

CONFLICT INDUCED DISPLACEMENT: CASE OF BTAD IN ASSAM.

**Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of**

Master of Philosophy

MAIDANG KHUNGREE BASUMATARY



**Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110 067,
India
2018**

Date: 25 July, 2018

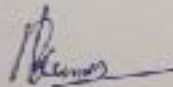
DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**CONFLICT INDUCED DISPLACEMENT: CASE OF BTAD IN ASSAM**" submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of **Master of Philosophy** has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.


Maidang Khungree Basumatary
MAIDANG KHUNGREE BASUMATARY

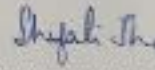
CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.



DR. V. BIJU KUMAR

 Supervisor
Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067



PROF. SHREFALI JHA

Chairperson
Centre for Political Studies
School of Social Sciences
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067

*Dedicated to
my Grandparents...*

Late Thaishi Basumatary, Late Harichandra Basumatary

Late Budhbari Mahilary, Late Mahesh Ranjan Mahilary

Acknowledgement

The accomplishment of any work requires the opportunity, support, and help of many people. This piece of work has been possible only because of the efforts of many well-wishers.

I take this opportunity to sincerely acknowledge the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University for giving us the opportunity and freedom to study and research on topics that we are interested in.

I am extremely indebted to my guide DR V. BIJUKUMAR for giving me the opportunity to work under him. It is indeed a great honour and privilege to work under the guidance of a person who has enormous knowledge in this field. He has given me the opportunity, space, patience, and support in accomplishing this work. His constant useful critiques, suggestions, and guidelines have always kept me going.

To my Maa and Baba, because of whom my life is a treasure. Their love keeps me motivated to work hard. To my aanwi Jilima Mushahary and amai Jana Mohan Mushahary who has a special contribution in my work. They have given me immense support, help, and guidance while I was on a field work.

My special thanks to the entire team of “THE PEOPLE’S AID,” a charitable trust social organization who has introduced me to the Conflict-Induced Displaced villages of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (Assam). The members of this organization have accompanied me in one of the most critical remote villages and helped me gain raw knowledge and insights. Without them, it would not have been possible.

My earnest thanks to local resource persons who have narrated the history and stories of the conflicts in their village. I am particularly grateful to Mr. Jogeswar Basumatary (Village headman of Sorolpara and a Victim of riot). I was immensely touched and amazed by his knowledge on the history of riots.

My appreciation goes to “NERSWN”, an NGO in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts who have helped me with the source and data collected by them on Conflict-Induced Displacement.

My eternal gratitude goes to Abo Bithorai, Dalim, Disha and Dinga for their valuable love, support, and generous care in accomplishing this work.

My high regards to my friends Bubuli, Rebekah, Anju, and Sanjeev for their sincere encouragement and help. I thank them for listening, offering me advice, and supporting me through this entire process.

Abbreviations

IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Area Districts
BSF	Bodo Security Force
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Boroland
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
CAPART	Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology
BLT	Bodo Liberation Tigers Force
BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Area Districts
DRDA.	District Rural Development Agency

Contents

Page no

Acknowledgement

Abbreviations

Chapter -I. Introduction.....1

1. Overview.....1

2. Displacement in India.....4

3. Conflict Induced Displacement.....8

4. The Northeast Context.....9

5. Outline of the chapters.....12

Chapter-II. Dire Traits of Conflict Induced Displacement.....14

1. Introduction.....14

2. Causes and Outcomes of Conflict Induced Displacement.....15

3. Deprivation and Vulnerability of the Displaced.....19

4. Dire Consequences of Conflicts and Displacement in Northeastern Region of India.....29

5. Complexity of Riots and Displacement in Assam.....33

6. Scenario of Displacement in BTAD of Assam.....38

Chapter-III. Internally Displaced Communities in Assam.....40

1. Overview.....40

2. Bodos and their Insecurities.....	41
3. Displaced Adivasis and their Concerns.....	45
4. Displaced Muslims and their Insecurities.....	50
5. Analysis.....	53
Chapter-IV. Analysis of the Riots and the Resulting Displacement in BTAD (1993-2012).....	56
1. Introduction.....	56
2. Kokrajhar District at a glance.....	57
3. Analysis of the Riots.....	58
4. Issues of Concern in Northeast.....	70
5. Number of Affected Families, the Position of present inmates, Requirement of Gratuitous Relief (G.R), and Rehabilitation Grant (R.G). (As on 01.01.2000).....	71
6. Process of Rehabilitation.....	75
7. Problems in Management of Relief and Rehabilitation in Kokrajhar District.....	78
Chapter-V. Conclusion.....	80
Bibliography.....	87

Chapter- I

Introduction

1. Overview

Mobility, displacement, and emplacement have become defining features of our generation. Displacement will continue to haunt us, as long as wars, conflict, development projects, and forced migration continues. Considering the magnitude of displacement in the whole world, displacement can have many different reasons. Displacement can be due to natural disaster, due to violence, due to development, due to ethnic conflicts and due to take over of land by migrating communities. All displacements are involuntary. Displacement risks the lives of displaced people. People displaced live in a complex and protracted environment. Displacement is a threat to national and regional stability.

The concern for the crisis of Internal Displacement and the plight of the displaced population in the international platform has grown over the years. The efforts of organizations like International Humanitarian, Human Rights, and Development agencies have become more focused on the policy and field level. For their proper coordination and an effective response to tragedies of Internal Displacement, a UN office has been established.

Though it is one of the very much easily understood term, there have been different ideas on the concept of Internal Displacement. For some, it means only those people uprooted by violence, conflict, and persecution. These uprooted people would be considered refugees if they cross the border of the country. Another group considers Internally Displaced people in a broader context. They consider millions of people who have been uprooted by natural disasters, development projects along with the ones uprooted by violence and conflict as IDP. Some question the very idea of singling out

IDP as a category at all. Some term the displaced people wholly as refugees in spite and regardless of whether they have crossed the border or not.¹ After much discussion and understanding, a final definition was decided. Representative's deliberation is contained in the introduction to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The principles, which were presented in UN in 1998 have since then gained wide recognition as an important and standard tool for addressing Internal Displacement.² It is being used around the world by Governments, the United Nations, Regional Bodies, Non-Governmental Organizations and other actors. They define Internally Displaced Persons as:

“Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural, or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.”³

IDPs are those who have been uprooted as a result of the conflict, natural or manmade disasters, violations of human rights and development projects. Sometimes the lack of explicit mention of development in IDP definition has led to confusion including erroneous assertions that those displaced as a result of development projects are excluded from the guiding principles. However that the Guiding Principles were meant to also apply in situations of development is apparent from the content of principles themselves, which directly addresses displacement by development projects in principle 6 and also draw upon resettlement standards from the development field. The definition of IDP is an illustrative explanation rather than a lawful term. It just outlines the condition of the person and does not confer a legitimate status as the term ‘Refugee’ does. The rights and duties to which the IDPs are entitled to come from their own state and the state are responsible for their protection. All IDPs do not need the attention of the international

¹ Erin Mooney, “The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a category of concern,” *Refugee survey quarterly*, vol.24, Issue 3, P.12.

² Jaine. Hampton, *Internally Displaced People: A Global Survey*, (UK, London: Earthscan Publication, 2002), p. 191.

³ UNHCR, *IDP definition, Emergency Handbook*, The UN Refugee Agency, (Feb.2017), p.2.

eye. If their own government protects them and takes up policies for their betterment and rehabilitation process, it is not necessary for the external authorities to interfere.

There has been debate over whether IDPs should be singled out and treated as a special category. Those who are against the idea of singling them out are of the view that it will privilege the displaced as a special category and it will lead to discrimination of others. Displacement is itself a unique vulnerability. Displacement leads to violation of certain rights. The rights of the displaced people need to be protected. Under the International Criminal Law, the forced removal of populations, including outside of the context of armed conflict is now recognized as a crime against humanity.⁴ Based on these standards as well as various implicit prohibitions in international human rights law, a right not to be arbitrarily displaced has been articulated (Guiding principle 6).⁵ The very fact of being Internally Displaced therefore can signal abuse of rights. Once the Internal Displacement occurs, it brings about a set of circumstances that render those affected highly vulnerable.

IDPs are put as a different category from refugees. Those who cross international boundary are considered refugees. Refugees are protected under international law. IDPs do not get international protection although they are affected with the similar tragedies resulting from conflicts, violation of human rights or any violence by state or non state actors. The purpose of this paper is not to provide or ask for a legal status for the IDPs but to assert that they are vulnerable because they have been forced out of their homes and that they should be given protection as per the humanitarian and human rights law. Understanding the differences and similarities between refugees and IDPs helps us to locate the limits on the protection of the internally displaced.

⁴ Hania Mufti, "Iraq Claims in Conflict: Reversing Ethnic Cleansing in Northern Iraq," *Human Right Watch*, no.4 (2004), p.18

⁵ Irge Satiroglu & Narae Choi, *Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: New Perspectives* (NewYork: Routledge Publication, 2015), p.151.

Recent study has found that displacement leads to massive loss not only of commodities as the home, income, land or other forms of property but also of less symbolic goods such as cultural heritage, friendship and a sense of belonging to a particular place. The repercussions of displacement are wide ranging, right from social, health, and welfare exclusion to deprivation of education. They are left to fend for themselves and are at the heightened risk of abuse. In many cases the displaced populations are viewed with suspicion and hostility in the areas where they settle down. They are stigmatized. Government tacitly accepts the lingering marginalization of the displaced people and they believe that the victims of displacement cannot reconstruct its previous standard of living. The difference in levels of humanitarian assistance can affect the other characteristics of the crisis. Some observers argue that generous assistance will prolong the crisis and make the displaced groups overly dependent on foreign charity. Others argue that a high level of aid will blunt the tendency for criminality and political violence that might otherwise occur in an overcrowded, unsanitary refugee camp. These opposing views can be tested with sufficient data.

2. Displacement in India

India has always been prone to violence and displacement. Violence and displacement is a common phenomenon in India. It is to be noted that violence in India has generated very few refugees but there is enormous displacement within the country. There is enormous variation in the nature and extend of displacement in India. There is always difference and variation in the data collected by different organizations on the number of displaced people in India. The latest World Refugee Survey has reported that there are 507,000 in India. The Indian Social Institute in Delhi puts the number of displaced people as 21.3 million and the Global Development project shows that there are

3.9 million displaced people.⁶The major reason for displacement in India can be discussed as follows:

2.1 Identity Based Autonomous Movements.

Autonomy movements are gaining its momentum in the recent decades. Movements for Bodoland, Gorkhaland, Punjab, Ladakh and many more are gaining importance. Such kind of movements has contributed to huge displacement in India.

2.2 Political causes, including Secessionist movements.

Since independence, Kashmir and northeast region of the country has been witnessing different kinds of secessionist movements. Violence resulting from secessionist movements has since then caused large scale displacement that directly affects the political and social scenario of the country.

2.3 Migration and takeover of land by migrating communities.

Migration due to economic incentives displaces thousands of people. Although migration due to economic incentives is a voluntary migration, it leads to conflicts with the host population or the place where people have migrated. Such kind of migration leads to fight for various incentives and natural resources leading to displacement.

2.4 Localized violence.

Caste disputes, religious fundamentalism have also cause displacement in India. Caste disputes are a very prominent phenomenon in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The “son of the soil” policy believers are against employment rights to those people who migrate. Such incidents lead to violence and displacement. Protest against the Chakma’s in Aurnachal Pradesh is an example of localized violence.

⁶ Mahendra P Lama, “Internal Displacement in India: Causes, Protection and Dilemmas,” Forced Migration Review, *Refugee Studies centre*, (August, 2000), p.25.

2.5 Displacement caused by Environment and Development projects.

In order to increase the economic growth, Indian government has been taking up projects like dams, roads, power plants and new cities. These kind of new projects and development have been possible through massive acquisition of land. This leads to displacement. Indian Social Science Institute has given a report which tells that there are 21.3 million people displaced by development projects. Amongst these displaced people 16.4 million were displaced by dams, 2.55 million by mines, and 1.25 through industrial development. There has been destruction of wild life sanctuaries and national parks as a result of development projects.⁷

2.6 Natural Disaster Induced Displacement.

Floods, landslides and cyclones are major causes of displacement in India. Displacement due to natural disaster is acute and frequent. Centre for Science and Environment has reported that India is the most flood affected country in the world after Bangladesh.⁸ Over 30 million people are displaced annually. Flood control measures by the government mainly consist of dams and embankments. But such control measures have not been able to stop the tragedy of floods and its resulting displacement. Rather, now dams are considered as an important cause of floods and embankments disrupts the natural drainage system in plains.

2.7 Communal violence.

Communal riots are definitely one of the important causes of violence in India. Hindu- Muslim riots are amongst the most common feature of violence in any part of the country. Communal violence can take serious turns and lead to mass killings. Gujarat riots is the example of such incidence. Any kind of violence in India has the possibility

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

to take communal turn. Hatred among each ethnic community in northeast can also take communal turn and lead to mass killings and displacement.

Conflicts in India continue to cause massive displacement. The country yet has not amended policies in accordance with the United Nations Guiding Principles to protect the IDPs. The existing data are not reliable. There is lack of a national governing body to protect the displaced people. As studied by the Centre for Social Justice and Action Aid (2013) many IDP have been living in protracted areas.⁹ Identifying the total number of IDPs' in India has been a challenge because of the absence of Central government authority which can regulate and monitor the number. The government has not been able to resettle all the displaced people. An International body IDMC (2015a) which works on IDPs issue has given a report of displaced people in India. The report says that around 6, 16,140 people were displaced in Central India (West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh), northeast (Assam, Mizoram, Tripura, and Manipur), Jammu and Kashmir, and Gujarat due to ethnic conflict, armed conflict, and communal violence.¹⁰

Because of the lack of national authority in India collection and monitoring data of displaced people is a big problem. In most places, data's are not collected due to severity and the insecurity of the places. For example it is very difficult to collect data in northeast and Jammu and Kashmir where the highest number of conflicts and displacement takes place. Presence of insurgency and other social insecurities makes it difficult. A place called Sorolpara in BTAD of Assam is a perfect example of this scenario. I had the privilege to visit this place while working with an NGO. The visit was useful as I could gather some insightful knowledge and data which shall be discussed in the following chapters. It is a place at the outskirts of BTAD, far away from the mainstream areas. There is very less connectivity to this place. Only one bus from

⁹ Madhulika Sahoo and Jalandhar Pradhan, "Counting Conflict-induced Internally Displaced Persons in India," *Economic and political weekly*, No.40 (October 2016), p.14.

¹⁰ Countrywide Response Urgently required to address Chronic Internal Displacement *Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre* Published by Norwegian Refugee Council, Norway (April, 2015).

Kokrajhar goes to this place. Bodos, Nepalese, and Adivasis are the residents of Sorolpara. These three communities keep on chasing each other, fighting over the limited resources. All the three communities are the victims of conflict and displacement. There is no proper data collected except for those by some NGOs. Humanitarian authorities, human right agencies, and scholars have no or less access to this kind of sensitive areas.

In most cases, only IDPs living in camps are registered as displaced. Many IDPs who do not live in official camps are rarely counted as displaced. It has always been a problem for the academicians and scholars to find reliable data on IDPs in India. Most of the resources are either from print media, audio-visual media or the NGOs.¹¹ Therefore the total estimation of the number of displaced people in India is problematic.

3. Conflict Induced Displacement

Displacement which is caused by violence/conflict is known as conflict induced displacement. Conflict is one of the major causes of displacement. Conflict induced displacement stands different from other kinds of displacement like development induced displacement or displacement caused by economic incentives. Conflict caused by violence is sudden and uninformed.

Conflict is a broad category and it needs a special focus to understand its causes and variants. This paper focus on the nature of displacement and its consequences, it will not discuss much about the variants of conflict. Kinds of conflict that leads to displacement are: civil war, ethnic conflicts, and conflict for natural resources, communal conflicts, genocidal government, rampaging militias, and international intervention. The nature of displacement differs depending on the type of conflict. Some leads to short term consequences and others lead to prolonged trauma. The cause and nature of conflict can be used to predict the possibility of repatriation. Those fleeing economic injustice will

¹¹ Ibid, P.14–15

easily and readily agree to repatriation than those displaced by violent conflict like genocide. Some violence intensifies over time and repatriation becomes impossible. Example of this scenario could be ethnic violence turning into genocide.

Victims of conflict have different motivations of plight based on the economic, political and geographical implications. Studying conflict induced displacement has two important focuses. First is the understanding of the violence/ conflict that has caused the displacement. Second is the nature and characteristics of the displacement. The nature and causes of displacement may differ and every reason needs to be studied with special focus. All displacement cannot be generalized. All displaced people cannot be viewed as undifferentiated masses. Their sufferings and problems differ. But it is to be noted that all kinds of displaced people have some common deprivation.

4. The Northeast Context

India's Northeast, ever since decolonization has been facing violent agitations, separatist insurgencies and different kinds of ethnic conflicts which has led to huge bloodshed and enormous displacement. It is an interesting area to study because the nature of the conflicts and displacement is dynamic. Researching on places like BTAD gives us the ongoing socio political scenario of the newly born autonomous councils. It helps us to analyze the possible situation of the future conduct and help us plan for a better administration and management of various kinds of crisis. Conflicts in these areas often overlap among identical communities. Northeast has seen more violence than any other part of India. Though its population is only 3.9 percent of the country's total population yet it has accounted for more than half the people killed either through violence or state repression.¹²

¹² Sajal Nag, "Resisting Nationalist Discourses, Ethnic Upsurge in Post-Colonial North East India," in *Conflicting Ethnicities Locating the Local in the Global*, edited. Kousar J. Azam (New Delhi: Manohar Publication, 2013), p.89.

