

**MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH TO INDIA –
THE CAUSAL FACTORS AT THE ORIGIN**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled : **"MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH TO INDIA – THE CAUSAL FACTORS AT THE ORIGIN"**, submitted by Mr. Ranjith Kumar. K.C. is his original work and has not been previously submitted to any other University.

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Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Preface	ii
List of Abbreviations	iii
CHAPTER I : Introduction	1-36
CHAPTER II : Migration from Bangladesh to India: A Profile	37-58
CHAPTER III : Environmental Causes of Migration	59-90
CHAPTER IV : Economic Causes of Migration	91-116
CHAPTER V : Social and Political Causes of Migration	117-152
CONCLUSION	153-160
BIBLIOGRAPHY	161-171

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Preface

The present study "Migration from Bangladesh to India – The Causal Factors at the Origin" is a modest attempt to analyse the Bangladeshi migration to India, focussing on the factors that cause migration at the origin (in Bangladesh).

The introductory chapter provides the theoretical background for the study. Here, we make an attempt to deal with some major theories of migration. The second chapter analyses the trends in Bangladeshi migration, its magnitude and its geographical context. The third chapter examines how the increasing environmental destruction and degradation in Bangladesh lead to migration of Bangladeshis to India. We also try to assess how deterioration of economic conditions in a country can act as a powerful factor in causing migration. This aspect is examined in the Bangladeshi context in the fourth chapter. The final chapter analyses how the deteriorating social and political climate in Bangladesh has led to migration of people from that country to India. The concluding part spells out the various findings and observations that this researcher has arrived at, during the course of this study.

This study focuses on the 'push' factors of migration, as the topic of this study demanded such an approach.

Abbreviations

AAGSP	—	All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad
AASU	—	All Assam Students Union
BBS	—	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BDR	—	Bangladesh Rifles
BRAC	—	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
BSF	—	Border Security Force
CHT	—	Chittagong Hill Tracts
DPR	—	Defence of Pakistan Rules
DTW	—	Deep Tube Wells
EPA	—	Enemy Property Act
GHG	—	Green House Gases
GNP	—	Gross National Product
HDI	—	Human Development Index
HES	—	Household Expenditure Survey
HYV	—	High Yielding Variety
ILO	—	International Labour Organisation
JMBO	—	Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority
NEFA	—	North East Frontier Agency
OIC	—	Organisation of Islamic Conference
SAARC	—	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SLP	—	Suction Lift Pump
STW	—	Shallow Tube Wells
Tk	—	Taka
UN	—	United Nations
UNDP	—	United Nations Development Project
UNEP	—	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNHCR	—	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VPA	—	Vested Property Act

CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

Mankind has witnessed migration since time immemorial. International migration in the proper sense of the term is a recent phenomenon, dating back to not more than two or three hundred years since the idea of the nation-state got established in Europe and spread from there to rest of the world. Migration on a permanent or temporary basis has been one of the most important survival strategies adopted by people for centuries in the face of natural or human caused disasters. Wars, persecutions, climatic changes and economic factors have been the primary movers of people.

In South Asia too, tides of migration have surged across since the dawn of civilization. Until the problem of population growth became acute and political animosity haunted the nations, the people of South Asia had very little feeling of separateness from one another as the migrants moved around in quest of livelihood. In the 20th century migration has acquired a new dimension in the South Asian region, with the redrawing of international borders resulting in the birth of new nation-states.

The South Asian region, home to around 1/5th of the world population and constituting only 3.31% of the world geographical area, has been prone to natural disasters displacing large number of people from their original habitats.

Migration from Bangladesh to India started even before the creation of that nation, which was then known as East Pakistan. During the partition of India in 1947 there occurred a mass cross border movement of people, unparalleled in history, between India and Pakistan, when large number of people moved into India from East Pakistan. History repeated again in 1971 in the wake of the partition of Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh out of East Pakistan. Large number of people, mostly Hindus, around 10 million, crossed over to India from East Pakistan fearing persecution at the hands of the Pakistani military. On 4th December 1971, Indira Gandhi informed the Lok Sabha that “ten millions have been pushed into our country”¹ Since then even though there has not been any mass movement of people from Bangladesh to India, but the migration continued, though on a limited scale.

¹ Indira Gandhi, “India and Bangladesh” Selected Speeches, cited in Sandip Bandyopadhyay, *Millions Seeking Refuge: The Refugee Question in West Bengal*, in Pradip Kumar Bose, ed., *Refugees in West Bengal: Institutional Practices and Contested Identities*, Calcutta Research Group, 2000, p.34.

There exists several factors that trigger migration at the origin (Bangladesh), which can be broadly classified under three heads—(1) Environmental factors (2) Economic factors and (3) Social and Political factors.

In Bangladesh, an estimated one million people are displaced and about 19 million are affected annually by natural disasters—floods, cyclones, river bank erosion and tornadoes.² In Bangladesh which is characterised by mostly vast flat tracts of land, floods have always been a recurrent problem. Since the second half of the 20th century this riverine country has experienced very high floods in 1954, 1956, 1966, 1968, 1974, 1984, 1987, 1988 and 1998. The 1998 floods, one of the worst that hit Bangladesh this century, inundated 2/3rds of the country. Thirty three million people were marooned of which 18 million needed emergency food and health services.³ The floods also left one million hectares of cropland damaged. Disasters have caused extensive damage to livestock, housing, roads and infrastructure, standing crops and therefore the livelihoods of the people. These translate into colossal economic and social costs that reach far beyond the immediate havoc they cause.

² Zaman MQ, "Rivers of Life—Living with Floods in Bangladesh", *Asian Survey* (California, Berkeley), Vol XXXIII, no10, October 1993, p. 985.

³ *The Crisis of Governance, Human Development in South Asia—1999*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 16.

Poor are more vulnerable as the floods and other natural disasters lead to increasing unemployment.

The three major rivers of Bangladesh—Brahmaputra-Jamuna, Ganges and Meghna drain a combined catchment of some 1.55 million square kilometers, 11 times greater than the area of Bangladesh itself.⁴ The low deltic terrain, extreme rainfall in nearby hills and high flows from these large catchments means that over 20% of Bangladesh is inundated in a 'normal' flood year.

Bangladesh has one of the worst record of cyclones⁵ and tidal surges in the world. The peculiar geographical location of Bangladesh and the inverted funnel shaped bay is particularly prone to cyclones. As a result, cyclones occur frequently and in such magnitude that result in vast destruction of property and often take a heavy toll on human lives. In addition to the above, factors like change in the course of rivers also cause the displacement of people.

Huge economic disparities exist between India and Bangladesh. GNP per capita of Bangladesh was only US \$ 260 in 1997 compared to that of India's US \$370 for the same period.⁵

⁴ Paul M. Thompson and Parvin Sultana, "Distributional and Social Impact of Flood Control in Bangladesh", *The Geographical Journal*, (London), Vol. 162, Part I, March 1996, pp.1-31.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 16.

Poverty is widespread in Bangladesh and is accentuated by natural calamities that hit the nation almost annually. More than 52% of the people of Bangladesh are below poverty line as per the 1993 figures.⁶

Traditional industries like jute manufacturing and fisheries are also on a decline in Bangladesh, which leaves thousands of people jobless.⁷ Low savings and investments is now a norm than an exception. Bangladesh is also facing a drastic reduction of traditional diversity of its aqua culture resources as a result of embankments. Density of population is one of the highest in the world with 750 persons per square kilometer compared to India's 250 persons per square kilometre.⁸ Unemployment is widespread and large number of people migrate to cities from villages in search of economic opportunities. Poverty itself has become a major factor in Bangladesh for displacement of people. Many of the poverty-stricken people of Bangladesh see India as a land of opportunities and migrate to India.

⁶ Mahbub-ul-Haq, *Human Development in South Asia, 1997*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p 43.

⁷ S. R. Chakravarty, *Bangladesh Under Mujib, Zia and Ershad*, Har Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1995, p 68.

⁸ Mahbub-ul-Haq and Khadija Haq, *Human Development in South Asia 1998*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p 27.

Social and political factors also play an important role in the migration of people from Bangladesh to India. After the assassination of the first President of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, the communal situation deteriorated and the Hindus found themselves increasingly insecure. Major General Zia-ur-Rahman who captured power through a military coup revived the political use of religion to raise his support base.⁹ He lifted the ban on religion based political parties, rehabilitated the fundamentalists and the extremist forces who directly or indirectly had worked against the liberation struggle. He amended the constitution, making Islam, instead of secularism as one of its fundamental principles.

General H. M. Ershad who assumed power in 1982 also vigorously pursued many of the policies of Zia, like appeasing the Islamic fundamentalists. Islamisation process of the polity, began by Zia, culminated under Ershad with the adoption of constitutional amendment declaring Islam as the state religion. All this created fear and suspicion in the minds of the Hindus and they started feeling alienated from the mainstream. In 1965, after the Indo-Pak war, the properties of Hindus were declared 'enemy property' in

⁹ S. R. Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 126.

Pakistan including in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). This remained in force even after the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 and the adoption of a secular constitution in 1972.

In 1974, government of Bangladesh enacted 'Vested and Non-Resident Property (Administration) Act'.¹⁰ This act was enacted to manage certain properties and assets of the persons who are 'non-residents' of Bangladesh or have acquired a foreign nationality. This law was widely used against Hindu minorities though the principle aim of the act was to identify and take over the properties of those people who had left Bangladesh during or immediately after the liberation war of 1971.¹¹ Hindus, thus, fearing persecution at the hands of the extremists started migrating to India. Hindu population which was about 22% in 1950 came down to as low as 10.6% in 1991, mainly due to this migration.¹² This drastic reduction in the percentage of Hindu population can only be explained by accepting the theory of Bangladeshi migration to India,

¹⁰ Abdul Barkat, Shafique-uz-Zaman, Azizur Rahman, Avijit Poddar, '*Political Economy of Vested Property Act in Rural Bangladesh*', Association for Land Reform and Development, Dhaka, 1997, p. 40.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Abul Barkat and Shafique-Uz-Zaman, "Forced Out Migration of Hindu Minority: Human Deprivation Due to Vested Property Act in Chawdhury R. Abrar (ed) '*On the Margin. Refugees, Migrants and Minorities*', University of Dhaka, Dhaka, 2000, p. 113.

though Bangladesh officially denies of any such migration taking place.

