Sanjay K Roy (ed.) *Refugees and Human Rights*, (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001), p. 107.

¹⁷ Roy, Sanjay K, "Refugees and Human Rights: The Case of Refugees in Eastern and Northern States of India", in Sanjay K Roy (ed.), n. 16, pp. 31-32.

There are several causes that induce migration in a country. Generally migration from a country takes place due to the deteriorating economic condition, like poverty, unemployment and decline in the production. The environmental degradation, such as soil erosion, natural disasters, like flood, cyclone, and drought are also a major migration triggering factors. Socio-political upheavals, communalism and state repression are also attributed to migration. One of the main causes of Bangladeshi migration to India is the existence of porous borders of 4096 km. between these two countries. West Bengal shares 2216 kilometres, Tripura 856 kms, Meghalaya 443 kms, Mizoram 318 kms, and Assam 362 kms. There are undemarcated border of 6.6 kms in Comilla and Tripura sector also.¹⁸ The border between India and Bangladesh hardly gives the appearance of an international border. The economic and social interactions across the border are common now in many places as they were before partition. As a result many people have come to Indian side of border as a matter of routine exercise.¹⁹

Environmental Factors

There exists a direct correlation between environment and migration. Environmental scarcity or destruction or degradation in a particular place can cause displacement of people. One of the major causes of migration of the Bangladeshis to India is the environmental destruction or degradation in the former.²⁰ The high rate of population growth, land, resource scarcity, deforestations in Bangladesh is considered as factors of migration. The country is annually affected by natural disasters like floods, cyclones, soil erosion, riverbank erosion etc that displaces millions of people. The absence of adequate government support and facilities for the displaced people, forced them to migrate to other places within or outside the country, particularly to India. There are number of factors responsible for environmental destruction in Bangladesh, the most prominent among them are deforestation, natural hazards like flood, cyclone, river bank erosion, decreasing ground water levels and salinity. These factors had adverse impact on the life and property and have resulted into large-scale

¹⁸ Jamal, N. S, "Border Management: Dilemma of Guarding India-Bangladesh Border", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.28, No.1, January-March 2004, pp. 5-36.

¹⁹ Ghosh, Partha S, "Regional Security and Cross Border Population Movements in South Asia", in Justus Richter and Christian Wagner (ed.), *Regional Security and Governance*, (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1998), p. 136.

²⁰ Swain, Ashok, "Displacing the Conflict: Environmental Destruction in Bangladesh and Ethnic Conflict in India," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 1996, pp. 189-204.

displacement of people. Here we would like to discuss deforestation, natural hazards like flood, cyclone, and other environmental factors that cause displacement internally which also lead to cross border migration.²¹

(i) Deforestation

Deforestation can be defined as change or the removal of trees from existing forest areas over time. The term deforestation has been used to describe changes in many different eco-systems, whenever deforestation occurs; it affects a particular geographic area. It is also a cause of serious concern in the affected regions. Deforestation of a particular area can have an adverse effect on the supply of wood fuels for household energy, soil and water resources and the quality of rural life. In addition, if deforestation is widespread, it can have global repercussions too; large scale loss of forests area can have implications on the eco-system, the hydrological balance, genetic resources and global cycles of carbon and other elements.²²

There are several causes of deforestation. Deforestation may occur due to changes in the climate, use of woods for fuel, shifting cultivation as well as burning and grazing in forests area. Forests naturally disappear due to catastrophes such as fire and landslide, but most changes occur in forest area as the result of human activities. The rapid increase of population is a major cause of concern, the increased demands for lands and wood can lead to the scarcity in the wood supply, and eventually it can destroy the environment. Shifting cultivation such as Jhum in the forests land is also a major cause of deforestation. The rates of deforestation are likely to be higher in countries where little progress has been made in agricultural productivity. The use of fuel wood and charcoal by the people for domestic cooking and heating in many developing countries is a major cause of deforestation. In many parts of Africa, wood fuels account for as much as 95% of the total energy use. Grazing, ploughing or simply clearing the forests may lead to soil erosion and thus it can reduce the productivity and natural regenerative capacity of the soil.²³

²¹ Ibid, pp. 190-196.

²² Allen, J. C & Burner, D. S. F, "The Causes of Deforestation in Developing Countries", *Annals of Associations of American Geographer*, Vol. 75. No. 2. 1985. pp. 163-184.

²³ Ibid, pp. 163-184.

Forestry is a sub sector of agriculture in Bangladesh and it contributes to the ecological stability as well as to the nation's economy. Bangladesh is a deltaic country and never had huge forest cover. Bangladesh is amazingly green but a forest poor country. Almost half of Bangladesh doesn't have forest at all. Bangladesh has approximately 6% of its land covered with forests. Most of its forest lands are located in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), greater Khulna district, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sunderbans and Tangoil districts.²⁴

Bangladesh has three types of forests i.e. tropical evergreen or semi evergreen hill forests in the CHT and Northeast Sylhet areas, deciduous Sal (*Shorea Robusta*) forest in the central Bangladesh and Mangroves forests in southwest Khulna and on the southern coastal belt.²⁵

The CHT has been broadly classified as the tropical evergreen or semi evergreen type forests. The forests in these areas are divided into three categories, reserved forests, protected forests, and unclassed state forests. The CHT covers an area of 5093 square miles (about 10% of Bangladesh) of which reserved forests cover 796160 acres or 1224 square miles (about 24% of CHT). The protected forests cover 34688 acres or 54.20 square miles (about 1% of CHT) and the unclassed state forests cover 2463000 acres or 3848 square miles (about 75% of the CHT).²⁶

The plain land forests in the central and north-eastern part of the country primarily contain deciduous forests of Sal. It extends over to Madhupur tract as well as over to the districts of Dhaka, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Rajshahi. The tree covers in these areas are scattered. Encroachment of settlements, logging for fuel wood, timber, and poles, and illegal felling of trees have eroded these forests severely.²⁷

²⁴ Gain, Philip, *The Last Forest of Bangladesh*, Society for Environment and Human Development, (Dhaka: SEHD, 2002), pp. 1-2.

²⁵ Mastler, M. et al, *Country Environment Review, Bangladesh Toward an Environment Strategy*, Asian Development Bank, Manila, 2000, p-18

²⁶ Gain, Philip, *Bangladesh Environment Facing the 21st Century*, Society for Environment and Human Development, (Dhaka, SEHD, 2001), pp. 72-73.

²⁷ *Bangladesh Compendium of Environment Statistics*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, (Dhaka, Government of Bangladesh, 1997), p. 22.

A large tract of Mangroves forests and swamp known as Sunderban located in the inter-tidal zone of the south western part of the country is the largest productive mangrove in the world. Sundebari, Gewa, are the dominant species, other species are Keora, Goran, Pasur etc. Sunderban is managed in a sustained yield basis with 20 year cutting cycle. Salt water intrusion due to low flow inland rivers, shrimp farming, unplanned polder construction and water development projects are the major threat to the Sunderban eco-systems.²⁸

The primary causes of deforestation in Bangladesh has been population increase, demand for forest products and fuel wood, and conversion of forest land to such other uses for agricultural. Jhum cultivation traditionally practised by the forests communities has been blamed for the massive destruction of forest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) as well as in the Sal forests areas. Jhum cultivation is extremely harmful to the forests and soil condition, as it implicates the glade of the forests. The rate of forest diminution has become a major problem in Bangladesh, with an estimated annual deforestation of 8000 acres. In the CHT region 75000 acres have been completely deforested in the past several areas. The illegal encroachment of forests land, fire, uncontrolled and wasteful commercial logging, illegal felling, turning forest land into grazing fields and collecting fuel wood are the major factor of deforestation in Bangladesh. The increased population of Bangladesh is also a major cause of deforestation.²⁹

Up to 1989, about 76,596 ha of forestlands have been encroached upon in different forest areas. According to one estimate, forest cover in Bangladesh has declined from about 15 percent of the total area to 6 percent. Out of a total area of 2 million ha of forestland, less than half of this area is actually covered with trees, the approximate rate of deforestation being 8,000 ha per year. Over 40 percent of forestlands have purportedly been lost from 1960 to 1990. Deforestation rate was 0.9 percent in 1970, but rose to 3.3 percent in 1984-90. Some sources quote that forests are declining at a rate of nearly 70,000 ha per year and Bangladesh has less than 0.02 ha of forest land per person, one of the lowest forest-man ratios in the world. If the current trend

²⁸ Mastller, M. et. al, op. cit. n. 25, p. 22.

²⁹ Gain, Philip (ed.), *Bangladesh Land Forest and Forest People*, Society for Environment and Development, (Dhaka, SEHD, 1998), pp. 33-35.

continues, forests are likely to disappear altogether in the next 35-40 years or earlier. The implication of continued deforestation is that valuable species may disappear forever. In addition to habitat loss, the environmental effects of deforestation include soil degradation, flooding, erosion and above all the danger of climate change.³⁰

Deforestation has several impacts on the environment as well as the society. Deforestation may lead to the destruction of biodiversity. Biodiversity is described as “the wealth of life on earth, the genes they contain and the intricate ecosystems, they help build into the living environment.” Countless species of plants and fauna found in forests ecosystems become extinct with the destruction of their habitats. A reduction of bio diversity diminishes the planet's gene pool and these pose incalculable risks for humanity's future.³¹

Forests clearance leads to aridness of previously humid forests soil. Daily and seasonal temperature extremes usually increase dramatically following removal of the tree covers. In many contexts deforestation changes a moist humid local climate to that of a virtual desert. Deforestation may cause soil erosion. Deforestation is associated with increased run-off of rainfall and intensified soil erosion.³²

There has been a wide consensus that deforestation has a serious social impact but there exists a considerable controversy over their nature and extent. This is unavoidable because the impacts depend largely on the socio-economic and ecological contexts in which forests clearance or degradation occurs. Indigenous forest people are likely to suffer from deforestation; it highly affects the poor people who are always dependent on the forest. Craftsmen such as carpenters or blacksmiths depending directly on wood or charcoal are likely to be seriously affected.³³

Deforestation often disrupts delicately maintained livelihood systems. On the other hand, it sometimes contributes to the new production system that occasionally is more productive and sustainable than those they replaced. Deforestation whether brought

³⁰ *Deforestation Rates in Bangladesh*, see http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/ht/d_0101.htm

³¹ Baraclough, S. L & Ghimire, K. B, *Forests and Livelihoods: The Social Dynamics of Deforestation in Developing Countries*, (London: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 22-25.

³² *Ibid*, p. 20.

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 20-21

about by forests clearance or mere degradation, leads to a subsequent reduction in available supply of forest products for local people. These include fuel, construction materials, fodder, fibres, food and medicinal plants. Over three fourth household energy requirements for cooking and heating in many developing countries come from fuel wood and charcoal. Deforestation is frequently associated with decreased crop yields and increasing costs in traditional agricultural systems. Soil erosion and degradation accelerate when adjacent tree cover is removed.³⁴

Deforestation of a particular forest area may cause migration of the indigenous forests people to another part. Migration from densely populated areas can help to reduce pressures on local land and forests. Temporary migration may provide remittances enabling rural communities receiving them to undertake productive activities other than overexploiting soil and forest resources. Migrants into sparsely settled forests region suitable for agriculture and agro-forestry can sometimes establish sustainable farming systems. On the other hand, migrations into forest frontier zones usually accelerate undesirable deforestation. Migration from the Nepal's hill districts and from India were associated with accelerating deforestation in the Terai region but also with increased agricultural production and income for most of the Terais new residents. Migration to the Terais hill districts has helped relieve land scarcity in hill communities. A few migrants' communities have sent black goods or remittances to their families in the hills.³⁵

In south Asia, most of the countries having fragile developing economies are more vulnerable to natural disasters. However, the people continue to live without any adequate natural disasters planning and systematic management.³⁶ Bangladesh is no exception to it. The country is affected by natural calamities like flood, cyclone, drought, desertification etc which is a major factor of displacement of population.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 22-27.

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 120-125.

³⁶ Lama, Mahendra P, "Economic Resources and Environmental Concerns in South Asia: A Changing Interface", in D D Khanna (ed.), *Sustainable Development Environmental Security, Disarmament and Development Interface in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Macmillan India Limited, 1997), p. 242.

(ii) Floods in Bangladesh

Flood is a natural hazard and a perennial problem in Bangladesh. Flood is a body of water that rises to overflow land, which is not normally submerged. It occurs, when areas that are usually high and dry are submerged.³⁷ A flood is defined as a discharge of water in excess of channel capacity. Flood has been considered as a natural calamity that generally occurs mainly due to overflowing of rivers and excessive rainfall in river basin. The causes, occurrence and the nature of floods in a region are highly regulated and immensely characterized by the climate conditions, geographical location, hydrological situations and high rainfall. A flood is relatively high stream or tidal flow that overtops the natural and artificial banks in any reach of a stream or coastal plains. The overtopping of the banks results in spreading of water flow.³⁸ Thus, flood can be defined as a discharge of water in excess of channel capacity.³⁹ A number of factors cause floods in Bangladesh. These include its geographical location, topographical aspects and climatic condition. However, precipitation or rainfall is the major cause of the annual floods in Bangladesh.⁴⁰

Bangladesh is situated in the floodway of an immense area, it located in the tropics between 20^o34'N and 26^o38'N latitudes and 88^o1'E and 92.41'E longitudes. Bangladesh shares border with India in north and west, in south with Bay of Bengal and in east with Burma. Bangladesh covers an area of 147570 kilometer square. The total population of Bangladesh is 123.1 million according to the 2001 census report.⁴¹ The country is encircled by hills on its three sides, Rajmahal hills on the west, the Himalayas and the Meghalaya Plateau in the north and Tripura, CHT on the east and by the Bay of Bengal on the South. Bangladesh is a deltaic country located in the lower part of the basins of the three greatest rivers of the world- the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna. The flood plain of these rivers and their numerous tributaries and distributaries cover about 80% of the country. The rainfall run-off from

³⁷ Singh, Avtar, *Environmental Degradation in Flood prone Areas*, (Jaipur: Pointer Publishers, 1991), p.16.

³⁸ Shahjahari, M, "Flood Disaster Management in Deltaic Plain Integrated with Rural Development", in Mir M. Ali, et. al, (ed.), *Bangladesh Floods: Views from Home and Abroad*, (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1998), p 41.

³⁹ Mukherjee, F. J, *Dictionary of Geography*, (London: Penguin Books) p. 103.

⁴⁰ Rob, Abdur, "Flood Hazards in Bangladesh, Nature, Causes and control", *Asian Profile*, Vol. 18, No. 4, August 1990, pp. 365-378.

⁴¹ *Statistical Hand Books of Bangladesh*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, (Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh, 2002), p. 3.

this vast hilly area coupled with snowmelt in the Himalayas brings a huge inflow of water to Bangladesh during the wet monsoon season.⁴²

Due to its tropical monsoon climate Bangladesh experiences high local rainfall. The mean annual rainfall of the country is about 1880 mm. In some places the mean annual rainfall ranges from 4000 mm to 6000 mm or even more. About 12,500 cubic meter of runoff is produced by rainfall in the country. The excessive rainfall in the catchments of the three rivers the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and the Meghna is also a primary cause of floods in Bangladesh. The total catchments areas of these rivers stand 1.72 million sq. km. covering areas of China, India, Nepal, and Bhutan. But Bangladesh shares only 7% of these total catchments. As a result of the exceptionally heavy or prolonged rainfall outside the country also results floods in Bangladesh. The total annual rainfall in Bangladesh contributes to a flow of 250398 million m³ but the flow coming from outside Bangladesh border amounts to 999,124 million m³. There are 57 rivers which originate outside the boundary of Bangladesh that carries the above mentioned amount of water during the monsoon season.⁴³ Flash flood affects the northern and eastern piedmont plains, the CHT coastal plains and northern parts of the old Himalayans. Piedmont plain is caused by heavy rainfall occurring over adjoining hill areas inside and outside Bangladesh.⁴⁴

The flat surface of land also spreads flood water evenly. In case with Bangladesh, more than 80 % of the total land comprises a vast flat plain with a very low altitude. The elevation of land ranges from 60 meters at the northern tip to less than 3 meters at the southern coast. Out of this vast alluvial plain 65% area stands below the 7.5 meter contour line. Excessive siltation in the channel beds of Bangladesh Rivers is considered as another important factor responsible for occurrence of floods in the country. Annually about 2.4 billion tons of sediments is flown to the Bay of Bengal by these river systems of the country.⁴⁵

⁴² Ahmad, Emaduddin, et. al, "Floods in Bangladesh and their Processes", in K Nizamuddin (ed.) *Disaster in Bangladesh: Selected Readings*, Disaster Research Training And Management Centre, (Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 2001), pp. 9-28.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 9-28.

⁴⁴ Brammer, Hugh, *Agricultural Disaster Management in Bangladesh*. (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1999), pp. 239-240.

⁴⁵ Rob, Abdur, op. cit. n. 40, pp. 365-378.

Some man made or human causes are also responsible for floods in Bangladesh. The construction of buildings, roads, embankments, railways obstructs the flow of flood water. The 4800 km coastal embankments in the southern part of the country along with some other inland river embankments have been found working against the drainage of flood water. This occasionally causes inundations in some parts of Bangladesh. The large scale canal digging programmes initiated by late President Zia Ur Rahman in 1980 ignoring the normal and natural hydrological settings of the country also caused floods in Bangladesh. Uncontrolled deforestation in the hilly areas also contributes to the flood problem of Bangladesh by intensifying the flow of surface run-off. The construction of the Farakka Barrage by India on the Ganges on her territory has changed the regime of Padma in Bangladesh. The total hydrological situation of the lower portion of the Ganges system down the Farakka barrage has started experiencing disturbed hydrological functioning.⁴⁶

In Bangladesh, three types of floods are normally encountered, flash floods that occur in the eastern and Northern Rivers, local floods that occur due to high rainfall, river floods that occur from the three rivers, and the floods that occur due to tidal storm. The flash floods are characterized by a quick rise followed by a moderately rapid recession and later causing high flow velocities of water that obliterate crops and properties. The local flood occurs due to high rainfall in the monsoon season and generates excess water volume causing localized floods. The river flood that occur from the three principal rivers generally rise slowly and continue to rise for 10-20 days or more, spilling through distributaries and over the banks of rivers cause the most wide-ranging flood damage. The damages become severe when the three rivers rise simultaneously. The floods due to storm surge in the coastal areas of Bangladesh which are generated by tropical cyclones cause extensive damage to life and property. These cyclones are predominant during the post monsoon period (October-November) and during monsoon period (April-June).⁴⁷

In Bangladesh, floods damages crops, lives or property in some part or another region almost every year in Bangladesh. The severe floods which attracted International

⁴⁶ Ibid. pp. 365-378.

⁴⁷ Branumcr, H, "Floods in Bangladesh: Geographical Background to the 1987 and 1988 Floods", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 156, No. 1, March 1990, pp. 12-22.

attention occurred in 1987 and 1988 and were also preceded by severe floods in 1984, 1980, 1977, 1974, and in many earlier years. The 1974 flood was followed by a famine in which about 30000 deaths were officially reported. The 1987 flood was caused mainly due to the heavy rainfall in July and September over North West Bangladesh. Insufficient drainage and embankments without proper bridges and culverts were identified as the major causes of floods.⁴⁸ The most seriously affected regions in these floods are the western part of the Brahmaputra, the area below the confluence of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, north of Khulna and finally the adjacent areas of Meghalaya hills. The country experienced the most deplorable decimation of lives in barely believable digits in that flood.⁴⁹

Bangladesh was hit by another flood in 1988. Almost 63% of the total areas were inundated by this flood. The mostly affected areas are the part of Meghna and Brahmaputra catchments including central Bangladesh.⁵⁰ The 1988 flood was predominantly caused by the flooding of rivers. The flood started in May-June with early flash floods in the south eastern hill basins. The situation was aggravated by intensive rainfall over the north-east of Bangladesh and Meghalaya to the north, which brought two major rivers to danger level. Extensive damage was caused in this flood.⁵¹

Natural hazards such as floods, cyclones, droughts are increasingly the source of immense misery to human lives. The impacts of flood comprise two broad categories viz., direct and indirect impacts. Direct impacts in economic sectors are the physical and visible damages cause by direct contact of water. Indirect impacts are caused as a consequence of direct losses (e.g. production loss of an industry caused due to direct damage to machinery) and provoked through interruption and disruption of economic

⁴⁸ Nasreen, Mahbuba, "Coping with Floods: Structural Measures and Survival Strategies", in Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.) *Living with Floods: An Exercise in Alternatives*, (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1999), pp. 32.

⁴⁹ Hofer, Thomas, "Floods in Bangladesh: A High Land Low Land Interaction", *Geographica Bernesia*, Institute of Geography, University of Berne, Switzerland, 1998, p. 101.

⁵⁰ Nasreen, Mahbuba, op.cit, n. 48, pp. 32-33.

⁵¹ Hofer, Thomas, op.cit. n.48, p. 101.

and social activities. The indirect impacts can involve effects both in the short and the long run.⁵²

Floods have considerable impact on the rural economy and the society. Floods not only destroy crops, but also cause considerable damage to livestock, poultry houses, railways, educational and industrial buildings and other facilities. The rural people are the most victims of the crops damages done by floods. Almost every year considerable amounts of food grains are lost due to floods in Bangladesh. In 1974 thousands of people died because of the famine resulting from large scale crop damages due to severe flood in that year. The consequences of floods in Bangladesh have both social and spatial dimensions. Socially the floods tend to deteriorate household income distribution in rural areas, since landless marginal and small farmers can hardly recover fully from the losses incurred during floods. Spatially, the floods result in deterioration of interregional disparities, since economic development in flood-prone areas cannot be sustained because of the destruction of crops, properties and infrastructures.⁵³

Bangladesh experienced most disastrous floods on records in 1988 and 1987. It caused a major set back to the economy by damaging to crops, property, human life and infrastructure, which is still reeling under the shocks. The government has undertaken a large number of measures to cope with the situation. Soon after the government of Bangladesh declared a proclamation to undertake the problem of recurrent floods in the country, a number of countries offered to help in findings ways to mitigate the effects of natural disasters. A UNDP- Bangladesh team carried out a flood policy study, team from Bangladesh and France prepared a pre feasible study of flood control, USAID sponsored an eastern water study and a team from Japan reviewed option for flood management.⁵⁴

⁵² K.M. Natriul Islam, *Research Report on Potential Direct Impact of Flooding on Health-Evidence from Macro Level Data on the Incidence of Bangladesh*. (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, December 1997), p. 7

⁵³ Shahjahan, M, op. cit. no. 38, pp. 47-49.