Land and Identity is an important issue which is central to most of the conflicts and displacement in northeast. Most of the conflicts in northeast arise out of contradiction between community managed tribal sustenance and the formal law of the state that depends on property and individual ownership. It is sometimes very confusing to figure out who is at fault. Is it the failure of the government to safeguard the identity and livelihood of the people or is it the people who have constantly been in conflict with each other. But what concerns more is the amount of displacement that occurs out of conflicts. Rehabilitation is extremely important. It is a humanitarian task and moral obligation of the state. The Norwegian Refugee Council's profile of Internal Displacement in India in 2000-2001, based on its Global IDP Database, is explicative of the broad divergence that exists between various existing available data of IDPs in the north east region of India. It also tells about the lack of data in some cases. The report by US Committee in the year 2000 estimated that there were 157,000 displaced persons in northeast India (USCR-2000).¹³ The numbers have definitely increased by now. Despite the presence of precise figures, these estimates underscore the magnitude of IDP crisis in north east India. Losing of land through displacement renders people economically non viable, even though they survive physically.

Questions of social justice in northeast India are significantly more complex today than what the regime of protection was originally designed to accomplish. Conflicts are not only between tribal's and nontribal. All denizens communities and minority groups face the danger of falling victim to the politics of displacement. The urge to protect an existing homeland claims of a rival group and the project of creating new homeland are the typically the subtexts of these conflicts.¹⁴ This paper studies the conflict induced displacement in northeast India because by drawing together the issues of analysis,

¹³ Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder; Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (New Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 2005), p.184.

¹⁴ Sanjib Baruah, "Citizens and denizens: Ethnicity, Homelands and the crisis of Displacement in North east India," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.16, No.1, (2003), p.46-47

accountability and advocacy of the displaced population, it can have a significant impact on improving the effectiveness and humanitarian organizations as well as local capacities for conflict transformation. Broad study has been made on the displacement crises of BTAD of Assam.

Displacement definitely has many causes. This study will exclusively discuss the displacement caused by conflicts in northeastern states of India with a special focus on displaced Bodos, Muslims and Adivasis of BTAD. Much of the field work has been done in Sorolpara, Alibita, Hakma, Nilajora, and Sukanbownai. These are conflict-affected villages of Kokrajhar district in BTAD. The research would try to address the following research questions:

- a. How and if in general Conflict-Induced Displacement increases the risk of Conflict diffusion within the country?
- b. Why are the displaced populations susceptible to political manipulations or become the easy targets?
- c. Do the experience and traumatization of the flight of Conflict-Induced Displacement likely to increase the salience of ethnic identities?
- d. Is the government's inability to address the flight of Conflict-Induced Displacement leading to more anti-government militarization?
- e. Why each community in BTAD believes that it has been victimized by the other?

The study is of an explanatory nature. It is based on both qualitative and quantitative method. Despite all these, it is largely based on the existing secondary resources. Most of the findings and explanation in the paper is based on the field work done with the help of local NGOs. It includes the information collected through interaction and friendly interviews with the victims of conflict-induced displacement.

Filed works were basically done to analyze and study the current status of the displaced population. Study of the nature and causes of conflict that led to displacement relied on the secondary available resources.

5. Outline of the chapters

The present chapter has introduced the concept of displacement and its causes. It presents a theoretical understanding of IDPs. It also asserts that displacement is a unique vulnerability and leads to abuse of rights. The similarities and differences between refugees and IDPs has also been pointed out.

The second chapter, i.e. “The dire consequences of Conflict-Induced Displacement” studies the various repercussions and deprivation of conflict-induced displacement. It argues that viewing all displacement crises, in the same way is problematic. It asserts the importance of understanding the political and military underpinnings for an effective solution to a humanitarian crisis. It points out the importance of disaggregating the displacement caused by violence/ conflict because it is sudden and is a matter of security. Conflict is a broad category and it needs a special focus to understand its causes and variants. The nature of displacement differs depending on the type of conflict. This chapter also talks about the consequences of conflicts and displacement in Assam and in the northeast as a whole. It says that the inequalities in northeast are based on cultural or racial differences and most of the groups perceive each other as a threat to their identity. Identity assertion is often based on contesting claims over homeland, a dominant territory or other resources. Fight for land is one of the most common causes of conflicts and displacement in the northeast.

The third chapter, i.e. “Internally Displaced Communities in Assam,” analyses the concerns and insecurities of the displaced population in Kokrajhar district. It studies the nature of displacement and asserts that the conflicts in BTAD cannot be termed as ethnic

cleansing. It says that all the communities involved in the conflict are minorities and they are victimized. All of them should be given equal protection and humanitarian assistance.

The fourth chapter, i.e. “Analysis of Riots and the Resulting Displacement in BTAD” analyses the various riots that happened in Kokrajhar from 1993-2012. This chapter talks about the unsolvable crisis, insecurity, and complexity involved in these riots. It also discusses the rehabilitation process of the displaced in Kokrajhar district.

The last chapter i.e. the conclusion summarizes the findings of this study. It points out that displacement of indigenous people from their land is a serious issue. It also suggest the possible measures in solving the problem of displacement in India.

Chapter- II

Dire Traits of Conflict Induced Displacement

1. Introduction.

Millions of people flee their home every year due to violent conflicts. The resulting displacement risks the lives of the displaced people. Conflicts and its resulting displacement are increasing worldwide. As a consequence of conflict and human rights violence as many as 25 million people worldwide have been uprooted within their own country.¹⁵ Displacement is accompanied by social and psychological marginalization. There is a loss of confidence amongst the displaced and in the society as a whole. It further leads to a feeling of injustice and deepened vulnerability. Rampant violations of human rights and use of terror by both state and non state actors and extrajudicial killings have weakened the political system. It leads to substantial displacement of populations.¹⁶

Displacement caused by conflicts is a serious issue; the dangers posed by it are traumatic. Viewing all displacement crises, in the same way, is problematic. Generalization on the basis of one factor leads to lumping of all kinds of violence. It obstructs the research on the crisis and hinders any solution or prediction of future events. It becomes difficult for the practitioners to examine the causes because they don't have the resource and cannot relate to the dynamics of displacement. Those who work as humanitarians do not go beyond their neutrality and do not compromise on their values by getting involved in the politics of displacement. Policy makers work separately from the refugee experts and see displacement as an outcome of the unenviable conflict. Analyzing the consequences of conflict-induced displacement requires a proper

¹⁵ Mridula Dhekial Phukan, "Ethnicity conflict and population Displacement in Northeast India," Assam. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* (AJHSS) Volume 1—Issue 2, (August 2013), p. 93-94. ISSN: 2320-9720

¹⁶ Subir Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery, Crisis of India's North East* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2009), p.88.

understanding of the nature of the conflict. Sometimes the situation of displacement is so dire that it becomes difficult for the humanitarian workers and policymakers to make a deep analysis of the cause.

Conflicts and its resulting displacement break up family and family support system. Displaced people are susceptible and vulnerable to many kinds of violence like sexual assault, militarization, forced labor, exploitation and many other forms of human rights violation.¹⁷ They are at a distinct advantage added with the deprivation of shelter, food, protection, and family. They need special and urgent protection to overcome the tragedy. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement asserts that “IDPs shall enjoy, in full equality, the same rights and freedoms enjoyed by other persons in the country. They shall not be discriminated against the enjoyment of any rights and freedoms on the ground that they are internally displaced. The principle of equality, however, does not preclude undertaking special measures in case of a particular group and in fact will often require this.”¹⁸ Leading human rights scholars explain: Equality in law precludes discrimination of any kind; whereas equality, in fact, may involve the necessity of different treatment in order to attain a result which establishes equilibrium between different situations.¹⁹

2. Causes and Outcomes of Conflict Induced Displacement

It is important to understand the political and military underpinnings for an effective solution to a humanitarian crisis. Different categories of violence affect the patterns of development. Generally, displacement crisis develop from politics. In many

¹⁷ Catherine Phuong, *The International Protection of Internally Displaced Persons* (UK, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.143.

¹⁸ Mooney, Op.cit, p. 19.

¹⁹ Henry J. Steiner and Philip Alston, *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics, Morals* (UK, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p.93.

cases, sometimes a response to a crisis can evolve a conflict. Dealing with conflict-induced displacement is critical, and needs special analysis. Conflicts not only displace people but it also affects the safety of the victims.²⁰ The type of conflict can determine the intensity of insecurity. It also tells the possible repatriation. There can be many kinds of conflict that force people to flee their home. The earliest classification of conflicts that leads to displacement and refugees was given by Myron Weiner. He has given four categories of conflicts: Interstate wars, ethnic conflicts, non ethnic conflicts and fight against an authoritarian and revolutionary rule.²¹ This classification cannot be rigid because many categories of violence can occur within the same conflict. It is important to disaggregate the displacement caused by violence because it is a matter of security. Unlike the refugees, IDPs do not have a legal protection. IDPs are under the control of home state. Displaced people can be categorized in many ways. Common and basic categorization can be understood as follows:

2.1 Geopolitical Characteristics

Geopolitical differences among displaced persons determine the legal classification. Spatial location of the place determines the kind of legal classification of a particular group. It tells the kind of protection, care and response they get from the legal aids. If in case a group crosses the international boundary, it gets the status of refugee and gets a special protection.

In case of an IDP, the place and geography determine how much attention it gets from humanitarian workers. If it is located at a place where there is a serious security issue it becomes difficult for the humanitarian workers to reach and communicate with

²⁰ Christopher McDowell and Gareth Morrell, *Displacement Beyond Conflict: Challenges for the 21st Century* (UK, Oxford: Berghahn Book Publication, 2010), p.34.

²¹ Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil, Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (USA, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2015), p.27.

the people. Politically sensitive areas are also at far reach from the people. For example, in the tribal areas of northeast India, ethnic conflicts are a common phenomenon. Thousands of people get displaced every year. Not everyone gets the protection of humanitarian helpers and government. It is difficult to connect to such places. Citing the example of Sorolpara in BTAD, it is worth mentioning that every person of this village is displaced. It is one of the most remote places in Assam. Although it lies in Kokrajhar district, it is on the extreme outskirts. Militant groups have made this place their home.²² The three communities living here continuously chase each other which leads to constant killings and displacement. Remoteness added with security issues has made this place unreachable for humanitarian help.

2.2 Political Legitimacy

The political legitimacy can determine the chance of receiving international protection. Refugees can get legal protection from the state or from an international humanitarian organization like UNHCR. Protection can be in the form of permanent asylum or eventually getting a citizenship. An IDP gets political legitimacy through informal channels.²³ Political legitimacy helps them achieve public attention that will focus on their plight. External state or organizations that are concerned and interested in their cause ensures the protection required. In most cases, an IDP suffers until the human rights organizations or humanitarian organizations expose the abuses and put pressure on the government. Pressure groups play a great role in protecting the rights of displaced populations.²⁴

²² Samir Kumar Das, *Blisters on their Feet: Tales of Internally Displaced Persons in India's North East* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2008), p.171–172.

²³ Morris Freilich, *The Pleasure of Anthropology* (USA, New York: New American Library Publication, 1983), p. 328.

²⁴ Gerd Oberleitner, *Global Human Rights Institutions* (UK, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.55.

There are a growing number of human rights organizations, NGOs, and humanitarian workers in India's northeast region. This is the outcome of increasing human rights abuses, displacement, and other social issues which needs attention. Existence of many non-state actors would help sustaining justice, and protection to people in places like the northeast.²⁵

2.3 Demographic Characteristics

Most of the collected data and researches are based on the population who reside in the government assisted or well know camps. Very less research is done on self-settled displaced people. Once they go back to their village or some other location they are not considered as displaced.

Available statistics on displaced groups categorize the data considering age, gender, and ethnicity. In Kokrajhar district of Assam, Bodos, Muslims, and Adivasis are almost equally displaced. The data collection and rehabilitation process are never without flaws. Organizations that belong to a certain community tend to show their community comparatively more displaced than the other community. In the process of giving rehabilitation aid, some community is made more privileged than the others. In the Bodo dominated areas Muslims are discriminated, and in the Muslim dominated areas Bodos are deprived. It all depends on the demographic characteristics of the displaced. Despite the biases and complications these data's are important and useful to have an idea and knowledge of the amount of the displaced population. There is always a tendency of conflict to arise if the host population is of a different ethnicity than the displaced. But in some rare cases, both the groups join hands to fight against the oppressor.

²⁵ Prasenjit Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidya, *Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India: An Analysis* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2008), p.13.

2.4 Humanitarian Status

The kind and amount of humanitarian assistance received can make distinction among groups. As mentioned and discuss previously, political legitimacy do affect the level of aid. Some politically strong groups can pressure the government and get the needed aid for their people. Sometimes the government prevents the aid groups from reaching the displaced people to downplay the displacement crisis. Refugees or displaced people who are in camps tend to receive more aid than the self-settled group as it becomes easier to locate for the aid organizations.²⁶ Media plays an important role in determining the attention and assistance. Attention and focus of particular crisis increases the funding. It encourages various aid organizations and government to take quick action.

3. Deprivation and Vulnerability of the Displaced

There is enormous diversity among the displaced populations. It depends on the place, circumstances, situations and the nature of the cause. But there is certainly clear similarity among all kinds of displacement. These common situations among all displaced persons can be analyzed as follows.²⁷

3.1 Landlessness and Loss of Livelihood

Those bearing the brunt of displacement find themselves suddenly stripped off from their livelihood. Most of them especially in cases of conflict Induced Displacement, IDPs have to run off from their houses without carrying any of their belongings. It drives

²⁶ James C. Hathaway, *The Rights of Refugees Under International Law* (UK, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 817.

²⁷ Michael M. Cernea, "Risk, Safeguards and Reconstruction: A Model for Population Displacement and Resettlement," *Economic and Political weekly*, vol.35,p.3659-3678.

people out of their shelter and the basic protection. IDPs are cut off from their traditional livelihood, land and their means of generating income.

Depriving people of their own land disconnects people from their productive system and commercial activities.²⁸ This problem should be reconstructed as soon as possible or it should be replaced with settled income generating options. Landlessness not only impoverishes the affected family but also leads to other social problems. Loss of land has more serious and a severe effect on families who are from the rural agricultural background. Their livelihood is connected to the land where they work. Suddenly stripping them off from their way of life is the biggest injustice against them.²⁹

3.2 Shelter/ Homelessness

Homelessness or worsening housing standards is an unavoidable sorrow for the displaced people. Loss of individual family house and a community's cultural space results in alienation and deprivation of status. Homelessness is intrinsic to displaced people.³⁰ Displaced people are deprived of the secured and minimum standard of shelter. A Shelter is an utmost need for those who have been displaced.³¹ Therefore giving shelter and a proper place to live is the most necessary humanitarian help for IDPs.

Because of the lack of proper shelter, displaced people are susceptible to the high risk of being affected by various natural tragedies like floods and landslides. It also leads to violation of human rights. Sometimes the displaced people are hosted by their relatives but then in long-term, it leads to tensions between them. The rebuilding of houses cannot

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Kali Chittibabu, *Patterns of Labour Migrations in Colonial Andhra* (UK, Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publications, 2015), 2017.

³⁰ Utpal kumar De, Manoranjan Pal, & Premananda Bharati, *Inequality , Poverty and Development in India: Focus on the North East Region* (New Delhi: Springer Publication, 2017), p.344.

³¹ Mooney, Op.cit, p. 16.

be incurred by the re-settlers due to high cost. In such a situation, they are pushed to take the temporary shelters. Such temporary resettlements make the homelessness chronic. Diseases like Tuberculosis, Malaria, are common amongst the IDPs due to poor living conditions along with insufficient food.³² Adequate health care facilities are not available to them.

3.3 Food

Displaced people face the risk of chronic undernourishment. They don't get the minimum calorie-protein intake necessary for the normal growth. Undernourishment is the symptom of inadequate resettlement. If a proper policy is not taken up, undernourishment becomes a long- term lingering problem. Getting a meal every day is a struggle for displaced people. IDPs are more dependent on food assistance for their survival. World Food Forum in 2001 has said that displacement creates a specific kind of deprivation and vulnerabilities that are not suffered by people who are not displaced.³³ This definitely increases the food insecurity for the displaced people. Malnutrition is one of the most basic causes of deaths among the IDPs.³⁴ High levels of food and livelihood insecurity do not certainly ameliorate over the years. Food insecurity leads to other health risks. Nutrition-related problems among the displaced people emanate from landlessness and joblessness.

³² Bongumil Terminski, *Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: Causes, Consequences, and Socio-Legal Context* (Germany, Leipzig: Deutsche Naitoanliblthek Publication, 2015), p.277.

³³ World Food Program, 'The Right to Food in Emergencies', in *The Right to Food in Theory and Practice*, Rome: UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 1998.

³⁴ World Food Program, *Reaching people in situations of Displacement: A Framework for Action*, WFP/EB.A/2001/4-C (Rome: World Food Program, 2001).

3.4 Lack of Income Generating Opportunities

Joblessness is a serious problem that haunts the displaced population. Loss of land and lack of a place to cultivate is common with all the displaced rural people. People from rural areas suffer the loss of access to work on their lands. The advantage of common property resources also gets lost. Craftsmen, shopkeepers, and others lose their self-employed production system. A survey done in tribal households in Talcer, Orissa found an increase in unemployment from 9 percent to 43.6 percent. An enormous move from primary to tertiary occupation was also observed. There were also reductions in earning among tribals. Training provided to resettlers can make them skillful but employment cannot be guaranteed.³⁵ Lack of income generating opportunities contributes to an increasing prostitution, theft and militarization.

In the northeast region of India, lack of income generating opportunity is a serious problem. It is leading to various other social problems. Human trafficking is acute in northeast.³⁶ Lack of job opportunism has allowed easy trafficking from northeast to metropolitan cities. In the cities many of them are held as domestic helpers against their will, many are forced into prostitution, many are underpaid or work for no pay. Sorolpara lies at the outskirts of BTAD. It is observed that due to repeated violence and displacement added to the remoteness and isolation of the place from the mainstream areas, most of the young women from this area have taken up the job of prostitution.³⁷ Displacement leads to victimization. Many, who are the victims of human trafficking and prostitution, go unnoticed and unobserved. It is important to understand the significance of displacement that is leading to such crimes.