In Bangladesh, thousands of people have been displaced from their homes and land by infrastructural development projects. Karnaphuli multi-purpose development project, which was constructed during 1957-62 to accelerate the economic development in East Pakistan, is a glaring example of this. Construction of Kaptai dam caused tremendous devastation and loss to the tribal population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), inundating 400 square miles which included 5400 acres of cultivable land, which was about 40% of the total area of CHT, and directly affected more than one lakh people.¹³ Major infrastructural development projects like Jamuna Bridge Project, Road Rehabilitation II, and Dhaka Water Supply Project have all displaced thousands of people.¹⁴

Migrants and Refugees

The terms 'migrants' and 'refugees' connote different meanings conceptually, therefore, it is important to understand the difference

¹³ Mohammad Humayun Kabir, "The Problems of Tribal Separatism and Constitutional Reforms In Bangladesh", in Iftekharuzzaman (ed) *Ethnicity and Constitutional Reforms in South Asia*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, p 16.

¹⁴ M. Q. Zaman, "Development and Displacement in Bangladesh: Toward A Resettlement Policy", *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 7, July 1996.

between these two terms.

The 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees and the subsequent 1967 UN Protocol on Refugees consider a refugee as “every person who, owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”.¹⁵

This definition has been modified and extended in practice by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and individual Third World countries and regions. Scholars like Nobel¹⁶ have pointed out the basic elements that determine a refugee while discussing contemporary refugee termination in the Third World. It is as follows:

- (1) ‘Cases of well-founded fear of being persecuted for any of the reasons mentioned in the Geneva Convention and/or the

¹⁵ *Basic International Legal Documents on Refugees*, Third Edition, UNHCR, New Delhi, 1999, pp 9-10.

¹⁶ P. Nobel, “Refugee Determination in the Third world”. Paper prepared for United Nations Research institute for social development project on people affected by uprootedness, cited in Graeme Hugo, Environmental Concerns and International Migration, *International Migration Review*, Vol XXX, No. 1, spring, 1996, pp. 105-131.

Statute for the office of the UNHCR.

- (2) Cases where lives, safety and freedom are threatened by events seriously disturbing public orders like external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, massive violations of human rights or generalised violence in the whole part of the country of origin.¹⁷

This definition considers only those people as refugees who are forced to move because of political pressures and conflicts. Scholars like Olson¹⁸ have adopted wider definitions for refugees. For him, "Refugees differ from other, spontaneous or sponsored migrants, largely in the circumstances of their movement out of one area to another... Refugees are forced to leave their home because of a change in their environment, which makes it impossible to continue life, as they have known it. They are coerced by an external force to leave their home and go elsewhere".¹⁹ In short, refugees are a category of forced migrants.

Migrants on the other hand, are generally the people who move out of their place of residence to another in search of

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ M. E. Olson, "Refugees as a Special Case Of Population Redistribution". in L.A.P. Gosling, L.Y.C. Lim(eds.), *Population Redistribution: Patterns, Policies and Prospects*. New York: United Nations Fund for Population Activities. pp. 130-152.

¹⁹ Ibid.

economic opportunities or due to events that forced them to leave their place of residence, which could be environmental, social or even political. Webster's Dictionary describes migration as "the act or an instance of moving from one country, region or place to settle in another".²⁰ An eminent scholar of migration, William Peterson, describes migration as "movement motivated by the individual willing to risk the unknown of a new home and breaking from a familiar social universe for the sake of adventure, achievements of ideals, or to escape a social system from which he has become alienated".²¹

Most of the scholars writing on migration see it as primarily an economic phenomenon while accepting that non-economic factors also play a role. The prominent among them is Helen I. Safa.²² She mentions that migration is an economic phenomenon, though non-economic factors obviously have some bearing. Most studies concur that migrants leave their area of origin primarily because of lack of employment opportunities and in the hope of finding better opportunities elsewhere.

²⁰ *Websters 3rd New International Dictionary*, Massachusetts, G and C Marrians Company, 1966, Vol II, p 1432.

²¹ Peterson, W.A, "A General Typology of Migration", *Americans Sociological Review*, 23(3), 1958, pp 256-266.

²² Helen. I. Safa, Brain M. Dutdit, '*Migration and Development: Introduction*' Mauton Publishers, Hague, 1975, p.1.

There are four “clusters” of variables that shape international migration.²³ One “cluster” can be called ‘differential variable’, such as wage differentials, difference in employment rates and difference in land prices. A second group of variables are ‘spatial’, such as distance and transportation costs. Religion, language, kinship networks and culture form the third cluster of ‘affinity variables’ and finally, the ‘access variables’—the rules of entry and exit. Economists generally give primacy to differential, spatial and affinity variables leaving access variables outside their analysis. But in practice, the rules of access influence other variables affecting migration, and in turn, the other variables influence the rules of access. Individual decisions of migrants are also influenced by the rules of entry of the country that migrants seek to migrate.

More recently the term ‘environmental refugee’ has gained wide usage.²⁴ This category represents people who are forced to leave their homes because of environmental disruption. Such ‘refugees’ are not officially recognised by national governments or international agencies and hence the term ‘environmental migrants’

²³ Myron Weiner, *On International Migration and International Relations, Population and Development Review*, (New York) Vol II, no. 3, September 1985, pp.441-455.

²⁴ Cited in Graeme Hugo, *Environmental Concerns and International Migration, International Migration Review*, 30(1), Spring, (New York), 1996, p.108.

seems preferable. Refugees as conventionally defined, are distinguished from environmental migrants by the fact that the overt force impelling migration is conflict or the threat of conflict. It has human rather than environmental origins.

Approaches to a Typology of Migration

The literature on migration is replete with typologies which differentiate migrants and migrations according to the relative permanence of the move, the distance traversed, the nature of the boundaries crossed, the causes of the move, the characteristics of the move, etc. The most frequently quoted typology is that of William A. Peterson²⁵ in which one of the most fundamental divisions employed is the degree to which migration is 'forced'. But this distinction between 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' migration is not clear and sometimes both may overlap.

Some scholars of migration argue that much of the migration which is conventionally seen as being voluntary occurs in situations in which the migrants have little or no choice. For instance, Amin in his discussion on migration in Western Africa states that: "A comparative cost and benefit analysis, conducted at the individual

²⁵ W. A. Peterson, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-266.

level of the migrant, has no significance. In fact it only gives the appearance of objective rationality to a 'choice' (that of a migrant) which in reality does not exist because in a given system, he has no alternatives."²⁶

Peterson recognised this degree of overlap between voluntary and involuntary movement and devised an intermediate category, which he called 'impelled' migration, where migrants retain some power to decide whether or not to leave. 'Forced' migrations on the other hand represent people who do not possess this power to decide. Different from all these is 'free' migration where the will of the migrants is the decisive element initiating movement.

Another typology of migration is classifying migration according to the distance travelled by the migrants.²⁷ Though unmeasurable empirically, social and cultural distance travelled by the migrants are also given importance. Not all scholars make such distinctions. For example, Lee²⁸ refuses to make any distinction between migrants on the basis of the distance traversed or of the

²⁶ S. Amin, *Modern Migrations in Western Africa*, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, p. 100.

²⁷ Paul White and Robert Woods, *The Geographical Impact by Migration*, Longman Group Ltd, London, 1980, p 18.

²⁸ Everest S. Lee, "Theory of Migration", Kenneth C. Kramoncyer(ed) *Population Studies, Selected Essays and Research*, Rand Menally College Publishing Company, Chicago, 1975, p 191.

relative permanence of the move. Lee describes migration simply as a “permanent or semi-permanent change of residence”.²⁹ No distinction is placed upon the distance of the move or upon the voluntary or involuntary nature of the act.

Another typology of migration that is very commonly used is of classifying migration on the basis of origin and destination or occasionally on destination of migration alone.³⁰ The terms rural-urban, inter-urban, sub-urban migration, etc are all well established in migration literature.

Theories of International Migration

At present there is no single coherent theory of International migration. What we see is a set of fragmented theories which have developed largely in isolation from one another and sometimes segmented by disciplinary boundaries.

Current patterns and trends in immigration suggest that full understanding of contemporary migration process will not be achieved by relying on the tools of one discipline alone or by focusing on a single level of analysis. Rather, their complex nature

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Paul White and Robert Woods, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

requires a sophisticated theory that incorporates a variety of perspectives, levels and assumptions.

Early anthropological research tended to understand migration as an 'external' force which would inevitably lead to the breakdown of local culture.³¹ This view was taken by researchers in the pre-independent Africa, which saw migration in negative terms linking it with agricultural decay and de-tribalisation. In India too migration has been linked with the breakdown of joint family.

"Push" and "Pull" factors form important variable in migration literatures while explaining/analysing migration. 'Push' factors or the impelling factors refer to the poor economic conditions and the resultant economic misery and lack of opportunities for advancement which push people out of the region in search of a livelihood or better opportunities."³² "Push" factors are, thus, the factors which more or less compell people to leave the place. "Pull" factors, on the other hand, are factors like, better employment opportunities, higher wages, facilities and amenities of modern life that encourage migration.

³¹ Kathy Gordner, *Global Migrants, Local lives-Travel and Transformation in Rural Bangladesh*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, p 4.

³² Francis Cherunilam, *Migration: Causes, Correlates, Consequences Trends and Policies*, Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, 1987, p.20.

A variety of theoretical models has been proposed to explain why international migration begins, and although each ultimately seeks to explain the same phenomena, they employ radically different concepts, assumptions and frame of reference.

Major theories of migration are Neo-Classical Theory, New Economics of Migration, Dual Labour Market Theory and World Systems Theory.

Neo-Classical Approach To Migration: Macro Theory

The neo-classical approach to migration can be traced back to the writings of Adam Smith³³ and E. Ravenstein.³⁴ Neo-classical economics focuses on differentials in wages and employment conditions between countries, and on migration costs; it generally conceives movement as an individual decision for income maximisation. The central means to achieve this is wages. According to neo-classical approach, migration takes place because of geographical differences in demand and supply in labour markets³⁵

³³ Adam Smith, *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nations*, Strahan/Cadell, London, 1776.

³⁴ E. Ravenstein, 'The Laws of Migration', *Journal of Statistical Society*, Vol. 52, pp.214-301

³⁵ Thomas Bauer and Klaus Zimmermann, "Causes of International Migration: A Survey", in Cees Garter, in Peter Nijakamp, Jacques Foot (eds), *Crossing Border, Regional Urban Perspectives in International Migration*, Asghate publishing Ltd, 1998, p.259.