⁵⁴ A Summary Report Based on Studies Carried out Under the Flood Action Plan, Flood Plan Coordination Organization, Dhaka, December, 1995, Government Of Bangladesh, Ministry Of Water Resources, p.1.1

One of the major consequences of the interaction of environmental degradation is the migration of the people from one region to another within a state or from one state to other neighbouring states, which has destabilising effects on both domestic order and international stability. Floods create an immense miseries and damages to the life and property, it destroy crops, dislocate transportation and communication system. The average annual loss of rice from flooding in Bangladesh is approximately 4% of the total countryside. In addition to these, flood causes extensive damages to jute, sugarcane and summer vegetables also.⁵⁵

Displacement of people in Bangladesh is high due to floods, around 20% of the country is affected by flood annually, and at least 37% of the land is affected once every 10 years.⁵⁶ Flood significantly distress poor people who lose whatever the assets they have and suffer from lack of work and wages. People who reside in the flood prone areas have low indicators in all sectors of health, nutrition and educations.⁵⁷ Flash floods cause extensive damages to life, property, crops, and other resources mainly due to its high velocity. The frequent flood and damages done to the people have no choice but to leave their homes and migrate to a safer place either temporarily or permanently. If these people don't get adequate facilities, they tend to cross the border.

(iii) Cyclone and Migration

Tropical cyclones are usually destructive and these are the ones which affect Bangladesh.⁵⁸ The general rule is that in the northern hemisphere, the center of low pressure lies to the left of an observer standing with his/her back to the wind. Therefore, cyclone approaching Bangladesh from the Bay of Bengal typically is preceded by winds blowing from entirely direction.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Paul, Bimal k, & Rashid, Harun, "Flood damages to Rice Crop in Bangladesh", *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 2, April 1993, pp. 150-159.

⁵⁶ Gain, Philip, (ed.), *Bangladesh Environment Facing 21st century*, Society for Environment and Human Development, (Dhaka: SEHD, 1998), p. 206.

⁵⁷ Ibid, pp. 206-209.

⁵⁸ Chaudhury A.M, in K. Nizamuddin (ed) *Cyclones in Bangladesh: Disaster in Bangladesh*, Selected Readings, Disaster Research, Training and Management Century, (Dhaka: The University press, 2001), p.61.

⁵⁹ Brammer, H. *Agriculture Disaster Management in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: University Press Ltd. 1999), p. 291.

The tropical storms which periodically ravage coastal areas of Bangladesh are properly called tropical cyclones (tropical cyclones have hurricane force winds; i.e. exceeding 73 mph (117km/hr). Storms with maximum wind speeds between 55 and 73 km/h (87 –1117 km/hr) are termed as severe cyclonic storms. Storm with maximum wind speed of 39-54 (62-86 w/hr) are termed as cyclonic storms and those with winds less than 39 mph (62k/hr) are termed depression. Tropical cyclones typically occur into pre-monsoon and post monsoon seasons; i.e., mid sprit to early June and later September to early December. These seasons are period of cyclone risks every year. Although several cyclones may form every the Bay of Bengal each year, only a few of them reach Bangladesh. Therefore, cyclone doesn't affect Bangladesh every year. Because of the funnel shaped coast Bangladesh may often become the landing ground of cyclones formed in Bay of Bengal. The Bay of Bengal cyclones also move towards the eastern coast of India, towards Burma and occasionally into Sri Lanka. But they cause maximum damage when they reach Bangladesh. This is due to the low flat terrain, high density of population and poorly built houses. Most of the damages occur in the coastal regions of Khulna, Patuakhali, Barisal, Noakhali and CHT and the offshore islands like Bhala, Hatiya, Sandhup, Manpura, Kutuledia, Maheskali, Nizhm Dwip, Urir Char and other newly formed chars.⁶⁰

Pre-monsoon and post-monsoon periods are the seasons when cyclones and depressions form in Bay of Bengal. Cyclones that form during pre and post monsoon periods are the more destructive due to the great instability of atmosphere and the weak vertical winds. They generally form over the Andaman Sea or southeast Bay of Bengal. They occur frequently and in great magnitude and directly responsible in multiplying the problems of poverty in Bangladesh. Bangladesh had experienced severe cyclone in 1854, 1876, 1919, 1942, 1960, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1970, 1985, 1988 and 1991.⁶¹

Bangladesh experienced severe cyclone on the night of 29 April 1991. A devastating cyclone accompanied by tidal waves battered the coastal areas and offshore island of the south cost of Bangladesh. The wind speed at the center was recorded at over 200 km/hr. It hit the islands of Kutubdia, Sandwip, Mahoskhali, Urir Char, Hatiya and the

⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 291-292.

⁶¹ Lama, Mahendra P, op. cit. n. 36, p. 244.

south eastern and southern coastal areas for nine long hours. Most of the devastation was due to this wall of water which occurred at high tide and took many people to their watery graves.⁶² Over 2.5 million people were evacuated and their lives almost certainly saved before the cyclones struck. This was largely the preparation by the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) initiated in early 1970s by the international federation the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) and the Government of Bangladesh. The CPP was started after the 1970 cyclone which caused 140000 human casualties. In May 1997 a similar cyclone with winds of over 230 km an hour and a tidal surge of up to 4.5 meters claimed less than 200 lives, while million people were evacuated into shelters. Over the same period the CPP was progressively extending its shelters and communication system.⁶³ (Table 2.II).

Cyclone creates immense miseries to the people. Cyclone is also responsible for large displacement of people in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has the worst experience of cyclone in South Asia. It is well documented that the poor are usually the victim of hardest hit by disaster. River banks steep slopes and reclaimed lands lack of financial and national resource gives poor people less flexibility in protecting their livelihoods and homes against disaster. When disaster strikes assets bought with loans (for e.g. sewing machine or cow) this forces the poor back to the beginning or worse, since they have to pay back the loan for an asset under such circumstances also.⁶⁴

(iv) Ground Water Level and Salinity

Groundwater is abundant in Bangladesh and the aquifers are highly productive. The sediments are predominantly non-indurate and easy to drill by hand, at least to shallow levels. Water tables vary across the country but are typically shallow at around 1–10 m below the ground surface. These factors have made groundwater an attractive and easily accessible resource and have led to a rapid proliferation in the use of groundwater over the last few decades. Besides surface water, ground water is the other major source of water in Bangladesh for agricultural, drinking, municipal, and industrial uses. Ground water is an important source of irrigation and industry. Over 97% of the Bangladeshi population relies on ground water for potable supplies.

⁶² Walter, Jonahan (ed), *World Disasters Report focus on Reducing Risk*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, (Geneva: IFRCRCS, 2002). p. 16.

⁶³ Ibid, p17.

⁶⁴ Walter. Jonahan, op. cit. n. 62, p. 11.

Table. 2. II
Cyclone Affecting Bangladesh since 1960

Date	Year	Number of deaths
09 Oct.	1960	3000
30-Oct	1960	5,149
30-May	1961	11,466
28-May	1961	
11-Apr	1963	11,250
11-May	1964	196
31-May	1965	19,279
14Dec.	1965	
01Oct.	1965	873
11Oct.	1966	850
24Oct.	1967	
10-May	1968	
17-Apr	1969	
10-Oct	1969	75
7-May	1970	
23-Oct	1970	300
12 Nov.	1970	5,00,000
8-May	1971	
30 Sept.	1971	
06 Nov.	1971	
18-Nov	1973	
9-Dec	1973	
15 Aug.	1974	183
28-Nov	1974	
21 Oct.	1976	a few
13-May	1977	
10 Dec.	1981	
15.Oct	1983	2
9-Nov	1983	
3-Jun	1984	
25-May	1985	11,069
29Nov.	1988	2000
29-Apr	1991	1,38,000
2-Jun	1991	
2-May	1994	170
25-Nov	1995	6
19-May	1997	126
26-May	1997	70

Source: *Cyclone Shelter preparatory Study (CSPS)*, 1966, as cited in Nehal Karim, "Options for Cyclone Protection: Bangladesh Context, see http://www.nehal_karim/cycloneprotection.com/pdf
Ground water levels across Bangladesh become generally dejected during the dry season, but the aquifers replenish fully during the monsoon. The number of tube wells in Bangladesh is not known but an estimates put the number at around 6–11 million.

The vast majority of these are private tube wells, which penetrate the shallow alluvial aquifers to depths typically of 10–60 m. Irrigation boreholes typically tap deeper aquifers in the region of 70–100 m depth. In some areas, notably the south and the Sylhet basin of north-east Bangladesh deep tube wells abstract groundwater from depths of 150 m or more. In the south, the deep tube wells have been installed to avoid high salinity at shallower levels. Shallow hand-dug wells occur in some areas, though they are much less common than tube wells.⁶⁵

Ground water plays a very vital role during the dry season and drought periods. The sediments are generally thick over most of the country. In general, there are two aquifer in the country: the upper aquifer and the main aquifer. In most Areas, these two aquifers are probably hydraulically interconnected. The main aquifer in most parts occurs at depths ranging from less than five meters in the northwest to more than 75 meters in the south. Ground water levels are highest from August through October and lowest in April and May. A sharp rise in water level generally begins in May and continues until July. The range of fluctuation is from three to six meters in most areas. After July, the rate of rise decreases and in many areas ground water levels remains almost stationary from August to October, indicating rejection of recharge because the aquifer is filled to capacity. The rejected recharge varies from place to place and depends upon several factors, including permeability of surface materials, rainfall amount and intensity, and the time factor. Recharge to ground water occurs primarily through direct infiltration of rainfall. Actual recharge is considerably less than potential recharges. Highest potential recharge occurs in Dinajpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Noakhali and Chittagong. The lowest potential recharge occurs in western Bangladesh in Rajshahi, Kushtia and Pabna.⁶⁶

Presently about 80% of the people in rural Bangladesh depend on groundwater for drinking. Urban water supply is also largely dependent on groundwater. In Dhaka City more than 95% of the supply comes from groundwater and the remainder is provided by treated surface water. Groundwater also contributes largely to irrigation

⁶⁵ *Groundwater Quality: Bangladesh*, British Geological Survey, January 2001, see http://www.bgs.org/ground_water.com.pdf

⁶⁶ *Irrigation & Drainage in the World – A Global Review, Bangladesh*, see <http://www.icid.com.bangladesh/pdf>

and under 1995 conditions 72% of the total coverage was provided by groundwater. The Master Plan Organization (MPO) in 1989 estimated a reserve of 25,750 million-meter cube (MMC) of groundwater in Bangladesh.⁶⁷

Salinity means the total amount of solid material (in grams) that is dissolved in one kilogram of water: generally expressed in parts per thousand. In 1902 an international commission defined salinity more specifically as the total amount of solid material in grams contained in one kilogram of seawater when all the carbonate has been converted to oxide, the bromine and iodine replaced by chlorine and all organic matter completely oxidized.⁶⁸ Increased salinity in the rivers of the coastal region is reported. This is mainly due to the effect of upstream withdrawal of waters from the rivers due to irrigation purposes. Diversion of water from the Ganges at Farakka during the dry seasons is the main cause of increasing salinisation in the deltaic region of Bangladesh. Fall of surface water is also partly responsible for depletion of water.⁶⁹

The salination of water within southwestern region of Bangladesh is due to diversion of water through various flood control and irrigation projects for the drought prone areas of Bihar and U.P. and other upper riparian states in India. The native intrusion would narrowly be ousted by strong upland flows but because of upstream withdrawal in the dry season flow of Ganges, Gorai, Madhumati receives an insufficient freshwater flow to check salinity. Only 500micromhas/cm is the permissible salinity limit but in April 1983, salinity observed at Khulna topped all previous records reaching 17000 micromhas /cm and in 1992 salinity level was 29,000 micromhas/cm.⁷⁰

(v) Economic Factors

Most of the scholars stress much importance to the economic factors and view that migration takes place due to the economic conditions. The economic factors play a

⁶⁷ see http://banglapedia.sarch.com.bd/HT/G_0209.htm

⁶⁸ *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Micropaedia, Vol. VIII, (USA: William Benton Publication, 1973-74), p. 811

⁶⁹ *Bangladesh Compendium of Environment Statistics 1997*, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Dhaka, 1999, p.81

⁷⁰ *Bangladesh Water Development Board, Master Plan Organization, Second Interim Report*, (Dhaka: Government of Bangladesh, June 1994), pp. 9-13.

significant role in migration of people in countries. In case of Bangladeshi migration to India, one can attribute it to the poor economic conditions which result into economic misery, poverty, unemployment and decline in agriculture predominantly. Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the context of development with an annual GNP per capita of US \$ 260 in 1997.⁷¹ Bangladesh is ranked 146th among 174 countries of the world in the context of Human Development Index (HDI).⁷² In the 2004 *Human Development Report*, Bangladesh is ranked 138th with an HDI value of 0.509. *Human Development Report of 1997* which introduced the Human Poverty Index (HPI), which focuses on the proportion of people below a threshold level in basic dimensions of human development - living a long and healthy life, having access to education, and a decent standard of living, much as the poverty headcount measures the proportion of people below a certain income level. The HPI-1 measures human poverty in developing countries. The HPI-1 value for Bangladesh was 42.2%, and ranked 72nd among 95 developing countries.⁷³

In Bangladesh, poverty is widespread with an estimated 49.8% of the total population living below the national poverty line. Lack of employment opportunities and existence of limited land make it difficult for especially rural people, to break the cycle of poverty. Poverty in Bangladesh is the weakness of the national economy and of the social and economic circumstances of a large section of its people. Bangladesh has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. The head count measure of rural poverty has slightly gone down during the first half of the nineties from 53% in 1991/92 to 51% in 1995/96. Over the entire period between 1983/84 and 1995/96, the rural head count declined by only 2.7 percentage points. A further improvement in the urban poverty situation in Bangladesh was recorded during the nineties: from 34% in 1991/92 to little over 26% in 1995/96. This trend of improvement in urban poverty is due to rapid pace of urbanisation over the recent years.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *Human Development Report in South Asia-1999, Crisis of Governance*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁷² *Human Development Report-1999*, United Nation Development Programme, (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1999), p. 136.

⁷³ Country Facts Sheets, *Human Development Report 2004*, Bangladesh, see http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_BGD.html

⁷⁴ Alam Mia, M.S, *Poverty Alleviation in Bangladesh, An Exploration*, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Unanyan Parishad, 1993), pp. 26-50.

The high population and low level of economic activities particularly in rural areas may be identified as important causal factors for high incidence of rural poverty in Bangladesh. The causes of rural poverty are much more complex and no single factor is sufficient to understand and explain the dynamics of socio-economic process of rural poverty. Illiteracy, unemployment and underemployment may be identified as visible effect of poverty.⁷⁵

The UNDP Human Development Report gives an adult literacy rate of 35%. However, the literacy rates vary for men 44% and women 24% and for rural areas 20% and urban areas 53%. In fact very few rural women are able to read and write.⁷⁶ Literacy is an important factor for productive employment opportunity and income of an individual and it is an important of reliving poverty in the long run. Illiteracy is one of the main social problems and it poses an obstacle to the adoption of improved process of production and development. As per 1981 census the literacy rate in Bangladesh was only 23.8% the corresponding figure in rural areas were even lower. A survey reported that about 80% of the total dropout children at the primary level of education in rural areas come from small form households and fell into the trap of child labour with minimum wage and in turn they were caught in vicious cycle of poverty.⁷⁷

The cities and towns of Bangladesh are constrained by the high pressure of population growth and the lack of job opportunities result in extreme poverty of people living in the urban areas. Although 20% of the countries population lives in urban areas, the annual growth of urban population, nature of rural-urban migration and growth of cities in densely built up areas are in alarming situation of population boom in the cities. Poverty is particularly visible in large metropolitan areas like Dhaka the capital.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Rahman, Md. Motiur, *Poverty issues in Rural Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: University Press Ltd. 1994), pp. 20.

⁷⁶ *Poverty in Bangladesh*, see

http://www.ecoman.unc.edu.au/Postgrads/Ajoy/poverty_in_Bangladesh.html

⁷⁷ Alam Mia, M.S, op.cit. n. 74, pp. 26-50.

⁷⁸ Rahman, A. Atique, *Environment and Poverty key Linkages for Global Sustainable Development*, (Dhaka: The University Press Ltd, 1998), pp. 27-33.

Bangladesh is characterized by low level of urbanization but at the same time it has experienced one of the most rapid urban growths in recent times. The growth of urbanization in Bangladesh was at an average of about 8% during 1961-81 and 5.17% in 1981-91. Because of the large national population size, the absolute size of the urban population is also quite large. The rapid growth of urbanization in Bangladesh has taken place due to a number of factors, such as high natural increase of urban population, territorial extension of existing urban areas and change in the definition of urban areas, and rural urban migration. Migration of course has been the most dominant component of urban population growth. Both the rural push and urban pull factors caused large-scale migration. The larger metropolitan centers more particularly Dhaka have been the major attractions. Rural impoverishment and landlessness brought about by natural calamities, like flood cyclone drought as the triggering factors.⁷⁹

Urban poverty situation in Bangladesh slightly been improved during the nineties, from 34% in 1991/92 it gone down to little over 26% in 1995/96. This trend of improvement in urban poverty is due to rapid pace of urbanisation to allocate the growing population over the recent years.⁸⁰

Development and Displacement in Bangladesh

In addition to displacements arising from natural disasters, the infrastructure development projects that effort to control their impact also results into the displacement of thousands of people from their homeland. Through the 1960s and 1970s the government initiated a large number of irrigation, flood control, hydropower and urban / industrial development projects to control the natural disasters with no resettlement policy for the displaced people. This resulted into large scale displacement in Bangladesh.

The major infrastructural development projects in Bangladesh are mostly externally funded by multilateral and bilateral agencies. The World Bank, Asian Development

⁷⁹ Islam, Nazrul, et. al, (ed.) *Addressing The Urban Poverty In Bangladesh, Critical Issues and the 1995 Survey Findings*, (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 1997), pp.45-50.

⁸⁰ Khundker, Nasreen, et. al, "Urban Poverty In Bangladesh: Trends, Determinants and Policy Issues", *Asian Development Review*, Vol. 12, No.1, 1994, pp. 1-33.

Bank (ADB), Overseas Development Authority (ODA), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), United States for International Development (USAID), Japan International Cooperation agency (JICA) and other aid / donor agencies have contributed to these development projects. The several development projects like Karnaphuli paper mill project, Kaptai hydro-electrical project, Jamuna Bridge project, Ashuganj-Bakhrabad (A-B) pipe line project, Road rehabilitation project, Dhaka water supply project displaced a large number of people in Bangladesh.⁸¹

The Karnaphuli paper mill at Chandraghona was constructed at a cost of approximately US\$ 13 millions foreign funds including US\$ 4.2 millions from the World Bank. The paper mill set the grounds for chronic deforestation in the hills. Since the constructions of the mill, millions of tons of bamboo and softwood have been cut for paper production that resulted in loss of livelihood of many families in the CHT.⁸²

The constructions of the Kaptai hydro-electric project submerged 54000 acres of settled and cultivable land. It affected about 100000 people where 90% of people were Chakmas that accounted for more than a quarter of the total populations of the CHT. In exchange, an adequate amount of monetary compensation was paid out but hardly one-third of lost lands were replaced. A large number of frustrated 'Chakma' people migrated to India.⁸³

The Jamuna Bridge Project, a high profile infrastructure projects in Bangladesh of US\$ 800 million donated by World Bank, ADB and Japan displaced a large number of people living nearby the embankments area. The five kilometres long bridge over Jamuna River establishes a permanent link between eastern and Western halves of Bangladesh. The Bangladesh government in 1985 established the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMBA) to plan, design, coordinate and secure funds for a huge constructions project the World Bank approved the project in January 1994. JMBA has acquired a total of 5,681 acres of land for the construction of the bridge. Large numbers of people were affected, mostly the farm workers, Uthulis

⁸¹ Zamman, M.Q, "Development and Displacements in Bangladesh, Towards a Resettlement Policy", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 34, No. 7, July 1996, pp. 691-703.

⁸² Gain, Philip, op.cit. n .24, p. 35.

⁸³ Gain, Philip, op. cit .n. 26, pp. 60-62.

(free users) constitute the large majority who were indirectly affected by households. The loss of agricultural land is very high on both banks of the river. The BRAC survey revealed that 5181 households lost partly or wholly the agricultural land, 2167 households lost their homesteads wholly or partly, 612 households were landless already due to land acquisition. Most of these affected people have to migrate in other parts of the country as there was absence of proper rehabilitations measures.⁸⁴ The Road Rehabilitation and Maintenance Project that designed to improve existing highways and roads in northwest Bangladesh also displaced a large number of people. The project was to construct necessary bypasses to avoid congestion near major city centres.⁸⁵

The 58 kms Ashuganj-Bakhrabad (A-B) pipeline that was made to improve gas delivery by integrating the present network with the North-western gas fields (Kailashtila, Habibganj, and Rashidpur) to meet the increase demands in Chittagong and Dhaka. The project made Ashuganj the main hub for gas distribution in Bangladesh. Land was often requisitioned for construction activities, and the combined acquisition and requisitions by the A-B project, affected some 400 households due to both land fragmentation and the traditional joint ownership of land in Bangladesh.⁸⁶

The Dhaka urban development Dholai Khal and Dhaka water supply projects together have caused the displacement of 34000 households. The Dholai Khal is a drainage improvement component of the Dhaka Urban Project. It consists of construction of a culvert, road and a pump stations at the mouth of Khal (Canal) at Buriganga River to alleviate flooding during the monsoon seasons.⁸⁷

Thus from the above discussion it could be revealed that development projects in Bangladesh also generated a large scale displacement of the people. However the displacement was more internal than external except the Kaptai Hydro-electrical project in Bangladesh that caused an exodus of population to India.

⁸⁴ Zamman, M.Q, op. cit. n. 81, pp. 691-703.

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 691-703.

⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 691-703

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 691-703

Bangladesh Agriculture

Bangladesh faces the problem of high population growth. (Over 2% until 1990s) extreme land stresses (average farm size has gone down from 3.12 acres in 1960 to 2.27 acres in 1983-84).⁸⁸ Bangladesh is primarily an agrarian economy with some three-fifths of the population engaged in farming and agricultural activities. Agricultural holdings in Bangladesh are generally small. Rice, jute, sugarcane, potato, pulses, wheat, tea and tobacco are the principal crops. The crop sub-sector dominates the agriculture sector contributing about 72% of total production. Fisheries, livestock and forestry sub-sectors are 10.33%, 10.11% and 7.33% respectively.⁸⁹

In Bangladesh about 84 percent of the total population live in rural areas and are directly or indirectly engaged in wide range of agricultural activities. Agriculture contributed 31.6 percent of total GDP in 1997-98 at constant (1984-85) prices. Of the agricultural GDP, the crop sub-sector contributes 71 per cent, forest 10 per cent, fisheries 10 percent and livestock 9 per cent. The sector generates 63.2% percent of total national employment, of which crop sectors share is nearly 55 %. Agricultural exports of primary products constituted 10.4% of total exports of the country in 1997-98. In the past decade, the agriculture sector contributed about three percent per annum to the annual economic growth rate.⁹⁰

The agriculture sector is the single largest contributor to income and employment generation and a vital element in the country's challenge to achieve self-sufficiency in food production. However, due to calamities like flood, loss of food and cash crops is a recurring phenomenon which disrupts the continuing progress of the entire economy.⁹¹

Natural calamities like flood and cyclone destroy large quantity of crops. Annually, floods damage approximately 4% of the rice crops. Jute, sugarcane and summer

⁸⁸ Sajat Ali, A. Md, "Toward an Ecological Explanation of Agricultural Unemployment in Bangladesh", *Professional Geographer*, Vol.50, No.2, May 1988, pp. 48.

⁸⁹ *Bangladesh Economy* see <http://www.discoverybangladesh.com/meetbangladesh/economy.html>

⁹⁰ *Role of Agriculture in Bangladesh Economy*, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of Bangladesh, see <http://www.bangladeshgov.org/moa/moa.html>

⁹¹ *Agriculture of Bangladesh*, see <http://www.discoverybangladesh.com/meetbangladesh/agriculture.html>

vegetables are also severely affected due to floods and cyclones. Highest damage to rice crop occurred in 1988 flood where 2.1 million metric tons of rice crops perished. Stagnation of agricultural growth in Bangladesh has led to wide spread unemployment in rural areas and then migration to urban areas and further to the neighbouring countries. Unemployment in agricultural sector is 47.4% of the total unemployment. Agricultural wages are also low compared to the average minimum wages in the country.⁹²

Socio- Political Factors

Social and political factors play crucial role in facilitating migration. Social and political upheavals in a country can induce migrations. The state repression, communalism, religious persecution, as well as political upheavals are the major factors that trigger migration. Generally political crisis in a state can produce forced migrants or what is called refugee. Particularly the state has been the main actor in forcing emigration. For example, the influx of the Rohingya's from Burma to Bangladesh, the influx of the Bengali population in 1971, was due to the state repression only.⁹³

In case of Bangladesh the deteriorating social as well as political conditions are primarily responsible for migration of the Bangladeshis to India. Most of the minorities in Bangladesh especially Hindus are the victim of state repression as well as communalism. The socio-political factors that exist in the country created a sense of insecurity among the minorities and induced them to migrate or cross the national border.⁹⁴ The process of Islamisation of Bangladeshi society, communalism and the passing of various acts like the Vested Property Act (VPA) and state repression against the minorities are the major factors responsible for spreading the feeling of insecurity among them.⁹⁵

⁹² *World Development Indicators-2000*, (Washington, The World Bank, 2000), p. 58.

⁹³ Lama, Mahendra P, "*Managing Refugees in South Asia*, Refugees and Migratory Movement Research Unit, (Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 2000), pp. 6-7.

⁹⁴ Choudhary, Afsan, "State and the Minority Identity: The Case of Hindus in Bangladesh," in Abrar R Chaudhury (ed.), *On the Margin, Refugees, Migrants and Minorities*, Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit, (Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 2000), pp. 145-166.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 145-166.

Bangladesh was born as a secular state but in a few years of time it was given a religious tint through a series of constitutional amendments by the political leaders. Thus spread the feeling of alienation among the minorities. After its liberation, Bangladesh had declared herself as a sovereign people's republic and proclaimed the three principles of state policy as democracy, socialism and secularism. Later, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman added nationalism to this list. Article 12 of Bangladesh Constitution declares Bangladesh as secular a state. The principle of secularism in Bangladesh is realized by the elimination of communalism in all its forms, and not giving political status in favour of any religion, abuse of religion for political purposes and discrimination against or persecution of practicing a particular religion by the state. In Bangladesh however, secularism was understood more in the sense of neutrality among the religious practiced or equal treatment of all religious and their followers, rather than a separation of church and the state.⁹⁶ Article 8 of the constitution of 1972 states, "the principle of nationalism socialism, democracy and secularism together with the principles derived from them set out in this part construct the fundamental principles of state policy."⁹⁷

The process of Islamisation in Bangladesh started when Gen Zia Ur Rahman came to power after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. Bangladesh saw a steady rise in the growth of fundamentalism when Zia remained to power. There were steep rise of Islamic political parties that was patronized by the government.⁹⁸ Zia's decisions to drop secularism as a constitutional principle was a political move to get support of the Muslim League and other Islamic based political parties to hold on his position. Some of Muslim league leaders have also suggested to Gen Zia to change the national flag (because it has no Islamic symbol) and the national anthem. He refused to accept Muslim League demands for separate electorates for Hindu and Muslims.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Zaman Anis Uz, "Religious and politics in Bangladesh" in S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), *Society, polity and Economy of Bangladesh*, (New Delhi: Har Anand Publications 1994), pp. 42-43

⁹⁷ Chittara. M.G. *Bangladesh Majli toi Bhashina*. (New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation, 1997), p 71.

⁹⁸ Ghosh. Partha S, "Bangladesh, The Communal Scene", *Mainstream*, Vol. 26. No. 20, March 10, 1990. pp.21-23

⁹⁹ Franda. Marcus, *Bangladesh: The First Decade*, (New Delhi: South Asian Publication, 1982), p. 262.

Gen Zia passed an amendment order immediately after assuming power. The amendment of 22 April, 1977, deleted Article 12 and it replaced secularism as the fundamental principles of state policy and added in the article 'total faith and belief in the Almighty Allah'. By this amendment, the word *Bismillahir Rahmanur Rahim* were added at the outset of the constitution, the words 'liberation struggle' in the preamble were replaced by 'war of independence'. 'Secularism' in the fundamental principles of state policy was replaced by "fatal faith and belief in almighty Allah." Socialism was explained as 'Economic and Social justice' and Article 12 was deleted. A new clause was added to article 25 to the effect that the state shall endeavour to strength, consolidate and pressure the fraternal relationship, between the Muslim states on the basis of Islamic solidarity.¹⁰⁰

After the end of General Zia's rule, General Ershad also followed the policy of Islamisation that also generated the feeling of insecurity among the minorities. After assuming office in 1982 Ershaad followed the 'politics of patronage' with the army and Islamic forces. He declared Bangladesh as an Islamic state in 1988. His policy of open appeasement of the Islamic forces encouraged the fundamentalist and other such elements in the society.¹⁰¹

In 1988, Ershad passed eight amendments to the constitutions and declared Islam as the state religion, while assuring that other religions can also be practiced peacefully. It said, 'The religion of the Republic is Islamic, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the republic.' The provisions made the difference between Islam and other religious so wide that it became obvious to the common people that equal rights of the citizens as enshrined in the constitution were no longer exercisable. The eight amendments, which was a product of Ershaad's brain storming was similarly approved by the parliament.¹⁰²

Ershad allowed the process of Islamisation of army and its institutions. Most of the policies were formulated to promote Islamic norms among the army personal and prayers were obligatory. Army personal were sent to Islamic organizations and

¹⁰⁰ Zaman Anis Uz, op. cit. n. 96, p. 44.

¹⁰¹ Ziring, Lawrence, *Bangladesh from Zia to Ershad: An Interpretive Study*, (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 210.

¹⁰² Zaman Anis Uz, op. cit. n. 96, pp. 45-47.

foundations (which prompt Islamic values and ideas) to occupy the top positions. Most of the top position of the army as well as civil administration was held by war veterans. These people subscribed the idea of Islamisation and secularism.¹⁰³

The Islamisation of society nationally fed into fears amongst the minority Hindus about their safety and security. The introductions of Islam as the state religion in 1988 caused unease and apprehensions among the minorities in Bangladesh. For the minorities, declaration of Islam as the state religions 'will result in destroying national unity as well as curtail equal rights of other communities.' The ascendance of Islamic identity and the corresponding dilution of secularism and Bengali and cultural identity have worked against the practice of tolerance and accommodation.¹⁰⁴

The growth of communalism in Bangladesh is partially due to the various policies followed by the military regime. The migrations of people from Bangladesh to India were due to the above mentioned policies. According to Chakravarty, "mounting communal tension created a sense of insecurity in the minds of the minority community. Communal tension is the principal cause of post partition migration."¹⁰⁵

During Ershaad's regime Islamic parties rapidly grew and by 1986 it rose up to 100 while there were only 65 Islamic parties in 1954, Ershaad's policy of appeasement and encouragement of Islam in Bangladesh alienated the largest minority groups, Hindus from national mainstream. The declaration of Islam as the state religion and the move to introduce compulsory Arabic education spread feeling of insecurity among the Hindus in Bangladesh.¹⁰⁶

This is reflected by the feel that the Hindu population steadily went down in Bangladesh. In 1947, the Hindus constituted 23% of the population of erstwhile East Pakistan. At the time of the first census in Bangladesh in 1972 Hindu population was reduced to 13.5%, it dwindled further to 12.1% in 1981 and at present out of the 127.7 million Bangladeshis only 12 million are Hindus. Again the 1991 census estimated

¹⁰³ Biswas, Sukumar & Sato, Hirashi, *Religion and Politics of Bangladesh and West Bengal: A Study of Communal Relations*, (Japan: Institute of Developing Economics, 1993), p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ Datta, Sreeradhha, *Bangladesh: A Fragile Democracy*, (New Delhi: Shipra Publication, 2003) p. 89.

¹⁰⁵ Chakravarty, S.R, *Bangladesh under Mujib, Zia and Ershad: Dilemma of a New Nation*, (New Delhi: Har Anand Publications, 1995), p. 130.

¹⁰⁶ Biswas, Sukumar & Sato, Hirashi, op. cit. n.103, pp. 104-05.

that the Hindu population has further declined by 0.3% since 1974. Fear of communal violence induced the migration of Hindus from the country.¹⁰⁷

There are other causes that spread the feeling of insecurity among the minorities that facilitated migration of Bangladeshi people to India. Apart from Islamisation process, the passing of Vested Property Act (VPA) in 1974 by the government which allowed embezzlement of Hindu property by the state was a major ground of alienation of the Hindus in Bangladesh, it acted as powerful factor for out migration.¹⁰⁸

The passing of several acts and ordinances by the Pakistani as well as the Bangladeshi government like the East Bengal Evacuees (Administration of Immoveable Property) Act 1965, the Enemy Property (Custodian and Registration) order 1965 and the vested and non-resident property (Administration) Act of 1974, etc. had a serious impact among the minorities in East Pakistan. The implementation of the above acts led to the acquisition of land and properties of the Hindu minorities eventually forcing them to leave Bangladesh.¹⁰⁹

The partition of India and the communal riot that breakout in East Bengal forced Hindus to have the country. And there was serious crisis of administration as well as legal problem arose regarding the management of the properties left behind by the Hindus. The government of Pakistan enacted the East Bengal Evacuees (Administration of immovable properties) Act in 1951 as a response to the situation. The act created an Evacuees Management committee and entrusted the power to take charge of properties of Evacuees, either on the basis of application from evacuees or its own. The committee had such profanities as it deem necessary. Widespread discrimination prevailed as the civil court was restricted to call in question in any order passed or any action taken by the committee.¹¹⁰

Discriminatory practices against Hindus and other religious minorities continued to be perpetuated through various means. One such means has been the vested property

¹⁰⁷ Datta, Sreeradha, op. cit. n. 104, p. 85.

¹⁰⁸ Alam, Q. A. M, "The Nature of the Bangladesh State in the Post 1975 Period", *Contemporary South Asia*, (Oxford: UK), Vol. 2, No. 3, 1993, pp. 311-325.

¹⁰⁹ Barkat, Abdul, et. al, (ed.) *Political Economy of vested Property Act in Rural Bangladesh*. (Dhaka: Association of Land Reforms Development, 1997), pp.24-25.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 26.

acts. In 1965, after the indo-Pak war, the then Pakistan government introduced the enemy property (Custody and Registration) order II of 1965. After the war of liberation the Hindus in Bangladesh thought that the discriminatory enemy property act would be scrapped. But surprisingly instead of scrapping, certain new laws were adopted. Law by Bangladesh parliament in 1974 namely "The Enemy Property Acts Continuance and Emergency Provisions (Repeal Act) and the Vested and Non-resident Property Act (administration)." Under the Enemy Property Act (continuance of) Emergency provisions (Repeal) Act, all enemy properties and firms which were vested in the custodians of enemy property in the then East Pakistan, remained vested in the government of Bangladesh under the banner of vested property. The vested and non-resident property (administration) Act (Act XLVI) of 1974 was enacted to provide the management of certain properties and assets of persons who are non-residents of Bangladesh or have acquired a foreign nationality. Though the principal aim of the act XLVI of 1974 was to identify and take over the properties of those residents who left Bangladesh during or immediately after liberations war or took foreign citizenship. But in practice this act XLVI of 1974 was widely used against Hindu minorities who had no connection with Pakistan for quite valid and obvious reasons. In November of 1976, Zia Ur Rahman abrogated the vested and non-resident property acts of 1974 and replaced it by an ordinance XCII of 1976. It empowered the government of Bangladesh to become custodians and to preserve enemy property in contemplation of arrangements to be made in the conclusion of peace with India. But the ordinance XCII of 1976 made the government owner of vested properties instead of protector of the same. Thus the government encroached upon the right of ownership, thereby forcing a large number of minorities to leave Bangladesh.

State Repression and Migration

The CHT in South-eastern Bangladesh covers an area of approximately 5.093 km² about 10% of the total land area of Bangladesh. It borders India to the north and Burma to the east. The population is Mongolian in race; the religion of the people is Buddhism, the problem of CHT in one of the legacies of partition where the non-Muslim Buddhists Chakmas found themselves in Pakistan / Bangladesh. Besides religion, their ethnic roots distinguish them from the majority Bengali Muslims. The ethno-linguistic and religious differences assumed a cultural-economic and religious differences assumed a cultural-economic dimension when the landless Bengali

Muslim from outside CHT were encouraged to settle in the hill tracts. This undermined the demography and cultural life of CHT. A crisis between the indigenous population and the government that encouraged outsiders, thus, became inevitable. The tendency of the government to resort to military means against genuine Jumma grievances led to their displacement and eventual migration to Indian Border States northeast.¹¹¹

Bangladesh inherited the problem of CHT since its independence 1972. Historically the hill tribes of CHT had always enjoyed an autonomous or quasi-autonomous status under the Mughals, British and in United Pakistan until 1964. In 1980, the British Indian government which succeeded the East India Company introduced direct rule in CHT and declared it as an administrative district, naming it the CHT by act XXII of 1860. In 1900, the British enacted the CHT regulation through which the region has been administered until.¹¹²

During the British days the area used to be governed under the CHT administrative act 1900. This act gave the local tribes autonomy and privileges, e.g., it accorded a special status to the tribesman with the guarantee that non-tribal wouldn't be allowed to purchase any cultivable land in the region and if the presence of any outsider, i.e., the non-tribal people was found to be detrimental to the tribal interest, he could be driven out of the area. The construction of the Karnafuli hydro-electric project as well as the resettlement policy of Zia-UR-Rahman defied the autonomy provision. In 1979 Zia Ur Rahman initiated a policy to encourage large scale transmigration of Bengalis to CHT. The settlers were poor Bengali families who were allotted five acres of hill land or four acres of mixed land or 2.5 acres of wet rice land in addition to free transport to cross to CHTs. They were provided rations and protections by the Bangladeshi armed forces. In 1979 and 1980, around 10000 Bengalis were settled into the CHTs. Further in 1982, another 10000 people entered the area, while additional 200000 went between 1982 and 1983.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Datta, Sreeradha, op.cit. n. 104, pp. 94-113.

¹¹² Kabir, Humayun Md, "The Problem of Tribal Separatism and Constitutional Reform in Bangladesh", in Iftikaruzzaman (ed.), *Ethnicity and Constitutional Reform in South Asia*. (New Delhi: Manahor, 1998), pp. 10-26.

¹¹³ Joshi, Ruchira, Situations of Minorities in Bangladesh". *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3-4, July-December 2003, pp. 103-145.

Ershaad continued with Zia's policies. Both Zia and Ershaad attempted to solve the crisis militarily. Thus it helped in the growth of an insurgent group called Shanti Bahini, their armed front of the Chakmas and Hajongs. Forced movement of the tribes from the region to neighbouring areas of India was a direct consequence of the military intervention by the successive governments. There was armed conflict between the Shanti Bahini and army and also the indigenous people and the Bengali people this caused large scale migration of the Chakma people. The government of Ershaad initiated dialogue with the Jana Samhiti Samiti (JSS), the political front of the tribal people but failed.¹¹⁴

Since 1977, small groups of Chakmas began to cross over into Tripura. This trend took a definite turn in June 1984. By 1987, the number of non-repatriated refugees swelled to 5000 and went up to 7000 in 1991, while some of them were repatriated; a large number of them were housed in various camps in Tripura.¹¹⁵

The CHT Accord, signed in 1997 is one of the most important ethnic peace accords in South Asia. The accord led to cessation of a protracted twenty years old hostilities between the tribal guerrilla group, the Shanti Bahinis and the Bangladesh government. The CHT accord signed on 2 December, 1997 by Abdul Hasant Abdullah, chief whips of the govt of Bangladesh and the head of the govt appointed committee on the CHT and JB Larma, the president of Parbiatya Chaattagram Zamon Samhiti became a model of conflict resolution in the world.¹¹⁶ However many provisions of the peace accord has not been implemented even after 8 years. The land disputes between the indigenous people and the Bengalis in CHT is yet to be resolved, rehabilitation of the Shanti Bahini cadres who had surrendered and also of the tribal refugee returnees from India awaits completion. The interim regional council has not work for greater harmony between tribal and Bengali settlers. The highly fragmented and fissured Bangladeshi politics remains the main hindrances towards the implementation of the peace accord. The accord has not brought peace in the region.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Barman, Dalem Ch. "Forced Migration in South Asia. A Study of Bangladesh", in Omprakash Mishra (ed.), *Forced Migration in the South Asian Region; Displacement Human Rights and Conflict Resolution*, (New Delhi: Manak Publication, 2004), pp160-167.

¹¹⁵ Datta, Sreeradha, op.cit. n. 104, pp. 99-100.

¹¹⁶ Nepam, Binalaxmi, "Accord into Discord: Conflict and the 1997 Peace Accord of C.H.T". *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, Vol. 7, Nos. 3-4, July-December 2003. pp. 146-168.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 146-168.

Chapter 3

Migration of Bangladeshis into Assam

The state of Assam is situated in the northeast region of India, and is connected to it through a narrow corridor of 18 kilometres (chicken neck). Due to its geographical and topographical conditions, Assam has always been attracted by people and communities from the neighbouring countries and other states of India for many decades. Its fertile land, the environmental condition and the presence of abundant natural resources is also one of the major factors of attraction. The migration of diverse people having different cultures and customs from different areas well mingled with the cultural set up of the state. These fusions have evolved into rich and composite culture of the state and highlights the assimilative character of the people. The Brahmaputra river is the most important natural feature of the state. It originates in Tibet, known as Tsang-Po, and it drives coastward for hundreds of kilometres and breaks through the Himalayas. It is then known as the Siang. It travels 300 hundreds kilometres of the forests hills of Arunachal Pradesh and meets Lohit in Assam, a river which has a deep association of the Assamese people. This union makes Brahmaputra (son of the god). Before entering Bangladesh, it passes throughout Assam for almost 800 kilometres and sweeps southwards beyond Dhubri. Then it moves towards the Bay of Bengal. In Assam a distinct monsoon season prevails and it records a high annual rainfall. The topography of Assam and the warm humid climate is conducive to plants and vegetation growth. Assam is the home of 51 forest and sub-forest types and the confluence of diverse patterns of vegetation.¹

Assam holds an important strategic position in the northeast India. Assam is surrounded by China and Bhutan on the north, by Burma in the east and south, and by Bangladesh on the south and west. Only a small corridor from its north-western parts connects its with the rest of India through West Bengal and Bihar. Assam has borders with six states² and two countries³. Assam constitutes about 2.4% of the total

¹ *Assam Human Development Report*, Planning and Development Department, (Dispur: Government of Assam, 2003), p. 1.

² Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram and Meghalaya. and (including Assam) it

geographical areas of India. According to the 2001 census, Assam has 26.64 million people and account for 2.59% of the countries total population. The density of population in Assam is 340 persons per square kilometres which is marginally higher than the average density of the country (324 people per square kilometre). Most of the Assamese people live in the lush and the verdant valleys of its two major river systems. The state is has 23 districts, where 18 districts are lying in the Brahmaputra valley and the three districts are lying in the Barak valley. There are two less densely populated hill districts in Assam known as Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar hills. All the districts in Assam vary considerably in size and population. The sprawling district of Karbi Anglong 10,500 square kilometres in area is nearly eight times as large as Hailakandi districts.⁴

The average population per district in Assam is 1.6 million. However, it is unevenly distributed. The range covers in the Kamrup district is 2.52 million, and 1.86 lakh persons are residing in north Cachar-hills. The spread of population densities is even larger. The most densely populated district in Assam is Nagaon, (604 people per square kilometres). It has population density of almost 16 times that of the least densely populated district, North Cachar hills (38 people per square kilometre). Most of the population professes Hindu religion (67.13%), while 28.43% are Muslims, 3.32% are Christians, Buddhists (.29%), Jains (.09%), and Sikhs (.07%). The urbanisation process in Assam is slow and the majority of its population reside in the villages (about 87.28%). Guwahati is the main hub of urban centre in the state only, there are small urban centres like Dibrugarh, Jorhat, and Sibsagar. In Nalbari districts nearly 98% of the population lives in the villages. Around 90% of the total population in 12 districts lives in rural areas.⁵ (Table 3.1)

The migration of the various people from across the border into Assam is not a recent phenomenon. Assam has long history of migration from parts of the Indian subcontinent and East Bengal. The migration of the both Bengali Hindus and

is known as seven sisters of the north-eastern region.