³⁵ Michael M Cernea, "Risk, Safeguards and Reconstruction: A Model for population Displacement and Resettlement," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.35, No.41(Oct.2000), p.3660.

³⁶ K.M Baharul Islam, *Issues in Women's Right: A Practitioners Resource Book* (New Delhi: Allied Publication, 2014), p.297.

³⁷ Evidences of Witness From Bengal and Assam, Published by Government Central Print, 1971

3.5 Psychological Trauma

Displacement not only leads to physical trauma. Displacement also contributes to psychological and mental problems amongst the displaced population. There is a high probability of psychosomatic emotions. A higher suicide rate was reported in IDPs than the national average in Sri Lanka.³⁸

3.6 Lack of Documentation

In many of the conflict affected villages it was found that people do not have any documents. They have either lost their documents during the fight or the women and children's who have suddenly become a widow/orphan doesn't have a document in their names. In such a scenario it becomes difficult to get most of the government services like health care, ration, and other facilities. It becomes difficult to access important identification like a voting card. Because of this reason, many of the displaced population cannot take part in any social, economic and political decisions that affect their lives.

3.7 Marginalization.

Loss of economic power leads to marginalization. The system of downward mobility gets distracted. Much of the middle-income families who hold a considerable amount of land become small landholders. Small shopkeepers and craftsmen are condensed and reach the level of below poverty line. Earlier acquired human skills and capital cannot be used in the new location. It becomes obsolete and inactive. This loss and deprivation are accompanied by a drop in social status.

Displacement and its victimization depreciate the self-image of the people. The displaced people are often looked as socially degrading by host communities. It leads to

³⁸ Save the Children, *State of the World's Mothers 2003: Protecting Women and Children in Conflict*, Westport, Connecticut: Save the Children USA, 2003, p.16.

stigmatization. The effects of marginalization can be multiple. Displaced are often regarded as strangers when they go to a new location. Because of such stigmatization, they are denied opportunities and entitlements. In urban areas, marginalization is often gradual. Its effect sometimes comes only after relocation or resettlement. They get temporary jobs which in long term is not a reliable source of income.

3.8 Health Hazards

Displacement causes serious health hazards. The temporary settlement cantonments of displaced people lack the preventive health measures. The effects of such condition lead to various diseases of poor hygiene. Diarrhea and dysentery are common among the displaced population. Insufficient and unsafe drinking water leads to various parasitic and vector-borne diseases. Malaria and schistosomiasis are diseases that haunt the displaced people because of the unhygienic living conditions. Infants, children's and elderly are more prone and susceptible to such diseases. Many types of research have proved that the displaced population is more vulnerable to severe illness and diseases than the normal population. Morbidity and mortality rates are higher in areas where displaced population settles. Increase mortality can be due to epidemic outbreaks and unavailability of information and preventive measures.³⁹

3.9 Loss of access to Common Property Resources

Lack of the advantage of common recourses, in the newly relocated areas, results in the significant expropriation of income and livelihood levels. The government cannot compensate for the loss of common property resources. Loss of common property resources has long-standing problems in the livelihood. For example, in the northeast

³⁹ C. J. Thomas, *Polity and Economy- Agenda for Contemporary NorthEast India* (New Delhi: Regency Publication, 2005),p.157.

region, rural people are mostly dependent on the common property resources.⁴⁰ Most of the needed resources in the house come from edible forest products, forest firewood, common grazing areas and public quarries.⁴¹ Without these resources survival becomes difficult. Loss of common property resources makes them spend money to buy basic requirements, which they would otherwise get without spending a penny. Lands held under the common property regime in India's semi-arid regions provide 91-100 percent of firewood, 66-89 percent of domestic fuel, 69-80 percent of grazing needs.⁴²

The loss of common property resources due to displacement in many instances have led to encroachment of forest lands. This phenomenon has become very common in the northeast. In the BTAD of Assam, the displaced population of the resulting conflicts has started living in forest lands. After the conflicts, they were temporarily settled in the dry area which does not have the land or the common property resources. Their livelihood was very much dependent and habituated to natural resources. Such a population has slowly crept into forest land. This is leading to new conflict between the settlers and the forest authorities in BTAD of Assam.⁴³

Displacement has led to an indication of social disarticulation within kinship system. Intimate bonds have loosened up, alienation, and anomie have been growing, and there is less control on interpersonal behavior. Because of increasing dowries, marriages have deferred, gifts have become unaffordable. There is decreasing interaction between individual families. Group activities have decreased as there is less participation by the people. Small gatherings like post-harvest feast and pilgrimages were eventually discontinued. Restoring trustful ties with the people in the new surrounding is one of the most difficult challenges that the displaced people need to go through. For the displaced

⁴⁰ Walter Fernandes and Sanjay Barbora, *Land, People and Politics: Contest Over Tribal Land in NorthEast India* (India: NESRC Publication, 2009), p.68—69.

⁴¹ Cernea, "Risk, Safeguards and Reconstruction: A Model for population Displacement and Resettlement," 3662.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *World Refugee Survey* Published by US. Committee for Refugee, 1998.

people poverty is not only lack of remuneration and resources like food, shelter, and land but also the personal ties among people which are difficult to construct. Displacement leads to a vulnerable powerless situation.⁴⁴

3.10 Differential Risk Intensities

Displacement force insecurities and risk upon the people. The displaced people have no option, but to deal with the risk. The intensity of risk varies from individual to different groups. One group may experience a risk which the other group may not. Some groups may be vulnerable to bigger risk and deprivation than the other. But it is fundamental that all displaced population suffer from a certain kind of risk and vulnerability.

Some studies have shown that women have more severe impacts. For example, in Orissa, the age for entitlement of land as compensation is set to 18 years for men and 30 for women.⁴⁵ Conflict-induced displacement is generally sudden. Displacement can happen overnight. In such instances sometimes pregnant women are forced to run away leaving their houses behind with no security of resettlement. They do not get proper needed care and food in the rehabilitation camps. Delivery of the baby happens in a very unscientific environment and care. This sometimes even leads to the death of the baby or the mother herself. In such situation women undergo mental trauma and distress which can never be restored or paid back. Children's are prone to severe consequences of displacement. Displacement leads to enormous education loss that directly affects the children and their future. Once displaced their education is disrupted. The trauma of displacement is itself very difficult to deal. Getting back to school is a distant dream for

⁴⁴ Sakarama Somayaji & Smrithi Talwar, *Development-Induced Displacement, Rehabilitation and Resettlement in India: Current Issues and Challenges* (NewYork: Sage Publication, 2011), p.109.

⁴⁵ Cernea, Op.cit, p. 3663.

the displaced children's. This makes the number of dropouts among displaced people high.

In an interview, the displaced youths of Sorolpara have expressed their sorrow at not being able to continue their study. They had the will to complete their study but did not get the opportunity due to the circumstantial tragedies in their lives. They have stopped going to school after they were placed in the new area. The camp did not have any facility for children's to learn. While returning to their original place after two years, they found that the school was dismantled and there was no teacher. While it took some time for everything to get in place, after a few months, they got back to school. The harsh reality is that again after a few months, the riot took its new turn, and they were displaced again. They were in relief camps. By then they have lost all hope that they will ever be able to study in life. Most of them have started working to support their family. By the time they returned to their villages after a few years, they had found it too late for them to restart or continue their studies. Presently they continue working to earn and support the family to survive.

The displaced tribal population is much more prone to a vulnerable situation than the general population. The livelihood of tribal's is intrinsically connected to the land and different forest produce goods. Displacement disrupts their way of life and threatens their survival. Rehabilitation process becomes difficult as finding a place that can considerably substitute the environment and livelihood given by their original village is not possible. It leads to injustice against them.⁴⁶

3.11 Risk of the Hosting Population

Host population can play a major role in resettlement or rehabilitation of the displaced population. While rehabilitating it should be made sure that the rehabilitation process does not harm the host population. The host population also suffers from a certain

⁴⁶ Tanka Bahadur Subba, *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 2009), p.354.

risk, but it is lower than what the displaced people suffer. Sometimes the host population does not accept the displaced people with wide arms. In most cases, the host population is always skeptical of the displaced population.

The inflow of more displaced people leads to increasing pressure on land, resources, and competition for employment.⁴⁷ This makes the host population blame the displaced for creating conditions where they have to compete with each other. Increasing population leads to high demand which increases the price of commodities. Frequent clashes for petty things are common between the displaced and the host population. Such clash sometimes takes serious turns which further leads to displacement and increases social tension increases. Because of the overpopulation and overexploitation both the host and the displaced suffer the adverse effects of the environment.

3.12 Increases in Militarization

This situation is acute in the northeast region of the country. Constant conflicts, natural disasters, and displacements lead to an increasing tendency of militarization among youths. The number of dropouts is high. It happens due to the uncertainty of the situations. Youths feel helpless and find no reason to live. They become easy prey for the military groups. In many instances, they are brainwashed to join the group and work against the government. They are made to believe that the government has not made any effort to protect their life. Lack of employment opportunities adds to the wound of such situations.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Thomas, Op.cit, p.111.

⁴⁸ P.R Ryngnga, "Ethnic Tension and Community Conflict in North East India, A challenge to India's Integrity and Unity," in *Conflicting Ethnicities, Locating the Local in the Global*, edited by Kousar J. Azam (New Delhi: Manohar Publication, 2013), p.90.

4. Dire Consequences of Conflicts and Displacement in Northeastern Region of India

The northeast is home to most tribal people. There are a total of 209 listed schedule tribes in the region belonging to six different categories. This region of the country is surrounded by international borders. A narrow strip of land connects northeast to other parts of the country. It is also known as the Chicken neck.⁴⁹ The history and geography has made the people of the region feel secluded and detached from the rest of the country.⁵⁰ They are generally dissatisfied with the functioning of the government because in many cases they don't get the basic minimum services. This region is highly diversified.

In a way diversity in the northeast has become a problem because the inequity is mostly based on differences in culture. Most of the communities consider each other as a threat to their identity. Identity assertion is often based on contesting claims over homeland, a dominant territory or other resources. The rise of a dominant community adds more to the threat and results in an atmosphere of mistrust and fear of domination. Poverty along with weak government and lack of effort to address the ethnic problems and development issues has resulted in a period of instability and armed conflicts.⁵¹ The failure of the state institutions is leading to insecurities, large-scale conflicts and displacement. There is growing insecurity among people because of the conflicts. It does not only affect the communities who are involved in the conflict but also all other communities living in and around the area.

Most of the ethnic conflicts in the northeast emanate from an ethnic consciousness and nationalist aspirations. Many of them center on land which is not only an economic commodity but also the center of culture and identity of most of the communities of the region. Since land, identity and other resources are inseparable; identity assertion is

⁴⁹ Nag, Op.cit, p. 92.

⁵⁰ Ryngnga, Op.cit, p.135.

⁵¹Ibid.

central to the effort to protect the natural resources. Exclusive histories of different communities often legitimize and support one's right over the resources. Every community uses these ethnic histories as a means to protect its livelihood to declare itself as the first inhabitant of a given area. Based on it, the community demands exclusive rights over its resources and benefits.⁵² Thus, we can say that what causes conflicts is not history as such but the search for an exclusive identity, shaped by economic shortages and attacks on their culture.

In this region of the country, the concept of Internal Displacement is still misunderstood and misread.⁵³ Media reports and official correspondence continue to refer to those internally displaced as refugees. Camps that shelter IDPs are also called refugee camps. Only some non-governmental groups who are exposed to the global discourse on refugees and internal displacement tend to make this distinction.

Ethnic conflicts have led to a huge displacement of victim population. Both the migrant population and the indigenous population have faced eviction and displacement owing to conflicts. The causes which lead to Internal Displacement in the northeast are (a) development projects (b) violent conflicts (c) counter-insurgency (d) natural disasters such as floods and (e) take over of land by migrating communities. This paper extensively studies the displacement caused by conflicts. This region of the country has witnessed 8 major cases of conflict-induced internally displacement in the recent years: 1. The displacement of Hindus and Muslims of Bengali descent from and within Assam, 2. The displacement of Adivasis and Bodos within and from western Assam, 3. The displacement of Bengalis from Meghalaya, particularly Shillong, 4. The displacement of Bengalis from and within Tripura, 5. Displacement of Nagas, Kukis, and Paites in Manipur, 6. Displacement of Reangs from Mizoram, 7. Displacement of Karbis and Dimasas.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Subir Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery, Crisis of India's North East* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2009), p.129.

Ethnic conflicts in northeast are basically of two types's i.e. the Inter-tribal and Intra-tribal conflicts. Intra-tribal conflicts were a part of the pre-colonial history of northeast India. Many tribal's compete with each other for scarce resources, land, and hegemony due to which they frequently raid each other's territory and often lead to conflicts and displacement. Some of the examples of Intra-tribal conflicts in Northeast are Naga-Kuki, Kuki- Paite, Kuki-Vaiphe, Khasi-Garo, Mizos-Bru, Bodo-Santhal, Naga-Meitei, Koyak-Chang, Kuki-Karbi, Dimasa-Zemi Naga, and Dimasa-Karbi are some of the conflicts that contributed to the large scale displacement in the northeast. These conflicts have lead to deadly displacements and sorrows that have a lasting effect on the ongoing socio-political scenario of the northeast.⁵⁴

Inter-tribal conflicts happen due to the resistance of sharing political and economic resources with the outsiders who have come and settled in their areas. The opposition of the presence of outsiders has always been an issue in this region. Many such movements and conflicts happened in Assam and Tripura over the presence of Bengali refugees from East Pakistan. The people of Arunachal Pradesh are resisting against Chakma's, Hajong, and Tibetan refugees from Bangladesh and Tibet respectively. The people of Mizoram are fighting against Chakma and Reang settlers. In Meghalaya, we see a lot of protest against Bengali refugees from Pakistan as well as other non tribals.

In 2011 more than 76,000 people remain in Internal Displacement. The violence that occurred between Garo and Rabha people in December 2010 and January 2011 in Assam's Golpara district and Meghalaya's East Garo hills has displaced around 5000 people. More than 46,000 Adivasis, Muslims, and Bodos of western Assam, were displaced after ethnic violence in the 1990's. In March 2011, more than 30,000 displaced Bru people from Mizoram staying in camps were displaced.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Ryngnga, Op.cit, 142.

⁵⁵ Lyla Mehta & Rebecca Napier- Moore, *Citizenship and Displacement* (UK: IDS Publication, 2010), p.17.

Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, and Manipur are currently much more affected by the tragedy of conflicts and displacement. The frequent intruding of migrants in the region has increased the complexity of the problem. Along with this, the failure of political leadership and polarization of tribal communities has led to increasing militant activities which have intensified the pressing demands led by ethnic communities over the years. Such increasing intensity of conflicts has led to the greater alienation of tribal communities from the nation. In such scenario issues of bad governance and corruption, fight for homeland, land alienation, politics of natural resources and conflicts induced by displacement have become more critical than before.

Both the guiding principles and external assistance are insufficient. States should be made more accountable. In both Tripura and Assam which accounts for the bulk of the IDPs in northeast India, the situation remains fluid. Fresh conflicts cannot be ruled out, and the threat of large-scale displacement remains a distinct possibility in both states. Heavy migration alters the demography of these states. Such incidents have often degenerated into insurgencies. Competition for jobs, business opportunities, land and political power, has pitted the Assamese, the Bodos and the Tripuris against the migrant Bengalis and other communities from India's heartland.⁵⁶In many cases, the demand for homeland turns violent and displaces people. The fights are not only between tribals and non-tribal. The discourse of homelands creates a territorial entity in every potential. Thus all communities and sections of people, whether a part of the conflict or not face the danger.⁵⁷

States in this region have dynamic societies and are modernizing in varying degrees of response, stress, and stability. The region is experiencing conflict situations associated with the problems of economic development, participation, representation and political change. Interaction within its system is constantly being affected by external

⁵⁶ Bhaumik, Op.cit, p.140.

⁵⁷ Baruah, Op.cit, p. 198.

forces and assumes dimensions that aggravate the crisis parameters in the regional system. There is always constant competition between groups and sub-groups.⁵⁸

5. Complexity of Riots and Displacement in Assam

Assam is situated in the south of the eastern Himalayas along the river Brahmaputra and Barak River Valleys. Most of the world's one horned-Rhino resides in Kaziranga National Park of Assam. It is well known for many wildlife sanctuaries, archaeological sites, and tea plantations. Guwahati, a city in the state of Assam is known as the hub of the entire northeast region.

The first major displacement in post-colonial northeast India was reported in Assam, where religious riots displaced around 1, 00,000 Muslims in post-partition riots. Almost the entire displaced population that migrated to East Pakistan returned to Assam after the Nehru-Liaqat pact of 1950. This situation can be best described as a refugee situation because it is not strictly internal to Indian Territory, as the displaced Muslims had left for Pakistan and then returned back.

Bhaumik says that land alienation has been at the basis of most ethnic conflicts in Bodoland, Karbi Anglong, and Tripura.⁵⁹ In the same book, Rajesh Dev has reflected the issue of how the institutional mechanism of state leads to ethnic identity formation. He points out that state can also be the source of conflict apart from its role of conflict resolution and sustainable peace.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ryngnga, Op.cit ,127.

⁵⁹ Subir Bhaumik, "Land-key to Ethnic Reconciliation in India's northeast," in *Shifting Terrain: Conflict Dynamics in North East India*, edited by Nani G Mahanta and Dilip Gogoi (New Delhi: DVS Publication, 2012).

⁶⁰ Rajesh Dev, "Institution Building and Conflict Transformation in Northeast India," in *Shifting Terrain: Conflict Dynamics in North East India*, edited by Nani G Mahanta and Dilip Gogoi (New Delhi: DVS Publication, 2012).