Regions with a shortage of labour relative to capital have a higher equilibrium wage, whereas regions with large supply of labour relative to the endowment of capital are faced with low equilibrium wages. This wage differential causes a migration flow from low wage to high wage regions.³⁶ In response to migration flow, the wages in the high wage region will fall, while the wages in the low wage region will rise. The migration flow will end as soon as the wage differential between the two regions equals the costs of movement from low wages to high wage region. As a result, labour migration emerges from actual wage differentials between regions, that is, the larger the wage differential the larger the migration flow.³⁷

The cost of movement between two regions can be proxied by distance. It is suggested that migration probability of individuals is decreasing with rising distance. 'Migrant' cost include the direct monetary cost of making a trip, the information and research cost incurred in obtaining a new job, the opportunity cost of income

³⁶ Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, J. Edward Taylor, "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal, *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), September 1993, p.433.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p.433.

foregone while searching for work, and the psychic cost of leaving a familiar environment and moving to a strange setting.³⁸

According to Neo-classical theory, labour markets are the primary mechanisms by which international migration of labour is induced. And the only way to end the movement of labour and migrants, according to neo-classical approach, is the elimination of wage differentials.

Neo-Classical Approach To Migration-Micro Theory

The neo-classical macro-economic model was extended by scholars like M. P. Todaro³⁹ and Larry A. Sjaastad.⁴⁰ According to this model, international migration stems from international differentials in both earnings and employment rates, whose product determines expected earnings. Contrary to pure neo-classical theory, migration is determined by expected rather than actual earnings differentials. The key variable for migration is earnings weighed by the probability to find employment in the destination region.

³⁸ Douglas S. Massey' "The Social and Economic Origins of Immigration", *Annals of the American Academy of Politics and Sociology*, July, 1990, pp. 60-70

³⁹ Michal P. Todaro, "A Model of Labour Migration and Urban Unemployment in Less Developed Countries, *The American Economic Review*, 59, 1969, pp. 138-48.

⁴⁰ Lerry A. Sjaastad, "The Cost and Returns of Human Migration" *Journal of Political Economy*, pp-80-93, 1962

Aggregate migration flow between countries are explained simply as sums of individual moves undertaken on the basis of cost-benefit calculations. Individual characteristics, and social conditions or technologies that lower migration costs increase the net returns from migration, and hence, raise the probability of international movement. According to this theory, the size of the migration flow between countries is determined by the size of the differential in expected returns, if the migration takes place.

New Economics Of Migration

The 'new economics of migration' challenges many of the assumptions and conclusions of the neo-classical theory. According to this approach, 'migration decisions are not made by isolated individual actors, but by larger units of related people—typically families or households in which people act collectively not only to maximise expected income, but also to minimize risks and to loosen constraints associated with a variety of market failures, apart from those in the labour market'.⁴¹

⁴¹ Douglas S. Massey, Joaquin Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, J. Edward Taylor, "Migration Theory Ethnic Mobilisation and Globalisation" in Monts Errat Guibernau and John Rex(eds). *The Ethnic Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migrations*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden, USA, 1997, pp. 257-269.

For the proponents of the new economics of migration, families, households or other culturally defined units of production and consumption are the appropriate units of analysis for migration research and not the autonomous individual. Here, wage differential is not a necessary condition for international migration to occur, and households may have strong incentives to diversify risks through international migration even in the absence of wage differentials.⁴² In developed countries, risks to household's income are generally minimised through private insurance markets or government programmes, but in developing countries, these institutional mechanisms for managing risk are imperfect or inaccessible for poor families, giving them incentives to diversify risks through migration.

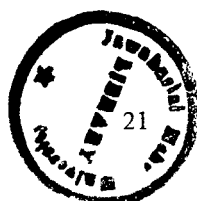
Contrary to the neo-classical approach, in this analysis international migration doesn't necessarily stop when wage differentials have been eliminated across national boundaries. Incentives for migration may continue to exist if other labour

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⁴² Household may send some family members for work in the foreign markets while leaving others to work in the local economy. In the event of adverse economic conditions in the local market the households can rely on migrant remittances for support.

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markets within the country of origin are absent, imperfect or in disequilibria.

Government's role in regulating migration has been highlighted by the new economics of migration model. It is also argued that government policies and economic changes that shake income distribution will change the relative deprivation of some households and alter their incentives to migrate.

Dual Labour Market Theory

Dual Labour Market Theory argues that international migration stems from the intrinsic labour demands of modern industrial societies. Michael J Piore⁴³ has been the most forceful and eloquent proponent of this theoretical point of view, arguing that international migration is caused by a permanent demand for immigrant labour that is inherent to the economic structure of developed nations. According to Piore, immigration is not caused by push factors in countries of origin (low wages or unemployment), but by pull factors in receiving countries.

⁴³ Michal J. Piore, *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labour in Industrial Societies*, Cambridge University Press, 1979

According to the dual labour market theory, international migration is largely demand based and is initiated by recruitment on the part of employers in developed societies, or by governments acting on their behalf⁴⁴. Since the demand for immigration workers grows out of the structural needs of the economy and is expressed through recruitment practices rather than wage offers, international wage differentials are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for labour migration to occur.

Governments are unlikely to influence international migration as immigrants fill a demand for labour that is structurally built into modern, post-industrial economies and influencing this demand requires major changes in economic organisation.

World Systems Theory

A number of sociological theorists⁴⁵ have linked the origins of international migration not to the bifurcation of the labour within particular national economies, but to the structure of world market

⁴⁴ Richar E Bilborrow, A.S. Oberai and Guy Standing *Migration Survey in Low Income Countries*, Croom Helm Item Publishing, London, 1984.

⁴⁵ Prominent among them are Alejandro Portes, John Watson, Elizebeth M. Petras, Manuel Castells, Saskia Sassen and Ewa Morawska.

that has developed and expanded since the 16th century.⁴⁶

World Systems Theory argues that international migration follows the political and economic organisation of an expanding global market⁴⁷ It sees international migration as a natural consequence of capitalist market formation in the developing world, and the penetration of the global economy into peripheral regions is the catalyst for international movement.

World Systems Theory differs from the other theories of migration like the Dual Labour Market Theory and the Neo-classical Theory in the sense that they hold the view that international migration has little to do with wage rates or employment differential between countries but it follows from the dynamics of market expansion and the structures of the global economy. Today, driven by greater profits, owners and managers of capitalist firms enter poor countries in search of land, raw materials, labour and new consumer markets. As capitalism has expanded outward from its core in Western Europe, North America, Oceania and Japan, growing shares of human population and ever-larger portions of the globe have been incorporated into the world market economy. As land,

⁴⁶ Douglas S. Massay, et. al, op. cit., pp. 257-269.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

raw materials, and labour within peripheral regions come under the influence and control of markets, migration flows are inevitably generated, some of which have always moved abroad.⁴⁸

The theory also argues that the government can influence migration rates by regulating the overseas investment activities of corporation and controlling international flow of capital goods, since international migration according to world systems theory stems from the globalisation of market economy.

Environmental migrants

The term 'environmental refugee' has gained wide usage to refer to peoples who have been forced to leave their home because of environmental disruption. Generally the terms environmental migrants are used to refer these peoples, as they are not officially recognised as refugee by national governments or international agencies. Environmental migrants includes people who are forced to leave their place of origin due to sudden and violent onset of floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc. It also includes people who are

⁴⁸ Dauglas S. Massey, "International Migration and Economic Development in Comparative Perspective" *Population and Development Review* 14, 1989, pp. 383-414

forced to move because of drought, famines and severe food shortage associated with gradual degradation of the environment.

Condition for environmental migration are environmental but also include population pressure upon natural resources. Environmentally induced migration are likely to be precipitated by a particular environment related events which forces people to move.

These environmentally related events include (as developed by eminent scholar A. Richmond) naturally induced disasters (earthquakes, floods, cyclones etc.), technologically induced disasters (air pollution, oil spills etc.) and economically induced disasters (crop failure, deforestation).

Perpetuation Of International Movement

Apart from wage differentials, relative risks, recruitment efforts and market penetration, there are other conditions that causes migration which comes into force once the migration commences. They are: migration networks, spread of institutions supporting transnational movement and the changes in the social meaning of work in receiving societies. The general thrust of these transformations is to make additional movements likely, a process known as cumulative causation.

One such important variable is migrant networks. Migrant networks are a set of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship and shared community origin.⁴⁹ They increase the likelihood of international movement as they lower the costs and risks of movement and increase the expected net returns from migration.

Network connections constitute a form of social capital that people can draw upon to gain access to foreign employment. Once the number of migrants reach a critical threshold, the expansion of networks reduces the costs and risks of movement, which causes the probability of migration to rise, thus, boosting additional movement, that further expands the network, and so on.⁵⁰

Scholars like James T. Fawcett⁵¹ stress the role of family relationship on migration. Family members are trusted sources of information as compared to migration recruitment agencies which

⁴⁹ Douglas Gurak and Cuses Fe, Migration Networks and the Shaping of Migration Systems in Kretz Mary Lean Linilean, Leanlisilean, Hania Zlotnik(eds), *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, pp. 150-176.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ James T. Fawcett, "Networks, Linkages and Migration Systems, *International Migration Review*, Fall 1989, vol. XXIII. No.3, 1989, pp. 671-680.

help the migrants very much while making a decision to move. Network theory sees international migration as a result of individual or household decision. Once begun, international migration tends to expand overtime until network connections have diffused so widely in the sending region that all people who wish to migrate can do so without difficulty; then migration begins to decelerate.

As per the Network theory, the size of migration flow between two counties is not strongly co-related to wage differentials or employment rates, because whatever effects these variables have in promoting migration are overshadowed by the falling costs and risks of movements stemming from the growth of migration networks overtime. As international migration becomes institutionalised through the formation of networks, it becomes progressively independent of the factors that originally caused it, be they structural or individual.

Once international migration has begun, private institutions and voluntary organisations help migrants in their endeavour to migrate, as capital rich countries generally offer only limited number of immigrant visas and there exists an imbalance between the number of people who wish to migrate to developed countries and the people who actually make it. This imbalance and the

barriers that developed countries erect to keep immigration out create a lucrative economic niche for entrepreneurs and institutions dedicated to promoting international movement for profit, yielding a black market in migration. As these organisations develop to support, sustain and promote international movement, the international flow of migrants becomes more and more institutionalised and independent of the factors that originally caused it.