³ Bhutan and Bangladesh.

⁴ *The Territories and States of India*, First Edition. (London & New York, Europa Publication, 2003), pp. 62-69.

⁵ *Assam Human Development Report*, op. cit. n.1, p. 4.

Muslims from East Bengal into various parts of Assam has been mainly triggered economic backwardness in the sending country, and employment opportunities in the

Table 3.I

District wise Population Distribution in Assam

District	Areas (sq. km)	Population (lakhs)	Density (per sq. km)	Rural Population (% of total)
Dhubri	2838	1635	584	88.38
Kokrajhar	3129	930	294	93.23
Bongaigaon	2510	906	361	87.86
Goalpara	1824	822	451	91.85
Barpeta	3245	1642	506	92.39
Nalbari	2257	1138	504	97.63
Kamrup	4345	2515	579	64.21
Darrang	3481	1504	432	95.08
Sonitpur	5324	1678	315	91.18
Lakhimpur	2277	889	391	92.69
Dhemaji	3237	569	176	93.15
Morigaon	1704	776	455	95.1
Nagaon	3831	2315	604	87.99
Golaghat	3502	946	270	91.65
Jorhat	2851	1009	354	63.05
Sibsagar	2668	1053	395	90.79
Dibrugarh	3381	1172	347	81.23
Tinsukia	3790	1150	303	80.52
Cachar	3786	1442	381	86.06
Karimganj	1809	1004	555	92.73
Hailakandi	1327	543	409	91.71
Karbi Anglong	10434	812	78	88.55
N C Hills	4888	186	38	68.82
ASSAM	78438	26638	340	87.28

Source: Census of India, 2001, as cited in *Assam Human Development Report*, Planning and Development Department, Government of Assam, Dispur. p. 5.

host country.⁶ Prior to the annexation of Assam by the Britishers in 1826, (the valley of Brahmaputra), Assam was ruled by the Ahom Kingdom from the 13th century. Ahom the offshoot of the Tai or great Shan stocks of Southeast Asia-was also

⁶ Misra. Udayan, "Immigration and Identity Transformation in Assam". *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 34, No. 21, 22-28 May 1999, pp. 1264-1271.

attacked by the Burmese, as well as by the Mughals. However, the Mughals were finally expelled in 1682.⁷

The problem of mass migration into Assam is not of recent origin. The continuous flow of the non Assamese Indians as well as East Bengalis into Assam started after the advent of British power.⁸ There are three phases of migration of East Bengali people into Assam. The first stage was during the period of the British rule: 1826 to 1905, the second stage was 1905 to 1947 and the third stage has been post 1947 period. The first phase of migration into Assam started with the British rule. The migration in this stage mainly occurred because of the British policy of encouragement for settling the land hungry peasants and the labourers from East Bengal. The second stage of migration occurred due to the Muslim Leagues initiatives for settling Muslims in Assam, and also due to the divisions of the sub continent. And the third stage of migration of East Bengalis into Assam were caused by a range of factors including state repression, communal violence, environmental dislocation and deteriorating economic conditions in the neighbouring country i.e Bangladesh. However the case of Nepali migrants from Nepal has been different as most of them have come under the special provision of the India-Nepal peace friendship treaty of 1950 which allows reciprocal movement of people between these two countries.⁹

The first phase of migration of the East Bengalis to Assam started due to the British policy of importation of Bengali people to work in the tea gardens as well as to cultivate in the abundant lands in Assam. The employment opportunities, particularly in the tea gardens and the cultivable waste land in the Brahmaputra valley motivated the East Bengali people to migrate into the provinces of Assam. The establishment of the tea industry in 1839 and the discovery of the Digboi oil field in 1901 in Assam encouraged migration. The growth of jute industry in West Bengal and Assam under the British financed capital in the first few decades of the 20th century also caused the migration of the Muslim peasants of East Bengal. With the expansion of jute trade

⁷ Borpujari, H. K & Bhuiyan, A. C (ed.) *Political History of Assam*, (Dispur: Guwahati, 1977), pp. 1-6.

⁸ Sarin, V. I. K, *India's North-East in Flames*, (Ghaziabad: Vikas Publishing House, 1980), p. 53.

⁹ Das, Amiyo Kumar, *Assam's Agony, A Socio-Economic and Political Analysis*, (New Delhi: Lancers Publication, 1982), p. 25.

and cultivation, the migration of expert jute cultivator's of East Bengal became a regular feature. Commenting on the contribution of East Bengali people, Amalendu Guha rightly states that, "with their superior techniques of cultivation, these East Bengali peasants taught Assam how to grow jute and several other crops". He shows that "the acreage under jute in the Brahmaputra valley increased as a result of this great population movement from a little less than 30 thousand acres in 1905-1906 to more than 106 thousand acres in 1919-20".¹⁰

Another cause of migration of East Bengalis into Assam during this period was the inadequacy of the supplies of local labourers. The gradual increase of the number of tea gardens in Assam led to the corresponding increase in the demand for labour in which the local Assamese people were disinclined to work. The local Assamese people always objected about the working conditions in tea gardens as uncongenial. They found the wages that were offered to them to be comparatively low. Thus, the scarcity of labourers in the tea industry ever since its inception has been a major force behind the importation of the East Bengali people into Assam by the British.¹¹

It may be noted the migration of the East Bengalis to Assam occurred not only for the above mentioned causes but also due to the excessive pressure of land, the Zamindari oppression and exploitation over the peasants and economic compulsion. The suffering from the oppression of Zamindars in East Bengal, forced these peasants to migrate to the Brahmaputra valley in large numbers. They settled down on its beckoning waste land.¹²

Other pull factors that induced migration of East Bengali peasants into Assam were the Moamoriya peasant rebellion (the last quarter of the 18th century), the Burmese invasion and the spread of disease like Kala-Azar which affected the natural growth of population in Assam. The presence of abundant cultivable land was much more in proportion to the inhabitants of Assam. The British administration apparently

¹⁰ Guha, Amalendu, *Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*. (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1977), p. 102.

¹¹ Chattopadhyaya, Harprasad, *Internal Migration in India: A Case Study of Bengal*, (Calcutta: K P Bagchi & Company, 1987), pp. 198-199.

¹² Goswami, Prafulla Ch, *The Economic Development of Assam*, (Bombay: Asia Publication House, 1963), p. 27.

encouraged large scale migration into Assam from the various famine stricken areas and provinces of India during this period.¹³

Generally migration took place in a cultural and ethnically homogenous society. The migration of East Bengali people in this period took place mainly in the district of Goalpara. The Goalpara district was the first camp of these migrants. This is because it is a border district of Assam which was close to East Bengal border. Besides that, the ethnic factor was also responsible for the migration of these East Bengalis. The Goalpara district is inhabited mostly by the Bengalis as well as by the Muslim population. The East Bengalis having the similarities of language and religion chose Goalpara as their destination. The Muslims in this district constituted 85% of the total population, and 69% local inhabitants had Bengali language as mother tongue in 1901.¹⁴

In 1881 and 1891, the migration of East Bengalis into Assam numbered about 2.3 lakh and 4.18 lakh respectively.¹⁵ There was a large scale migration of East Bengali people in this period mainly from the district of Mymensingh to Goalpara district. This is evident from the fact that the decadal population growth rate in Mymensingh district was in decline. The decadal population growth rate in this district came down from 12.8% in 1891-1901 to 6.9 in 1911-1921. This transfer of population on a large scale completely changed the demographic composition in the two areas involved East Bengal and Assam. A decline in population of East Bengalis was also recorded in some other districts such as Rangpur, Bogra and Pabna. While the growth of population in some districts of Assam was growing unevenly due to the migration of East Bengali people. Table 3.II shows the decadal growth rates of the Eastern Bengal districts that went down sharply in each successive decade 1891,1901, 1911, 1921, and 1931 while the population growth rates for Assam valley districts rose sharply starting with 1911.

It is clear from the table 3.II that the population growth rate of Mymensingh, Rangpur, Bogra and Pabna in East Bengal decreased while that of Goalpara increased

¹³ Phukan, Girin, *Assam, Attitude to Federalism*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publication Private Limited, 1984), p.10.

¹⁴ Sarmah, Alaka, *Immigration and Assam Politics*, (New Delhi: Ajanta Publication, 1999), p. 15.

¹⁵ Census of India, 1891, Vol. III, p. 51 as cited in Sarmah, Alaka, n. 14, p. 16.

to 2% in 1901 increased to 15.8% during 1921-31 from a mere 2 percent in 1891-1901. In Kamrup district, it rose from 7% to 28%, in Darrang district from 9% to 22% and in Nogaon from 30% to 91%. It is obvious that the migration from the East Bengal districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur had causing serious

Table 3. II

Percentage Increase in Population

Years Decade	Mymensingh	Rangpur	Bogra	Pabna
1891-1901	12.8	4.3	11.8	4.8
1901-1921	6.9	5.1	6.6	2.7
1921-1931	6.1	3.7	3.5	3.7
Years Decade	Goalpara	Kamrup	Darrang	Nogaon
1891-1901	2	7.1	9.7	30
1901-1921	26.9	14.2	27	31.9
1921-1931	15.8	27.9	22.6	91.3

Source: Census of India- Assam Census Reports and Districts Census Handbooks, as cited in Alaka Sarmah, *Immigration and Assam Politics*, (Delhi: Ajanta Publication, 1999), p. 17.

concern to the government as early as the first quarter of the 20th century. The census report of that year had described the situation as alarming. It had expressed concern over the extraordinary settlement of the Goalpara chars. In the following, decades the movement of population of East Bengalis extended far up in the Assam valley including in Nagaon, Barpeta, Darrang and North Lakhimpur.¹⁶

With the partition of Bengal in 1905, large scale migration of Muslims began from the eastern part of Bengal, pushing up the Muslim population of Assam. The migration of the East Bengalis that occurred during the period of 1901 to 1931 was mainly attributed to the oppression of the landlords, the tacit welcome extended by the landed gentry in Goalpara, and the importation of the East Bengali peasants by the Assam's premier Sir Syed Saddullah's in 1930s under the, "Grow More Food Campaigns." Muslim population in Assam was promoted by the Muslim League

¹⁶ Sarin. V. I. K, op. cit. n. 8, pp. 19-20.

Chief Minister in Bengal, Suhraward, and his counterpart in Assam, Saadullah. Under this governmental sponsored campaign, Muslim cultivators were brought from Mymensingh and other districts of erstwhile Bengal in 1930-40 to settle in the government *Khas lands* in Goalpara, Kamrup, Nogaon, and Darrang districts of Assam. This accentuated the migration of people from East Bengal.¹⁷

A British expert Lloyd estimated that “the migrants from East Bengal, ‘including the children’ born after the arrival in Assam, the total number of settlers will be at least 300000 in 1921.” Mulan¹⁸ in his census report however cited that the number of immigrants in 1931 to be over half a million. As a prophet of doom, Mulan had warned that the wave was likely to “alter permanently” the future of Assam and that “in another thirty years Sibsagar district will be only part of Assam in which an Assamese will find himself at home.”¹⁹

Table.3. III

District wise Population Growth Rate in (%)

Districts	Years						
	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971
Kamrup			14.20		27.93		
Darrang		11.89	22.68	26.07	24.25	39.64	34.62
Nagaon	15.84	31.94	41.35	15.37	36.65	36.51	38.83
Lakhimpur	26.29	34.07	23.92	22.70	17.94	38.85	35.74
North Cachar					30.96	79.21	68.28

Source: completed by self

If we look at the population growth rate of Assam in district wise, in this period of 1911-1971, we can see that the Sibsagar district alone has shown a balanced growth rate. The average growth rate in this district during the 1911-71 periods was 17.4%. But the other districts in Assam had not upheld the uniform growth rate. Table3.III shows that the border district of Goalpara which was the first choice for settlements of the East Bengali migrants, registered a high growth rate of 29.97% in the 1911. Kamrup district felt the impact of migration in 1931, when the decadal variation rate rose suddenly from 14.20% to 27.93% in 1951. In 1941, the district shows an increase

¹⁷ Kumar, D. P, *Challenges to Indian Unity: Assam's Students Agitation and Government*, (Delhi: B R Publishing House, 1990, p. 1.

¹⁸ Sarin, V. I. K, op. cit. n. 8, p. 19-20.

¹⁹ Census of India, 1931 as cited in Sarmah, Alaka. op. cit. n. 14. pp. 18-19.

of population of 29.43%. The impact of migration in the Darang district was felt first in 1921, when the decadal variation suddenly shot up from 11.89% to 27.67%. The increase of population in this district in 1931, 1941, 1951, 1961, and 1971 was respectively 22.68%, 26.07%, 24.25%, 39.64%, and 34.62%. The next destination of the migrants after Goalpara was the district of Nogaon. The population in Nogaon district suddenly showed an increase from 15.84% in 1911, to 31.94% in 1921. The decennial increase in 1931, 1941, 1951, 1961, and 1971 were respectively 41.35%, 15.37%, 36.65%, 36.51%, and 38.83%. The growth rate in the district of Lakhimpur has been very high from the beginning. In 1911, the population in this district was 26.29%, in 1921, 1931, 1941, 1951, 1961, 1971, the decadal variation were 34.07%, 23.92%, 22.70%, 17.94%, 38.85%, and 35.74%, respectively. In the North Cachar hill district (also known as Mikir hill district), the growth rate has been highly abnormal. The regular census operations were started only in 1951 in this district. In 1951 the population in this district was 30.96%, but in 1961 it jumped to an all time high of 79.21% and in 1971 it came down to 68.28%. In the 1951-71 periods, karbi Anglong district registered a growth rate of 175.75%, perhaps the highest in India ever recorded. There is no earthly reason to view the abnormal growth rate of population in Assam as due to natural factors. Such abnormal growth rate could be attributed to unabated influx from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, and an immigrant from other parts of the country.²⁰

The next stage of migration of East Bengalis to India was due to the communal violence that characterised the subcontinent in the pre and post partition period. The division of the country on communal line was a major factor of mass movement of population in the subcontinent. Migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan and present Bangladesh constitute the largest contingent of refugees on Indian soil. The mass migration of Eastern Bengalis got further consolidation due to the communal violence that began in eastern part as early as in 1946, when the communal conflict in Noakhali of East Bengal broke out. There was a large scale out migration of both Hindus and the Muslims from that region. From 1941 the Hindu, the largest minority group in Bangladesh started declining. This was mainly due to the communal violence in that region. The percentage of minorities, primarily the Hindus, in East

²⁰ Sarin, V. I. K, op. cit. n. 8, p. 52.

Bengal has been steadily going down.²¹ A study mentioned that on “if there was no out migration of the Hindus from East Bengal and Bangladesh during 1961-91, there would have been 16.5 million Hindus in Bangladesh census of 1991.” According to our calculations from 1964 to 1991 a total of 5.3 million Hindus, that is on average 2,00,000 per year have gone missing. According to the census report of Hindu population has declined from 28.3% in 1941 to 12.6% in 1991.²²

The unusual form of decolonisation in the south region led to a massive migration of the minorities. The division of the subcontinent on the clearly demarcated grounds of religion and territory created borders on papers. It affected a large number of people in the subcontinent. The massive migrations following it put the seal of permanence on the reality of post-colonialism. Following the partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947, 15 million people both Hindus and Muslims crossed the newly defined borders, a phenomenon that has been termed as the greatest mass migration ever recorded in the world. In West Bengal alone an estimated 3 million refugees entered by 1960. While the movement of Muslims from India to Pakistan gradually came to a halt, the migration of minority Hindus from East Pakistan to India continued in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.²³

Even after the partition of the country in 1947 the flow of migrants continued. After the partition, the movement of population didn't stop, due to economic hardship, scarcity of cultivable land and unemployment, as well as environmental degradation in East Pakistan, people continued to come to India. They continued to migrate to the adjacent north-eastern and eastern border secretly without obtaining the required travel documents. Through unauthorised routes and the invitation by the early sheltered migrants, they continued to pour in India. Repeated communal disturbances

²¹ Ghosh, Partha S, “India-Bangladesh Loves Labour Lost”. in Partha S Ghosh, *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, (Dellhi: Manohar, 1989). p. 206.

²² Gulhathakurta, Meghna, “Bangladesh, A Land of Shifting Populations”, in Tapan K. Bose & Rita Manchanda (ed.) *States, Citizens and Outsiders: The Uprooted People of South Asia*, (Kathmandu: South Asian Forum for Human Rights, 1997), pp. 116-117.

²³ Bose, Pradip Kumar, “Refugees in West Bengal: The State and Contested Identities”, in Pradip Kr Bose (ed.) *Refugees in West Bengal: Institutional Practices and Contested Identities*, (Calcutta: Calcutta Research Group, 2000), pp. 4-5.

in East Pakistan, especially in 1952 and 1964, led to the migration of a large scale Hindus and other non Muslims into Assam.²⁴

Communal disturbances during the period of division also rocked Assam in February-March 1950. And for that reason a large number of migrants from East Bengal went back in the wake of riots. The Nehru-Liaquat pact which was signed in 1950 provided the resettlement of this displaced people. Most of the Muslims settlers who left Pakistan due to outbreak of communal disturbances in East Bengal and Assam and came back to Assam in the same year. The free movement between the then East Pakistan as provided by the Nehru-Liaquat pact subsequently resulted in fresh influx of a large number of migrants in Assam. But there was hardly any machinery to keep track of these migrants. The migrants who eventually settled in the state with the help and support of their friends and relatives started posing themselves as Indian nationals.²⁵

The post partition migration of East Bengalis into India and was basically caused by the communal conflict, the process of Islamisation, environmental degradation, political repression and economic degeneration in East Pakistan. Discriminations against the religious minorities by the rulers of Pakistan after partition also resulted in a mass exodus of minorities especially, Hindus from East Pakistan to Assam. There are forces in Bangladesh which are constantly working to see that the non-Muslims are sent out of the country. The religious fanatics, the Islamic fundamentalists are pursuing this mission in an organised way with the help of the unconscious common people. As a tactic they prefer direct communal attack to create a threatening situation.²⁶

Migration of Bangladeshis into India has been a long established fact. From the nineteenth century the dynamics of these population movements, have been varied and complex. The migrant population of Bangladeshi origin in India can be said to consist presently of long settled migrants, refugees and economic migrants. Prior to 1947, the experience of this part of British India was with intra-state migration

²⁴ Mahanta, P. K, *The Tussle between the Citizens and Foreigners in Assam*, (Ghaziabad: Vikas Publishing House), p. 93.

²⁵ Sarin, V.I. K, op. cit. n.8, p. 21.

²⁶ Bose, Pradip, Kumar, op. cit. n. 23, p. 50.

between geographically contiguous regions. On numerous occasions, geographical contiguity proved to be an impetus for administrative unification of diverse ethnic linguistic and religious communities. This further facilitated the exchange of populations on intra-regional or intra-provincial level. Such movements were essentially motivated by economic reasons.²⁷

Table 3. IV
Percentage Distribution of Population by Religious
Communities in Bangladesh (1901-1991)

Year	Muslims	Hindus	Others
1901	66.1	33	0.9
1911	67.2	31.5	1.3
1921	68.1	30.6	1.3
1931	69.5	29.4	1.2
1941	70.3	28	1.8
1951	76.9	22	1.1
1961	80.4	18.5	1.1
1971	85.4	13.5	1.1
1981	86.7	12.1	1.2
1991	88.3	10.5	1.2

Sources; Government of Bangladesh, *Analytical Report of Population Census 1991*, Vol. 1, Dhaka, May 1994, p.103.

It is very difficult to estimate that presence of the actual number of Bengali refugees in India. But there are certain reasons to believe that if we take all the refugees the number would be more than 15 million. It is revealed from the analysis of the census figure of Bangladesh. Table.3.IV gives empirical evidences of the decline of minorities in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, in 1941, 28.3% of the total population constituted religious minorities (Hindus, Christians and others) and 70.3% were Muslims. In 1951, 22% of the total population was enumerated as Hindus and another 1.1% as other non-Muslim population. In 1991, the percentage share of the minorities declined to 10.5. More than 94 million were Muslims and little more than 12 million were the Hindus. To put it in another way, in 50 years, between 1941 and 1991, the Muslim population increased by 219.5 % as against only 4.5% increase of Hindu population. Had the normal growth rate been maintained the Hindu population would

²⁷ Bose, Pradip, Kumar, op. cit. n. 23, p. 6.

have been about 30 million and not 12.5 million as stood in 1991. Going by this method of calculation nearly 18 million Hindus have left Bangladesh over this period. Stating this missing population Salam Azad has estimated that between 1974 and 1981, 1.22 million, and between 1981 and 1991 another 1.73 million people have left Bangladesh. He further estimated that on an average 475 Hindus are leaving Bangladesh everyday and this would put the yearly figure 1, 73,375, and the post 1971 number to 5.2 million.²⁸

The influx of the Hindus in post-1971 period can be seen in the perspective of the earlier phase. From 1946 to 1949, an estimated 1,10,0000 Hindu refugee entered West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura. It is estimated that about 5,20,0000 Hindus entered India during 1964-1970. Though the majority of the 1, 0000000 refugees of 1971, of whom 85% were Hindus, returned in 1972, the process of Islamisation during the Zia and Ershad regimes in Bangladesh renewed the flow of minorities. The violence which gripped Bangladesh in the wake of the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in December 1992 and large scale destruction of places of worship and property again forced many Hindus to seek sanctuary in India.²⁹

Liberation War

The Bangladesh liberation war also generated a large number of exoduses of people. About 7.5 million Bangladeshis came over to India during the war in 1971. There was a lull on refugee movement after the birth of Bangladesh. Millions of non-Muslims as well as Muslims came to India to save themselves from the brutality of the Pakistani military. After the liberation war, most of the refugees went back to Bangladesh with the high hopes and ideals generated by the freedom struggle. But some of them stayed back in India and disappeared in Indian Territory.³⁰ The migration of Bangladeshis again accentuated due to the political instability and upheavals that persisted in the Bangladesh society. The law and order situation during the Mujib period had deteriorated and atrocities on the landed non-Muslims were on the rise. The minority

²⁸ Roy, Sanjay K, "Bengali Refugees in India and Their Rights". *Journal of Anthropological Survey of India*, March 2002, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 82-101.