In Assam, the quest for Assamese identity has taken place at the cost of other sub-national groups of the region. They have failed to take into consideration the aspiration and confidence of tribal's like Bodos, Missing, Karbis, and Tiwas, etc. This is why tribal's of Assam today feel alienated and are in conflicting demands of their own identity. Adding to that, the increasing migrants have led to contesting geographical share. The tribal's feel they have been increasingly alienated from their land in different ways. For this reason, they have become more conscious and violent that leads to increasing conflicts and displacement in the region.

The different ethnic groups in Assam have been fighting against the Assamese domination. For example, the government has failed to meet the demands of tribal's like Bodos, for which these tribal's are becoming stronger with their demands for a separate state. The increasing immigration and also the influx of migrants in Bodo areas have made them more insecure about their land. They are in constant fear of their land being taken away. Similarly, other communities like Santhal, Missing, and Karbis are becoming more aware and insecure about losing their land. This situation is further leading to conflicts among them which displace thousands and lakhs of people.

The struggle over land in the northeast is an old issue; its intensity has been increasing over the years. Land has been the central theme for most of the horrible ethnic carnages in the northeast. For example, in recent times in 2008 alone in BTAD, more than 100 people were killed primarily over the fight for land encroachment.⁶¹ The consequences and displacement caused by some of the recent conflicts particularly in Assam will be discussed in the following chapters. Issues of governance, land allotment, deprivation, conflicts, and displacement have become more crucial than before.

Almost every state in the northeast is currently affected by conflicts of different intensities. Most conflicts in the northeast region are centered on land. Conflicts and

⁶¹ Nani G. Mahanta, "Conflict Dynamics in a Shatter Zone: The Shifting Terrain," in *Shifting Terrain: Conflict Dynamics in North East India*, edited by Nani G. Mahanta and Dilip Gogoi, (New Delhi: DVS Publication, 2012).

displacement uproot the people from their way of livelihood. Around 70 percent of the people in the northeast are dependent on agriculture. The frequent and increasing conflicts in the northeast region have been uprooting and displacing people from their land. Once displaced their way of life is distracted. No rehabilitation policy can justify the amount of loss they suffer. Most of the displaced people are never properly rehabilitated. There is always competition and politics in the rehabilitation process. Displacement is a lifetime trauma for the people. Most of the displaced people are deprived of needed assistance and support.

Land deprivation is the main cause of conflicts in Assam. Displacement from such conflicts leads to further deprivation. For example, in Assam first instance of such deprivation has been the Assam Waste Land Grant Rules 1838. This decision has made way for taking away the CPEs (Common Property Resources) of the Bodos and Kacharis of Assam for tea gardens.⁶² This has made many Bodos and other tribal's into landless workers who were one of the causes of Bodo- Santhal conflicts. This fight again has led to large-scale displacement. So we can say that land alienation has been and is one of the most important reasons for conflicts and displacement.

We see the same kind of situation in other parts of the northeast as well. Some rules and policies intentionally or unintentionally are made to alienate tribals from their land. In Tripura "The Tripura Land Reforms and Land Revenue Act 1960 (TLR AND LR Act 1960) was enacted. This recognizes only individual land, and according to this act, CPRs are state property. Though the objective of this act was good and was to give permanent heritable and transferable rights over land, it had an adverse effect on the tribal's since tribals did not have the system of individual land. The life of the tribal's was hugely dependent on Common Property resources which were now the state property. Such deprivation has led to conflicts and displacement in Tripura. Such lands which are now a state property were sometimes used to resettle the Bangladeshi immigrants who

⁶² Vibha Joshi, *A Matter of Belief: Christian Conversion and Healing in North-East India* (New York: Barghahn Book Publication, 2012), P.19.

were not liked by the locals and the tribal's. This kind of situation leads to fuming fights and displacement that renders thousands of people homeless. Similar kind of situation persisted in Nagaland as well.

The land is the identity and livelihood for the tribal's. Land alienation has led to large-scale displacement in northeast India. The two main reasons for land alienation in these states are immigration and loss of tribal land to nontribal's and the tribal elite. Every state in northeast is affected by immigration in different levels. The census of 2001 shows that there were a total of 40 lakh migrants in Assam, 40 percent of them being Muslims of Bangladeshi origin. Some others speak of 12 lakh Bangladeshis in Assam and some others deny the very existence of Bangladeshis. Whatever may be the numbers, the important issue is that the state has immigrants, many of whom have encroached upon the lands of tribal people. This is leading to frequent conflicts and displacement.⁶³

There is a similar situation in other states of northeast like Tripura. As per the official account 174,703 East Pakistani Hindus entered Tripura between mid-1947 and 1950. The immigration was supposed to be stopped but it continued even after 1950. Sources say that the indigenous tribes have lost more than 60 percent of their land to Bangladeshi immigrants by 1970. It says that the inflow of Bangladeshi migrants has persisted even after 1971. The tribal population in the state has declined to a large extent.⁶⁴

Such kind of insecurities leads to fight among different communities. Land becomes scarce and many communities fight over the same geographical space. It leads to alienation and deprivation of people. Some policies of the government allow tribal land acquisition which does not have any provision for rehabilitation. Displacement without rehabilitation or compensation leads to the permanent marginalization of a certain group

⁶³ Gita Bharali, "Land and Conflicts in North East India," in *Shifting Terrain: Conflict Dynamics in North East India*, edited by Nani G. Mahanta and Dilip Gogoi, (New Delhi: DVS Publication, 2012),

⁶⁴ Ibid.

or community. Such group always feel deprived and in some time there evolves a consciousness among them which leads to fight with another community who comparatively is in a better position.

There has been a transfer of tribal lands to nontribal's. This practice has created alienation and deprivation. We see and hear many conflicts between tribal's and non-tribal in states like Assam. This is mainly due to the fear of tribal people that their land will be soon taken away by the non tribal's. Such taking away of land mainly happens through privatization. There has been increasing privatization and commercialization of tribal lands in the northeast region. Not long ago tribal's are now very much conscious and aware of this phenomenon. Many organizations and parties like Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) by Akhil Gogoi have come up in protest against such transfers and alienation. Not only is the transfer of tribal lands to non tribals an issue, another important concern is the monopolization of lands by the tribal elite. Monopolization could be in many different ways. It could be through ownership of land, commercialization of crops, exploitation of tribal workers etc.

More than alienation there is competition for land and a fight over the same geographical space. Generally the livelihood of immigrant is also agriculture, which is same with the original inhabitants.. They acquire the land and starts cultivating through different techniques. They have more produce than the local tribal's who know only a few techniques. So conflicts are not only because of alienation but are also because of competition as well. If we take the example of Assam in BTAD the fight between the Muslims and Bodos are not only because of alienation but is also because of the competition among them over the livelihood, cultivation, education and the development of the entire community.⁶⁵ One feels that it is much more deprived than the other. The competition increases with the involvement of political intruders which further worsen the condition. This leads to fights among them and the enmity is forever.

⁶⁵ James Minahan, *Ethnic Groups of South Asia and the Pacific: An Encyclopedia* (USA, California: ABC- CILO Publication, 2012), p. 44.

Over the past few decades, Assam has been witnessing series of unrest and insecurity based on land, language, and ethnicity. Many areas of Assam have been flooded with the displacement sorrows and human rights violation. The response of the state has been largely dependent on the political agendas which ultimately have a huge impact on the people. Displacement through these conflicts is severe and needs an urgent solution.

6. Scenario of Displacement in BTAD of Assam

BTAD is considered to be the entrance to northeast India. Every truck/lorry that supplies goods to northeast India passes through Srirampur gate in Kokrajhar district of BTAD. BTAD is created under 6th schedule of Indian constitution. It consists of 4 districts i.e. Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang, and Udalguri. Its population is 3.1 million. The vitality of the area pushes the lives of the major ethnic groups: the Bodos, Adivasis and the Muslims living in the area to the edges. Personal skirmishes between individuals have the potential to become mass driven clashes like communal riots. Added to the miseries are the incidents of extortion and killings that have become part of mundane occurring in the BTAD. 49 blocks and a number of areas in the BTAD have been declared by the state government of Assam as tribal blocks. Land transfers from the tribal's to the non-tribal's have been prohibited to prevent alienation of the tribal's from their land, and it has been a prevalent trend since ages in these tribal blocks and belts.

There should be proper demarcation and identification of specific areas to avoid conflicts and displacement. The identity of every community should be specified and identified. They should all be protected; their grievances should be well understood. Two districts i.e. Bongaigoan and Kokrajhar in lower Assam have been highly vulnerable to conflict-induced displacement since the time of independence and continue to be so now. The relief camps in these places are in pathetic conditions. There is a shortage of food; children are deprived of basic education, and there is no safe drinking water. There is a

lack of security, many people do not go out of the camps for safety reasons, and some go out at their own risk. There is no provision for health care. Many children die because of malnutrition. There have been situations when parents had sold off their children out of poverty and helplessness. Young girls from displaced families have been forced into prostitution.

The conflicts that happened in Kokrajhar district will be discussed briefly in the next chapter. It is worth mentioning again that the Government of Assam has granted Rs 10,000 to the displaced families. They have also given houses under the scheme called 'Indira Awas Yojna', although it has not yet covered all the displaced people. Many IDPs in Kokrajhar district could not return to their original village because their lands have been occupied by others. There has been a judicial bar against the settlement inside the reserved forest, so the people from reserved forest villages cannot go back to their previous settlement. The people displaced from revenue villages cannot go back because of the threat to their lives.

The state is unable to provide security to these places. A place called Hakma in Kokrajhar district is an example of this situation. While on interaction with some of the inmates, they have expressed their desire to go back to their place if the state gives them security. They have been chased out from their village in 1996 Bodo Santhal riots. They were from a place called Nilaijora. It was a Santhal majority area. Nilaijora is an Adivasi majority area. It is not very far from the place where they are currently residing. Bodos find it insecure to settle in Nilaijora because of the presence of Adivasi militants. Not all the Adivasi makes the life of Bodos difficult but it is the militant organization that makes the living difficult. If the state can provide security, it is possible for the displaced to go back to their original place.

Chapter III

Internally Displaced Communities in Assam

1. Overview.

Northeast India consists of 8 states, i.e. Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim. It has international borders with Bhutan, Burma, China and Bangladesh. Almost half of India's IDP belongs to this region. Violent Conflicts and displacement in this region is of grave concern and is a long-standing problem. Conflicts have continuously caused large-scale displacements in this part of the country. It is home to a large number of ethnic groups. The 'People of India' project which was sponsored by Anthropological Survey of India pointed out that there are 5,633 communities in India. Amongst these 635 are categorized as tribals, of which 231 are inhabitants of the northeast. 325 languages were listed by the project.⁶⁶

The issue of conflicts and displacement in northeast India is complex as the society in the northeast has always been multilingual, multiracial, multi-ethnic and multi-caste in composition. Above that, the illegal migration from neighboring countries like Bangladesh has added more to the complexity. Change in the demography of the northeast region has been tilting against tribals. The tribals are realizing the threat to their existence and are reacting in violent and dangerous ways. Violent confrontations are taking serious turns in states like Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Manipur.

The nature of conflicts and displacement vary from state to state. The history of Assam, rise of tribalism driven by contestation of territorial claims and the fright of losing identities and loss of land makes the nature of conflict in the region more complex. Riots that happen in Assam are generally painted as 'communal' or as an ethnic cleansing

⁶⁶ Mridula Dhekial Phukan, "Ethnicity Conflict and Population Displacement in Northeast India," *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS)*, Volume 1, Issue 2 (August 2013), p.98–99.

overall in India. But it cannot be termed as communal or ethnic cleansing. The nature of the violence and displacement needs to be studied and understood critically. The concerns and issues of every community displaced should be understood and read carefully.

The high rates of illiteracy in the northeast continue to affect the mainland India. The riots and displacement in Assam are absolutely preventable but are not prevented.⁶⁷ The unwillingness of this country to prevent and protect the displaced marginalized citizens has been replaced by the charities of different organizations which has become dangerous and has led to the emergence of new areas of politicizing. These people have become easy prey for militants and political mobilizations.⁶⁸

The enmity between different communities in Assam has increased over the years. There have been frequent and continuous conflicts between Bodos, Muslims and Adivasis in BTAD. This chapter will analyze the concerns, issues, and insecurities of the three communities displaced i.e. the Bodos, the Adivasis and the Muslims in BTAD. Every community feels threatened by each other and reacts in certain ways. The concerns of each community are justified and need to be secure. All the displaced people suffer from unique vulnerability. None of these displaced people are responsible for their situation.

2. Bodos and their Insecurities

The Bodo-Kacharis are considered as the original inhabitants of Assam. Bodos are a Mongoloid race who has migrated from china. The Bodos themselves claim that ‘The Bodos are one of the earliest settlers in Assam. They migrated to Assam say at about 5000 B.C. from Central Asia such as China, Mongolia, Tibet, and Siberia. Bodos are a branch of the great Mongoloid stock. With the passage of time, the Bodos have come to

⁶⁷ Relief web, “Assam Riots: Preventable but not Prevented, Asian centre for Human Rights,” *Asian Centre for Human Rights* (September 2012),p. 16–17.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

be further sub-divided into a number of tribes depending on the regions in which they have settled.⁶⁹ When the words Bodo and Boro are used, it must be understood that these are not two different ways of spelling the same word, but have different connotations. The word Bodo refers to all the sub-tribes of the Bodo people. The word Boro, however, specifically refers to the Boro speaking people who are one of the major tribes amongst the Bodo group.⁷⁰

Bodo constitutes around 6% of the total population in Assam. They are the single largest tribal community in Assam. The traditional religion of the Bodos is Bathouism which derives its essence from the word Bathou which means 5 principles, comprising of Bar (Air), San (Sun), Ha (Earth), Dwi (water) and Okhrang (Sky). These five principles is considered as creations of Bathoubwrai (Bwrai means the elder), the deity of Bodos whose nature is to be omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent in the lives of the people through the five principles created. The believers of Bathouism consider the Sijou plant (Euphorbia Splendens) as the living embodiment of Bathoubwrai. The Sijou shrub is planted at the northeast corner of the courtyard as the protector of the family. It is fenced with 18 pairs of bamboo strips with 5 fastenings. Birth, death, marriage and peace/pleasure refer to the 5 fastenings. Apart from Bathouism over the years a miniature percentage of Bodos have started learning, knowing and believing other forms of Hinduism (there is no data or a proper idea of the exact percentage). Some percentage of the Bodo population also follows Christianity.⁷¹

The domination by the majority Assamese was their initial resentment. Their main accusation has been that Assam Accord 1985 which promised that whether Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Assamese, Bengalis or any other community cannot become beneficiary of the tribal land as per chapter 10 of Assam Land Revenue Regulation has

⁶⁹ Lt Col Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India* (New Delhi: Sage publications, 2004), p. 256.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Accessed from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bathouism>, 10 Oct, 2017.

been broken. The aspirations of the Bodos in the accord were far from being fulfilled.⁷² Over the years this has led to the demand for 'Bodoland'. Two accords were signed in 1993 and 2003. The 1993 accord was signed among the All Bodo Students Union, Bodoland Peoples Action Committee, the union and the state government. The second accord was signed with the state government, union government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers. These accords were unsuccessful in bringing peace to the region. Chapter X of the Assam Land Revenue, 1886 guarantees the land rights of the tribals. It is believed that this clause has been consistently violated. Being aware of it, the Bodos blames the Government of Assam for allowing the outsiders to acquire land in BTAD and turning the tribal community into a minority in their own place. The Bodos feel insecure, whenever they see other communities coming to their areas and settling down they start revolting against it. It turns into a violent conflict that displaces thousands of people from both the communities that are involved.

The Bodos were widely distributed on both sides of the Brahmaputra. But slowly due to an external and internal migration of different communities they are turning into a minority residing only in few parts and districts of Assam. Different communities from different parts of the country as well as immigrants from countries like Bangladesh acquired the lands of the tribals. People from various places migrated to this state and this had a bad effect on the availability of land on the tribal people. The procedure continued even after the partition and has endangered the identity of the Bodos.⁷³

One of the main reasons for the conflicts that displace thousands and lakhs of Bodos and other communities is the real or perceived insecurity among them. The Bodos are concerned about their economic deprivation and the losing majority in their own areas. The areas that made up the places where Bodo people live is continuously subject

⁷² Relief web, "Assam Riots: Preventable but not Prevented, Asian centre for Human Rights," *Asian Centre for Human Rights* (September 2012), p. 16–17.

⁷³ Pralip Kumar Narzary, "Hidden Truth of ethnic clash between Boro tribe and Santhal in Assam," *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*, Vol. 4 (October 2017), p.59.

to change which makes the Bodo people feel that their identity is at risk. The entry or the migration of more and more people into the Bodo areas is leading to the reduction in the availability of land for cultivation. Cultivation is one of the main occupations of the Bodo tribal. Their way of life is very much connected to the cultivation of paddy and other crops. Uprooting or disturbing their way of life from where they had been living for ages definitely has to lead to violent reactions by them. So gradually frustrated over the loss of their lands and identity they have become excessively violent towards any community that comes or settles down in their areas.