Governments have difficulty in controlling migration flows once they have begun because the process of institutionalisation is difficult to regulate for stricter immigration policies are met with resistance from humanitarian groups. The efforts to prevent immigrants only result in black marketing in international movement.

Cumulative Causation

International migration sustains overtime in ways other than the growth of networks and the development of migration supporting institutions. Gunnar Myrdal called this process cumulative

causation⁵². Causation is cumulative in that each act of migration alters the social context within which subsequent migration decisions are made, typically in ways that make additional movement more likely. So far social scientists have discussed six socio-economic factors that are potentially affected by migration in this cumulative fashion: the distribution of income, the distribution of land, organisation of agriculture, culture, the regional distribution of human capital and the social meaning of work⁵³.

Attempts to formulate a general theory of human migration started more than 100 years ago with E. Ravenstein's search for the 'laws of migrations' (1889), but have not been successful since. Basic reason for this failure is that it seems very difficult and at the same time pointless to make the kind of generalisation that would be required for a general theory. Human migration is not determined by either a single purpose of the individual migrants or by a single function which migrants fulfill for social systems.

Migration is a human activity involving a shift in territorial residence. Main theories focus on individuals who move and their

⁵² Gunnar Myrdal, *Rich Lands and Poor*, cited in Douglas S. Massey, et. al., *op.cit.*, 1996, p.451.

⁵³ Daugles S. Massy, et. al. *op. cit.*, pp 257-269.

motives. People migrate to improve their income, to join their family or to establish a new one.

Migration is never fully explained by structural forces. Not only voluntary, but also most of the forced migration involve migrants as human agents who take decisions as to when and where to go. In some neo-marxist accounts, migration is basically explained by the capitalist need for improving an ongoing supply of foreign labour for a board industrial reserve army or for specific jobs shunned by natives. Differences in wages, employment rates, social security and welfare provisions are normally not sufficient to predict the direction and size of migrations.

Historic ties between states and societies, cultural similarities, construction of national identities, foreign policy interests, and effort to enforce political control over emigration and imigration are highly relevant for transformation of latent or migration potentials into actual flows.

Study of migration is a genuinely inter-disciplinary task in which one should deliberately avoid attempts to construct a unified theory or to establish migration and studies as a discipline of its own. As Baubock and Rundell put it, "As a social phenomenon migration erases and blurs the boundaries of societies; as an object

of scientific inquiry it erases and blurs the boundaries of academic disciplines".⁵⁴

Bangladeshi Migration To India

The question that arises first in the minds of researchers while attempting to provide a theoretical explanation of the Bangladeshi migration to India is that which theory can be used to explain this phenomenon. The answer to this question is not very simple, Bangladeshi migration cannot be satisfactorily explained using any just one theory of migration.

At best, Bangladeshi migration can be explained as a result of a combination of factors – environmental, economic and social and political, acting in varying degrees at different points of time causing migration. These are the most prominent factors that cause migration to India from Bangladesh. There are other factors also that influence migration. One such is “spatial variable”,⁵⁵ such as distance and transportation costs. Bangladesh has over 4080 kilometres of common border with India, a major part of which is

⁵⁴ Rainer Baubock and John Rundell(eds), *Blurred Boundaries: Migration Ethnicity and Citizenship*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, England, 1988, p. 19.

⁵⁵ Myron Weiner, n.22.

porous in nature. So the cost of migrants is less compared to the economic benefits that would accrue to them from crossing over to India. This factor acts as an incentive to undertake migration for the potential migrants.

'Affinity variable' like kinship networks and linkages are very strong in the case of Bangladeshi migrants "migration cost which include the direct cost of making a trip, the information and research cost paid to obtain a new job, the opportunity cost of income forgone while searching for work, and the physic cost of leaving a familiar environment and moving to a strange setting⁵⁶ are all reduced in cases where migrants have personal ties with people whom they have prior experience in a particular destination area. So the migration cost of Bangladeshi migrants is less as most of the migrants succeed in using kinship networks and linkages before migration.

As said earlier, the main factors that cause Bangladeshi migration to India are - environmental, economic, social and political. They all act in varying degrees at different points of time causing migration. For instance, a few month ahead of the Indo-Pak

⁵⁶ Dauglas S. Mussey, "The Social and Economic Origins of Immigration", *Annals of the American Academy of Politics and Sociology*, July 11990, pp. 60-70.

war of 1971 and immediately after it, social and political factors played a prominent part in causing Bangladeshi migration as compared to the other factors. But after that, though social and political factors have been present, it has not 'pushed' the migrants out of Bangladesh the same way as it did in 1971. The change was only in the degree at which these factors impacted on the migration process. In the same way, we could see a perceptible change in the magnitude of migration after Bangladesh enacted the 'Vested and Non-Resident Property (Administration) Actin 1974⁵⁷.

Economic factors that cause migration gained prominence in the 1980's with the decline of the Bangladeshi economy and the resultant swelling of unemployed people in the country. Since Bangladeshi economy is basically an agrarian economy decline in agricultural sector severely affected large number of people. Economic reforms initiated by the Bangladeshi president H.M. Ershad and followed by successive rulers to tide over the economic difficulties have not yielded the desired results. Decline of agricultural sector along with the closing down of traditional industries like jute making and fisheries have led to a situation of

⁵⁷ Impact of this act on migration has been extensively dealt with in Chapter V.

widespread unemployment and poverty in the country.⁵⁸ All these developments culminated to act as push factors on migrants.

Environmental factors play an important role in influencing Bangladeshi migration to India. Displacement of people due to natural disasters is very high in Bangladesh.⁵⁹ The internally displaced people consider migrating to India when they find it difficult to sustain themselves in Bangladesh once a disaster has struck.

The environmental, economic, social and political factors that cause Bangladeshi migration have been discussed in the 3rd, 4th and 5th chapters respectively.

Researchers on Bangladeshi migration often come across the question as to which factor is more responsible for migration? The 'push' factors or the 'pull' factors? The obvious answer is both. But the most important question relevant to this research is — are they equally responsible for migration? In the case of Bangladesh the 'push' factors appear to be primarily responsible for causing

⁵⁸ 52% of the Bangladesh live below poverty line as per 1993 figures, *Human Development Report 2000*, UNDP, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p.43

⁵⁹ Annually around one million people are displaced due to natural disasters. M.Q Zaman, n.2, p.985.

migration though the pull factors also influence migration, on a lesser degree compared to the former. This study would focus on the 'push' factors of migration while analyzing the causal factors of Bangladeshi migration.

CHAPTER – II

MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH TO INDIA: A PROFILE

Migration from Bangladesh to India is a proven fact though there exist wide disagreement among officials and scholars regarding the magnitude of migration, mainly because of the lack of reliable statistics.¹ The porous nature of the Indo-Bangladesh border which runs into about 4080 kilometers helps the Bangladeshi migrants to cross over to India without being detected by the Border Security Force (BSF), that guards the Indian border land. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, migration between Bangladesh and India is not entirely a recent phenomenon. It started centuries ago when Bangladesh was part of undivided India. This was also known as East Bengal after the partition of Bengal in 1905.

Geographically Bangladesh lies in Southern Asia, surrounded by Indian territory except for a short south-eastern frontier with Myanmar and southern coast fronting the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh shares common borders with five Indian states, viz. West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Indian state

¹ Sanjay Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist Tales of War and Peace from India's North East*, Viking Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 1-9.

of West Bengal has got its ten districts² bordering Bangladesh and has over 2000 kms of common border.³ Border between India and Bangladesh is not very clear in several places. Unclear demarcation of the border has often led to clashes between the BSF and the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). A latest such incident in the border in Pyrdiwah in Assam led to the death of 16 BSF soldiers. Indo-Bangladesh talks have begun in Dhaka on 2nd July 2001 to settle the border issues including the matter of 'adverse possession' and the issue of 6.5 kms of undemarcated border.⁴

In 1947 during the partition of India, it is estimated that nearly 6.7 million Muslims moved to Pakistan from India and about 8 million people, mostly Hindus, and Sikhs moved to India from Pakistan.⁵ Virtually every member of the Sikh community residing in Pakistan moved to India and they in turn, along with Hindus, aggressively displaced Muslims from the Indian territory.⁶ Fearing persecution, vast majority of Muslims living in East Punjab (in India) quickly opted for Pakistan, where they proceeded to forcibly

² Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur, Malda, Murshidabad, Nadia, South 24 Parganas and North 24 Parganas.

³ Ranabir Samaddar, *The Marginal Nation: The Transborder Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1999, p. 206.

⁴ The Hindu, 3rd July 2001, New Delhi

⁵ Myron Weiner, "Rejected Peoples and Unwanted Migrants in South Asia", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, August 21, 1993.

⁶ Ibid.

evict sikhs and the entire Hindu community in West Pakistan. This exchange of refugees was accompanied by massive communal violence and murder, but it was a relatively even exchange and it was virtually over by the end of 1947.⁷

The Hindus who lived in the areas that later became East Bengal after the Partition of India in 1947 were mostly from landed families, while the muslims resided in North West India were predominantly landless. Understandably East Bengal Hindus were reluctant to move to India in 1947, since it would mean that they would have to surrender their lands at the time of migration with little or no hope of gaining new lands when they cross over to India. "Moreover India tried to discourage the movement of the Hindus from East Pakistan to India by refusing to compensate East Pakistan refugees for land and properties abandoned in East Pakistan even though the Compensation Act of 1954 provides such compensation to refugees in India's North West".⁸

Refugee influx to India increased during the communal violence in East Pakistan, especially during the years 1950 and 1964 which were the worst before 1971. The growth of Jamaat-I-

⁷ Marcus Franda, *Bangladesh: The First Decade*, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1982, p.101.

⁸ Avtar Singh, *Environmental Degradation in Flood Prone Areas*, Pointer Publishers, Jaipur, 1991, p.46.