²⁹ Samnadar, Ranabir, *The Marginal Nation, Migration of Bangladeshis to West Bengal*, (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 1999), p.205.

³⁰ Weiner, Myron, "Immigration: Perspectives from Receiving Countries", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1990, pp. 157-158.

communities always felt insecure, the villages were no longer safe places for the women as they were attacked frequently. The members of the minority communities are physically attacked, the religious places, the temples and ashrams are destroyed and religious functions are disrupted. There are reports of forceful religious conversion, lifting of girls belonging to minority communities, and forceful take over of landed property. In many cases the interested parties are resort to all such atrocities outside the fundamentalist design by using the prevailing threat perception and in connivance with the police and legal authorities.³¹

With the growing threat perception to the minorities like Hindus, Buddhists and Christians who had gone back to Bangladesh after the war started coming over to India again. These migrants choose West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Assam as they were having cultural affinity with these states. According to 1981 census the refugee population had increased by 1.44 million between 1971 and 1981. Migration continued in the 1980s, 1990, and even thereafter. The process now appears to be unstoppable.³²

During the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971, a total of 11, 00000 forced migrants took shelter in Assam. While the bulk of them returned to their homes following the liberation of Bangladesh, about 1, 00000 of them are believed to have stayed back in Assam. The Assam police detected a total of 99583 during the period from 1972 to 1978. The number of undetected infiltrators is feared to be many times more. There is an unprecedented growth of voters in Assam. During the revision of electoral rolls in 1979, as many as 3, 46,000 objections on grounds of doubtful nationality were filed but it was believed that the numbers of foreigners who managed to get their names included in the voter lists was many times more. No wonder there was a general hue and cry for the removal of their names from the electoral rolls by the All Assam Students Union and the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) demanded the expulsion of Bangladeshi migrants (AASU).³³

³¹ Ferris E (ed.) *Refugees and World Politics*, New York. Praegar, 1985, p. 6 as cited in Roy, Sanjay K, op. cit. n. 28, p. 88.

³² Roy, Sanjay K, op. cit. n. 28, pp. 83-101.

³³ De, Sibopada, *Illegal Migrations and the North-East: A Case Study of Migrants from Bangladesh*, (Kolkatta: Anamika Publishers & Distributors (p) Ltd. 2005), pp. 56-59.

With the birth of Bangladesh in 1971, many had thought that there would not be any more movement of people. Now there are more than 10 million migrants from Bangladesh in India. They have settled down in the various states of India like West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Orissa, and Bihar. The refugees sneak and settle down on their own by using their resources, the kinship network and the accommodative social atmosphere in West Bengal. They are however, not welcome everywhere. In states like Assam and Meghalaya they have to face the wrath of ethnic upsurge and in Delhi and Bombay they are met with police atrocities. West Bengal has seen a much organised population movement in the 1950s and 1960s under the leadership of left parties. Such movements have helped their rehabilitation in West Bengal. The refugee movement had a lasting impact on the political map of West Bengal in the latter decades. The economic and political implications of migration for the states like Assam, Tripura, and West Bengal could hardly be overemphasised. The excessive pressure on the resources of these states is worth noting. The refugee's movements had contributed significantly to the shaping of left movement in Tripura and West Bengal. Their presence in large numbers have also provoked ethnic upsurge in Assam and Tripura. The abnormal growth of population in Assam after Bangladesh liberation war caused animosities and ethnic conflict in that region. They demanded that the 'foreigners' who had entered Assam after 1966 should be deported.³⁴

Migration to Assam

In 1974, controversy broke out over the validity of the so-called exit permits issued by Bangladesh to those willing to go back to India on the ground that they were Indian's and had come to Bangladesh after the liberation. Numerous reports started appearing in Indian news paper in 1975 about illegal Bangladeshi migrations into Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Tripura and other border states of India. The parliament was reported by the External Affairs Minister that the number of illegal migrants in India from Bangladesh between Aprils to December 1974 was 15278; in 1975 it was 38445 and in 1976 it stood at 7,014. *The Statesman* contradicted the 'low

³⁴ Roy, Sanjay K, "Refugees and Human Rights: The Case of Refugees in Eastern and Northeastern States of India", in Sanjay K Roy (ed.) *Refugees and Human Rights*, (Rawat Publication: New Delhi, 2001), pp. 26-28.

figures' and claimed quoting Home Ministry (BSF) figures that as 'high' a figure as 78808 persons were detected and sent back.³⁵

There is a continuous rise in the population of West Bengal and the neighbouring states of Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. This can be revealed by comparing the growth rate of the population of India and to that of West Bengal. The population of India have recorded a decadal increase 21.51% (1951-61), 24.80 % (1961-71), 24.66% (1971-81), and 23.50% (1981-91); whereas West Bengal recorded a much higher increase of 32.80% (1951-61), 26.87% (1961-71), 23.17% (1971-81), and 24.55% (1981-91). The overall density of population in India rose by 51 per square kilometre as against 151 persons in West Bengal.³⁶ This above mentioned analysis shows that this growth occurred due to the migration from Bangladesh.

Table 3. V
Decadal Percentage Variation in Population since 1901

Period	India	Assam
1901-11	5.75	16.99
1911-21	-0.31	20.48
1921-31	11	19.91
1931-41	14.22	20.4
1941-51	13.31	19.93
1951-61	21.64	34.98
1961-71	24.8	34.95
1971-81	24.66	23.36
1981-91	23.86	24.24
1991-2001	21.34	18.85

Source: Census of India, various years as cited in *Assam Human Development Report*, Planning and Development Department, Government of Assam, Dispur, p. 6.

In the 20th century, between the years 1901 and 2001, the population of Assam increased by a little over eight fold, clearly outpacing the average rate growth of population in the rest of the country. An examination of the trends of population growth in Assam shows that the decadal variation in population has been much

³⁵ Partha S Ghosh, "India-Bangladesh Loves Labour Lost" in Partha S Ghosh, *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989), pp. 81-102.

³⁶ Roy, Sanjay, K, op. cit. n. 28, p. 204.

together than India as a whole. This was especially so in the first half of the century. Subsequently too, the growth in population in Assam has been substantially larger than in India. It is only in the last decade that the decadal variation in Assam has declined to a rate less than that of India. (Table 3. V)

Table 3. VI
Decadal Variations in Population, Assam, 1901-2001

District	1901-11	1911-21	1921-31	1931-41	1941-51	1951-61	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1991-2001
Dhubri	29.97	26.92	15.76	14.83	9.25	27.1	40.51	56.57	23.42	
Kokrajhar	29.97	26.92	15.76	14.83	9.25	44.18	54.3	76.78	15.05	
Bongaigaon	29.94	26.94	15.94	14.97	9.31	60.81	40.29	64.64	12.23	
Goalpara	29.97	26.92	15.76	14.83	9.25	37.1	45.88	54.12	23.07	
Barpeta	20.02	34.04	69.02	44.04	18.77	32.62	35.81	43.02	18.53	
Nalbari	13.33	14.2	27.92	29.43	17.89	49.62	42.02	49.27	11.98	
Kamrup	11.1	7.06	9.38	19.21	17.17	37.75	38.8	65.72	25.75	
Darrang	-0.25	11.78	26	35.5	24.13	44.75	43.24	55.63	15.79	
Sonitpur	24.33	40.69	20.5	19.73	24.26	35.82	27.62	57.14	17.8	
Lakhimpur	26.29	34.07	23.91	22.7	17.94	50.46	43.39	16.29	18.34	
Dhemaji	26.29	34.07	23.92	22.69	17.94	75.21	103.42	107.5	18.93	
Morigaon	15.84	31.84	41.35	15.37	36.63	37.89	37.51	50.9	21.29	
Nagaon	15.84	31.84	41.35	15.37	36.65	33.91	38.99	51.2	22.3	
Golaghat	16.55	19.83	18.29	1.27	19.76	26.04	30.35	58.12	14.21	
Jorhat	16.9	17.26	8.88	15.27	14.87	24.17	17.47	83.1	15.84	
Sibsagar	13.41	20.46	14.44	15.64	15.98	23.36	19.47	38.76	15.95	
Dibrugarh	26.29	34.07	23.91	32.7	17.94	30.64	22.93	37.78	12.43	
Tinsukia	26.29	34.07	23.92	32.7	17.94	35.92	31.03	47.03	19.52	
Karbi										
Anglong	---	---	---	---	30.95	79.21	68.28	74.72	22.57	
N C Hills	-33.12	5.92	13.6	13.75	6.16	36.93	40	98.3	23.47	
Karimganj	12.94	3.91	8.91	9.52	29.87	22.96	25.13	42.08	21.35	
Hailakandi	16.09	7.59	7.08	10.29	17.48	27.23	23.61	45.94	20.92	
Cachar	12.33	5.98	7.6	13.08	23.92	22.6	23.96	47.59	18.66	

Source: Census of India, various years as cited in *Assam Human Development Report*, Planning and Development Department, Government of Assam, Dispur, p. 8.

There are discernible trends in this analysis of district-wise decadal variations in population (Table 3. VI). Most districts have sustained high increases of population in the pre-independence period, in particular the lower Assam districts, and the tea growing districts of upper Assam and the north bank. In the post independence period while the lower Assam districts have sustained high increases, the districts of

Lakhimpur and Dhemaji have also seen population increases of high order, as have the sparsely populated hill districts. Post-1991, the rate of increase all over Assam has stabilised.

In Assam, the politics of migration persistently overshadowed many other issues. One cannot ignore the geographical realities and historical facts and compulsions in evaluating the trend and extent of migration, which had undoubtedly governed the flow of population in Assam. The problem of migration and possible threat to Assamese identity persisted even before independence. With the partition of the country on the eve of independence the situation took the turn for the worse.³⁷

Assam Movement

The growing influx of the Bangladeshi national into Assam created a situation of animosity among the people of Assam. With the fear of losing their identity, Assamese people started the movement against the foreigners. The Assamese people started demanding that Assam should not be a burden with further migration from foreign lands. They demanded that all genuine foreigners who don't qualify for citizenship, in terms of the law and the constitution, should be detected and deported. It was accepted by all the people of Assam and even by the political parties in 1979 and this acceptance were reiterated again and again.³⁸

The All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) were in the forefront of the Assam agitation. Popularly known as Assam Movement, the agitation in the beginning started peacefully but later it turned violent when the state administration was disinclined to meet their demands. AASU managed to get support of the masses in the anti-foreigner upsurge. The first organisation to lead the movement was the AASU and it was supported by a number of political parties like Jatiyatabdi Dal, and the Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad (PLP). AASU in its memorandum presented to the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, stated that the influx of the Bangladeshis into Assam has created an alarming situation and the very existence of the indigenous population is threatened. According to them these

³⁷ Sharmah, Alaka, op cit. n.14, p. 28.

³⁸ Guha, Amclendu, "Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist. Assam's Anti Foreigner Upsurge 1979-1980", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22-28 May. Vol. 11, No. 9. pp. 1699-1720.

problems attack the sovereignty of the country and accused the political leaders and intelligentsia for mishandling the situation. AASU demanded that the foreign nationals should be detected and deported. The entire voter list must be totally free of foreigner's names before holding any election in future.³⁹

The Assam movement started with demonstrations and rallies with widespread participation by ethnic Assamese in support of the demands. The movement began with festive and mostly peaceful protest actions, but with some reports of ethnic violence and conflicts and signs of confrontation between the Indian state and the movement began to show by the middle of 1980. In December 1979, the civil disobedience was extended to an economic blockade, and the movement supporters stopped the flow of crude oil and plywood from Assam to the rest of the country. With the enthusiastic support for the demands of the movement by major sectors of Assamese intellectual and cultural life apart from the leadership role for AASU and Asom Sahitya Sabha (ASS), the Assam movement managed to mobilise extremely broad support among the ethnic Assamese.⁴⁰

All Assam Students Union was in the forefront of the Assam Agitation. Besides AASU, there was other organization a number of organizations also involved in this agitation. Their main motto was the "detection, deletion, and deportation of all illegal migrants." All Assam Gana Sangram Samiti (AAGSP) was also with the agitation. The organization was set up in 27th august, 1979; there were three convenors in the organization, namely, Bhrigu Kumar Phukan (AASU), Jatin Goswami (ASS) and Atul Bora (PLP) to head the AAGSP for coordination. There are some other organizations which joined AAGSP were Assam Jatiyatabadi Dal (AJD), the Assam Jatiyatabadi Yuva-Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), and the Assam Yuvak Samaj (AYS). By the end of the December 1979, the Plain Tribal Council (progressive), the All Assam Tribal Sangha and Young Lawyers Forum joined the AAGSP. Ironically the AAGSP is a forum which has been fighting on behalf of the government of India for a national cause of security and integrity.⁴¹

³⁹ All Assam Students Union, Memorandum, Presented to Indira Gandhi, as cited in V R Trivedi (ed) *Documents in Assam, Part-B*, (New Delhi: Omsons Publication, 1995). Pp. 635-639.

⁴⁰ Baruah, Sanjib, *India Against itself and the Politics of Nationality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 105-106.

⁴¹ Das, Amiyó Kr, op. cit. n. 9, p. 65.

The AASU has long track record of demonstrations, struggles and satyagrahas for various genuine causes such as: establishment of Guwahati University, the oil refinery, promotion of Assamese as state language, and the deportation of the illegal migration. The organization had evolved since independence of India. The 35 member AASU executive body has representatives from all the districts. They had an extremely interesting and effective method of decision making and its implementation. One more organization involved in the Assam agitation was the Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad (PLP). It was founded in 1977. The organization came into being as a protest against the national parties which did not look after the interests of the northeastern region. This is how they felt the need for a political party. This party had regional appeal and had thrown itself fully into the movement. The Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) had a literary organization has also been active in presenting and promoting Assamese language, literature, culture and identity over three quarters of a century. ASS had been continuously supporting the cause for the agitation. The Assam Yuvak Samaj founded by Ambikagiri Roy Choudhary, has been in existence since 1965 and had been raising its voice for various causes of Assam. The AYS is an active partner in the movement.⁴² There were also hundreds of local small organizations and units which supported actively in the movement.

There was wide spread protests for the removal of the names of foreigners from the electoral rolls, and it spread to the entire Brahmaputra valley when the mid-term poll to the Lok Sabha was announced. Minorities in Assam were scared that their names might get removed from the electoral rolls.

With the announcement of the Lok Sabha election schedule, the agitation was further intensified. The AASU and the regional parties gave a call for the boycott of elections. There was hardly any political activity taking place on ground in Assam except for the agitation. The scene was dominated by the AASU. The candidate's houses were subjected to gherao and agitators resorted to every technique to ensure that the intending candidates were prevented from filling nominations. It was obvious that unless the state administration intervened effectively, no machination could be

⁴² Das, Amiyo Kr, cit. n. 9, pp. 105-107.

filled. However there was no evidence of any such inclination on the part of the administration.⁴³ The foreign national's movement launched by the AASU "demanding detection deletion and deportation" of illegal Bangladeshi migrants clandestinely living in Assam continued for six years from 1979 to 1985. The movement however, basically aimed at preserving the Assamese cultural and linguistic identity safe from the invasion of aliens' ethos.⁴⁴

The Illegal Migrants Determination Tribunal Act (IMDT) was enacted at the height of the anti-foreigner's movement in Assam on October 15, 1983. It is an instrument for detection of illegal migrants from Bangladesh and their expulsion from the state of Assam, the act only operates in Assam. The large scale violence during the movement including the Neile and Chaolkhowa Chapori massacres, had led to understandable apprehension among the minorities in Assam. There were chances and possibilities that in the process of detecting through the judicial process, some genuine Indian citizens may get harassed. There were also possibilities that in deporting illegal people from Assam, the Indian minorities may get affected and the possibilities of deporting cannot be ignored. But whatever the fact may be, the act was found to be primarily serving the interest of the illegal migrants in practice, which was passed on the plea of protecting the genuine Indian citizens.⁴⁵

The Act provided for two individuals living within a radius of 3 kilometres of a suspected illegal migrant to file a complaint accompanied with a deposit of Rs.25. Later the restriction was modified and the complaint can be from the same police station area as the individual being complained against. The deposit fee has been reduced from Rs.25 to Rs.10. The Police can also *Suo Moto* and initiate action. The act provided for screening for examination by the district tribunals and for appeal to the Appellate Tribunal. However, the provisions were time consuming and delayed the process of detection as well as deportation.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 57.

⁴⁵ Assam Governor S K Sinha's Report, on *Illegal Migration into Assam*, Submitted to the President of India, 8 November, 1998, Raj Bhavan, Guwahati, pp. 5-7.

⁴⁶ The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act 1983, as Passed by the Houses of Parliament in 1983, Bill No. 116-F of 1983, pp. 1-4.

The AASU and the other parties of Assam movement opposed the act and asked for immediate repeal as it was highly discriminatory legislation applying only to Assam and not in any other states. They argue that such legislation should not have been on the statute of any sovereign state, the act gives freedom to an alien person to enter this country. And give chance to that alien person to prove that he is an illegal migrant to deny him citizenship. Under the Foreigners Act which applies to the rest of the country and which is in consonance with the practice followed the world over; it is for the foreigner to prove that he is an Indian national to claim Indian citizenship. The IMDT Act shifts the burden of proof on the complainant or the police, to establish that the person complained against is a foreigner. But any move to repeal the IMDT Act is likely to encounter strong opposition from the minorities and their supporters, for vested reasons. At the same time, some of the supporters of the act have been suggesting removing the allegation of discrimination connected with this Act. They want its provisions to extend to other States also.⁴⁷

According to a Supreme Court observation, 310,759 enquiries were initiated under the IMDT act, while only 10,015 persons were declared illegal migrants and only 1,481 illegal migrants were physically expelled up to April 30, 2000. It must be noted that in the case of West Bengal, where the foreigner act was applicable, 489,046 persons were deported between 1983 and November 1999.⁴⁸ The Supreme Court of India struck down the controversial IMDT Act on 12th July, 2005. The number of cases pending before the tribunal under the IMDT act would now stand transferred to the tribunals under the foreigner acts. The court also directed the Governor of Assam to constitute sufficient number of tribunals under the foreigners act to deal with the situation. The petition also said that the act was only encouraging vote bank politics without addressing the mammoth problem of illegal migrants.⁴⁹ It has said that the vote bank policy of the Congress party and the other left parties will definitely get affected.

⁴⁷ Kakati, Satish C, "The Assam accord II", *The Statesman*, 25th November, 1995.

⁴⁸ *The Times of India*, Monday, 18 July, 2005.

⁴⁹ *The Hindu*, and also see *The Times of India*, *The Hindustan Times*, 13 July, 2005.

Assam Accord: Process of Solution

After the prolonged agitation by the AASU and allied organisation government has all along been most anxious to find a satisfactory solution to the problems of foreigners in Assam. The AASU and AAGSP have also expressed their keenness to find a solution. The AASU through their memorandum dated 2nd February 1980 presented to the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, conveyed their profound sense of apprehensions regarding the continuing influx of foreign nationals into Assam and the fear about adverse effects upon the political, social, cultural and economic life of the state.⁵⁰ Being fully alive to the genuine apprehensions of the Assam the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi initiated a dialogue with the AASU/AAGSP. Subsequently talks were held at the Prime Ministers and Home Minister's levels during the period 1980-83. Several rounds of informal talks were held during 1984. Formal discussions were resumed in March 1985. The Assam accord dealt with the issues of illegal immigrants and decided to implement the following:

1. For purpose of detection and deletion of foreigners 1.1.1966 shall be the base date an year.
2. All persons who came to Assam prior to 1.1.1966 including those amongst them whose names appeared on the electoral rolls used in 1967 elections shall be regularized.
3. Foreigners who came to Assam after (inclusive) and up to 24th march, 1971 shall be detected in accordance with the provisions of the foreigners act, 1946 and foreigners (tribunals) order 1964.
4. Names of the foreigners so detected will be deleted from electoral rolls in force. For this purpose government of India will undertake suitable strengthening of the governmental machinery.
5. All persons who were expelled earlier, but have since re-entered illegally into Assam, shall be expelled.
6. Foreigners who came to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 shall continue to be detected, deleted and expelled in accordance with law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners.

⁵⁰ All Assam Students Union, Memorandum, op. cit. n. 45, pp. 635-639.

7. The government will give due consideration to certain difficulties expressed by the AASU and AAGSP regarding the implementation of the illegal migrants (determination by tribunals) Act, 1983.⁵¹

The main provision in the accord was, "Constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people. The government takes this opportunity to renew their commitment for the speedy all round economic development of Assam, so as to improve the standard of living of the people. Special emphasis will be placed on education and science and technology through establishment of national institutes. The international border shall be made secure against future infiltration by erection of physical barrier like walls, fencing, and other obstacles at appropriate places. It will be ensured that relevant laws for prevention of encroachment of government lands and lands in tribal belts and blocks are strictly enforced and unauthorized encroachers evicted as laid down under such laws. The AASU and AAGSP call of the agitation and assure the full cooperation and dedicate themselves towards the development of the country."⁵²

Besides the arrangement mentioned above and keeping in view of the security considerations, the government has decided to construct roads, border fences and other necessary measures to curb infiltration across the border. As a policy measure and in order to prevent illegal infiltration and anti-national activities across border government of India started constructing fencing in the border. In the first phase of fencing in Indo-Bangladesh border started in 1989, 854.35 kilometres have been erected as against the target of 857.37 kilometres. And in the second phase, government has approved additional fencing of 2429.5 kms.⁵³

Role of Political Parties

Ever since the beginning of Assam agitation on the foreign national's issue, the national level political parties have hardly displayed any deeper analysis of the

⁵¹ "Assam Accord", Memorandum of Settlement, as cited in D P Kumar, *Challenge to India's Unity Assam Students Agitation And Government*, (Delhi: B R Publishing Corporation, 1990), pp. 340-343.