This has overtly happened due to the ignorant behavior of the government in not willing to protect the minorities. No community whether Bodos, Santhal or Muslims are to be blamed. They are all minorities and they are all worried about losing their identity. They are not aware of the responsibility of the government, so they consider each other as the rivals in fighting for land. Each community feels threatened and reacts in certain ways. They are not aware of the fact that it is the responsibility of the government to protect each of their identities. Rather they are pinched by many political leaders and parties to fight against each other that lead to displacement. It becomes an issue that can be used as a political fodder/ agenda for an election. We cannot term such clash as an ethnic cleansing because Bodo themselves are a minority in Assam and a minority cannot have cleansed another minority community.⁷⁴ If it was ethnic cleansing it wouldn't have been restricted to just one or two community like Muslims or Santhal. Ethnic cleansing would have involved chasing out other communities like Marwari's and Bihari's as well.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Samir Kumar Das, *Blisters on their Feet: Tales of Internally Displaced Persons in India's North East* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2008), p.6.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

3. Displaced Adivasis and their Concerns

The descendants of indentured tea labor brought by British during the 19th century are known as Adivasi or Santhal. The exact connotation of Adivasi is indigenous or aboriginal. The descendants of tea labor like Santhal, Oraon, Munda, Khamer etc are known as Adivasi in Assam.⁷⁶ The rule of British in Northeast India was not free of economic gains/motives. After the availability of tea was discovered in 1821, it became a major source of income. Tea garden was established in Assam in 1835 and the export of tea began in 1838. Oil was also discovered and a refinery was discovered in 1890. These economic motives led the British to look for cheap and easily accessible labor to work in the tea estates and oil refineries.⁷⁷

Economic upheaval also necessitated requirements of labor for building communications networks, which included building roads, laying railway lines and improving inland waterway networks. The British also realized that large tracts of unutilized land could be gainfully employed in cultivation. These requirements could not be fulfilled with the available manpower in the state. This shortfall was made up by cheap labor from different parts of the country. The ethnic population faced a paradoxical situation, in which there were fresh opportunities for economic advancement but at the expense of a loss of identity. After this, however, it was necessary to feed the growing population that had been encouraged to migrate into the state. This made it necessary to cultivate barren land, especially in the aftermath of the Burmese onslaught, which had led to mismanagement and a gross shortage of food grains.

Since then Adivasis who were brought to Assam by British as laborers have settled down in Assam especially in and around the forested areas and also near the tea gardens. Adivasis work as laborers in tea gardens even today. These people are marginalized and poor. They are underpaid and most of the children's in these areas are

⁷⁶ Narzary, Op.cit, p.60.

⁷⁷ Chadha, Op.cit, p.262.

dropouts. They stop going to schools to work in tea gardens. The rich tea garden owners exploit them as they are very much aware of their miserable condition. No matter how low they are paid, they would still work because they have no other source of income. Over the years the condition has been improving with the formation of different organizations and political parties. NGO's are helping them in understanding their rights. While working with an NGO in BTAD area I had the privilege to visit those areas inhabited by Adivasis. According to my observation and interaction with them, they wouldn't want to harm anyone unless they are instigated to do so.

Adivasis are vulnerable and prone to any kind of misunderstanding because they are worried and scared that their identity would be lost. They feel victimized by any other community. As they have been living for ages and decades in these areas they have mingled and learned to live peacefully with Bodos. We see a lot of Adivasi learning Bodo language and also Bodos learning the Adivasi language. Learning each other's language shows and proves the love and interdependency among them. They are dependent on each other in a lot many ways. Bodos never had the skill to work in tea gardens and Adivasis never knew the art of cultivation. Today if we go to these areas we find Bodos plucking tea leaves and Adivasis working in paddy fields. Talking about the violent conflicts between Adivasis (Santhal) and the Bodos that have displaced thousands of people from both the communities is the concern of human rights. It happens only because they are instigated by outsiders. They are defenseless of the killings among each other. The failure to resettle leads to renewed violence. The 1996 Bodo- Santhal clash killed around 300 people and as many as 2, 00,000 were displaced.⁷⁸

As we say trust is like a paper, once its crumbled it can't be perfect again. Although they have started living together again, they are always suspicious of each other. This situation is due to the ignorant behavior and disinterest of the government in securing these communities. The relief camps are in pathetic condition and there are no proper rehabilitation policies implemented. The harsh full conditions make these

⁷⁸ Narzary, Op.cit, P. 61.

communities feel that the rival community is responsible for the pathetic conditions of their lives. To add salt in the wound sometimes this already existing hatred and fear among each other is used by political parties and different organizations to instigate violence for political motives. This further leads to more displacement, hatred, and suspicion amongst each other. In this way, the reconciliation among these tribal's becomes impossible and adds to more violent and serious circumstances.

Such a condition has led to the emergence of many fundamentalist militant organizations of both the communities. The emergence of these groups has led to dangerous living situations and more and more of human rights violation. These organizations seek to threaten each other's communities in violent ways. When a little clash occurs, militant groups come out and start blatantly killing people of the rival community that worsens the condition. Ultimately no one but the common people of such communities gets the brunt, gets killed and displaced.⁷⁹ These innocent people try to live peacefully with each other, but because of the involvement and instigation of the outsiders,⁸⁰ they seem to be the brunt bearers. While on a visit to some villages in Kokrajhar district I found stories where during violent fights they try to help and save each other.

Alubita is a place in Kokrajhar district of BTAD. While on a visit to this place I met a person called Sanchi (name changed) who was a Muslim, one of his neighbors was Bodo. They have lived together happily for decades. Killing each other was impossible for them. Alubita is a Muslim majority area. So when the riot was happening all the Bodo people ran away from that place to save their lives as Muslims would kill them. But one of the members of Sanchi's neighbor could not run as he was not well. His name was Ontai (name changed). Muslims who come from other villages to look for Bodos would have killed him. Sanchi has hidden Ontai in the forest and would go once every day at night to give him food. He continued that for a week. Although other Muslim members

⁷⁹ Das, Op.cit, p. 172.

⁸⁰ Ramesh Chandra, *Global Terrorism Vol.6* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publication, 2004),p. 43.

continuously kept asking Sanchi about the whereabouts of Ontai and doubted that Sanchi must have hidden Ontai from being killed, Sanchi still kept quiet. Sanchi could ultimately save Ontai's life. While talking to us, Ontai expressed his thankfulness and gratitude towards Muslims for saving him and blamed the politics for making them fight against each other.⁸¹

It is not the only story, there are many more such stories. Such incidents also happened in Bodo dominated areas where we saw many Bodo people trying to save Muslims from being killed. This makes us think of the unwillingness to fight, kill and destroy each other. It is the politics, the pressure and the militant groups that force these innocent people to fight against each other for reasons sometimes they even are unaware of. I have met and interacted with people who even after years of conflicts are not aware of the reasons for why they fought against each other. They seem to live happily with their neighbors and villagers (mixed community). Amidst this happy living, there comes suddenly a moment or time when they have to run from each other. Distrust or the suspicion among each other is built by the outsiders. After years and ages of such insecurities, it becomes difficult to trust each other. Their lives get threatened by each other for unknown reasons.

The migration of the mass population into the region has been responsible for a change in the demographic pattern of BTAD. These transitions have generated insecurities among the Bodo about the bargaining power in their demands for a separate state of Bodoland. There is a transfer of population among different ethnic groups especially the Bodos, Santhal, and Muslims. All these communities have dispersed into more villages over the years. Adivasis started their life by settling in and around the tea gardens. They have slowly crept into far-off plains where the Bodos live. Initially, the Bodos had a problem only with those who are outside the tea garden areas and had nothing to do with those settled in and around the tea gardens. There was certainly a division of space. The problem started only when the division of space started becoming

⁸¹ Interview with Jaleswar Muchahary on July 21, 2017. (Village. Alibita, BTAD).

blur. Bodos felt that their land has been encroached more and more. Adivasis feel that they have been denied to live in these areas and their way of life has been constantly disturbed by Bodos.

There was violent conflict between the Bodos and Santhal in May 1996 and September 1998 lower Assam (Kokrajhar and Gossaigoan). Kokrajhar and Gossaigoan were worst affected although other parts of lower Assam were also hit by the clash. Hundreds were killed, so many villages were burnt down and thousands were displaced. Both the communities suffered an enormous loss. The victims of this riot still live in relief camps. The conditions of the camps and living conditions will be analyzed in the following chapters. The number of children's in these camps is enormous. It feels very helpless to know that many of these children were born and grown up in these camps. Majority of the children doesn't go to school and help their parents in earning by working as laborers (child labor). Children's are the future of a particular society. Children's not getting chance to go to school shows no sign of improvement or development in future of these communities. These communities are downtrodden, poor and a minority. One needs the opportunity to develop. It is the duty of the government to create conditions and opportunities to develop.

Some of the displaced have definitely been able to return to their original villages. But what needs to be pointed out is the loss these already poor people suffer from. Disasters of conflicts pool them to extreme poverty. They have returned to their villages but they must have found their hard earned property (houses, cattle's, and many more things) in ashes. Any kind of compensation cannot substitute the losses these people have suffered. No amount of compensation can buy them back everything they had. Many families return back to their villages not because they want to return but because they are tired of the pathetic living conditions in the relief camps. The Adivasi affected people are opposed to rehabilitation in different places. They do not want to break up community ties. They have demanded that all the people from the relief camp should be rehabilitated

in one place.⁸² Most of them return back to villages and start their living by working as laborers.

4. Displaced Muslims and their Insecurities

The issue of Muslims in Assam is very complicated. The problem of the Muslims and the inhabitants of Assam are long-standing. There has been a series of conflicts which has led to large-scale displacement and human insecurity. When the British conquered Assam, they have found out that it has a lot of resources, but Assam lacked the labor force. So the British have brought people from different parts of India to work as laborers. Bengali Muslims from Bengal were one group of those laborers. They were brought to work as construction workers, to work in tea gardens and many more. Over the years' immigration of Muslims from neighboring Bangladesh has also increased. The Bengali Muslims from Bengal and the Muslims from Bangladesh got mixed. The main problem is that the people of Assam are feeling more and more threatened by the increasing number of the Muslim population. There has been anti-foreigner's movement in Assam since long. Along with the unwilling interest of the government to resolve the issue there has been increasing riots which frequently leads to huge displacement and human rights violations. It has become almost impossible to resolve the issue. Rather than resolving it, it has been made a political play ball for vote bank.

Looking at the problems in BTAD area the issue seems to be more complicated. There has been a string of riots between Bodos and Muslims in October 1993, September 1998, August 2008 and July 2012. Over the years the population of Muslims in these areas has been increasing. They started settling in barren lands and has also has been spreading over to areas where Bodo people live. Tribals are very protective of their land because land is their way of life. It is not only Bodos who are complaining of the increasing Muslim population but all other communities of Assam have the same

⁸² Monirul Hussain, *Interrogating Development: State, Displacement and Popular Resistance in North East India* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2008), p.35.

complaint. As the government has done nothing to stop this, Bodos have started reacting to it in violent ways. Also, the Muslims have started retaliating in dangerous ways.⁸³ In such situation both the communities bear the brunt of tremendous loss and misery.

In a way, the government has failed to protect both these minority communities. The militant organizations of both groups take an active role in killing each other. Ultimately it is the poor innocent people who suffer. The issue has been politicized. The vulnerable and suspicious relation of Muslims and Bodos is taken advantage by some powerful people for their self-aggrandizement. If we look at CBI report of 2012 riots, it revealed that a police constable was carrying illegal firearms with him and he accidentally shot a bullet in his leg. Later a case was registered with Kokrajhar police station that two motorcycle-borne youths (Bodo) tried to kill the police constable who was Muslim. To avoid the case of illegal firearms and to mislead the police investigation the police constable (Muslim) made a false story of an attack on him. Being very much aware of the already existing uneasy relations between the Muslims and Bodos this police constable instigated the two communities to fight against each other. Muslim organization accused Bodos of trying to kill their officer and Bodos accused Muslims of trying to kill them. The suspicion and blame game continued for few days until the real fight started. There were killings and displacement from both communities. Hundreds were killed and lacks were displaced. Innocent people were made to fight among each other for a wrong action of which none of them were responsible. It is that one-man action (police constable) who is responsible for such volcanic violence that has rendered thousands homeless. So is it right to call this violence as ethnic cleansing or communal? Definitely not! Both the communities did not want to fight against each other but they were made to fight and their clash was termed as communal. Most of the displaced people aren't even aware of why they fought against each other.

⁸³ Pooja Kataria, *Conflict Resolution: Conflict: Forms, Causes and Methods of Resolution* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publication, 2007), p.127.

Most of the studies in Bodo-Muslim conflict term it as ethnic cleansing or communal riots which are absolutely not true and justified. The reasons for why it cannot be termed as an ethnic cleansing or a communal riot have been mentioned earlier. It is the conflict for the land. It is not because one hates the other religion. The only reason for these repeated violent conflicts is the lack of proper policy or process to secure and protect the lands of these minority communities. It is worth mentioning that displaced Muslims and Bodos are more in number than the displaced Adivasis because there has been a more intense fight among the two communities. Bodos seem to be displaced more as Bodo faces the brunt of the clash with both Muslims and Adivasis. The main problem is that these communities feel that Bodos are a majority and is trying to dominate them. On the other hand, Bodos feel that because of migration and an increasing number of other communities in their areas they are being turned into a minority and are marginalized. Because of this insecurity, their demand for a separate state has become stronger.

It is important to understand the grievances of Muslims, they are minorities too, and they need to be protected. It is true that with the increase in their population they are moving more and more towards Bodo dominated areas.⁸⁴ They need land for their increasing population to live. Policies to demarcate land for the natural growth of existing population should be taken. To stop more riots and displacement proper demarcation of the areas and land is important. Both communities are very much connected to the land. To protect their identity their land needs to be protected.

This chapter does not look much into the reasons of riots and politics over it. The focus will be on post-conflict displacement. Displacement due to conflicts is more vulnerable and traumatized than other kinds of displacement because it is a uniformed and sudden tragedy. Sometimes people have to run away from their houses with only what they are wearing in their body. Development-induced displacement although is a harsh tragedy but still is an informed displacement where a person can still pack up all

⁸⁴ India Today, Vol. 19, Aroon Purie Publication, New Delhi, (1994): 27.

his/her important belongings and there is a hope of rehabilitation or replacement. But conflict-induced displacement is a lifetime of sorrow and disaster where a person is helpless. Displacement due to conflicts can bring a person to lifetime poverty.

If we count the number of displaced people due to Muslim-Bodo conflict in BTAD, it crosses 8 lacks. Many of them still live in the relief camps. Few have gone back to villages. They built small houses with the help of little compensation from the government and if any with the help of some rich relatives. Many have stayed back in the camps because they are scared to go back to their villages and also because the compensation by the government is not enough to resettle themselves. Some of these camps have turned into congested unhygienic villages over the years. Such villages have become prone to theft and also other criminal activities.⁸⁵

5. Analysis

Most of the recent literature is busy studying the politics of who is to be blamed for the riots and the displacement. Instead of studying the humanitarian conditions of all the communities involved in riots they simply aim at studying the politics involved and go by the wind of common ideas calling it as ethnic cleansing or communal riots. What is intriguing is that these communities are all minorities and needs special protection for their identity and way of life. All the communities involved in the riots get victimized and displaced.⁸⁶ All of them should be given equal humanitarian assistance. Relief and rehabilitation process and policies are never without flaws and politics. There is always supremacy and segregation even in human misery and sufferings. Innocent people of all the communities have to bear the brunt of the mishappening. There should be an equal protection to these communities and also equal distribution of goods and services. In

⁸⁵ Observation on field work, Village: Paraugura, BTAD), 20 July, 2017.

⁸⁶ Sanjib Baruah, *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p.205.

most relief camps there is a division of who should be given more and who should be given less. In Bodo dominated areas Santhals are given less priority and in Santhal dominated areas Bodos are given less priority. Rather these displaced innocent souls should be treated equally and counseled to live together peacefully. A lot of differences and grudges are created among each other in the camps.

Once these families return back to villages they are never counted in the data as displaced. They lose everything but still are not counted as displaced just because they have been able to return to their villages. No proper data or survey is conducted for the compensation of displaced people. Even if they are compensated it is done only in small amounts, for example, one room houses are given which in most cases are incomplete. There is a lot of politics involved in the process of compensation. The government definitely sanctions the needed amount to compensate. The problem lies with the contractors who take up the charge of building the houses. They plunder half of the sanctioned money. They build weak houses, use poor quality materials (bricks, sands, stones, cement) and save half of the money for themselves. Proper inspection of the work by contractors should be done.

Lack of proper rehabilitation policies has led to more diffusion of military actions in these areas. A youth who is displaced and are jobless becomes easy prey for military organizations. They are poor and jobless. In such conditions, it becomes easy for the militant organizations to recruit them. They have a bad thought in mind against the other communities who have displaced them, they joined the militant organizations and feel no guilty to kill and plunder the people of other communities. Displacement is definitely one of the main reasons for increasing militarization in the northeast region.⁸⁷

Overall the security and culture of these communities is at risk. Their way of life has been disturbed over the years. Many have migrated to big cities to work as laborers living behind their tribal way of life. It is well read by many that northeast have been

⁸⁷ Chandra, Op.cit, p.85.

developing over the years. But to speak about the truth it is developing only at the face of it. It is only the already developed areas where fruits are reaching. The remote corners and villages are living in extreme poverty and blindness. Their life has become uncertain. Many areas in the northeast has been striven by poverty, distress, militancy and natural calamities like floods, landslides etc.

Such terrific conditions have accentuated the increasing hatred among different ethnic groups. They are suspicious and feel victimized by each other. There is a demand for separate state by these groups over the same geographical space. It has become impossible to solve the differences between them. The hatred has been increasing over the years because of the complexity of the differences. The nature of the conflict is long-standing and it can turn into violent conflicts repeatedly. The fear among each other is always consistent. Even a petty fight between one or two people can turn into a violent confrontation of the entire community as a whole and kill thousands of people. Every community feels they are consistently attacked by the other. Displacement is a situation of unique vulnerability. Displaced Muslims, Bodos, and Adivasis have different flights based on political, economic and geographical motivations. They are displaced through coercion. Displacing one from their land or home is a major act of injustice against a person. It is one of the biggest challenges to humanity. The effect of displacement and succeeding decrease in individual and household entitlement during conflict- induced displacement are severe.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Robert Muggah, "Through the Developmentalist Looking Glass: Conflict- Induced Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement in Columbia," *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.13, No.2, (2000), p. 138.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Riots and the Resulting Displacement in BTAD (1993-2012)

1. Introduction

In the post-colonial period, Assam experienced a lot of ethnic violence which resulted in the displacement of the affected people, and till today displaced persons are loosely termed in Assam as ‘refugees’.⁸⁹ Repeated violence and bloodshed in Assam is not the result of sudden reaction but an accumulation of years of anger and insecurity. Unwillingness to find a solution for this problem has contributed to the repeated bloodshed, displacement and insecurity among communities in the region. Majority of recent conflicts in the northeast is within the states and among each other i.e. communities belonging to the same state. They fight for a bigger share for land, and geographical space. Negotiation among these communities is the key to conflict resolution. Repeated violence tells us the scenario in Assam. It has an unsolvable crisis, insecurity, and complexity involved in it. The constant tug of war between the center and state makes us believe that there is a confusion of responsibility in finding a solution to this problem. Until then the unwanted conflicts and displacement continue to haunt the common people. The existing legal regime is not adequate to deal with the existing lawlessness. Violence in Assam captures political and communal forces which make the reconciliation a distant dream.