Islami and other fundamentalist Islamist parties in East Pakistan indulged in communal propaganda and hatred towards the Hindus.⁹ Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamaat-I-Islami defined 'Nation' as "comprising all those believed in Islams as one nation".¹⁰ "Communal tension and violence were also not uncommon. Migration has been high during those periods of communal violence than the normal periods. Some years migration from Bangladesh dwindled, but the average number of refugees coming to West Bengal each year during the 25 years period starting from 1947 was nevertheless a considerable 1,72,462 and the influx was above average in 10 of the 25 years from 1947 to 1971".¹¹

The promulgation of the Enemy Property Act (EPA) in 1965 by the Pakistani Government and, later on, the enactment of Vested Property Act (VPA) by the Bangladeshi Government in 1972, expedited the migration of minorities, mainly Hindus from Bangladesh.¹² EPA and VPA empowered the government to evict any

⁹ Kalim Bahadur, "The Emergence of Jamaat-I-Islami in Bangladesh", in S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), *Society, Polity and Economy of Bangladesh*, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p. 34.

¹⁰ Ibid p.30.

¹¹ M.O. Abdur Rob, "Flood Hazards in Bangladesh: Nature, Cause and Control, *Asia Profile*, vol-18, No.4, August 1990.

¹² Abul Barkat, Shafaque Uz Zaman, Azizur Rahman, Avijit Poddar, *Political Economy of vested Poverty Act in Rural Bangladesh*, Association for Land Reform and Development, Dhaka, 1997, pp. 31-32.

Hindu from his ancestral property and the evacuees even could not approach the courts for the redressal of their grievances.¹³

The President's Order No. 29, the Bangladesh (Vesting of Property and Assets) Order, 1972 says "Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, all properties and assets which were vested in the Government of Pakistan or were vested in or managed by any board constituted by or under any law or in the former Government of East Pakistan shall be deemed to have vested in the Government of Bangladesh on and from the 26th day of March, 1971."¹⁴

This particularly gave Bangladesh control over all properties that were taken by the Pakistani Government under the Enemy Property Act of 1965, and other 'related laws'.¹⁵ A study conducted by Abul Barkat et al., showed that from 1965 on an average 538 Hindus migrated from Bangladesh to India.¹⁶ The sample survey on the basis of which the study was done showed that out of the 101 dispossessed, 13% were near landless, while 40% became landless

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Abul Barkat, et al, n. 12, p.40.

¹⁵ Ibid, these laws have been extensively dealt with in Chapter V of this dissertation.

¹⁶ Abul Barkat, et. al, n. 12, p.3.

through dispossession, and 15% of the surveyed were rich before dispossession and the consequent migration.

The study traced four ways of dispossession and consequent migration: forced occupation, leasing out by government of the said property to third party, nominal occupation and extreme feeling of insecurity regarding loss of property.

Environmental degradation or destruction in Bangladesh is an important cause for migration. It is estimated that about 26000 square kilometers or 18% of the country is flooded every year by monsoon rains.¹⁷ Floods and cyclones are the major movers of people in Bangladesh apart from other natural disasters like earthquakes, river bank erosion, salinity and decreasing ground water tables. The construction of Farakka barrage by India and the resultant diversion of water led to decreased availability of water for Bangladesh which affected the fishing, navigation and most importantly the agricultural production sector¹⁸. It also led to changes in the hydraulic character of the rivers and brought about changes in the ecology of the delta.¹⁹

¹⁷ Jamal Anwar, *Bangladesh: The State of Environment, Coastal, Area Resource Development and Management Association, Dhaka, 1993, p.6.*

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.6.

Bangladesh maintains that they need at least 55,000 cubic feet/sec of water flow to avert an ecological disaster. In 1995 it complained of getting only 9000 cubic feet/second of water flow in the dry season i.e., from January to May. This reduced flow in the Ganges has severely affected the people of Bangladesh, especially in the South-West region, where the people depend heavily on the Ganges. Agricultural sector in the south western region was worst affected due to the reduced flow in the dry season. In Bangladesh millions are rendered homeless and deprived of livelihood due to natural disasters that hit the nation almost annually. A large number of people are thus, internally displaced due to natural disasters.

Bangladesh is a least developed country with an annual per capita income of hardly US \$ 260 in 1997²⁰. Bangladeshi economy is an agrarian economy with 85% of the population living in the rural areas and about 78% of the total labour force depend on rural based employment²¹. Several indicators like basic health services, access to safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, literacy rate, etc. are all abysmally low. The agricultural sector is also on a decline.

²⁰ *Crisis of Governance, Human Development in South Asia 1999*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.

²¹ Report to the Like-minded Group, *Rural Poverty in Bangladesh*, University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1993, p 49

The growth of agricultural sector did not keep pace with the rate of growth of population. For instance, during the period 1967-70 to 1970-82, the rate of growth of output of food grains was no more than 1.24% while the rate of growth of population was above 2.5%²².

Traditional industries like jute, manufacturing and textiles is also on a decline. Jute industry suffered because of the decline in the world market demand for jute and also faced stiff competition from synthetic fabrics, which substituted jute. In Bangladesh the average annual production of raw jute in recent years has been about 5 to 6 millions bales, but its average yearly requirement at the jute mills and other users was not more than 3.4 million bales²³. The average raw jute export has also declined; as a result price in the local market for jute has dropped down²⁴.

Natural calamities like floods and cyclones also destroy large quantity of crops. About 4% of the rice crops are damaged by floods annually²⁵. Other crops are also severely affected due to natural disasters.

²² Ibid, p 69.

²³ Philip Gain (ed.), *Bangladesh Environment: Facing the 21st Century*, Society for Environment and Human Development, 1998, p 223

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Bimal Kanti Paul and Harun Rasid, "Flood Damage to Rice Crop in Bangladesh", *The Geographical Review*, (New York), vol 82, No. 2, April 1993, pp.150-159

In Bangladesh as we saw in this section, because of the decline in the agricultural sector, where the majority of people depend for livelihood, a large number of people are displaced. Social and political factors have also displaced people. The enactment of draconian laws like Vested Property Act have forced minorities (mainly Hindus) to leave Bangladesh for India.²⁶ In the case of people who are displaced due to natural disasters and economic miseries, first they migrate to cities and towns. And when the urban economy of Bangladesh are unable to absorb these people they are left with few options than migrating to India.

There are also other factors (pull factors) of migration that acts as an incentive for migration. The porous nature of the long Indo-Bangladesh border, of over 4080 kilometers naturally acts as a major incentive for migrants. It is practically difficult to man the entire border and thus check migration. It is difficult to identify a Bangladeshi migrant, as it is difficult to distinguish between a Bangladeshi and a West Bengali. Both speak the same Bengali language (Bangladeshi Muslims speaks Urdu too) and are also ethnically undifferentiable. Because of these reasons detection rate is very low.

²⁶ Impact of Vested Property Act on migration is being discussed in Chapter V of this dissertation.

Geographical Context Of Migration

Though migration of people has its origin in almost all parts of Bangladesh, most researchers and journalist are unanimous in their view that the largest portion of Bangladeshi migrants originate in the South-Western part of Bangladesh²⁷. People in the South-Western part face a lot of hardships due to the reduced flow of Ganges waters, mainly due to the Farakka barrage diversion. The entire South-Western region, and a portion of the North-West region, that is, about 37% of the total area of Bangladesh and about 30 million people are dependent heavily on the Ganges rivers as the source of water supply²⁸. This area receives the country's lowest rainfall. Agricultural sector in the South-Western region was also severely hit due to the reduced flow in the dry season.

Former Chief minister of Assam P K Mahanta in an interview to Ashok Swain said that it was from the Khulna region of Bangladesh (South-Western part) that the largest number of migrants come to Assam²⁹. Bangladesh government has been

²⁷ Studies conducted by scholars like Swain prove this, Ashok Swain, "Conflict Over Water The Ganges Water Dispute", *Security Dialogue*, vol.24, No.4, December, pp 429-439

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Ashok Swain, "Displacing the Conflict: "Environmental Destruction in Bangladesh and Ethnic Conflict in India", *Journal of Peace Research*, (Oslo), vol 33 No 2, 1996, pp 189-204

consistently denying the theory of Bangladeshi migration to India. Even the Press in Bangladesh maintains a discreet silence over the immigration issue.

Census report of Bangladesh, if carefully examined, could be used to establish a pattern of Bangladeshi migration to India.

Table - 1

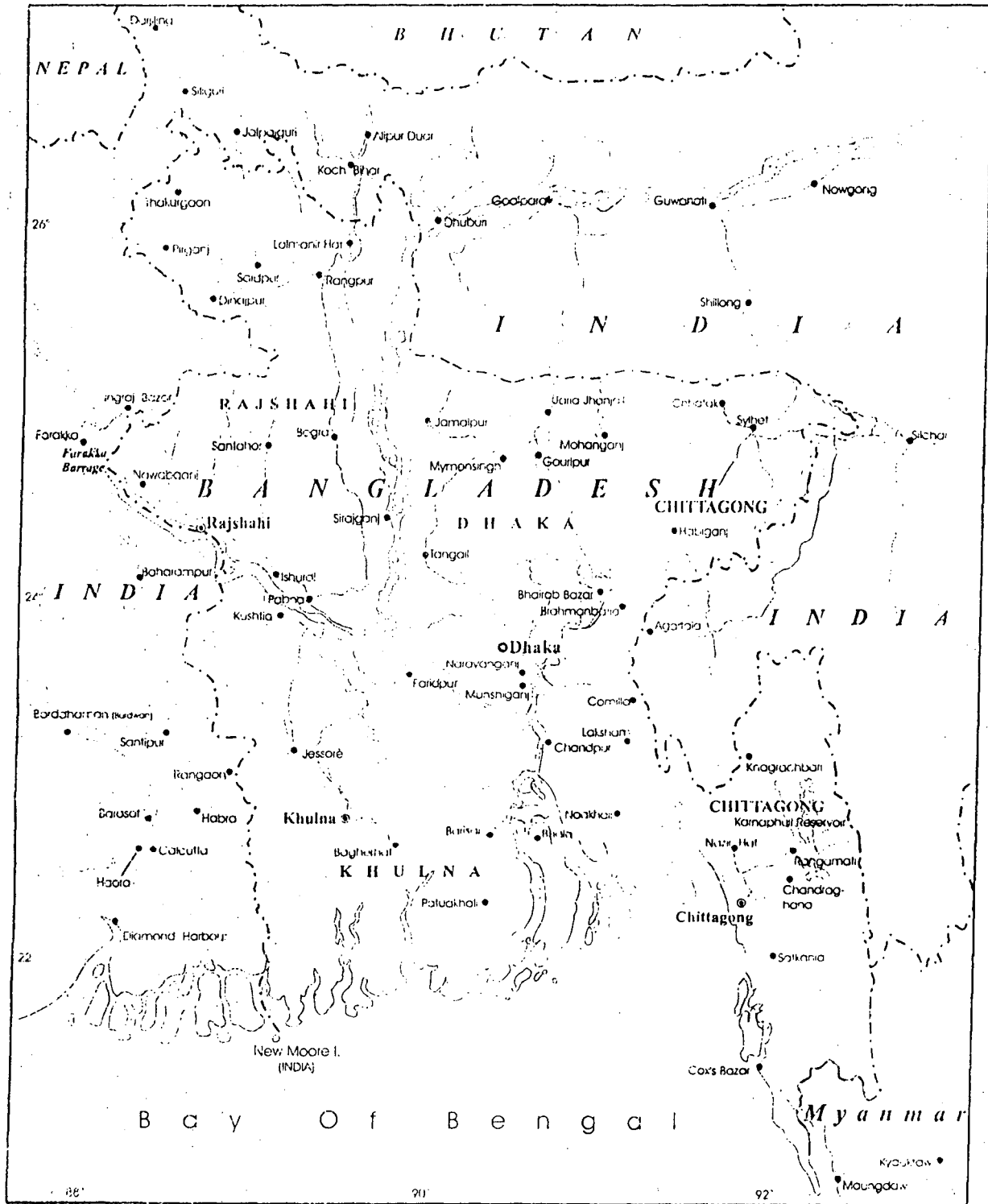
Yearly population increase in Divisions of Bangladesh (%)