⁵² Ibid, pp. 340-343.

⁵³ *Annual Report 2003-2004*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, p. 57.

movement and its consequences on Indian nation state. They in fact seem to have been guided more by opportunism rather than anything else. Most of the time political parties have played a vacillating and have treated this sensitive issue from the pure vote bank perspectives.⁵⁴

Among the entire left parties, some groups of Marxist-Leninist tendency (M-L) seem to have been most alert on the question of Assam. The left parties like Communist Party of India Marxist (CPI M) always termed the Assam agitation as secessionist and chauvinist in character. The CPI (M) has always been against the Assam agitation. In a political resolution adopted by CPI (M) in 1982 at Vijawada it stated that “secessionist influence in the North-Eastern region including Assam is due to the backward condition of the region and denial of rapid industrial development. The secessionists have succeeded in diverting the discontent arising from mounting economic misery into disruptive channels. They have also used the fear of foreign influx to strengthen the secessionist appeal.”⁵⁵ The party’s first task is to fight all divisive and secessionist forces which undermine national unity. The resolution clearly states that they were not in favour of the agitation and viewed it as secessionist as a act. However, the CPI (M) completely failed to give any concrete evidence of secessionism in Assam. To prove the ground of secessionism they alleged that Adivasi areas are providing ideal ground for some Christian missionaries to spread the message of separation from the country. And they again alleged that the imperialist propagandists are attempting to dismember the country through such propaganda. However, these assertions necessarily don’t substantiate the concrete evidence of secessionism.⁵⁶ The CPI (M) in another resolution during the Janata Party rule both in the centre and in the state declared that “influx of people from across the border must be stopped. They demanded that the border must be completely sealed. It is the duty of both the central and the state government to tackle such problems immediately.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Sarmah, Alaka, op. cit. n.14, p. 58.

⁵⁵ Singh, Manju, Assam: Politics of Migration and Quest for Identity, (Jaipur: Ajanta Publication, 1990), pp. 178-180.

⁵⁶ The Political Resolution Adopted by CPI (M) in 1982 (Vijayawada) as cited in op. cit. no. 14, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁷ *Bideshi Nagarikar Prabahan Samparke Prastab* (Assamese). Resolution Adopted in the CPI (M) State Committee Mect (21st September, 1978) as cited in Sarmah, Alaka, op. cit. n. 14, p. 59.

In 1978 the agitating parties in Assam resorted direct action over the foreigner issue. Within weeks slogans were raised and the movement organised for the boycott of the Lok Sabha elections. The result was that election to twelve out of fourteen Lok Sabha constituencies could not be held in 1978. According to CPI (M) the unity and the integrity of the country was disrupted by not participating in the election. The CPI (M) along with several left and democratic parties stood firmly against the anti foreigners movement in Assam. The party viewed that "anti foreigner" campaign is a movement directed against the linguistic, ethnic and religious minorities in Assam. The so called 'foreigners' according to them were either Indian citizens from other states or the refugees who have come to Assam from the territories of former East Pakistan. "The CPI (M) along with its left and democratic allies also sees in the anti foreigner movement a force of destabilisation in whose creation and working American imperialism plays an important role."⁵⁸

The CPI (M) wants a democratic solution to the problem of foreigners in Assam fully protecting the rights of all those non-Assamese speaking people. The position taken by the CPI (M) in the issue of migration of foreign nationals and the movements launched by the AASU and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) over the issue appear to be unjustifiable.⁵⁹

The Communist Party of India (CPI) doesn't have a proper view on migration from the neighbouring countries. They suggested more or less about the regularisation of these people and were in favour of giving citizenship to these people. The CPI did not consider the problem of migration seriously. They termed the agitation as anti democratic and secessionist in nature. They provided their own solution to these problems. According to the party, the foreigners who had entered Assam after 25th March, 1971 should be detected and deported back to Bangladesh. Those people who had entered Assam during 1961-71 should be distributed in all the states of India and be given citizenship. The Indo-Bangladesh border must be completely sealed off.⁶⁰ The CPI in one of their meetings in Guwahati suggested that those who came after 1971 should be divided into four categories, (a) the foreigners who were detected and

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 59.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 59-62.

⁶⁰ Asomar Bideshi Nagarikar Samasya aru Bharatar Communist Party. Leaflet Published by CPI (Assam), Guwahati, 1982, p. 27, as cited in Sarmah, Alaka, op. cit. n. 14, pp. 58-70.

deported earlier but came back again, should be deported again. (b) those who were settled on Indian soil should be regularised and be given citizenship. (c) those that were detected, but not deported by the government should be deported and (d) but those who settled down on their own, but detected with the help of law should be deported. But the government should see the humanitarian question here before detecting.⁶¹ But this position was not compatible with the dominant view of AASU, the movement leaders and the people.

The Assam Agitation over the issue of foreigners rendered the national parties almost totally irrelevant in Assam politics. If we look back to the Congress Party in Assam, we find that the party almost (dominated) ruled the state from 1952 to 1983 except 1977 (Janata Government). The Congress had a near total hegemony over Assamese society with minor pockets of opposition. The congress party has always been against raising the issue of influx of the people from Bangladesh. On the other hand, it was the Congress Party which raised the problem of migration into Assam before independence. Veteran congress leaders like Gopinath Bordoloi (first Chief Minister of Assam) and Nabin Chandra Bordoloi had been arguing consistently against unchecked migration. In 1964 the Assam Congress Parliamentary Party in their memorandum to Gulzarilal Nanda, Home Minister, stated that there has been a large scale infiltration of Pakistani nationals and they have been illegally entering Assam without any travel document and not being detected. To effectively control this infiltration of (East Pakistanis earlier) of foreign nationals the Congress Parliamentary Party pointed that, "Indian and Bangladesh borders must be completely sealed. All weather road communication should be constructed in the border for speedy movement of troops for patrolling the border. The strength of border security force should be increased."⁶² It must be admitted that it was the congress party which first pointed at the danger of migration of Bangladeshis into Assam. It shows that the party was aware of the movement of the population from Bangladesh but the party showed gross negligence about this issue.

Further Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1960 agreed that in Assam, infiltration of Pakistani nationals has been taking place for a long time and he suggested the year of

⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 62-65.

⁶² *The study on the Pak Infiltrates*, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee. Guwahati, 1980. p. 4. as cited in Sarmah, Alaka, op. cit. n. 14, pp. 72-84.

1952 should be made the date of enquiry.⁶³ But this assurance of Nehru was left practically unimplemented for which the congress party has been accused for neglecting the issue of foreigners in Bangladesh. The minority vote bank policy of the congress party was one of the major causes of the negligence of enquiry and refused to take any action against them. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee in one of its memorandums stated that “a target date not later than March 1965 to complete the deportation of Pakistani nationals in Assam be announced and acted accordingly. Adequate numbers of tribunals be appointed immediately to achieve complete deportation of Pakistani nationals within the target date.” What gave impetus and even legitimacy to illegal immigration was the anxiety of Assam’s ruling elite to rely heavily on these illegal Muslims immigrants.⁶⁴

Despite its awareness about the problem, the Congress Party gradually began to take a myopic view in its own interest. It ignored the problem and didn’t realise at what cost to the nation it was extending support to these vote banks. Sarin observes, “thus the larger interest of the country, including threat to its very security and integrity, were subordinated to serve the narrow party interest of the ruling elites.”⁶⁵ The Congress Party failed to mobilise vast majority of Assamese people. Not only this, party’s favour to illegal migrants also alienated it from the Assamese people. The result was the fact that it remained ousted from power in 1985 election.

Among the national parties, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has played a most vocal and articulate role on the Assam crisis on the question of migration. The central government accused BJP of provoking and encouraging systematic violence at the time of Assam agitation, an accusation which the BJP denies. And the BJP threw back the accusation to the centre, and viewed that the centre was responsible for the large scale violent unrest in Assam. The BJP’s close association with the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) and its pro-Hindu stance, the party’s support to the Assam agitation has been interpreted in terms of its alleged anti-Muslim politics. The Congress accused BJP of involving in the agitation only because of the fact that the migrants are mostly Muslims (majority of them) from Bangladesh and the BJP wants

⁶³ Ibid, p.5.

⁶⁴ Manoram Sharmah, “A Note on Electoral Behaviour in Assam”. in P S Dutta (ed.) *Electoral Politics in North East India*, (New Delhi: Omsons, 1986). p. 47.

⁶⁵ Sarin, V. I. K, op. cit. n. 8, p. 16.

them to deport. Vajpayee, a BJP leader announced a formula for solving the Assam tangle. According to him the problem could be solved only by the like (a) detection of the foreigners should be done on the basis of relevant provisions of the constitution and existing laws, making use of the 1951 national register and other relevant documents, (b) appeal from the decision shall lie with judicial tribunals. Cases of all entrants up to 1961 should be regularised, (c) foreigners who came during 1961-71 should be removed from the electoral rolls and their burden should be shared by Assam as well as other states, (d) Infiltration should be completely stopped and all repressive measures and press censorship should be withdrawn, and (e) all persons detained in connection with the movement should be released. All pending detention orders should be cancelled.⁶⁶

It must be admitted that the BJP always stood in support of the movement in Assam. It has been against the foreigners and has sided with the AASU. The BJP's support to the movement was basically to make a base for election purpose as the party was not getting success in Assam. The party's policy also somehow indicates the vote bank policy (Hindu) in Assam. Further it could be proved from the statement made by Ashok Singhal, the Secretary of Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) who is of the view that the problem of migration could be solved only by exchanging the population (both Hindus and Muslims) with Bangladesh.⁶⁷

The problem of migration in Assam would not have reached such a grave situation if the political parties had shown some interest in solving the problem. The political parties were mostly concerned with their power politics and hence ignored the situation. The Congress Party was quite aware of this grave problem even before independence. Pandit Nehru himself admitted about the large scale influx of foreign nationals into Assam. Though he assured the people of Assam that necessary steps would be taken to tackle this problem nothing was done in practice because of the vote bank policy of the Congress. So they definitely would never take any steps which go against their political goal. The other opposition parties like BJP and

⁶⁶ BJP's Formula and Assam, *The Hindustan Times*, 14 January, 1980. p. 2-3.

⁶⁷ The statesman 25th January, 1992, as cited in Abhijit Dasgupta. "The Politics of Agitation and Confession: Displaced Bengalis in West Bengal", in Sanjay Kr. Roy, (ed.) *Refuges and the Human Rights*. (New Delhi: Rawat Publication, New Delhi, 2001, p. 97.

Communist Party's, instead of trying to solve the problem were busy in criticising the central government for their incapacity to handle the situation. This was only because of the fact that the congress party was fast losing their support in Assam and these parties were trying to establish their popularity in Assam for the election purpose.

Chapter 4

Migration, Conflict and Violence in Assam

Generally people migrate to accelerate their level of income. In doing so they might either contribute to the development process in the receiving state or can cause conflict too. Migration and conflict are intrinsically related. When migrants work for the development of the receiving country it can be said as positive aspects, but when it generates conflicts it is in the negative aspects of migration. Migration of people from different culture and customs can stimulate conflict in the receiving country/state with a different culture as well as customs. Migrants can become economic assets in the host country as well as it can be a burden in the host country if it generates conflicts in the host country.¹

There has been long debate about the impact of migration on the countries and communities that shelter them. Migration of a culturally different people from one place to another can stimulate violence and conflict.² According to Richmond “conflict in the host countries may arise out of competition for scarce resources, the differential distribution of power within the society, fundamental opposition of value supplies and inherent contradictions in the values held and the institutions serving them. Competition between migrants and the local population arises when there is a consensus on the value of given objects or goals, both material and symbolic and when these are in short supply.”³ The migration of the Bangladeshis into Assam can be said as economic assets as it provides cheap labour and contributed to the development of agriculture and jute industry in the state, but to some extent these people have also induced conflict in the state. It is almost difficult to assert whether these people are responsible for the conflict or not.

Migration within and into a multi-ethnic society can have a destabilizing effects and tend to perpetuate intense conflicts. Migration has both integrative and disintegrative

¹ Helen I. Safa and Brian M Tait, (ed.), *Migration and Development: Implication for Ethnic Identity and Political Conflict*, (The Hague: Morton, 1975), p. 6.

² Richmond H. Anthony, *Immigration and Ethnic Conflict*, (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 42.

³ *Ibid*, pp. 42-44.

potentialities in a multi ethnic society. The migration of ethnically different, potentially high skill and semi skill labourers from a country and a region can spread the feeling of what is called the 'sons of the soil' among the local people/inhabitants. Ethnic self awareness may possible when individuals are able to contrast their cultural characteristics with those of others. Thus migration may precipitate self awareness both on the part of the migrant and on the part of the indigenous population. Migration has a cumulative effect on the linguistic heterogeneity with those of others.⁴

Migration from a country has serious and several implications on the host country. The influx of the people can create demographic imbalances, (both of size and composition of population) environmental degradation and also has a serious security implications in the receiving countries.⁵ Migrations not only strains the economic resources and the administrative structure of the host country but it could also leads to political instability and ethnic polarization and creates potential for security threat in the country.⁶

Migration of people from one region to another may cause due to environmental degradation and violence in the sending country. It can also create violence and environmental scarcity in the receiving state.⁷ Migration of people can create resource scarcity in the receiving state and thus it can lead to conflict between the natives and the inhabitants of the state over the scarce resources. The resource scarcity has two dimensions, supply induced scarcity and demand induced scarcity. When the resources are reduced and degraded faster either due to environmental destruction or natural calamities, then they are called the supply induced scarcity. Demand induced scarcity is created by the population growth or increased per consumption.⁸ One of the major causes of migration of people from one region to another is the high

⁴ Weiner, Myron, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 3-31.

⁵ Muni, S. D and Baral, Lok Raj (ed.), *Refugees and Regional Security in South Asia*. (New Delhi: Konark, 1996), pp. 1-6.

⁶ Ahmad, Imtiaz, "Refugees and Security: The Experience of Bangladesh", in S. D Muni and Lok Raj Baral (ed.), *Ibid*, pp. 123-151.

⁷ Pericipal, Vol & Dixon, Thomas Homer, "Environmental Scarcity and Violent Conflict: The Case Study of South Africa", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1998, pp. 279-298.

⁸ Wenche, Hauge & Tanja, Ellingsen, "Beyond Environmental Scarcity: Causal Pathways to Conflict", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1998, pp. 299-317.

population growth at national and global level. The large scale population growth is also a major cause of environmental degradation in the world. And it is also true that the growing population is one of the factors that exacerbate poverty and starvation.⁹ The resource scarcity and competition for employment and jobs may lead to armed conflict and violence in the receiving state/country. Conflict over scarce resources, such as minerals, water and particularly land/territory is a major source of armed struggle between the migrants and native people in the receiving state.¹⁰

It has been already discussed that the migration of the Bangladeshi people occurred mostly during the British regime, when these people were imported to cultivate in the waste land in the Brahmaputra valley. The influx of the East Bengali people continued but was unnoticed because their flow was not examined in the context of demographic imbalances in the state. On the eve of the partition, there was further influx of people from east Bengali and this was especially encouraged by the ministry headed by Syed Sadullah which administered Assam after 1937. The migration of the people before independence consisted of service classes and tea garden labourers, and also the Muslims. Migration of Bangladeshis into Assam after the independence occurred either due to communal violence or due to the state repression in Bangladesh.¹¹

If we take into account, the demographic conditions of the state, the steep rise of population in the state could be noticed as a crystal-clear fact. If we take into account the increase of population in the state, we can see an increase of the total population of Assam by 82% during the period of 1951 to 1971. And for that reason the demographic pattern in 10 out of the 23 districts of Assam has completely changed. This created divisions in the society on ethnic and religious ground and rampant unemployment has further accentuated the situation.¹² Again population increase rate for all India from 1961-1991 was 72.96% and for Assam it was 87.39%. If Assam's

⁹ Jaroslav, Tir & Paul, Diehl F, "Demographic Pressure and Interstate Conflict: Linking Population Growth and Density to Militarized Disputes and Wars, 1930-89", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1998, pp. 319-339.

¹⁰ Petter, Nills Gleditsch, "Armed Conflict and the Environment: A Critique of the Literature", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 3, May 1998, pp. 381-399.

¹¹ Hazarika, Sanjay, "India's Northeast & The Problem of Migration: What is to be Done?" *Dialogue*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 11-20.

¹² Kotwal, Dinesh, "Insurgency in Assam: The Demographic Dimensions", *Strategic Analysis*, May, 2001, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 313-324.

population had grown at as rate as that of India, the total population would have been of 1.8 crore instead of 2.2 crore in 1991. So at simplistic level there are, therefore is estimated that there are 35.5 lakh migrants in Assam.¹³ However, it is very difficult to estimate how many people have actually crossed over the borders from Bangladesh and settled in the state, these migrants also include population movement from within the country.

The Assamese people however, reluctantly accepted the Bangladeshi migrants as long as the migrants preferred to remain as wage labourers and cultivators. It has already been mentioned that the migrants were engaged mostly as petty labourers, restaurant staff, rickshaw puller and other manual jobs. The social tensions and violent conflict began erupting when the migrants made inroads into their economy by occupying their land, administration, government jobs and began to prosper. The problem got accentuated when Assamese people started thinking of their separate culture and identity, and also the fear of becoming minority within their own land.¹⁴ Thus the uneven growth of population in Assam created a situation of scarcity of civic amenities leading to the competition between the migrants and the local people.

The sweeping waves of the Bangladeshi migrants created a fear psychosis among the local people of becoming a minority in their own state. The local people feel that if the streams of Bangladeshis constitute an elite cultural group and occupy a large chunk of employment, their identity would be at stake and they would become minorities and jobless in their own state. Thus the fear of Assamese people of losing their identity that basically took four roots, economic, linguistic, cultural and political was the major cause of violent conflict in the state. On the economic side, the swelling unemployment and the lack of resources of livelihood compounded the problem. On the cultural and linguistic fronts the overwhelming number of presence of the Bengalis is a major source of irritation among the Assamese people.¹⁵ Thus the

¹³ Weiner, Myron, op. cit. n. 4, pp. 78-79.

¹⁴ Gaan, Narottam, "Environmental Scarcity of Land, Migration and Violent Conflict: Bangladesh-India", *India Quarterly*, Vol.57, No.3 July-Sept 2001, pp. 151-76.

¹⁵ Bhattachya, Suparna, "Assam Politics of Migration and Imperiled Frontiers", *ALPJAN*, April-June 2003, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 3-11.

Assamese nationalism based on language and culture was a major source inspiration of the people to become volatile against the Bangladeshis.

The Assamese nationalism has in fact been the major cause of the growth of violence and conflict in Assam. The Assamese nationalism started beginning to take shape in 1850 through the political mobilization of the Assamese middle class on the language issue and later on the jobs and land issue as well. It gradually developed as a comprehensive ideology which underwent organized consolidation during 1920s. Until 1947, Assamese nationalism was basically protectionist and defensive but later it took an aggressive tone as well. The Assamese people looked mother language as a effective vehicle of collective self-assertion. The middle class Assamese also found it convenient to identify the Bengali language as a stumbling block on their way to progress cultivated a sense of grievances against them.¹⁶ The Assamese nationalism was largely supported and represented by organizations like Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS), the Assam Jatiyatabadi Dal (AJD) and Purbanchaliya Lok Parishad (PLP) etc. The All Assam Students Union (AASU) is one of the important organizations which, together with the ASS, spearheaded the 1972 Asamiya language movement. The AASU was also in the forefront of the second refinery movement (demand for establishment of oil refinery in Assam) in 1970 as well as the food movement in 1966.¹⁷

Genesis of Conflict

Migration has been a major element of violent conflict in India's northeast since the early twentieth century. The migration of the Bangladeshis into Assam having different culture and religion, and the chauvinist character of the Assamese nationalism is responsible for the conflict in Assam. The social jealousy and the legitimate fear, discontentment and lower standard of living of Assamese people were the major cause of conflict in the state.¹⁸

¹⁶ Guha, Amelendu, "Little Nationalism Turned Chauvinist Assam's Anti-Foreigners Upsurge", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22-28 May 1980. Vol. 10, No. 9, pp. 1699-1719.

¹⁷ Jaroslav, Tir & Paul, Diehl F, op. cit. n. 9, pp. 319-33.

¹⁸ Gaan, Narottam, "Environmental Scarcity of Land, Migration and Violent Conflict; Bangladesh-India", *India Quarterly*, Vol. 57, No. 3, July-Sept 2001, pp. 151-76.