The eight states of the northeast have different scenarios and the problems vary accordingly, but they have a similar nature. This chapter will discuss the dire tragedy and consequences of displacement in BTAD of Assam (Specifically Kokrajhar district). The four districts of Kokrajhar have witnessed many violent conflicts whose victims still live in relief camps. Special focus will be given to the amount of displacement, the condition

⁸⁹ Das, Op.cit, P. 85.

of relief camps, and the present status of the displaced people. It will analyze the dire displacement caused by 1993, 1996, 1998, 2008, and 2012 riots.

2. Kokrajhar District at a Glance

Kokrajhar district was created on 1st July 1983. It was initially a part of Golpara District. It is on the northern side of river Brahmaputra.⁹⁰ During the time of British rule, most of the areas in Kokrajhar district were under Zamindari estate.⁹¹ It is the westernmost district of Assam and situated at the foothills of Himalayas in the lower part of Brahmaputra Valley. Physical boundaries of Kokrajhar district are: on the north of it is Bhutan, on its south is the Dhubri district, on the east is Bongaigoan and west is attached to West Bengal.⁹² The total geographical area of the districts is 3169 sq.km which amounts for 4.03% of the total geographical area of the state. The forest area declared as reserve forest is 1764 sq.km. Kokrajhar is under the extreme pressure of high population growth.

The population as per 1991 census is 8.08 lakh. The major population pattern is dominated by Bodos besides a major share of the population belongs to Adivasis, Rajbongsi, Muslim and Bengali communities. The literacy percentage is 40.4%, out of which male is 49.57% and female is about 31.5%. The urban areas comprise only 17.20sq.km. Major townships are Kokrajhar, Gossaigoan, and Basugoan. On the other hand, the rural area is 3152.02sq.km and comprises of 922 villages.⁹³ The major areas of the district consist of rural area and 80% of the population is solely dependent on

⁹⁰ Assam Information, Published by Directorate of Information & Public Relations, (1983), p.35.

⁹¹ Kamal Narayan Chaudhary, *Folklore in North-Eastern India* (Assam: Punthi Pusthak Publication, 2001), p.125.

⁹² E.H Pakyntein, *District Census Handbook, Assam: Golpara* (Assam: Tribune Press, 1965), p.14–15.

⁹³ The Deputy Commissioner, Kokrajhar, *Action Plan for Rehabilitation of the Refugees of 1993, 1996, and 1998 Ethnic Violence* (Dispur: Published by Government of Assam, 2000), p.96–97.

agriculture. Paddy is the main agricultural crop. As mentioned earlier, Kokrajhar district has witnessed many riots that have rendered thousands of people homeless.

3. Analysis of the Riots

3.1 October 1993, and July 2012, Conflict between Bodos and Muslims

There is a history of conflict between Muslim and indigenous Bodos in Assam. The conflict has always been over land. Subsequent violence between the two communities took place in 1979-1985, 1991-1994, 2008, and 2012. The constant conflict between Bodos and Muslims in Assam is an offshoot of bitterness.

The violence in BTAD which started in the month of July 2012 raises important questions about the demographic viability, and accommodative capacity of an ethnically defined autonomous council in a multi-ethnic setting. The immediate cause of 2012 riot has been attributed to the killing of four Bodo men by the Muslims. But the larger view and reason can be attributed to the economic, social, and political issues. This conflict has erupted out of unstoppable and uncontainable bitterness among the two communities. Its consequence and displacement are extremely huge because there is no sign of abatement. The CBI report of 2012 riots has named an Assam Police Constable as the main culprit for the clashes.⁹⁴ The reasons for this one man action which led to many deaths and displacement have already been discussed in chapter three (Displaced Adivasis and their concerns). Around 100 people were killed and 4 lakh were rendered homeless in 2012 riots.⁹⁵

⁹⁴Assam cop triggered Bodoland riots: CBI December 5, 2014. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/45377734.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

⁹⁵ CBI arrests four for 2012 Assam Riots, Dec 16, 2013. *The Economic Times* <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/cbi-arrests-four-for-2012-assam-riots/articleshow/27485117.cms>

There has been a widespread protest demanding deportation and detention of illegal immigrants in Assam. In the aftermath of the 2012 riot, northeastern students living in other parts of the country received threats from radical Muslim organization. Various Muslim groups held protests in Mumbai in response to riots in Assam.⁹⁶ The state has failed to stop this conflict because these communities are very skeptical about trusting the government. This is because then and again the government has been unsuccessful in accommodating the demands and aspirations of these two communities.

The conflict that occurred between Bodos and Muslims in 1993 displaced around 3568 families. 2074 families consisting of 10,481 persons were still taking shelter in 8 relief camps till today. Such kind of sporadic incidents of displacing and killing continuously keep disturbing the peace and integrity of this place.⁹⁷

The aftermath of these three riots in different villages

The aftermath of Bodo Muslim riot in BTAD cannot be generalized. Different villages have a different relationship between the two communities. While on an interaction with the people of Serfanguri (Ontaibari and Doctorbari) it was found that there is still a suspicion and distrust among the two communities.⁹⁸ It is a place where both the communities live together, Bodos are in majority. Unlike at a place called Alibita, there was no incident or cases of saving each other in Serfanguri. As discussed in Chapter 3, in a place called Alibita there were cases of saving each other (Ontai and Sanchi). The relation between the two communities is better in Alibita than Serfanguri although the suspicion and distrust are always there. In Alubita, many of the families have left the place and settled in some other areas after the 2012 riots.

⁹⁶ Samir kumar Das, *Governing India's Northeast: Essays on Insurgency, Development and the Culture of Peace* (New Delhi: Springer Publication, 2013), p.8.

⁹⁷ Das, "Blisters on their Feet," p.112.

⁹⁸ Antara Datta, *Refugees and Borders in SouthAsia: The Great Exodus of 1971* (New Delhi: Routledge Publication, 2013), p.90.

While on an interaction with Sahadad Ali (53years), who has been living at a place called Paraugura since 1992, it was realized that situation is better in Paraugura than other places. According to him, both communities live happily together now, even after three consecutive fights (1993, 2008 and 2012). But the population of both the communities has decreased to a large extent as many have migrated to other places.

Thus, we can conclude that generalization of the intensity and repercussion of conflict is not justified. Specific study of an area according to its nature and resulting factors is important to find out the actual causes of conflict and displacement.⁹⁹

3.2 May 1996, Conflict between Bodos and Adivasis (Sorolpara)

As described by the local resource person, during this time of the year a theatre was brought from Jharkhand.¹⁰⁰ This theatre was showed in almost all the areas in lower Assam where the tribal people reside. It is believed that Teer (bow) was brought along with the artist of the theatre. Adivasis have started organizing themselves in a place called sorolpara. Meetings were held to discuss certain issues of their locality. They do not own a land, so they always lived in constant fear and insecurity. They were brought as laborers to this part of the country by the Britishers. They have been living here for generations and now they want to settle down.¹⁰¹ In Sorolpara Adivasis wanted to occupy the barren lands to settle. For mobilizing the people of their community. They followed the system of distributing letters to each other. As told by the locals who have witnessed the conflict, it is said that Adivasis were instructing their community members to get ready to fight against the Bodos.

⁹⁹ Interview with Sahadad Ali on 20 July, 2017 (Rickaw Puller & victim of riots, Paraugura, BTAD).

¹⁰⁰ Interaction with Jogeswar Basumatary on 16 December, 2017 (Village Headmen, Sorolpara, BTAD)

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

The letters which the Adivasis were distributing among themselves by mistake fell in the hands of few a Bodo people. And ultimately it went into the hands of Bodo Security Force (BSF). In the letters distributed among the Adivasis members, the message to get ready for fight against Bodo were written, the aforementioned date to start the fight was May 18, 1996. The local Bodos felt insecure and was of the fear that their land where they have already settled will be soon taken away if they don't chase away the other community who is planning to occupy it.¹⁰² With this thought in mind, the Bodo mobilize each other and decided to start the fight against Adivasis. The news went on to other places. The fight started on 17 May 1996 at a place called Gossaigoan. It started at a different place, not at a place where letters were distributed. The news of fight between two communities blew like a wildfire and has affected every area of BTAD. On 20 May 1996 it has reached the area (Sorolpara) where incite full incident of distributing letters took place. As the fight has already started in other places, being aware of it, the Adivasis have started chasing the Bodos in Sorolpara.¹⁰³

In Sorolpara the fight started with the killing of Bodo women. A girl named Haji Basumatary was shot at the back with a bow by Adivasis. Another man named Lacit Basumatary was shot with a bow. After this incident, the fight continued for weeks and both the communities ran from each other. This fight has displaced thousands of people from both the communities.¹⁰⁴ The insecurity persisted in both the communities. The government could not do much to solve this problem. It is the failure of the state's law and order for not being able to save these innocent people from being displaced. They have fought against each other for land. For ages, until today the authorities have not been able to provide proper settlement area or land to these communities.

¹⁰² Nirmalya Banerjee, Land Rights at heart of Bodo-Muslim conflict in Assam, *The Times of India*, July 26, 2012. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Land-rights-at-heart-of-Bodo-Muslim-conflict-in-Assam/articleshow/15152424.cms>

¹⁰³ Ved Prakash, *Terrorism India's North-East: A Gathering Storm, Vol 1* (New Delhi: kalpaz Publication, 2008), p. 279.

¹⁰⁴ Interaction with Jogeswar Basumatary 16 December, 2017 (Village Headmen, Sorolpara, BTAD).

In Sorolpara there were 365 Bodo and 660 Adivasi households. All of them were displaced. The entire area/village/settlement was left vacant. Both communities were housed in relief camps which were far from each other. They were housed in relief camps for 2 years. As per the local resource persons, the condition of the relief camp was extremely bad. Initially, in 1996, the ration which was given to them was sufficient. But slowly from 1997 onwards, the quality of the ration became bad. Rations were given only for 20 days in a month. Doctors did visit the relief camps but only once in a while. There was no proper facilities and sanitation for women. The ration given was not enough for them to survive, families who had a big family had to earn for their living by selling wood.¹⁰⁵

There were no schools, so none of the children from these two communities got the opportunity to go to school. Many of the children who used to go to school had to drop out, as there was no facility to continue. Only those families who had relatives in some places could send their children to study. Jogeswar Basumatary (victim and village headmen of Sorolpara) has described me his story. He is one of the survivors of this tragedy. He told that his wife had become paralysis in the relief camp. She died in the relief camp itself. He did not have the money to take her to the doctor nor did they have any facility in the relief camp for health care.¹⁰⁶

In the year of 1990 Bodos were released from relief camp and had gone back to the place from where they were chased out. They had stayed in the camp for two years. But the Adivasis were still residing in the relief camps.¹⁰⁷ When the Bodos started settling, something instigated Adivasis and started the fight again. Adivasis were of the idea that as they could not settle in this area, so even Bodos should not be allowed to settle. The conflict has renewed its phase and the people were displaced again.

¹⁰⁵ India: Mass violence and displacement of Adivasis in Assam in December 2014 - A report by Wing-Assam and AAWAA.<http://www.sacw.net/article10411.html>

¹⁰⁶ Interaction with Jogeswar Basumatary on 16 December,2017 (Village Headmen, Sorolpara, BTAD).

¹⁰⁷ Prakash, Op.cit, p. 120.

3.3 September 1998, Bodos and Adivasis Clash (Sorolpara)

The fight has taken a new phase. This meant that the enmity was not over and a solution was not found. This indicates the failure of the authorities and the government. Violence erupted in May 1998 between the Adivasis and Bodos which displaced around 48,556 families. They were housed in 63 relief camps. People still cry over this unfortunate incident. The Bodos could not retaliate back. This was known as Doaka Baha incident. A few days later Doaka incident, Bodos started killing Adivasis who come to visit the local market. In this place i.e. Sorolpara; a local market takes place on Sunday's. It was on this day of the week where the big fight began. As it was Sunday, a church service was going on. Both the communities were praying together in the church. While in the midst of praying the news came. The church service was stopped in between and people from both communities parted ways right from the church. On the same day, a Bodo person named Jirmiya was killed.¹⁰⁸

The fight took its intense phase. People had to leave their houses and stay in the relief camps. They were displaced again. After one year when they came back to their original place from relief camps, they found that all their belongings and houses were destroyed. While on the release from relief camps they were given 10,000 each by the authorities. They bought plastics and build houses with it. The condition of the relief camps was no better than the previous one in the 1996 riots. They were tired of the harsh and poor condition of the relief camps, so they decided to go back to their respective places. But the situation was not yet normal, so they had to come back to the relief camps. As the district commissioner of that area was changed, camp was shifted to a place called Lauri Para in the same district. This time the camp was made of plastic. For one year good and sufficient ration was given. Slowly like in the case of 1996, the quality of ration deteriorated. The ration given was sufficient to feed only for 10 days in a month.

¹⁰⁸ Interaction with Natanel Basumatary on 17 December, 2017 (Victim of Bodo-Adivasi Riot, Sorolpara, BTAD).

Other days they worked as laborers and wood sellers.¹⁰⁹ In 1996 -1998 relief camps did not have the facility for schooling. From the aftermath of the 1998 riots, teachers were appointed in relief camps to teach the displaced children.

Fed up with the life in relief camps these people asked for a release in 2000.¹¹⁰ Finally, on 7th August 2000, they were released. They were given Rs 10,000 and one big plastic on the day of release. Both the communities were released on the same date. When they return back to their villages, they learned that forest authorities have claimed their area as forest land. They were helpless and live forever in sorrow with no hope for a good life. They struggled every day to survive. The land, for which they have been fighting for, has now been taken by the forest authorities. Even the Nepali's who stayed in the nearby area did not want Bodos to come and settle in the area. Both the communities i.e. Adivasis and Bodos were not allowed to settle. Bodos have temporarily settled in a place called Jaharbari.

Apart from the money (10,000) which was given on the day of release, they didn't get anything from the government. Instead, they were restricted and disturbed by the forest authorities by not letting to settle in their previous village. Forest authorities are of the view that it is a forest land and according to the law, they are not allowed to settle there. They were frequently questioned by the SSBs. These people were constantly accused of being an extremist, National Democratic Front of Bodoland by the authorities. Valid documents were constantly asked. They had no option to go anywhere, so they forcefully settled in that place. This place is special to them because they have been living there for ages, they fought for it and they are attached to the place. Some of them had made plastic tents and some had made small houses to settle.

The livelihood of these people was disturbed constantly. While on a visit to this place, I felt really sorry to see the insecurity that these people are suffering from. The

¹⁰⁹ Interaction with Michael Basumatary on 17 December,2017 (Victim of Bodo-Adivasi Riot, Sorolpara, BTAD).

¹¹⁰ Lessons not learnt by Assam: ethnic cleansing and internal displacement in Karbi Anglong and NC Hills, *Asian Centre for Human Rights*, (2005), p.31.

situation is good now and both communities have a peaceful coexistence. While speaking to the locals of both the communities, there were responses which describe the fear of being chased out and displaced again. Both the communities don't have any problem living together in the same place, but still, there is competition and distrust among each other due to the history of repeated violence. In the midnight of 22nd September 2008 the forest authorities tried to evict them or chase them out from that place. A lot of people were beaten up. By morning 5.00 am many of them were chased out of that area. They had given letters to some leaders from CPI, Congress, and NDFB. They have filed a case and it has reached the high court. A written statement was given by the High Court, that the authorities cannot evict the people without a notification and a proper rehabilitation program. Again in January 2009 the forest authorities evicted these people. The people still decided to stay back and not leave the place.

On 18th February 2009 people who were constantly evicted started an Andolon (revolt) in the headquarter of BTAD against the forest authorities.¹¹¹ They have organized a rally forcing the government to take some action. On 22 February 2009, the BTC government decided to fight for rights. One of the elected leader of BTC (Bodo) and one leader from Adivasis (Havel Tirki) accompanied these people to the high court. They have given the documents to High Court. They have given an argument that until 1985, they were living in that land. They had to run away and stay in the relief camps because of the conflict. They have the will to settle back in the same place. On 13 September 2010 there was hearing in the High Court. The hearing said that it is a forest land and no one should be allowed to settle there. But the authorities cannot evict people who are already living there without any formal information. And if eviction is done proper rehabilitation arrangement should be made beforehand. People of Sorolpara were not really happy with the hearing but then there was a certain relief.¹¹² Even if they get evicted, the government will have to arrange for rehabilitation. After this incident, until today these people are still

¹¹¹ Jhumpa Mukherjee, *Conflict Resolution in Multicultural Societies: The Indian Experience* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2014), p.164-165.

¹¹² Interview with Somkanto Hemron on 18 December, 2017 (Village Headmen, Salbari, BTAD).

leaving in that land. It has become a proper village where Bodos, Adivasis, and Nepali live together. In 1996 a lower level school was registered for that place. In 1995, a club named Tiger club cum Library was registered. It was another big development.