Divisions (pre-1993)	1961-71	1971-81	1981-91
Chittagong	2.87	2.48	2.22
Dhaka	3.22	2.75	2.22
Khulna	3.31	2.41	1.62
Rajshahi	3.56	2.64	2.09

Source: Ashok Swain, *The Environment Trap: The Ganges River Diversion, Bangladeshi Migration and Conflicts in India*, Report No. 41, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppasala University, 1996, p.82.

As the table suggests, the growth of the population in Khulna division has dropped dramatically in the last 2 decades. In the period 1981-1991, population growth rate in the Khulna division has been only 1.62 %, while in the rest of the country it is well above 2% mark. Historically, the population growth in this region has always been higher than the national average. Drastic fall in

Bangladesh Political



Source:

Dreamland School Atlas, Dreamland Publication, New Delhi, p.14.

this particular division cannot be attributed to better literacy rate or family planning facilities in the Khulna division. In fact, the rate of literacy and the availability of family planning facilities in the Khulna region are much lower than the national average³⁰. The number of passports issued in the Khulna region is also comparatively far fewer than in some other division, which means that the loss of population in the division is not due to the legal migration to other countries³¹. The decline in yearly population increase in the Khulna division was not due to low life expectancy or very low birth rates.³²

Ashok Swain puts the disappearance figure of the million people from Khulna division on the basis of the calculations he made out from the Bangladeshi government's census figures. Again the same trend is visible in the Rajshahi division, where population

³⁰ Ashok Swain, *The Environment Trap: The Ganges River Water Diversion, Bangladeshi Migration and Conflict in India*, Report No.41, Uppasala University, Sweden, 1996, p.82.

³¹ For instance in 1991 Bangladesh Department of Passport and Migration issued 265,823 passports in the Chittagong Division, 380431 in the Dhaka division, but in the Khulna division it was only 54,484 for both international and Indian target purposes.

³² Study conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics showed high life expectancy in the Khulna Division compared to others in Bangladesh. Crude Birthrates (CB) per 1000 population in Khulna in 1982 was slightly less than the two divisions, other but it had a lower mortality rate than others. CBR in 1982 per 1000 population was 35.08 in Chittagong, 35.08 in Dhaka, 34.56 in Khulna and 33.72 in Rajshahi. See Swain n.29, p.203

growth was the highest in Bangladesh before 1974, but has now come down to below the national average.

The South Eastern part of Bangladesh, the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region, has also seen large scale migrations of people to the Indian bordering states of Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. Construction of the Karnafuli Multipurpose Project during 1957-62 to accelerate the economic development in East Pakistan, had serious adverse impact on the economy and life patterns of the CHT people. Kaptai dam construction caused tremendous devastation and loss to the local population. It inundated 400 sq. miles including 54,000 acres of cultivable land which was about 40% of the total acreage of CHT.³³ About 10000 ploughing and 800 Jhumiya (shifting cultivation) families, comprising more than one lakh, were affected. As a result "over 40,000 Chakmas left for India and settled in many parts of North-East region including Arunachal Pradesh³⁴.

The separatist³⁵ movement of the CHT people, who are

³³ Mohammad Humayun Kabir, "The Problems of Tribal Separatism and Constitutional Reforms in Bangladesh", in Iftekharuzzuman (ed.), *Ethnicity and Constitutional Reforms in Bangladesh*, Manohar Publications, 1988, p. 6

³⁴ Mahendra P. Lama, *Managing Refugees in South Asia: Protection, Aid, State Behaviour* Occasional Paper 4, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, 2000, p. 10

³⁵ Mohammad Humayun Kabir, *op. cit.*

predominantly tribals, after the independence of Bangladesh, led to refugee movements to India. Chittagong district of Bangladesh borders Indian state of Mizoram and Tripura and also Myanmar. Chakmas, the largest of the thirteen hill tribals that inhabit the CHT have been vociferously demanding a separate state.

Bangladesh government used excessive force to suppress the movement of the tribals³⁶. Many have come to India and stayed in refugee camps for decades together before they were repatriated back to Bangladesh in 1998 after CHT Peace accord was signed in 1997. Mizoram was home to about 86,000 refugees to during the period 1979-1984, some have come there some 40 years ago and has been living there since.³⁷

India as a Migrant Destination

India-Bangladesh border runs to over 4080 kilometers, with the Indian state of West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram bordering that country. Bangladesh-West Bengal border is itself, 2,203 kilometers long.

³⁶ Saradindu Mukherji, *Subjects, Citizens and Refugees, Tragedy in Chittagong Hill Tracts (1947-98)*. Indian Centre for the Study of Forced Migration. New Delhi. 2000 p. 61

³⁷ *Ibid* p. 108.

Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal states of India have become the favourite destinations of the Bangladeshi immigrations³⁸.

Table - 2

Decadel Growth Rate in Assam and India

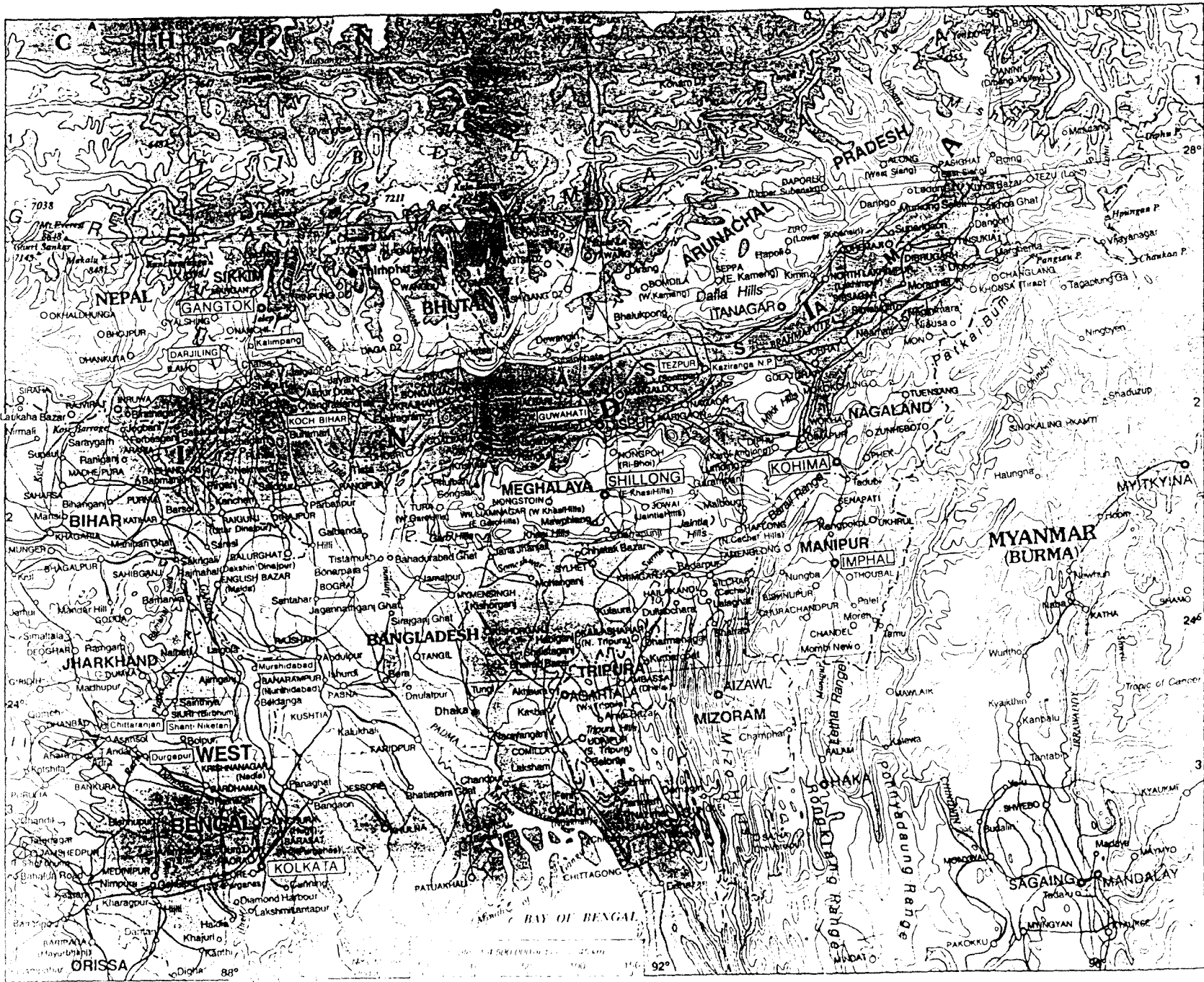
	Assam	Indian
1901-11	16.99	5.75
1911-21	20.48	-0.31
1921-31	19.91	11
1931-41	20.40	14.22
1941-51	19.94	13.31
1951-61	34.98	21.64
1961-71	34.95	24.80
1971-91	52.44	48.24

Note: There was no census in Assam in 1981, hence the data relate to two decadel growth rates. The population of Assam was 8.028 million in 1951 and 22.41 million in 1991.