The migrants have contributed a lot to the Assam's economy. They developed the agriculture, jute industry, and other sector by providing cheap labours. From that perspective the migration of the Bangladeshis into Assam can be said as economic assets. It is almost difficult to assert whether these people are responsible for the conflict or not. The presence of the large number of Bangladeshi migrants shook the foundation of the Assamese social structure and created 'sons of the soil' based solidarity among the Assamese people. The demographic condition of the state become uneven because of the migration of the people from Bangladesh and that resulted in acute conflicts over language, education and employment policies, leading to fear of being beleaguered demographically, culturally and economically by the migrants.¹⁹

The Role of AASU

The people started demanding the expulsion of the migrants by arguing that Assam should not be a burden with further migrants from foreign lands and that all genuine foreigners, who don't substantively qualify for citizenship in terms of law and constitution should be detected and deported. This demand was accepted by the Congress Government and all major Indian political parties by September 1979 and this acceptance was reiterated again and again. Thus a large number of political parties and pressure groups started demanding the expulsion and detection of the illegal migrants residing in Assam and initiated a massive movement against these people. In the forefront of the movement AASU played a crucial role in mobilizing the people on the basis of linguistic identity and the Assamese ethnicity.²⁰

There was wide spread protests for the removal of the names of foreigners from the electoral rolls, and it spread to the entire Brahmaputra valley when the mid-term poll to the Lok Sabha was announced in 1980. The AASU got a stronghold for agitation when the election commission reported an increase of a large number of voters in the Mongoldoi constituency. While updating the voters' list by the election commission the electoral officers found a large number of aliens had been included in the voters list. Around 70 thousand complaints were registered within a short duration. Thus

¹⁹ Dutta, Sreeradha, "North East Turmoil: Vital Determinants", *Strategic Analysis*, March 2000, Vol. 23, No. 12, pp. 2123-2134.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2123-2134.

putting a question in the minds of the responsible Assamese people that if the election commission, after a sincere scrutiny of the objections about the aliens in a single constituency, what would be about the rest of 13 constituencies?²¹

The minorities in Assam were scared about that their names might get removed from the electoral rolls. The election commission had hitherto taken credit to focus the attention of the government on the alarming increase in the numbers of voters in the north east region due to the inclusion of the names of alleged foreigners. But when confronted with the widely popular demand for the removal of foreigner's names from the voters list, it found itself in a quandary. The Chief Election Commissioner Shakhder commented, "the influx has become a regular feature. I think it may not be wrong assessment to make on the basis of 34.55% between the two censuses (1961 and 1991); the increase that is likely to be recorded in 1991 census would be more than 100% over the 1961 census. In other words, a stage would be reached when the state have to reckon with foreign nationals who may in all probability constitute a sizeable percentage, if not the majority population in the state."²²

This authoritative statement and potential pronouncement from the Chief Election Commissioner about the growing risk of foreigners which were swamping the electoral rolls, and reducing Assamese into a minority were the best gift for the AASU in support of their cause. This benediction had the effect of sanctifying their cause of action. There was support from various parties and organizations for the agitation led by AASU, the Assam Jatiyata Badi Dal (AJBD) and the Janata Juba Chatra Parishad (JJAP) supported AASU for the movement.²³

The AASU accused the election commission for neglecting the electoral issue in the constituency. According to AASU the negligence of the Election Commission to delete the names of the foreigners from the voter list led to the anxiety of the people. The CEC's verdict in the question of inclusion of voters in the electoral rolls was, "a person whose name has been included shall be presumed to be a citizen of

²¹ De, Sibopada, *Illegal Migrations and the Northeast: A Study of Migrants from Bangladesh*, (Kolkata: Anamika Publishers, 2005), pp. 57-60.

²² Chhabra, K. M. L, *Assam Challenge*, (Delhi: Konark Private Publication, 1992), pp. 74-78.

²³ Ibid, pp. 74-78.

India...the process of establishing citizenship is time consuming ...scrutiny of electoral rolls can be taken after the election is over.....”²⁴

Thus the statement of the CEC also backed AASU's complaint of what is called the negligence by the authorities, got a ground to justify their agitation, and viewed that the people of Assam could not accept the argument of the CEC. The AASU started the movement taking into consideration of the Assamese people. The firm determination of the AASU “a foreigner is a foreigner; a foreigner shall not be judged by the language he speaks or by the religion he believes in.” was to deport the foreigners irrespective of their religion and language. Following were the main demands of the AASU:

- a. Foreign nationals must be detected and deported.
- b. Voter list must be totally free from the foreigners name before holding any election in Assam.
- c. A 'no man's land' should be created all along the Indo-Bangladesh border to stop infiltration effectively.
- d. Identity cards must be issued to every eligible Indian voter in Assam.
- e. Assam government should be free to reject any doubtful citizenship certificates issued by the Governments of West Bengal and Tripura.²⁵

Thus these demands were popularly accepted by the people of Assam and the AASU managed to get widespread support from the masses. With the popular support of the people the agitation became intense and it spread and sparked violence in the state.

During the announcement of election schedule in 1979, the election was boycotted by the AASU and its allied parties. This led to the intensification of the agitation. At the time of agitation hardly any political activities were taking place in Assam. The scene was entirely dominated by the AASU and the political parties had been rendered totally irrelevant because of their hiding character in the movement. The AASU and AAGSP appealed to the political parties not to file nominations. The volunteers

²⁴ *Memorandum, All Assam Students union*, presented to the Prime Minister of India, as cited in as cited in V R Trivedi (ed.), *Documents in Assam, Part-B*, (New Delhi: Omsons Publication, 1995). pp. 635-639.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 635-639.

started mass picketing in front of the offices accepting nomination papers. The AASU and its allied parties done every measure to stop the election, they even gheraoed candidates house and threatened the candidates of social ostracism and violence were held out. The agitators resorted to very techniques to ensure that the intending candidates were prevented from filling the nominations. The actions of the agitators could have been prevented if the state government intervened effectively. However there were no such measures initiated by the administration to stop these activities. No nominations papers were filed except in the Bengali speaking district of Cachar. The atmosphere of the state capital was that of the situation like 'wait and watch' and hope for the best.²⁶

However, Begum Abida Ali, the wife of the former president of India Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed decided to file her nomination. But getting such information, the AASU leaders decided to stop her filing nomination. The agitators kept a day night vigil in Barpeta over the activities of her. and kept alert the members of the organization so that she could not file the nomination. The state administration made elaborate plans to file her nominations and she succeeded in doing so. But during this programme a member of AASU had to lose his life (Khargeswar Talukdar) which ignited more violence in the district.²⁷ There were also some killings of the innocent people by some extremist members of the AASU. On December 12, 1979, Anjan Chakravarti, a Bengali doctor was killed. The AASU and the AAGSP have been condemning such violence and said that such violence would hurt the image of the agitation. The AASU leaders pledged the people not to indulge in such activities.

Nature of Conflict and Violence

The foreign national movement started by AASU and its allied organization All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) was earlier peaceful and became violent later when the governments fail to meet their demands. The foreign national movements launched by the AASU, "demanding detection, deletion, and deportation" of Bangladeshi migrants clandestinely living in Assam continued for six years. This movement was initially peaceful and secular and it was not directed against any minorities. The conflict in the period didn't become violent instantly. The movement

²⁶ Chhabra, K. M. L, op. cit. n. 22, p. 79.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 80-81.

started peacefully and peaceful methods of agitation were used to redress their grievances. The initial phase of the agitation developed peacefully by and large with blessings of the press, organized intimidation and jingoist wall writings. The movement culminated into a mass hysteria after September 1979 and led to large scale anti-Bengali programmes in January and May-June of 1980. The nature of the conflict during the period of 1979-1985 became violent and mostly ethnic violence took place.²⁸

The first phase of the conflict started with the demonstrations and rallies with widespread participation by the Assamese ethnic in support of their demands made by the AASU. This phase began with a mood of optimism about a negotiated settlement and ended with considerable pessimism about the prospects of a solution and signs of increasing fissures in the Assamese sub-national formation.²⁹ During September-October 1979, mass rallies and picketing of government offices were resorted to by the AASU and the government officials. Hunger strike was conducted from September 25 to October 10, 1979. 'Assam Bandh' and picketing measures were adopted by the AASU and the other organization involved in the anti-Bengali protests. Various bandhs and postponement of election during this period by the AASU had widespread support from the masses.³⁰ The sustained campaign of picketing, relay hunger strikes and mass Satyagraha conducted through out November and December in 1980 paralyzed the administration.

There are some ethnic group newly formed, opposed the movement and demanded the end of the movement. By May 1980, some ethnic groups who were directly threatened by the demands of the movement began to form organizations to oppose the demands of the AASU. In May 1980, a new organization, the All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU), which attempted to include both Hindus and Muslim of Bengali descent, appeared on the scene to rival AASU. The group didn't dispute over the issue of migration and started demanding that all migrants who came before 1971 are formally given citizenship and the harassment of minorities be stopped.³¹ AASU

²⁸ Guha, Amalendu, op. cit. n.16, pp. 1699-1719.

²⁹ Baruah, Sanjib, *India Against Itself: Asian and the Politics of Nationality*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 115-143.

³⁰ Ibid. pp. 115-143.

³¹ Ibid. p. 127.

opposed the demand of AAMSU and in certain strongholds of the migrant communities, strike called by the AAMSU led to the clashes between the supporters of these two organization. This was the ground which spread the seeds of communal feelings among the people of both the Hindus and Muslims. Apart from the ethnic violence and communal violence, a growing number of terrorist attacks on the state official also took place and state property was damaged. It must be remembered that a high ranking officer from Indian civil service, E.S. Parthasarathy, who was identified with the tough measures against the movement was killed in the terrorist bomb attack. It shows that the nature of violence during the period of Assam movement was also a kind of terrorist violence.³²

The movement that began as peaceful anti-alien agitation with picketing and *Hartals* but it led to bloodshed and violence across the Brahmaputra valley, especially after 1983. It must be remembered that the imposition of the election for Lok Sabha and state assembly was the major cause of sparking ethnic violence in the state. In elections to the state assembly and to 14 seats to the Lok Sabha, ethnic and sectarian clashes erupted in which not less than three thousand people are believed to have been massacred. The state government totally failed to maintain law and order situation in the state. The ethnic divisions along which the violence took place varied from place to place. There was violence between Tiwa 'tribal' verses Muslims of Bengali descents; Bodo tribal vs. Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims, and even Bodo tribal vs. Assamese Hindus and Muslims also. Each community was the victim of other in different places.³³

(i) Communal Violence

The best example of the ethnic violence was the Nellie massacre in Nagaon. The worst killing took place in the harvested fields nearby the small town of Nellie in Nagaon in 1983, in which a mob killed an estimated 1,700 men, women, and children- all 'migrant' Muslim settlers in the space of a five hour rampage. The reasons for that massacre were rooted in land alienation-the settlers had bought and taken over land of the native Lalung/Tiwa community in an area where selling of land

³² Ibid, p. 129.

³³ Chhabra, K. M. L, op. cit. n. 22, p. 134.

to a non-tribal was illegal. Bitterness there and elsewhere continue to simmer.³⁴ The chain of violence continued and took a toll of more than 3000 people—mostly Bengali Hindus and Muslims. The violence began because of Muslims defiance of the AASU's order.³⁵ So it has been suspected by some minority organization that the massacre was the handiwork of AASU and its affiliated organization. But AASU sharply reacted to this accusation. The large number of Muslim victims in the election violence, and the national and international press coverage of it as a case of Muslims were being killed, strained the ethnic Assamese Muslim attitude towards the movement also.

Nellie was not the end. It was followed by the massacre at Chaulkhowa Chapori in the Darrang district where the victims belonged to the same group as that of Nellie. Another massacre took place at Silapathar in Lakhimpur district where most of the victims were the Bengali Hindus, ex refugees/displaced persons from East Pakistan. At Gohpur (Sonitpur district) and Darrang district several people died and many were displaced in the attacks and counter attacks. Here the victims were the Bodos and Assamese.³⁶

There was violence at Barneta road, Howli, Nagarbera in Kamrup, Gosaigaon in Kokrajhar, Salmara in Dhubri, Owguri, Thilamara, Rupahi, Dhing, Tinsukia, Goreswar etc.³⁷ In these violence ~~large~~ large number of people belongs to Hindu or Muslim Bengali descent were killed. Most of the victim was the Bengali Muslim migrants which added a sense of disillusionment among the Assamese Muslims. There are also instances where Assamese Muslims joined Assamese Hindu villagers in resisting attacks from the migrant Muslims. Although the stated aim of the movement was to drive out the foreign nationals (both Hindu and Bengali

³⁴ Hazarika. Sanjay, "India and its North East: The Challenges of Regionalism and Migration", in Kousar J Azam (ed.) *Ethnicity, Identity and the State in South Asia*, (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers. 2001), pp. 191-207.

³⁵ Sarmah. Alaka, *Immigration and Assam Politics*, (New Delhi: Ajanta Publication. 1999), p. 15.

³⁶ Hussain. Monirul, "State, Identity Movements and Internal Displacement in the North-East", *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 16, 2000. pp. 45-49.

³⁷ Das, Amiya Kumar, *Assam's Agony: A Socio Economic and Political Analysis*, (New Delhi: Lancers. 1982), p.150.

Muslims) from the region, yet the communal flare ups in different parts of the state made the Assamese Muslims feel increasingly insecure.³⁸

While replying to a question by Samar Mukherjee about the casualties in Assam during the long three months violence, the minister of state in the home affairs, Shri P Venkatasubbaiah said, "according to the information furnished by the Government of Assam, during the period from October 1979 up to 20th January, 1980, 201 incidents of violence and arson have taken place in Assam and 69 persons have lost their lives. According to the available sources, over 15000 people are estimated to have been rendered homeless in Kamrup district."³⁹

Again to a query of N E Horo in the parliamentary debate in 30th March 1980 about the casualties in the election duty in Assam in that period, the Minister of the State of Home Affairs, Nihar Ranjan Lascar replied, "there are also reports of election violence in the state. The government reveals that no army personnel were deployed on the election duty in Assam. None of the employees deputed in the election duty from outside the state has lost his/her life. However, 5 CRPF and one Rajasthan armed constable personnel were killed while on duty in Assam."⁴⁰

In a question raised by S Krishanpratap Singh about the total casualties and other loss of properties during the time of agitation, the then minister in charge of state in the Home Ministry affairs Shri Nihar Ranjan Lascar said, "According to the state government, 1637 persons lost their lives in recent disturbances in Assam. Since January 1983 till 21/3/83 there was also extensive damage to public and private property. About 40000 houses will require being reconstructed/repared. 1598 road bridges have been damaged/ destroyed."⁴¹

The large scale communal and ethnic violence in the state displaced a large number of people in the state. During the six year long anti-foreigner agitation in Assam, (1979-85) there was substantial internal displacement of both Hindus and Muslims of

³⁸ Misra, Udayan, "Immigration and Identity Transformation in Assam". *Economic and Political Weekly*, May22, 1999, Vol. 34, No. 21, pp. 1264-1271.

³⁹ Parliament Debate, Lok Sabha, 30 January, 1980, p. 26.

⁴⁰ Parliamentary Debate, Lok Sabha, 30 March, 1983, pp. 522-523.

⁴¹ Ibid, 6 April, 1983, pp. 189-190.

Bengali descent. In the first phase of the Assam Movement attacks were reported on the Bengali Hindus and Muslims settlers throughout the Brahmaputra valley. At least 7000 Bengali Hindus were displaced and crossed over to West Bengal in 1979-80, the Muslim peasantry of Bengal descent stayed put. But even those who braved the attacks were displaced under sustained pressure from the administration that was dominated by the Assamese.⁴² When the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) came to power in 1985 election-the members who had led the Assam agitation confused the AGP almost entirely-their supporters backed by the administration went about hunting for foreigners. Thousands of Bengali Hindus and Muslims fled to Barak valley and West Bengal and many Muslim and lower caste Bengali Hindu peasants vacated their cultivable lands and went further deep into the forest areas. Nearly 5000 were allowed to settle down in the disputed borders of Assam and Nagaland.⁴³

There was another campaign led by AASU known as '*Bongal Kheda*,' in 1980, (throw out Bengalis). It was an organized campaign of ethnic cleansing that originated in Assam. It was however, not restricted to Assam only. That resulted into a large scale displacement of Bengali people in Tripura and Meghalaya also. In both states, tribal people attacked Bengalis both Hindus and Muslims, resenting their growing numbers and dominance in jobs and in business or in both. In Meghalaya, the mayhem was restricted to Shillong, the former capital of Assam where the Bengali dominated bureaucracy and a number of professions. In the 1990s Bengali remained the prime target of tribal violence but other non tribal communities like the Biharis (people from Bihar) and the Marwaris (from Rajasthan) also came under attack in that state. Since the early 1980s an estimated 25-30 thousand Bengalis have left Shillong and from some other parts of Meghalaya and settled down in West Bengal and other states in India.⁴⁴

In a question of Chitta Basu about the violence triggered by agitation the then Minister in Charge of State in Home Affairs P Venkatasubbaiah replied, "since the commencement of the agitation, a number of violent incidents has taken place.

⁴² Bhaumik, Subhir, "India's North East; Nobody's People in No Mans Land", in Paula Banerjee, S B Roychoudhary, S K Das (eds) *Internal Displacement In South Asia*, (New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2005), pp. 144-173.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 144-173.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 144-173.

Between August and December, 1976, 26 persons lost their lives; there were about 120 incidents of arson and about 327 cases of assault. In January 1980, 41 persons lost their lives and over 3200 houses set on fire rendering over 15000 people homeless in Kamrup district. In Cachar district, 6 persons lost their lives in communal clashes. On 18th January, 1980, 5 persons including a senior technology officer of Oil India lost their lives in violent incidents at Duliajan. The government seized of the gravity of the problem. The Prime Minister and the home minister have had intensive consultations with the governor of the north eastern states. The prime minister has also had discussions with leaders of the opposition and it has been decided to have talks with leaders of national parties in Assam and the leaders of the opposition in Delhi. Steps have been taken to reassure the students and others, who have been engaged in the agitation, of the anxiety of the government to continue discussions with them to create an atmosphere conducive to evolving solution to the problems they face.”⁴⁵ In another question of Sudhir Kumar Giri, the Minister-in-Charge of Home Affairs Shri Nihar Ranjan Lascar replied, “according to the information furnished by the state of Assam government, 1774 persons lost their lives due to the violence. 207 persons died in police firing. The government had sanctioned Rs. 5000/ as ex-gratia grant to each of the bereaved families for every person killed.”⁴⁶

Realizing the intensity of the movement, the AASU leaders also used one of the most important techniques that were the oil blockade. The leaders realized that the oil is a powerful weapon which could be used to effective pressure on the government to draw attention of their demands. A large number of people including man and women came out to protest. They shouted slogans in front of the oil installations throughout the state. The volunteers were successful on blocking the oil supplies to the other state.⁴⁷

(ii) Oil Blockade

The blocking and stoppage of pumping of crude oil outside Assam affected the functioning of the Barauni refinery in Bihar which was set up exclusively to process crude from Assam. The blockade raised important questions on the national security.

⁴⁵ Parliamentary Debate, 30 January, 1980, p. 76.

⁴⁶ Parliamentary Debate, Lok Sabha, 27 April, 1983, p. 264.

⁴⁷ Das, Amiya kumar, op. cit. n. 37, pp. 76-77.

How could such a major step be organized without mobilizing support in advance and alerting the authorities about the design behind it? Could this have been anticipated after the imposition of a blockade on the movement of plywood and jute? Due to the prolonged spells of bandhs and picketings, traffic on the national highways frequently disrupted. This had severe adverse impact on the economies of the northeastern states and union territories of India. The interdependence nature of the state in India, and the blockade imposed by AASU disrupted the supplies of food and other essential materials to the other states. There was counter blockade from the neighbouring state West Bengal, the government of West Bengal imposed blockade in trains going to Assam. But this was handled by the administration properly.⁴⁸

In a question of P K Kodiyan about the relief and shortage of commodities in affected regions, the Minister of State in Home Affairs and in the Department Of Parliamentary affairs P Venkatasubbaiah replied, "shortage of essential commodities like petroleum products, food items, such as salts, sugar, edible oils, etc. has been reported from practically the entire North-Eastern region. Steps have been taken to move supplies to the affected areas. Government is taking all necessary steps to maintain peace and order and restore peace and security among all sections of the people. Steps are also being taken to reassure the students and others who have been engaged in this agitation of the anxiety of the government to continue discussion with them and to create an atmosphere conducive to evolving satisfactory solutions to the problems."⁴⁹

When G Y Krishnan asked about the impact on economy due to Assam agitation, the Minister of Industry Shri Narayan Datt Tiwari replied, "the Assam agitation has adversely affected the financial and economic well being of the state. It is difficult to quantify precisely the overall loss suffered by industry on this account alone. It is, however, estimated that in the case of petroleum fertilizers, etc. the loss would come to rupees 1272 crores. Moreover, due to the disruption of the rail movement, the railways suffered a financial loss of Rs 32 crore. Several projects have been delayed, thereby resulting in considerable cost escalation. The state government is making

⁴⁸ Das, Amiya Kumar, op. cit. n.37, p. 84.

⁴⁹ Parliamentary Debate, Lok Sabha, 30 January, 1980, p. 34-35.

with the full support and assistance of the central government or restoration of peace and normalcy in the state.”⁵⁰

International Attention

The conflict and violence that occurred in the period of Assam agitation attracted the world wide attention. The representatives of Pakistan and Egypt, who served on the 18 member United Nations Committee on Racial Discrimination, raised the issue of Assam during consideration by the Committee of India's 7th periodic report. Subhash Yadav and M Ramgopal Reddy in their question to the External Affairs Minister regarding the issues of Assam, which was recently raised by some foreign countries in United Nation's Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination discussion asked whether the minority people of Assam were being targeted or not? The minister in the State of Ministry of External Affairs replied, “the representative of Pakistan and Egypt, who serve on the 18 member UN committee on racial discrimination in their personal capacity, raised the issue of Assam during consideration by the Committee of India's 7th periodic report. The Indian representative refuted the arguments and said that he did not see the developments in Assam as a matter of fact any article of the convention of elimination of all forms of racial discrimination nor its relevance to the work of the committee regarding the constitutional obligations for holding elections in the state of Assam. He added that the government had very resource and made elaborate law and arrangements to ensure free and fair conduct of poll. He indicated the measures undertaken by the government to provide relief and to rehabilitate all those adversely affected. Provisions in the Indian Constitution which guaranteed maintenance of harmony between different groups and made racial discrimination an offence punishable by law were also referred to. It is pertinent to note that India's report was commended by most of the member's of U N Committee who also acknowledge the contribution made by India both at national and international level, to the elimination of racial discrimination.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Parliament Debate, Lok Sabha, 6 April, 1983, pp. 31-32.

⁵¹ Parliament Debate, Lok Sabha, 7 April, 1983, pp. 251-252.

Responses of the Security Forces

After the prolonged disturbances and lawlessness in Assam since December, 1979 the government of India deployed military and para military forces to reinforce the law and order situation. The government continued to call the movement in Assam as violent. The army and para military forces vigorously perused their policy of atrocities in the state in the name of maintaining law and order. The atrocities had occurred throughout the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. There are several documents and reports about the atrocities of security forces in Assam during the period of Assam agitation.⁵²

Following the violence in Assam, the then Governor of Assam, L P Singh declared North Kamrup as a disturbed area on January 7, 1980. On 8 January, 1980 army and the para military forces were called to aid the civilian police and restore law and order. But without consulting the civilian police, the forces entered in 29 villages and tortured the villagers on 10th and 11th of January. In a 23 pages Report of the relief team from Guwahati Medical College, it is mentioned that the team treated more than 200 victims for rape, fractures, dislocation of joints, sprains and minor cuts caused mostly by boots and rifle butts.⁵³ More than 25 cases of rape victims were received from this medical team. The AASU leaders wisely declared these rape victims as the martyrs.