Present status of Sorolpara

Three communities i.e. Bodo, Nepalese and Adivasis live together in Sorolpara. It is a Christian majority area. In 2014 there was a tendency for the conflict to arise again. The reason was the land. Bodos decided to acquire some barren land to cultivate crops for a living. When Bodos started clearing the grass of that particular area, Adivasis came and acquired the land saying that they too want this land. This land was particularly much nearer to the settlement of Bodos. So the Bodos said that Adivasis should acquire the land near to their settlement and not come in the space of Bodos. But the Adivasis were not ready to listen and they too started clearing the grass. There was competition among the two communities to acquire the same land. In such a situation the Bodo extremist group (NDFB) came and interfered. The clash occurred on 18 December 2014. There was no death in Bodo community but there were few killings from Adivasis community. Unlike 1996, when the Adivasis group was stronger, in this clash the Bodos although a minority in that area seemed stronger because of the involvement of extremist group. Both the communities had to run away from their houses. They again had to be housed in relief camps. But this time they were housed in the nearby SSB camps, not very far from Sorolpara.¹¹³

After this incident the Peace Committee (Santi committee) was brought up. In 20 January 2015, they were brought back from SSB camps and were housed in the lower level school of their village. After a while, they were allowed to go back to their own houses. Those whose houses were burnt were given a compensation of Rs 50,000. And

¹¹³ G.P. Pandey, Chau Joshi, and Paromta Das, *Problems and Perspectives of the Relationship Between the Media and Human Rights* (UK: Cambridge Scholar Publication, 2017), p.78.

those whose houses were destroyed were supposed to get 20,000 for repairing which they haven't got yet. Although not proved, lot of people say that Nepalese keep instigating Adivasis to fight against Bodos. Nepalese are the majority in this area. They keep pinching the two minorities to fight against one another so that one community gets chased out of that area and they will have less competition. Presently there are 530 Adivasis households in Sorolpara. There are in total four schools in Sorolpara. The three communities in this area are slowly getting mixed up because of the intermarriages.¹¹⁴

3.4 1996 Riots, Bodos and Adivasis (From Narenguri and Nilajjora to Hakma)

In May 1996, a series of incidents took place which displaced around 42,214 households. The state authorities could provide only 61 relief camps, which was not enough to house all the displaced people. This conflict was between Bodos and Adivasis. As told by the victims, there were no deaths in the 1996 riots.¹¹⁵ Everyone could run away at midnight when the riot started. Hakma is a place in Kokrajhar district of BTAD. Currently the displaced people from two places i.e. Nilajjora and Narenguri live here. All the people living in Hakma are Bodos. They are the victims of two riots, one with Adivasis and the other with Muslims. The people living here still have the desire and the will to go back to their original place. Now and then these people are disturbed, as the forest authorities consider this land to be a forest land. While on a field visit at this place, it was found that these people are surviving under pathetic living condition. They had to run away from their original place without carrying any belongings along with them.

They have been living in Hakma for 20 years and yet there is no sign of development or return to their original place. Right after riots they stayed in relief camps for 1 year and then shifted to Hakma. There are 70 households who came from Narenguri and 117 households from Nilajjora. Both in Narenguri and Nilajjora Adivasis were a

¹¹⁴ Interaction with Matlamardi on 19 December, 2017 (Village Headmen, Danagoan, BTAD).

¹¹⁵ Interaction with Dilip Basumatary on 19 December, 2017 (Victim, Village. Sukanbownai, BTAD).

majority community. Adivasis still live in Narenguri and Nilaijora. Most of the displaced Bodos who live in Hakma earn their living by weaving few traditional dresses called Dokona (It's not a permanent or secured income because they cannot effort to weave in large numbers). Male members generally work as bus conductors. They are not only displaced once, but they had to bear the brunt of riots three times (once with Muslims and twice with Adivasis). Those displaced want to go back to their original place but they are afraid of the repeated violence. They told me that they had left around 1200 bighas of land in their original village. In between, they had once gone back to their village but they had to run back because there was a tendency that the fight could have repeated. Both the communities were very much bitter to each other. Unless the government gives them the security they won't be able to go to their original place. While on interaction with them, they have informed me that leaders do visit them but only before an election.

There is just one school in Hakma which is in a very bad condition. There is no proper facility for basic education. While on a visit to this place the cook of the school complained that she was paid very low. She was not paid the amount which is supposed to be given. She is overburdened with her work.¹¹⁶ There is no facility of electricity in Hakma. The government had promised to build latrines in every household. Till now only a few houses are given incomplete latrines. While asking them of why don't they complain about it when leaders visit their place? They told that there is no one to speak up or take the lead to complain. They are scared of the negative repercussions.

There is similar situation in a place called Sukanbownai (near Nilaijora). It is very saddening to see that there are only 7 Bodo households living at this place. Earlier there were 42 households. With utmost guts and courage, these 7 households have stayed back. This is an Adivasis majority area. This place was highly affected by 1996 riots. While on the interaction with the members of 7 households, they expressed the existing fear in them but they would not like to leave their land and go somewhere else to settle.¹¹⁷ Most

¹¹⁶ Interaction with Sharmila Basumatary on 11 November, 2017(victim, Sukanbownai, BTAD).

¹¹⁷ Interaction with Mahendra Mushahary on 11 November, 2017 (Victim, Nilaijora, BTAD).

of the households in this village has left their land and went to some other place to settle. Also, many of them have sold the land to Adivasis. They feel insecure about the repeated violence with the Adivasis. Although the Adivasis with whom they have been living are of no harm, this place seems to be dangerous because of the presence of the Adivasis extremist group. They are the ones who threaten the public. Many NGOs and social organizations have started researching and working in this area. NGOs have organized awareness programs to make a peaceful coexistence between different communities.

Visiting Nilaijora was another source for learning. As mentioned earlier that people from this place had to run away as a result of conflict with Adivasis. They are presently living in a place called Hakma. While on a visit to Nilaijora, it was found that there are only five Bodo households living at this place. Among these five households, I have interacted with a man who has lost everything in the riot.¹¹⁸ He had two sons. He had a house made of mud (around 5 rooms). His house was burnt into ashes. His son died out of illness during the riot. His wife also died after the riot. He is now living alone in this isolated village in a one-room hut. In this one room hut, he has a small glossary shop. The shop is in his room itself. The customers of his shop are all Adivasis.

The nature of these conflicts is widespread, deadly and persistent. Fear is the fire that keeps the tendency to repeat. A new group is always considered hostile to the congruity of the existing communities. The political carnage has taken advantage of this fear coming out of the ethnic diversity in the region. In that way, a good solution has never been developed.

¹¹⁸ Interaction with Nirendra Basumatary on 6 February, 2017 (Victim, Village. Nilaijora, BTAD).

4. Issues of Concern in Northeast

On January 26, 1950, the constitution of India has given certain communities the autonomy to govern themselves under the sixth schedule. It grants them administrative autonomy and also supremacy over the land. The states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills Districts of Assam come under the sixth schedule. Recently the schedule has been applied to BTAD of Assam and also in Dhalai District of Tripura.¹¹⁹ Through this, the state has promised to protect the tribal's and their areas. There has been increasing violence and displacement because of the fear and insecurity among tribals. They accused the government of not keeping their promise to secure them.

One very important issue that needs to be pointed out is that most tribal's being illiterate and unfamiliar with the formalities had no registration of their land. In many places, the government has been taking up legal changes. In tribal areas, there are resources known as commons. But the recent laws made by the government do not recognize common lands. Most of the lands were made state property. The land which was their sustenance before laws were made became state property. In many cases lands are taken without paying any compensation. Events like this scare the tribal people and traumatize them. They are constantly under the fear that their resources are being taken away either by the state itself or by the migrants. They have become more violent as they believe there is no other way out to save their resources on which their livelihood is based. Such a situation is leading to increasing violence against other communities. This also leads to a strong insurgency in this region of the country. Tribal's are under massive land alienation. Common lands are the habitat of tribal's. Before the laws came up for individual rights, tribal's lived happily with their own laws for commons. Such laws vary from tribe to tribe. But all of them has three common features firstly no one monopolizes the resource. The basic needs of everyone were surely fulfilled. Sustainable management

¹¹⁹ Bhabani Shankar Nayak, *Nationalizing Crises: The Political Economy of Public Policy in Contemporary India* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publication, 2007), p.207.

of resources was the second value. Every resource was used judiciously. Thirdly, women were given higher status than any caste societies did but none treated them exactly equal as men.¹²⁰

5. Number of Affected Families, the position of Present Inmates, Requirement of Gratuitous Relief (G.R) and Rehabilitation Grant. (As on 01.01.2000)

5.1 Ethnic Violence, 1993.

1. Number of families affected	:	3,568
2. Number of Relief camps (All are set up in Kokrajhar sub division)	:	8
3. Number of families still living in Relief camps	:	2074
With Rehabilitation Grant	:	988
Without Rehabilitation Grant	:	1086
4. Number of inmates living in Relief camps	:	10,481
Without Rehabilitation Grant	:	4,119
With Rehabilitation Grant	:	6,352

(Source: Action plan for rehabilitation of the refugees of 1993,1996 and 1998 ethnic violence, Government of Assam, office of Deputy Commissioner, Kokrajhar).

¹²⁰ Walter Fernandes, *Tribal commons and Conflicts in Manipur and Tripura in Northeast India*, Sustaining Commons: Sustaining our Future, the Thirteenth Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons, Hyderabad, 2011.

5.2 Ethnic Violence, 1996.

1. Number of families affected	:	42,214	
(A) Kokrajhar Sub Division	:	20,064	
(B) Gossaigoan Sub Division	:	22,150	
2. Number of families and inmates who are still living in Relief camps without receiving Rehabilitation Grant:			
	Kokrajhar	Gossaigoan	Total
(A)No. of Relief camps:	3	2	05
(B)No. of families :	1066	1437	2503
(C)No. of inmates :	5813	8223	14036

(Source: Action plan for rehabilitation of the refugees of 1993,1996 and 1998 ethnic violence, Government of Assam, office of Deputy Commissioner, Kokrajhar)

5.3 Ethnic Violence, 1998.

1. Number of Villages affected:			
	Kokrajhar	Gossaigoan	Total
(A) Revenue Village	63	133	196
(B) Recognized Forest Village	14	11	25
(C) Encroached Forest Village	443	92	535
2. Total number of families affected:			48,556
3. Number of families who have returned to their respective villages:			14915
4. Number of families still living in relief camps:			34348
5. Number of inmates still living in relief camps:			219108

(Source: Action plan for rehabilitation of the refugees of 1993,1996 and 1998 ethnic violence, Government of Assam, office of Deputy Commissioner, Kokrajhar).

5.4 Total Number of Existing Relief Camps, Families, and Camp Inmates following the violence of 1993, 1996, and 1998 in Kokrajhar District of BTAD.

Name of the Subdivision	Year	Name of the Community	Number of the Relief Camp	Number of Families	Number of Adult	Number of Minor	Total Inmates
Kokrajhar Subdivision	1993	Muslim	8	2074	7108	3363	10471
Kokrajhar Subdivision	1996	Adivasi	8	1066	4222	1591	5813
Kokrajhar Subdivision	1998	Bodo	14	3258	15527	7198	22716
Kokrajhar Subdivision	1998	Adivasi	1	6913	24204	13946	38150
Kokrajhar Subdivision	1998	Adivasi	12	6913	24204	13946	38150
Kokrajhar Subdivision	1998	Rabha	1	99	463	158	621
Gossaigoan Subdivision	1996	Adivasi	2	1437	5878	2345	8223
Gossaigoan Subdivision	1998	Bodo	15	5768	28867	10122	38989
Gossaigoan Subdivision	1998	Adivasi	18	18068	84550	23425	116975
Gossaigoan Subdivision	1998	Rabha	2	112	704	372	1076

(Source: Action plan for rehabilitation of the refugees of 1993,1996 and 1998 ethnic violence, Government of Assam, office of Deputy Commissioner, Kokrajhar).

6. Process of Rehabilitation

The administration of Kokrajhar district has drawn up a plan which is under implementation. Presently there are 38,925 families consisting of 2, 43,615 inmates in 78 relief camps. These are the people who were displaced in 1993, 1996 and 1998 violence. These riot-affected families have been divided into three categories, namely-

1. Families from revenue villages having their own land.
2. Authorized families from authorized forest villages.
3. Encroachers from unauthorized forest villages

6.1 First Phase of Rehabilitation: Families from Revenue Villages

The following numbers of families have been sent back to their own revenue and authorized forest villages-

(a).Kokrajhar Subdivision : 5202

(b)Gossaigoan Subdivision: 9006

The following steps were taken to send back these riot-affected people:

1. Construction of dwelling houses.

As there is no sufficient fund to construct houses for rehabilitation, the district administration has requested the District Rural Development Agencies of Kokrajhar to construct dwelling houses under Indira Awas Yojna for the poor riot affected families of Revenue villages and Authorized Forest villages. The DRDA Kokrajhar has constructed 3293 houses under Indira Awas Yojna for the affected families of Revenue and Forest villages. They have completed 1754 houses and have handed over to the concerned families.

Under the supervision and guidance of DRDA Kokrajhar, many NGO'S and Block Development officers have been engaged in the construction of Indira Awaj Yojna houses. A total of Rs 6, 58,000 on loans has been given by DRDA Kokrajhar, to District Administration for the construction of Indira Awaj Yojna. Besides that, a loan of Rs 34, 14, 55600 has been taken from DRDA to install pedal water pumps for relief and rehabilitation. Presently 700 pedal pumps have been installed already. To all those who have been given a house by DRDA, the CAPART took the responsibility to provide rehabilitation package of Rs 6,000 per family for rehabilitation in the form of bullock, drinking water, irrigation and income generation schemes.

2. Payment of Rehabilitation Grant

Initially, it was directed that Rehabilitation Grant commensurate with the damage caused should be paid to the affected families. Many of the families who have returned to their revenue villages have not received Rehabilitation Grant while some of them have received partially. Later on, the amount was fixed to Rs 10,000 for each family irrespective of the extent of the loss.

Revenue villages are registered and people own registered land in such villages. Such villages are safe and secured. So in order to encourage the people to return back to their villages, the District Administration has provided ration for 15 days with a promise of Rehabilitation Grant if they actually return. Since the government has stopped payment of Rehabilitation Grant, it has led to the breach of its promise. A plan has been made by District Administration to pay Rehabilitation Grant in their Revenue Villages itself. In case of those for whom Indira Awaj Yojna houses has not been constructed a certain amount of money up to 10,000 will be given at the time of construction. But for those whom the Indira Yojna Houses have been given will not be eligible to receive Rs 10,000 as Rehabilitation Grant because Indira Awaj Yojna houses already cost Rs 20,000.

3. Requirement of Rehabilitation Grant for the first phase of rehabilitation

As per the calculation an amount of Rs 13, 23, 30,000 is required for the rehabilitation of riot affected families in the first phase.

4. Setting up of Cluster

The District Administration of Kokrajhar as directed by the government has made a plan to set up cluster villages where refugees from revenue villages and authorized forest villages could be rehabilitated.

6.2 Second Phase of Rehabilitation: Authorized Forest Villages

Due to the difficulties faced in dealing with forest land, action on the rehabilitation of families from authorized forest villages has been delayed. Recently the forest officers in cooperation with the District Administration have verified authorized families of authorized forest villages living in relief camps. According to the report, 24,774 families are authorized families who were in authorized forest villages.

The task of rehabilitation of authorized settlers in authorized forest villages should be entrusted to the forest department. The forest laws should be kept in view while rehabilitating them. Forest department should be given administrative and logistic assistance while dealing with the rehabilitation process.

6.3 Third Phase of Rehabilitation: Forest Encroachers affected in 1993, 1996 and 1998 Riots

The rehabilitation of forest encroachers who were displaced due to riots has been a very complicated and difficult situation. There are some rules and laws which

cannot be broken. Some of them are: The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 as amended in 1992, and the ruling of Gauhati High Court in a public interest litigation filed by an NGO called Central Land and Forest Protection Committee. The said Act and High Court ruling strictly barred entry into the reserved and other forest areas by any person except officials of Forest Department and police.

Another big problem is that there is no sufficient vacant government land in Kokrajhar district which can be used for resettlement. There are only about 1939 bighas which are suitable for settlement. But there is very strong resistance put up by the bonafide dwellers in the vacant plots. They don't even allow the refugees of the same ethnic community to settle in such plots. In such a way it has become very difficult to settle these people. Because of the above situation and reasons the Kokrajhar district administration have not been able to make any concrete plan or management to rehabilitate the forest encroachers of any community who were affected by the violence. These displaced people have been living in the relief camps for many years. They will have to continue living in the camps for more years. A strong political decision along with the support of public and local people can help solve this situation.

7. Problems in Management of Relief and Rehabilitation in Kokrajhar District

7.1 Shortage of Staff

There is shortage of officers and staff for relief and rehabilitation, revenue and development work in Kokrajhar district.

7.2 Lack of Infrastructure for Monitoring.

Due to lack of infrastructure the district administration is facing extreme difficulties in managing relief and rehabilitation. There is weak administrative control by the higher officials. The whole question of relief and rehabilitation has become a political

issue. Unless there is genuine and strong political will, this problem cannot be solved. The government and the entire organization that is given the responsibility for rehabilitation should give some serious thought and work towards the just and proper rehabilitation of the people displaced.

7.3 Security Risks.

Safety is an issue of concern. It is difficult for the aid organizations, government officials, and researchers to conduct a survey for data collection in some politically and militarily sensitive areas of Kokrajhar. This hinders the proper planning for the rehabilitation process as the number of total displaced can never be accurately ascertained.

Chapter V

Conclusion

1. Description.

Displacement of indigenous people from their ancestral land is a serious issue. When indigenous people realize their danger, they begin to express their grievances through violent means. Searching for alternatives which are acceptable to all can only be the solution to all conflicts. Its answer is not polarization or romanticizing either the tradition or modernity. Displacement breaks up communities; it deconstructs an interpersonal ties and social organization patterns. It pulls apart an existing social fabric and scatters the existing kingship groups.¹²¹ Displacement disrupts the various existing voluntary associations and self-organized mutual service. It leads to long-term consequences. Social networks among people are disrupted. This makes the mobilization for common interest and various needs difficult.