Source: Government of India, *Census of India, 1971 and 1991*, New Delhi, cited in Sanjib Baruah, *India, Against Itself. Assam and the Politics of Nationality*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p.51

While analysing the population growth rate of the state of Assam and India for the period 1901-1981, Baral commented “had Assams population increased at the same rate as the rest of India from 1901 to 1981, her population would now be 9.5 million rather

³⁸ Lok Raj Baral, *Regional Migrations, ethnicity and Security*, South Asian Publisher Pvt. Ltd., 199, p.22.



Source:

Frank School Atlas, Frank Bros. & Co., 2001, Ed., Delhi, p.8.

than 19.9 million, a difference of 14.4 million. Such a difference can only be accounted by net immigration³⁹.

Though there is no definite figures for migration into Assam, no one contests the fact that migration is taking place into Assam, especially that of Bangladeshis. "In 1951, there were about 16.2% of migrants in Assam out of which 10.7% came from other countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka and only 5.5% migrated from other states. In 1961 out of 11.8% of migrants, 7.3% hailed from other countries and in 1971, 10.3% of migrants originated from other countries"⁴⁰. The period 1971-1981 Migration from East Pakistan accounted for more than a third of the Bengali population in Assam. For the same year East Pakistani migrants accounted for more than half of the Bengali population in the state of Tripura enough to give the Bengali speaking community a whopping 63.3% majority in a state that was previously dominated by non-Bengalis.⁴¹

Scholars like Lama argues that the migration to Assam "Mainly occurred because of the relative abundance of land, the need for cheap labour, relative lower density of population, porous

³⁹ Ibid. p.18

⁴⁰ Surendra K. Gupta, Indira B. Gupta, *Conflict and Communications. Mass upsurge in Assam*, Har-Anand Publications, in association with Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1990, p.80.

⁴¹ Myron Weiner, "The Political Demography of Assam's Anti-Immigrant Movement", *Population and Development Review* No. - 2, 1983 p.282.

borders and electoral calculations”⁴². Communal disturbances that rocked East Pakistan during 1947-52 and 1964-65 have also forced people to cross over to Assam from Bangladesh⁴³. Immigration from East Bengal to Assam which had been going on for over half a century did not stop with partition. “The ‘Pushfactor’ from East Bengal which in the pre-independence period was mainly economic became much stronger on account of frequent spurts of communal disturbances there”⁴⁴. According to data pertaining, to registration of refugees, there were 5.5 lakh in Assam during 1951-61 and 14.7 lakh Hindus and 2.47 lakhs muslims migrants in Assam during the period 1951-71⁴⁵.

A lot of migrants from Bangladesh find their way in to the tea gardens of Assam as labourers. “Assam’s tea gardens provide 58% of India’s total tea output and the labour that maintains the production level consist of 6,00,000 ‘foreigners’, though the figures of Bangladeshis, Nepalis and others are not properly enumerated⁴⁶.

⁴² Mahendra P. Lama, “Separatism and Armed Conflicts in North East India”, in *Conflict and Violence in South Asia*, K. M. De Silva (ed.) Bangladesh India and Pakistan, ICES South/South East Asia Studies Series: 3, International Centre for Ethnic Studies Kandy, Sri Lanka, 2000, p.351.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ K.M.C. Chhabra, *Assam Challenge*, Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p.24.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.25

⁴⁶ Lok Raj Baral, n. 38, p.24

According to Home Ministry records, displaced persons from East Pakistan who had come to India upto March 31, 1958 was about 41.7 lakhs and bulk of them over 31 lakhs stayed in West Bengal.⁴⁷

According to Baral, in West Bengal, though the Bengali community is dominant, the “influx of more than 3 million refugees by 1961 (and more than 4 mn in 1971; most of them returned in the same year and early next year) created problems between the migrants and the indigenous Bengali community”.⁴⁸

The 1981 Census of India shows that between 1971-1981 5,01093 people entered West Bengal and are staying in that state illegally⁴⁹. It also mentions about the people who had come to West Bengal 10 to 19 years prior to 1981; which is estimated to be around 8 lakhs. Since the border is mostly porous, it is very difficult to check migration. Even then Border Security Force (BSF) tries to check the migration, in most cases by simply pushing back the migrants. Former Chief Minister Jyoti Basu in his address to the Eastern and Northern state Chief Ministers conference held in New Delhi on September 28, 1992 stated that from 1977-92, BSF had

⁴⁷ *Annual Report 2000-2001, Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Internal Security, JandK Affairs, States and Home, New Delhi 2000-2001 p.128*

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 104

⁴⁹ Ranabir Samaddar, n.3, p.17

identified and pushed back a total of 2,35,529 illegal Bangladeshis immigrants.⁵⁰ Out of which 68472 were Hindus and 169795 were muslims. This figure prove that muslims, more than Hindus cross the border illegally.

Refugee Flow of 1971

The Awami League of Shikh Mujib ur Rahman won a majority of seats in the election for Pakistan's National Assembly in February 1971. The league called for a national federation in which central government would be responsible for defence and foreign affairs with federating units maintaining more autonomy with having control over the rest of the affairs of the state. Intense negotiations followed between the Pakistani authorities and the East Pakistani leaders led by Mujib ur Rahman. As a result, military crackdown on East Pakistan occurred on March 25, 1971. Fighting broke out between the Pakistani army and East Pakistani Bengali Units known as Mukthi Bahini, which was trained and armed by India⁵¹.

East Pakistani people, mostly Hindus moved to India as the Pakistani forces started marching into East Pakistan. By September

⁵⁰ Amitava Mukherjee, "India's Home Minister and Infiltration from Bangladesh", *Mainstream*, (New Delhi) 24 August, 1996.

⁵¹ Myron Weiner, *Rejected People and Unwanted Migrants in South Asia*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, (Bombay), August 21, 1993.

1971 number of refugees who had crossed over to India and settled in West Bengal, Tripura and Assam reached to 8 million. Alarmed by the likely political consequence⁵² of refugee settlements in Assam and North East tribal Hill states, India intervened militarily in November 1971. As the conflicts intensified, with India actively supporting the Mukthi Bahini, the people of East Pakistan, especially who were residing along the borders were forced to move to India.

Table - 3.

Influx of Refugees from March 25 to December 15, 1971

West Bengal	7493474
Tripura	1416491
Meghalaya	667986
Assam	312713
Bihar	8641
Total	9899305

Source: *Bangladesh Documents*, Vol.1 p.81, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 1981.

Table III shows largest concentration of refugees was in West Bengal, numbering over 74 lakhs. Indian government did the demanding job of building and sustaining the refugee camps successfully.

⁵² Even before 1971, conflicts were reported between the migrant Bengalis and the indigenous people of the North Eastern States of India and West Bengal.

The refugee influx in 1971 disrupted normal life and threatened to disturb the demographic scenario in the four bordering states of India, viz. West Bengal, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam.⁵³ Large scale migration of Muslim Bangladeshis into non-muslim areas of the neighbouring states of India like Assam has culminated in conflicts between migrants and natives. The situation got complicated as 'under political patronage of the party in power, large number of migrants from Bangladesh got their names enrolled in the electoral rolls of the state'.⁵⁴ Political parties, especially the Congress has used Bangladeshi migrants as 'Vote Banks' in Assam, and in West Bengal, the communist parties considers migrants as helpful to their electoral victories.⁵⁵

In Assam the failure of the governments to respond to the migration issue led to agitations by the Assamese under the leadership of All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) and All Assam Students Union (AASU). To counter this, Bangladeshi migrants also became organised, leading to conflicts between the migrants and the natives. Bangladeshis started to 'identify

⁵³ Sandip Bandopadhyay, *Millions Seeking Refugee: The Refugee Question in West Bengal*, in Pradip Kumar Bose (ed.), *Refugees in West Bengal. Institutional Practices and Contested Identities*, Calcutta Research Group, 2000, p.35.

⁵⁴ Munju Singh, *Assam: Politics of Migration and Quest for Identity*, Anita Publications, Jaipur, 1990, p.183.

⁵⁵ Ibid p.179-185

themselves as Assamese speakers irrespective of whether they spoke Assamese or not. As a result from 1911-1991, Assamese population went up by 280% from 3.8 million to 14.6 million while the population of Assamese speakers went up by 966% from 21.69% to 60.89%⁵⁶.

Since 1971 there has not been any mass cross border movement of people between India and Bangladesh. However, migration has been taking place from Bangladesh to India, especially into the North-Eastern states. The push factors - environmental, economic, social and political - all impact upon the migration process. Infact, it is the combination of all these factors that lead to migration. Pull factors like porous nature of the Indo-Bangladesh border, better economic opportunities in India as compared to Bangladesh and less deportation rates, etc. also play a role in causing migration.

⁵⁶ Sanjib Baruah, *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p.52.

CHAPTER - III

ENVIRONMENTAL CAUSES OF MIGRATION

Environmental degradation or destruction in Bangladesh is an important cause of migration of Bangladeshi nationals into India. Bangladesh is affected by natural disasters like floods, cyclones, river bank erosion, etc almost annually, which displaces millions of people. These internally displaced people for lack of alternative means of livelihood and also for want of adequate government support find it increasingly difficult to stay in that country. As a result a large number of internally displaced people in Bangladesh, due to environmental destruction or degradation, migrate to India.

There exists a range of factors that cause environmental destruction / degradation in Bangladesh. Prominent among them are floods, cyclones, river bank erosion and changing river courses, desertification, decreasing ground water levels and salinity. All these factors impact adversely on the life and property of the people causing immense hardships. It also results in the displacement of people when they are forced to leave their original habitats.

The manner in which these factors affect the population are also different. Flood and cyclones occur suddenly. People are taken by surprise (though early warning systems exists, it is difficult to

evacuate a large number of people at short notice from the danger areas during floods and cyclones). Whereas desertification and fall in ground water tables take place over a period of time. Enough time is there to take precautionary measures. But still, due to negligence and incompetence, these factors also displace a considerable number of people in Bangladesh.

Here we analyse the environmental factors that cause internal displacement in Bangladesh, which in turn lead to migration to India.