As per the reports given by the High Court Bar Association, eight names of rape victims were named. All of them are Assamese and five of them were Hindus, two of them were Muslims and one tribal girl. Some women were also been reported attempted. In Gordon High School in Nalbari district 2000 Assamese people took refuge to save themselves from the atrocities. On a third report of the army atrocities, written by S K Saxena, public relation officer, Ministry Of Defence, following his enquiry, he reported that seventeen girls and thirty women were raped by the army personal. There was also report that Saxena was forced to retire for writing this report.⁵⁴ There occurred another massacre by the CRPF personal in the oil installation

⁵² Among them is *The Report of a Relief Team from Guwahati Medical College* and other is from *The Assam High Court Bar Association*.

⁵³ As cited in Das, Aniya, Kumar, op. cit. n.37, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁴ Ibid, op. cit. n.37, pp. 109-113.

in Duliajan. The CRPF personnel opened fire on the 12000 gathering people; there were reports of casualties in the news papers and journals. But the government did not admit such kind of deaths in the firing. It is also reported that the CRPF personnel loaded these dead bodies in the trucks and disposed of. The Dibrugarh University Students Union reported that the bodies with picketer's badges were seen floating in the Buridihing River, while two other bodies were seen burning near Tippling Thermal Power Station.⁵⁵

In the name of maintaining law and order situation in Assam, army personal perpetrated inhuman atrocities on the innocent villagers and the people associated with the agitation.

Implication of Assam Accord

Answering to the question raised by Satish Agarwal and others about the continuation of the infiltration to Assam and the total number of foreigners residing illegally in Assam, the Minister-in Charge-of State in Home Affairs replied, "as a result several measures have taken by government to effectively prevent infiltration from across the border, there has been a considerable reduction in the number of Bangladesh nationals attempting to enter into India clandestinely. According to the Government of Assam during 1980, 2154 infiltrators were detected and 2039 of this were sent back to their country of origin. Government announced on 17th October, its decision to take up vigorously and on a priority basis the works of detection of foreigners who came to Assam after -March 1971. The process of identification of foreigners is being hampered due to the continuing agitation in Assam."⁵⁶

To implement the Accord, the government has done several measures to prevent infiltration of the Bangladeshi nationals into Assam. The government has given more stress on the implementation of economic and industrial development of the state. With a view to prevent infiltration of Bangladeshi nationals into Assam and in pursuance of the Assam Accord, a project for construction of road/fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh border in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, and

⁵⁵ Das. Amiya, Kumar. op. cit. n.37, pp 113-114.

⁵⁶ Parliament Debate. Lok Sabha, 25 February, 1981, pp. 262-263.

West Bengal has been taken up since 1987. As on February 28, 1998, 2,136.5 kms of road (including bridges) and 753.68 kms of fence were completed out of the approved target of 2,784 kms of road and 896 kms of fence has been completed.⁵⁷ By the end of October, 1991, roads for a length of 207 kms, and fence for a length of 37 kms have been constructed.⁵⁸ In 1993 the construction of 360 kms of border roads and 77 kms of fencing was completed.⁵⁹ Over 1712 km out of the total length of 3287 km of Indo-Bangladesh border has been fenced and a pilot project of flood-lighting along 126 km has been taken up during the current financial year.⁶⁰

The Government has also provided for the rehabilitation measures for the east Bengali people, who were regularized as the citizens of India. The Government of India set up Dandakaranya Project in 1958 for the resettlement of displaced people from East Pakistan. Through this project 25,231 families were settled in various parts of India, like Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.⁶¹ The Government has also settled 11.14 lakh persons migrated from the erstwhile East Pakistan between the period 1.1.1964 and 25.3.1971. The eligible among them were resettled in agriculture or small trade/business mainly in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Consequences of the Assam Movement

The Assam movement has widespread consequences in the state. The movement has spread the feeling of alienation among the minorities and also gave birth to more ethnic cleavages and separatist tendencies in the state. In this context the growth of terrorist outfit like United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and the demand of the separate Bodoland by the Bodos in the state are very critical to discuss. This was nothing but the consequences of the Assam agitation which has spread the seeds of separatist feeling.

By providing national and ethnic identity, the Assam agitation has prepared the ground for the rise of insurgency in Assam. Insurgency is an organized attempt to exploit a region-faced with deteriorating social and economic conditions- through the

⁵⁷ Annual Report, *Ministry of Home Affairs*, Government of India, 1997-98, p. 16.

⁵⁸ Annual Report, *Ministry of Home Affairs*, Government of India, 1990-91, p. 13.

⁵⁹ Annual Report, *Ministry of Home Affairs*, Government of India, 1992-93, p. 17.

⁶⁰ Annual Report, *Ministry of Home Affairs*, Government of India, 2004-2005, p. 8.

⁶¹ Annual Report, op. cit. n. 58, pp. 62-63.

use of irregular warfare to achieve its political goals. It involves guerrilla tactics to impose restrictions on the people in order to usurp control from the government. Insurgency has both military and political components wherein the former resorts to violence and the latter mobilizes people the people.⁶²

The group which has been the most vocal about demanding secessionism from Indian union is the ULFA. It is essentially an offshoot of the Assam agitation and many of its members once belonged to Assam agitation and the AASU. Since 1986, the extremist outfit indulged in all sorts of terrorist activities viz. bombing, shooting, extortion, robbery etc.⁶³ The blue print of the ULFA was drawn up in 1979 by six college drop out students of upper Assam. The prominent among them being Arvind Rajkhowa and Golap Barua. The ULFA leaders were members of the All Assam Students Union (AASU) during the Assam agitation. After the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) came to power, most of the AASU leaders went on to form the government. However there were some who didn't do so. They gathered together and under the leadership of Paresh Baruah of Chabua, district Dibrugarh, reactivated the ULFA. The declared objectives of the ULFA are the following:

1. To obtain Assam's sovereignty by armed revolution.
2. To save guard the people and interest of Assam and those of its neighbouring land, that is Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura.
3. To have full control over the revenue resources of Assam like oil and natural gas, forest, etc.
4. To gain public support against Indian and non Indian exploitation
5. To stand against any suppression and repression of the Assamese masses.⁶⁴

The group has established ties with the NSCN and with the Kachin Independent Army with whose active support and helped it raised small guerrilla army and procured their 'tools' of revolution. During the time of AGP government in Assam

⁶² Thompson, Robert, "Defeating Communist Insurgency, London", 1966 as Cited in Dinesh Kotwal, "Instability Parameters In Northeast India", *Strategic Analysis*, April 2000, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 137-149

⁶³ George. Sudhir Jacob, "Insurgency/Terrorism in the Northeast an Overview", in S C Tiwari (ed.) *Terrorism in India*, (New Delhi: South Asian Publisher, 1990), pp.241-263.

⁶⁴ Asthana, N. C and Nirmal, Anjali, *Terrorism, Insurgency and Counter Insurgency Operations*, (Jaipur: Pointer Publishers, 2001), pp. 110-111.

(1986-90) the ULFA had a virtually free reign to let loose its subversive activities. The ULFA by then fairly well equipped with trained cadres and weapons unleashed a reign of terror in a spate of selective assassination.⁶⁵

ULFA started its movement on an anti immigrant plank. However, it changed its course in midway. The hostility against Bangladeshi migrants vanished once the ULFA sought sanctuary in Bangladesh and put all the money that they exorted into Bangladesh banks. ULFA established initial contact with the Kachin independent army in 1986. It was the Kachins who provided initial training to ULFA cadres. Much of the support ULFA enjoyed later was based on the sentiments that Delhi was not concerned about the development of Assam. Growing unemployment and frustration among the people added fuel to the fire.⁶⁶

ULFA maintained close links with the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP), which was in power from 1985-90. Its influence was visible in all the state government departments and even the state police department was full of ULFA sympathizers. In view of the growing nexus between AGP government and ULFA and the latter's increasing militant activities in the state, New Delhi imposed President's Rule on November 7 1990. The entire State of Assam was declared a "disturbed area". ULFA was banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 and Indian army launched Operation Bajrang.⁶⁷

Illegal migration from Bangladesh was an issue of prime concern for ULFA in the year of its birth. But latter it had no inhibition to shake hands with the same country for its secessionist move. Contrary to its initial ideological stand, it revised its concept of Assamese identity to accommodate the illegal migrants from Bangladesh that constitute the largest number of foreigners in Assam. The ULFA, which came to its existence to stop migration from Bangladesh gradually, abdicated this ideology and helped Islamic militancy as collaborator to Bangladesh and Pakistan. "A militant movement that came into existence to protect the rights of an indigenous people has

⁶⁵ Dasgupta, Anindita, "Small Arms Proliferation in India's Northeast: A Case Study of Assam". *Economic and Political Weekly*, 6 January, 2001, pp. 59-65.

⁶⁶ Kotwal, Dinesh, "The Contours of Assam Insurgency". *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 24, No. 12, pp. 2219-2233.

⁶⁷ IPCS Database on Armed Groups in South Asia, see www.ipcs.database.org

done a complete about-face in order to endanger its original parish - and ULFA members are allying themselves with the same people they want to oust from Assam.”⁶⁸

The ULFA movement, which was rooted in ethnic chauvinism, set a pattern for a number of ethnic groups in Assam to demand secession from Assam or from India. Prominent among such insurgent groups include, Bodo Security Force (BSF), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), Dimasa National Security Force (DNSF), Dima Halim Daoga (DHD), Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA), Kamtapur Liberation Organization (KLO), United Tribal Nationalist's Liberation Front (UTNLF), Hhar People's Council (HPC) Rabha National Security Force (RNSF), Tiwa National Revolutionary Force (TNRF), Bengali Tiger Force (BLT), Adivasi Security Force (ASF), People's United Liberation Front (PULF), Gorkha Tiger Force etc.⁶⁹

Apart from running training camps, ULFA launched several income generating projects in Bangladesh. It has set up a number of firms in Dhaka, including media consultancies and soft drink manufacturing units. Besides it is reported to own three hotels, a private clinic, and two motor driving schools in Dhaka. Paresh Barua is reported to personally own or has controlling interests in several businesses in Bangladesh, including a tannery, a chain of departmental stores, garment factories, travel agencies, shrimp trawlers and transport and investment companies. ULFA's camps in Bangladesh have been functioning since 1989, at which time there were 13 to 14 such camps. Commencing initially with using Bangladesh as a safe haven and training location, ULFA gradually expanded its network to include operational control of activities and the receipt and shipment of arms in transit before they finally entered India.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Saikia, Jaideep, "Terror Sans Frontiers: Islamic Militancy in North East India", July 2003, page 17. see www.ipcs.database.org

⁶⁹ Vasudev, P. K., "Insurgency in the North East", *Indian Strategic Review*, see <http://members.tripod.com/israindia/isr/week1/ineindia>

⁷⁰ Ibid.

One of the important fall out of the AASU's agitation on the foreigners issue was the resurgence of ethnic identity in the state. In recent Assamese ethnic emotions have been challenged often within Assam than in the rest of India. Most of the challenges have emerged from the hill areas or the plains in the country. Whenever Assamese leaders equated the territorial identity with the ethno-linguistic identity of Assamese speakers of the Brahmaputra valley, they pushed the other ethnic groups to seek security through their autonomous structures.

The Bodo movement is positively interested in Indian national cohesion. The ethnic rage in the case is directed mainly towards Assam. The term Bodo refers to a group of closely related tribe including the pure Bodo language speakers who are called the Bodo-Kachari people. The entire group often referred to as the Bodo-Kachari community by others. It is the most numerous ethnic group in Assam. The Bodos claim to be the earliest inhabitants of Assam and also the earliest as well as the longest chains of rulers. They are quick to point out that when Assamese leaders trace their heritage from the Ahom era, they actually glorify invaders from an alien culture. They use the category of artificial Assamese to describe the present generation of Assamese ethno nationalist who represent the relatively upper caste Hindus structure. The latter, according to Bodo leaders can be traced to migrants from northern India.⁷¹

The Bodos asserted that the Assamese people are in fact outsiders who have unleashed a 'deadly anti tribal policy' to arbitrarily cleanse Assam of its genuinely original and authentic inhabitants. They accused the Assamese government of conducting a deliberate policy of Assamization through an imposition of the "Assamese language and culture upon the tribal undemocratically and violating the constitution of India." The Bodos accused that the Assamese language has similarities with other language like Bengali and Oriya and other northern Hindi language. Given such perception on the part of the Bodos, it is understandable why they want a division of Assam and a separate homeland free from Assamese political influence and domination connected with land, education, culture and job opportunities.⁷²

⁷¹ Chhabra. K. M.L, op. cit. n. 22, pp. 144-152.

⁷² Nath, Manoj Kumar, "Bodo Insurgency in Assam: New Accord and New Problems", *Strategic Analysis*. Vol. 27, No. 4, October-December 2003. pp. 533-545.

The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) Students Union launched their agitation in March, 1987 on the basis of the 92-point charter of demands which it submitted to the Assam government. The demands in the charter included the establishment of a separate state for the Plain tribes of Assam on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. These demands came from the Bodo as they felt exploited, alienated and discriminated against for decades. According to the ABSU the Bodo-inhabited areas have been neglected by the successive Congress Government and the AGP Government also did not try to address the problems of the Bodo people and Bodo areas.⁷³ The Bodo movement became violent when it started its insurgent activities by the organization like Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF). The level and scale of violence came down sharply after the signing of Bodo Accord on February 20, 1993, between ABSU and Central and the State Government. The accord made commitment to forming an elected Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC) comprising “contiguous geographical areas between river Sankosh and Mazbat/river Pansoi. The new agreement on February 10, 2003 between the Central Government and the BLT leaders somehow created Bodo Territorial Council (BTC). But still the problem persists because of the demand for a separate independent Bodoland by the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB).⁷⁴

Another fear that has erupted is the possibility of dismemberment of some parts of Assam from the Indian union. In this regard the report submitted by the governor of Assam is worth mentioning. The governor report reveals that the large scale influx of the people from Bangladesh need to be stressed both for the people of Assam and the nation as a whole. The report calls the migration “as an invasion of the Bangladeshi people.” It stressed on the deportation of the illegal people and in doing so no misconceived notions of secularism should be allowed. It further mentioned that due to large population movement from Bangladesh, the indigenous people of Assam are being reduced to a minority in their home State. Their cultural survival will be in jeopardy, their political control will be weakened and their employment opportunities will be undermined. It called the migration of the Bangladeshis as “silent and invidious demographic invasion” of Assam and as a result the state may lose some of

⁷³ Misra, Udayan, “Bodo Stir: Complex Issues, Unattainable Demands”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27May 1989, vol. 16, No. 10, p. 1148.

⁷⁴ Nath, Manoj Kumar, op. cit. n. 72, pp. 533-545.

the geo-strategically vital districts of Lower Assam. The report also reveals that the influx of these migrants is turning some of the districts in Assam into a Muslim majority region. The Governor feared that these districts later may demand for their merger with Bangladesh may be made. The rapid growth of international Islamic fundamentalism may provide the driving force for this demand. Loss of Lower Assam will sever the entire land mass of the North East, from the rest of India and the rich natural resources of that region will be lost to the Nation. Neither the BSF on the border nor the Border organization in the interior could prevent large scale illegal migration from Bangladesh. The border is very porous and the illegal migrants enjoyed political patronage. Efforts to prevent their ingress or to deport them were not very successful.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Assam Governor S K Sinha's Report, on *Illegal Migration into Assam*, Submitted to the President of India, 8 November, 1998, Raj Bhavan, Guwahati, pp 1-13.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Migration means a movement of population from one place to another and it may be internal or external. When migration takes place in and within a region or state, it is called internal migration. But when people cross some demarcated international boundary it is called the external migration. Migration may be permanent or semi permanent. It generally depends upon the people who migrate/who takes decision to migrate. People generally migrate either to get rid of poverty or hunger or to increase the level of income to live better life. People also migrate to save themselves from religious persecution or sometimes from the state repression and environmental destruction and natural hazards. Environmental destruction in a particular region definitely has adverse effect on the human being. Natural hazards like flood, cyclone etc also have adverse impact on the human being in such situation large scale destruction occurs which compels people to move to safer places. The state repression, human right abuses, communal conflict have also been some major causes behind migration of people.

It is observed that most of the scholars of migration studies divulge the economic factors as major causes of migration. Scholars stress that people migrate from one place to another only for the lack of proper economic infrastructure, like low level income, poverty, lack of smooth development and high level of unemployment. Most of the policy makers also give emphasis on the fact that migration takes place from the developing countries to developed countries. Individuals are most likely to migrate when economic conditions in a particular region decline and least likely when the economic conditions improve. But sometimes this notion of migration has been proved to be wrong. This is manifested in many ways, for instance, in the era of globalization migration of people also takes place from the wealthy countries to developing countries for investment purpose. People with high skills also migrate to the developing countries.

It has also been observed that sometimes people migrate to other countries through legal mechanism, which provides a specific time to the migrants. But sometimes people cross international border without any legal documents. It occurs when the legal administrative process is slow and cumbersome. People under this condition cross the boundary without any legal procedures. Most of the theories of migration say that individual's migrate when they see some wage differential between his own country and the destination countries. This implies that the individual migrate to places where there is a chance of having income-maximizing opportunities.

This study also shows that migration of people from a different country or region sometimes contribute to the development and also generate conflict. Violence becomes inevitable with the people of the host country when the migrants having different culture and customs compete with the inhabitants. Scholars also think migrants as economic assets in any country as they provide labor and manpower. The countries having labour scarcity always prefer semi and highly skilled labours for the development purpose. The governments who import people from outside the country do have policies to deal with the migrants. Sometime government having no policy to deal with migrants faces severe problems. Migration of people from a place having ethnic differences also creates problems in the host country. Conflict occurs between the migrants and the local inhabitants for the competition over the resources like land, employment, and civic amenities. It is also observed that social jealousy and separate identity shown by the people of the host country also generate violence and conflict with the migrants.

This study has substantiated that the migration of Bangladeshis into Assam is a long proven fact. Earlier during the British period the migration was systematic and state sponsored. Migration of Bangladeshis occurred during that period mainly to implement the British policies in this region. Moreover, due to the abundance low wage labourers' people from East Bengal were imported to work in the waste land in the riverine tracts. Their migration has been continuing after the annexation of Assam in 1826. But later in the twentieth century it become mere acute. It has been observed from the study that migration of Bangladeshis into Assam occurred due to several factors. Low density of population, more employment opportunities, abundance of fertile land, cultural affinity, language

homogeneity, and the religious cohesion in the state are the key factors of triggering Bangladeshis to migrate into Assam. At the same time the push factors have been very strong. These push factors are largely responsible for the migration of Bangladeshis into the border states of India like Tripura, West Bengal, Assam and other Northeastern states. The study observed that the environmental scarcity, natural hazard, like flood and cyclone are responsible for the same. Since the Bangladesh economy is based on agriculture, the decline of agriculture productivity and the loss of crops due to intrusion of saline water are also very visible factors. Mostly poverty, inadequate development measures taken by the government, political instability, and the state repression could be termed as the key factors of migration.

The large scale increase of population in Bangladesh has created a scarcity of land. This compelled Bangladeshis to migrate into India. The shortage of food and other necessities of life deteriorated thereby disturbing the social and economic fabric of the society. Though a large number of governmental and non governmental organisations are engaged in poverty alleviation programme, poverty in Bangladesh still remains a burning problem. Some major infrastructural development projects initiated by the Bangladesh government also created large scale population displacement. These large chunks of people without proper rehabilitation were forced to migrate either internally or externally to India.

The division of the Indian subcontinent on religious ground also created massive population movement from both India and Pakistan. Migration of both the Hindus and the Muslims occurred due to the division. But the feeling of insecurity spread by the state through the legalization of Islamisation is also a major cause of migration of Bangladeshis into India. It has been observed that the migration of the Bangladeshis into Assam created a demographic imbalance in the state. This injected fear psychosis among the middle class Assamese. They apprehended of becoming minority in a majority state. It can not be denied that these migrants have immensely contributed to the development of the Assamese economy. Moreover most of the time these migrants have been blamed for only generating conflict in the state. People who are influenced by religious fanaticism started looking at these migrants as a threat to security of the nation.

Bangladeshi migrants in Assam have never been in some attractive government jobs (with some exception), they are simply laborers and engaged most of the time in agriculture and in some petty jobs like rickshaw puller, , milk farming, restaurant staff etc. The fear among the Assamese middle class led to the beginning of a massive anti-Bengali/anti illegal migrants uprising in the state. A large scale massacre of both Hindu and Bengali Muslims took place. The government estimation in the violence shows less but the actual numbers of death were more than is estimated.

This study has also shown that the violence against the state takes place when the government consistently fails to meet the demands of the local people. The demands of the Assamese people of detecting, deporting and disfranchising the migrants from Assam created havoc. It is also observed from the study that the political parties both at national and regional level were involved on the vote bank politics in their attitude to the migrants. These parties were busy in mobilizing people on their own way and neglected the gravity of the problem. The negligence of the administration and the government to handle the problem generated the feeling of more alienation among the people of Assam. The people lost the faith on the constitutional mechanism and resorted to violence to show their abhorrence towards the government. However we cannot say that the government was totally showing negligence and did not take any initiatives to deal with the problem. Moreover, instead of initiating constructive, peaceful negotiation with the people, the government resorts to military solution of the problem that created more anxiety among the people.

It also been observed from the above study that the government also tried to take measures to solve the problem. For the purpose of deportation of these people government introduced several measures. The signing of an Accord with the AASU was one of the firm steps taken by the Government. Moreover, passing of the IMDT act in 1983 to deal with the problem of migration, created more anxiousness among the people. The provisions of the act created more problems in deportation rather than helping the administration. People criticized it as this mainly served the vote bank politics of the government and political parties. But the recent scraping of the act by the Supreme Court is likely to simplify the process of deportation. Deportations of these migrants are not easy.

The political parties have always had a very diverging opinion on these migrants. Even the Governor of Assam viewed it as a demographic invasion, and suggested that it may result in loss of some geostrategically vital districts of lower Assam.

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