Conflicts have become an important issue of concern because it not only leads to deaths and displacement of the people, it also brings along other pressing problems like food insecurity and hunger. The recent United Nations Sustainable Development goals 2018 Report pointed out that conflict is now one of the main drivers of food insecurity in 18 countries. It says that conflict, drought, and disasters linked to climate change are among the key factors causing food insecurity. The report mentions that violent conflicts led to the forced displacement of a record as high as 68.5 million in 2017.¹²² United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement addresses the basic rights of displaced people but its rules are not binding on the states. But countries like Kenya,

¹²¹ Hira Lal Shukla, *Language, Ethnic, and History: Dimensions in Anthropological Linguistic* (New Delhi: B.R. Publication, 1985), p.78.

¹²² The Hindu Newspaper, *World's hungry population on the rise again*, Dated.22 June,2018.

Afghanistan, and Pakistan have ratified their national policies for IDPs. India is definitely in need of national policy to protect the rights of IDPs.¹²³

2. Problems in India.

The analysis of protection, comparative assessments and assistance needs of IDPs in India is largely hindered by the unavailability of proper data monitoring. India does not have the guidelines that address the needs of IDPs. The sole decision makers are the state authorities; they decide the extent and scope of relief to be provided to the displaced people. Because of this reason the responses are often ad-hoc and varies from state to state, sometimes even among the IDPs of the same place. Identifying the total number of IDPs in India has been a challenge because of the absence of Central government authority which can regulate and monitor the number. In such a huge country without a central authority, it is not possible to monitor and record them. This is why estimating the total number of displaced people in India is problematic.

In many cases, the state of India deals with conflict-induced displacement by announcing exgratia relief which differs among place, time and persons. The communal violence (Prevention, Control, and Rehabilitation of Victims) Bill, 2005 of the Government of India addresses those displaced by communal violence. But this bill does not comply with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (UNOCHA, 2004). The responsibility of the state is paramount in solving the issue of displacement.

The issue of IDP has no immediate solution in India because of the following reasons:

1. The complexity of the situation under which they are displaced.
2. Central and state government does not give much priority to the issue of displacement.

¹²³ Sahoo and Pradhan, Op.cit, p. 40.

3. The absence of central legal institutions and instruments to deal with displacement situations.

3. Northeast

Northeast is considered to be one of the most vulnerable zones of conflicts. This region has faced armed rebellion and many kinds of violence such as inter or intra group fights, ethnocide, human rights violation and displacement. Since Independence in 1947, the northeast region of India has witnessed killings of around 50,000 people in such conflicts. Almost all the states of the northeast have seen violent conflicts that take the lives of people and render thousands of them homeless.¹²⁴ As many as 10 different ethnic groups like Bodos, Nagas, Kukis, Karbis, Dimasas, Paites, Dimasas, Reangs, Mizos, and Bengalis have been involved in such conflicts.

Change in demography, loss of land and shifting of political power from indigenous to outsiders has been the root causes of increasing violence, conflicts and displacement in the region. Nani G. Mahanta has referred to the northeast region of India as 'Shatter Zone' which meant the geographical inaccessibility of the region and the enormous diversity of tongues and cultures.¹²⁵ Most of the states in the northeast are suffering from land-related conflicts which are leading to increasing displacement. Most of the ethnic conflicts in the northeast are around the question of land.

Attempts should be made to stop the increased displacement and conflicts in this part of the country. Whatever protection and security are given to the people is too little and too late. They react to outsiders in violent ways because their protected enclaves have been constantly encroached by the outsiders. The idea of giving protection to these people came only after the phase of enormous violence that was inflicted upon these

¹²⁴ Subir Bhaumik, Op.cit, p.88.

¹²⁵ Sristidhar Dutta and Byomakesh Tripathy, *Buddhism in North East India* (New Delhi: Indus Publication, 2006), p. 229.

people by the early colonizers in the course of pacification campaigns of savage tribes and after it became clear that the initial onslaught of colonial transformation had led to massive dispossession and displacement.¹²⁶ They are still scared of such excessive traumatization. In the process to protect them, in most of the cases there occurs a conflict which leads to large-scale displacement. There is always a fear of being swamped by outsiders. Their life is attached to land. So anything that goes against their right to land and its resources leads to fear and destruction.

In Assam, the rehabilitation of the displaced persons has always been very uncertain. The central and the state government need to cultivate the will to solve the problem of displacement and rehabilitation. There is displacement every year in Assam. If effective intervention is not done and the present situation continues, there will be more internal displacement. The marginalized sections and communities are likely to suffer more.

4. BTAD

The persistence of riots in BTAD is not only evident in the fact that its roots often extend backward years ago. The pattern of conflict which often involves the violent outbreaks, followed by the years of relative quiet and peace, gives rise to another period of violent confrontation. If we look at Bodos and Muslims of BTAD, they are economically interdependent although culturally and socially they are different. The conflict between the two communities is often termed as communal or ethnic cleansing, but the reality is the fight for land.

Displacements in BTAD do not occur as a result of individual choice per se and includes a situation of non-freedom. It has become one of the greatest challenges to deal with. People displaced in these areas have become vulnerable to all kinds of injustices.

¹²⁶ Baruah, Op.cit, p.182.

Children's are not getting an education, there is an increasing human trafficking from these areas, and more youths are joining militant organizations.

Leaders have seized on the fear generated by ethnic diversity. They have framed the fires of this fear and focus it on blaming "the other side" for problems in the region. The fear enables these leaders to consolidate political power, and it becomes the energy source for violent confrontation. The conflict is widespread, persistent and often deadly. If the vulnerable people are to survive this epidemic, then it is critical that we develop an understanding of its causes and develop effective means of reducing its destructiveness.

5. Findings

Over the last century, the northeast region has attracted large-scale migration from the rest of the subcontinent. Most of these tribal areas have been going through a process of transition from shifting cultivation to settled cultivation, from clan control of land to modification of land, urbanization and cultural change associated with the process of modernization. The new economic niche created in this process attracts a lot of migration from the other parts of the country. Because of this very reason there has been an increasing fight for resources. Tribals are under the fear of land alienation. Some settlers exploit indigenous tribals while some occupy the most marginal of economic niches. Such a situation is not only unique to this part of the country. Similar situations do exist in other parts of the country as well. But yes, we can say that this scenario is more prone and frequent in northeast India.

In the context of social transformation that attracts the significant number of people to the region, this has generated an extremely divisive politics of insiders and outsiders that have led to these displacements. Conventional wisdom would have it that voluntary (or involuntary) return of IDPs to their homes or their reintegration elsewhere marks the end of internal displacement. The mere act of relocation does not necessarily end internal

displacement. The consequences of displacement and subsequent declines in individual and household entitlements during conflict-induced displacement are severe.¹²⁷

There are also immediate positive gains of conflict induced-displacement, such as increased political participation, the emergence of capacities of local organization and the changing status of women. It should be noted that particularly in the case of conflict-induced displacement such gains are frequently short term, palliative and often at the expense of a horrendous loss. These include losses in both productive capabilities and access to basic services especially local production system are dismantled, kinship groups and established residential institutions disorganized. Trade networks are shattered and reconfigured resulting in disruption of markets.¹²⁸ Livelihoods are affected in painful ways.

In many cases, after the displacement people may physically survive but the system of community and its values completely shatters away. The cultural, spatial and temporal determinants go away. Rehabilitation of displacement should go much beyond financial cost because displacement does not only lead to economic hazards. It has socio-political repercussions which are difficult to retain.

6. Possible Measures.

1. The level of violence should be reduced in order to avoid further repercussions.
2. It is necessary to find a possible solution to the ongoing conflicts.
3. The displaced population should be ensured rapid resettlement and rehabilitation.
4. Measures should be precautionary rather than coercive.
5. Rehabilitation of the displaced should be done as soon as possible.

¹²⁷ Muggah, Op.cit, p. 156.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

6. Central laws in accordance to the guiding principles should be made to deal with every kind of displacement.
7. Focus should be given on the opinions and perspectives of those people directly affected by conflict.
8. Humanitarian and development inputs should be evaluated.
9. Issues on which international agencies can provide support should be identified.
10. Enabled the voices of the conflict induced displaced to be heard by humanitarian agencies and key parties to the conflict.
11. Young, and educated youth should be encouraged to contribute during crises.
12. All the necessary steps should be taken by the central and state government to rehabilitate the existing victims.
13. The state should take measures to protect the social, political and economic rights of the tribal population.

Bibliography:

Books:

Azam, J. Kousar. *Conflicting Ethnicities, Locating the Local in the Global*. New Delhi: Manohar Publication, 2013.

Baruah, Sanjib. *Durable Disorder, Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*. New Delhi: Oxford India Paperbacks, 2005.

Baruah, K. Ajit. *The Koch Kingdom, Polity, Society and Economy*. DVS Publishers, Guwahati, 2016.

Baruah, Sanjib. *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

Bhaumik, Subir. *Troubled Periphery, Crisis of India's North East*. New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2009.

Biswas, Prasenjit and Suklabaidya, Chandan. *Ethnic Life-Worlds in North-East India: An Analysis*. New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2008.

Bharul, K.M. Islam. *Issues in Women's Right: A Practitioners Resource Book*. New Delhi: Allied Publication, 2014.

Chittibabu, Kali. *Patterns of Labour Migrations in Colonial Andhra*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publications, 2015.

Chadha, Vivek. *Low Intensity Conflicts in India*. New Delhi: Sage publications, 2004. Chandra, Ramesh. *Global Terrorism Vol.6*. New Delhi: Kalpaz Publication, 2004.

Chaudhary, K. Narayan. *Folklore in North-Eastern India*. Assam: Punthi Pusthak Publication, 2001.

Das, K. Samir. *Blisters on their Feet: Tales of Internally Displaced Persons in India's North East*. New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2008.

Datta, Antara. *Refugees and Borders in South Asia: The Great Exodus of 1971*. New Delhi: Routledge Publication, 2013.

Dixit, K.R and Dikshit, K. Jutta. K. *North-East India: Land, People and Economy*. New Delhi: Springer Publication, 2014.

Dutta, Sristidhar and Tripathy, Byomakesh. *Buddhism in North East India*. New Delhi: Indus Publication, 2006.

De, K. Utpal, Pal, Manoranjan Pal, and Bharati, Premananda. *Inequality, Poverty and Development in India: Focus on the North East Region*. New Delhi: Springer Publication, 2017.

Fernades, Walter and Barbora, Sanjay. *Land, People and Politics: Contest Over Tribal Land in North East India*. India: NESRC Publication, 2009.

Freilich, Morris. *The Pleasure of Anthropology*. USA: New American Library Publication, 1983.

Hampton, Jaine. *Internally Displaced People: A Global Survey*. UK: Earthscan Publication, 2002.

Hathaway, C. James. *The Rights of Refugees Under International Law*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Harf, E. James & Lombardi O. Mark. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Global Issues*. UK: MacGrill Hill Publication, 2001.

Hussian, Monirul. *Interrogating Development: State, Displacement and Popular Resistance in North East India*. New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2008.

Irge, Satiroglu and Narae, Choi. *Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: New Perspectives*. New York: Routledge Publication, 2015.

Joshi, Vibha. *A Matter of Belief: Christian Conversion and Healing in North-East India*. New York: Barghahn Book Publication, 2012.

Kataria,Pooja. *Conflict Resolution: Conflict: Forms, Causes and Methods of Resolution*. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publication, 2007.

Mahanta, G. Nani and Gogoi, Dilip. *Shifting Terrain: Conflict Dynamics in North East India*. New Delhi: DVS Publication, 2012.

Mukherjee, Jhumpa.*Conflict Resolution in Multicultural Societies: The Indian Experience*. New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2014.

Minahan, James.*Ethnic Groups of South Asia and the Pacific: An Encyclopedia*. USA: ABC- CILO Publication, 2012.

McDowell, Christopher, Morrell, Gareth. *Displacement Beyond Conflict: Challenges For the 21st Century*. UK: Berghahn Book Publication, 2010.

Nag, Sajal. "Resisting Nationalist Discourses, Ethnic Upsurge in Post –Colonial North East India." in *Conflicting Ethnicities Locating the local in the Global*, edited by Kousar J. Azam, New Delhi: Manohar Publication, 2013.

Oberleitner, Gerd. *Global Human Rights Institutions*. UK: Polity Press, 2007.

Pakynstein, E.H. *District Census Handbook, Assam: Golpara*. Assam: Tribune Press, 1965.

Pandey, G.P. Joshi, Chau and Das, Paromita. *Problems and Perspectives of the Relationship Between the Media and Human Rights*. UK: Cambridge Scholar Publication, 2017.

Phuong, Catherine. *The International Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Shnakar, B. Nayak, *Nationalizing Crises: The Political Economy of Public Policy in Contemporary India*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publication, 2007.

Shukla, L.Hira. *Language, Ethnic, and History: Dimensions in Anthropological Linguistic*. New Delhi: B.R Publication, 1985.

Steiner, J. Henry and Alston, Philip. *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics, Morals*. UK: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Somayaji, Sakarama and Talwar, Smrithi. *Development-Induced Displacement, Rehabilitation and Resettlement in India: Current Issues and Challenges*. New York: Sage Publication, 2011.

Subba, B. Tanka. *Indian Nepalis: Issues and Perspectives*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing, 2009.

Terminski, Bongumil. *Development-Induced Displacement and Resettlement: Causes, Consequences, and Socio-Legal Context*. Germany: ibidem Publication, 2015.

Thomas, C. J. *Polity and Economy- Agenda for Contemporary NorthEast India*. New Delhi: Regency Publication, 2005.

Weiner, Myron. *Sons of the Soil, Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India*. USA: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Wilson, K.B. *Internally Displaced, Refugees and Returnees from and in Mozambique*. Sweden: Nordiska Africaninstitutet, 1994.

Articles /Journals:

Assam Riots: Preventable but not Prevented, Asian centre for Human Rights, Janakpuri, New Delhi India, September 2012, Accessed from <https://reliefweb.int/report/india/assam-riots-preventable-not-prevented>.

Assam cop triggered Bodoland riots: CBI December 5, 2014.:http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/45377734.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

CBI arrests four for 2012 Assam Riots, Dec 16, 2013. *The Economic times*<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/cbi-arrests-four-for-2012-assam-riots/articleshow/27485117.cms>

Erin Mooney, *The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a category of concern*, Refugee survey quarterly, vol.24, Issue 3.

Erin Mooney, *The concept of Internally Displaced Persons as a category of concern*, Refugee Survey Quarterly, vol.24, Issue 3, UNHCR 2005.

Hania Mufti, "Iraq Claims in Conflict: Reversing Ethnic Cleansing in Northern Iraq," Human Right Watch, no.4, 2004.

India Today, Vol. 19, Aroon Purie Publication, New Delhi, 1994, 27.

India: Mass violence and displacement of adivasis in Assam in December 2014 - A report by Wing-Assam and AAWAA. <http://www.sacw.net/article10411.html>

Lessons not learnt by Assam: ethnic cleansing and internal displacement in Karbi Anglong and NC Hills, Asian Centre for Human Rights, 2005.

Lyla Mehta, & Rebecca Napier-Moore, *Citizenship and Displacement*, Working Paper, Volume 2010 Number 354, December 2010.

Mahendra P Lama, *Internal Displacement in India: Causes, Protection and Dilemmas*, Forced Migration Review, Refugee Studies centre, August, 2000.

Madhulika Sahoo, Jalandhar Pradhan, *Counting Conflict-induced Internally Displaced Persons in India*, Economic and political weekly, October 1, 2016, Vol No.40.

Madhulika Sahoo, Jalandhar Pradhan, *Counting Conflict-induced Internally Displaced Persons in India*, Economic and political weekly, October 1, 2016, Vol No.40.

Mridula Dhekial Phukan, *Ethnicity, conflict and population Displacement in Northeast India*, Dispur Law College, Guwahati, Assam. Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS) Volume 1—Issue 2, August 2013 ISSN: 2320-9720.

Michael M. Cernea, *Risk, Safeguards and Reconstruction: A Model for Population Displacement and Resettlement*, Economic and Political weekly, vol.35. 3659-3678.

Michael M. Cernea, *Risk, Safeguards and Reconstruction: A Model for population Displacement and Resettlement*, Economic and Political weekly, vol.35. 3659-3678.

Mridula Dhekial Phukan, *Ethnicity Conflict and Population Displacement in Northeast India*, Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (AJHSS), Volume 1, Issue 2, August 2013.

Nirmalya Banerjee, Land Rights at heart of Bodo-Muslim conflict in Assam, The Times of India, July 26, 2012.<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Land-rights-at-heart-of-Bodo-Muslim-conflict-in-Assam/articleshow/15152424.cms>

Pralip Kumar Narzary, *Hidden Truth of ethnic clash between Boro tribe and Santhal in Assam, India*, 2006.

Relief web, *Assam Riots: Preventable but not Prevented*, Asian centre for Human Rights, Janakpuri, New Delhi India, September 2012.

Robert Muggah, *Through the Developmentalist Looking Glass: Conflict- Induced Displacement and Involuntary Resettlement in Columbia*, Journal of Refugee Studies, Vol.13, No.2, 2000.

Sanjib Baruah, *Citizens and denizens: Ethnicity, Homelands and the crisis of Displacement in North east India*, Journal of Refugee Studies, Vol.16, No.1, 2003.

Save the children, *State of the World's Mothers 2003: Protecting Women and Children in Conflict*, Westport, Connecticut: Save the Children USA, 2003.

Simantik Dowerah, Assam Riots: What leaves Bodos angry and Frustrated, August 2, 2012, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/assam-riots-what-leaves-bodos-angry-and-frustrated-391119.html>

The Hindu Newspaper, *World's hungry population on the rise again*, 22 June, 2018.

World Food Program, 'The Right to Food in Emergencies', in *The Right to Food in Theory and Practice*, Rome: UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 1998.

Reports:

Evidences of Witness From Bengal and Assam, Published by Government Central Print, 1971

World Refugee Survey Published by US. Committee for Refugee, 1998.

India Country Study Guide Volume 1 Strategic Information and Developments USA, Washington DC: International Business Publication, 2012.

Assam Information, Published by Directorate of Information & Public Relations, 1983.