History Of Floods In Bangladesh

Flooding in Bangladesh is a regular occurrence. About 26,000 square kilometres or 18% of the country is flooded every year by monsoon rains.¹ The earliest recorded flood is that of Meghna basin which was recorded by Abul Fazal in his famous *Ain-e-Akbari*. This flood which occurred in 1584-85 in the southern part of the present districts of Barisal – Patakhali of Bangladesh led to the death of about two lakhs people apart from causing severe damages to the economy.

¹ Jamal Anwar, *Bangladesh: The State of Environment*, Coastal Area Resource Development and Management Association, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1993, p 6

The next recorded flood is the Gomti flood of 1660, which was a flash flood.² This flood devastated the standing crops of the fields, took many lives and livestock, and perished numerous homesteads, markets and roads.

In 1662, another great flood occurred in North Bengal and Assam.³ This flood was a result of excess and prolonged downpour in the Brahmaputra basin. It devastated property and killed several people. During the 1769-70 period, at the time of East-India company's rule in Bengal, a serious flood took place.⁴ This flood along with the previous year's drought and the resultant, crop failure for the two consecutive years, led to a famine which killed one-third of the total population of Bengal.

Meghna Basin faced a disastrous flood in 1784, which affected the districts of Sylhet and Tipperah seriously.⁵ After three years another serious flood hit eastern and the northern parts of Bengal. Owing to this flood, the river Tista and the Atarai changed their courses. The effect of this flood of 1787 was very visible as it

² R C Mujumdar, "History of Bengal (Vol. 1)", Dhaka University Press, Dhaka, 1970, cited in Abdur Rob, Flood Hazards in Bangladesh: Nature, Causes And Control, *Asian Profile*, Vol 18 No 4, August 1990, pp 365-378

³ Mujumdar, 'History of Bengal', quoted in Abdur Rob, "Flood Hazards in Bangladesh, Nature Cause and Central", *Asian Profile*, (Hongkong), Vol.18, No.4, August, 1990, pp. 365-378.

⁴ Quoted in M.D. Abdur Rob, *ibid*.

⁵ *Ibid*, p.367.

changed the courses of many rivers of Bengal. Numerous other floods have occurred after 1787. Statistics show that above a dozen high floods and five 'severe' floods have occurred in Bangladesh during the last five decades. A severe flood occurred in Bangladesh in 1988, leaving 66% of the land area inundated and 3000 people dead.⁶ The latest severe flood was in 1998, when two-thirds of the country was inundated 33 million people were marooned and one million hectares of cropland was damaged due to this flood.⁷

Nature of Floods in Bangladesh

Flood is a body of water which rises to overflow land which is not normally submerged. It is said to occur, when areas that are usually high and dry are submerged.⁸ Simply put, flood is defined as a discharge of water in excess of channel capacity.⁹ Floods are characterised by the area covered by the rate of flow and by the rate of rise and fall in the water flow of the rivers.

The movement of the flood water, normally, is from the upstream to the downstream of a river in the form of a solitary wave.

⁶ *Human Development in South Asia – 1999, Crisis of Governance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p.16

⁷ *Ibid*, p.16.

⁸ Avtar Singh, *Environmental Degradation In Flood Prone Areas*, Pointer Publishers, Jaipur, 1991, p.46

⁹ F. J. Monkhouse, *Dictionary of Geography*, Penguin Books, London, p.103.

Therefore, it has an advanced front, a peak and the recession part. As the flood wave moves down the river channel, the depth of water increases gradually at a station, and the water spreads over the sections of the station so long as the peak of the flood reaches at the station. In this phase, the flood engulfs first the low lying areas, then the dwelling houses and buildings, afterwards the roads, highways, railways etc. Most of the flood plains and river basins of Bangladesh follow this order of occurrence and recession, as the order normally depends upon the land features of the region.¹⁰

Bangladesh experiences different types of floods and on the basis of the nature and origin of inundation it can be classified as follows:

(1) General or Monsoon floods -

Occurrence of this type of floods is easily predictable and are associated normally with the yearly monsoon rains between the months of June and October. The pattern of floods is such that monsoon or general flood advances gradually; attain peak height slowly and also recedes from a place quite slowly. The devastating effect of this type of flood depends much on the duration of the flood

¹⁰ M.O. Abdur Rob, n.4, pp.365-378.

rather than on the peak height of flood or on the advance of the flood.

(2) Flash floods

Flash floods result from exceptionally heavy rainfall occurring over neighbouring hills and mountains and do not give adequate time for evacuation or transfer of valuable properties to a safer place. Normally flash floods occur in the early stages of the monsoon rainfall in May and June. The hilly areas of the north-east and the south-east region of Bangladesh are prone to this type of inundation. The Monu, Khawai and Luva rivers of Sylhet region (north-east) and the Muhuri, Halda, Sangu, Matamuri and the Baghkhali river of the Chittagong region (south-east) produce flash floods.¹¹ The run off from the heavy rainfall in the nearby hilly areas of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh cause flash floods in these torrents. These floods are characterised by short duration super critical velocity and very high degrading effects. Flash floods do not necessarily damage crops or property and when and where damage occur it is mainly due to rapidity of the flowing water.

(3) River floods

River floods result from snow-melt in the high Himalayas plus heavy

¹¹ Ibid, p.371

monsoon rainfall over the Himalayas, the Assam and Tripura hills, the adjoining flood plains and the northern part of the Central Indian plateau. In the event when river water rises higher than 'normal' (as in 1989), river water also extends varying distance into neighbouring meander-plains, carrying alluvial sediments with it. River floods causes the maximum crop damages when they occur early (June, mainly along the Brahmaputra and Meghna) or late (after Mid-August, along all rivers).¹² Crops may be uprooted by rapid water flow, fields buried by thick alluvial deposits and riverbanks land eroded. High floods may also damage roads, houses and urban property. Flooding attains serious proportions when peak flow in the Brahmaputra and Ganges river coincide as it happened in the severe floods of 1988.

(4) Cyclonic Surges and Tidal bores

The coastal belt of Bangladesh is abnormally flat and low lying which makes it vulnerable to the cyclonic surges and tidal bores which could easily submerge the region. Funnel shape of the coastal belt of Bangladesh adds power to the cyclones. If the pounding wave of cyclonic surge coincide with a huge tide, their amplitude may be as high as 10 to 12 metres. This type of inundation locally known as

¹² H. Brammer; Floods in Bangladesh: Geographical Background to the 1987 and 1988 Floods, *The Geographical Journal*, (London), vol.56, No.1, March 1990, pp.12-22.

^{9/2/17}
'Gonky' causes unbelievable damage and loses to the life and property of the coastal people. Most severe cyclonic floods occur in the month of October and November.

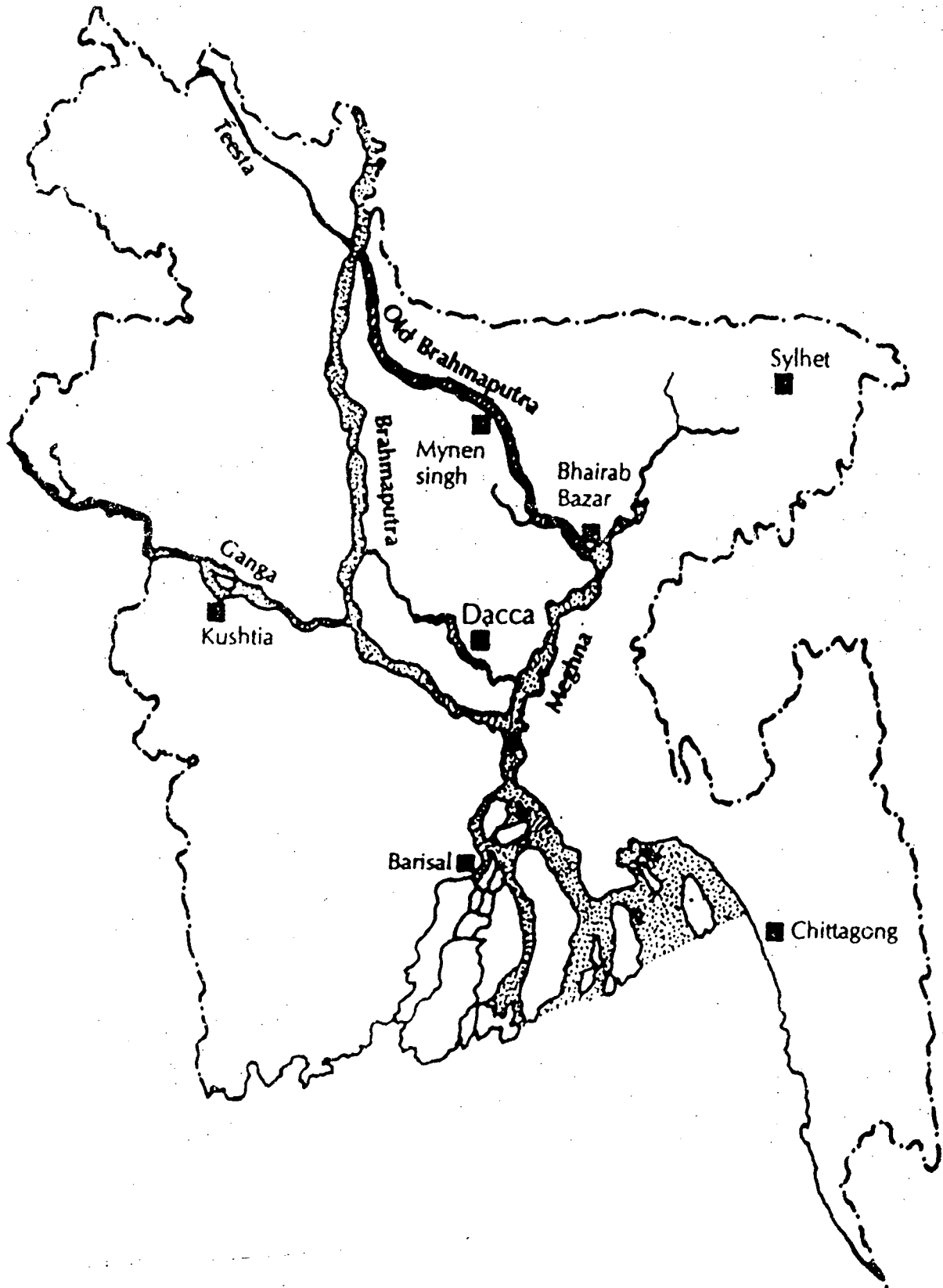
Cause of Floods in Bangladesh

Bangladesh lies on the floodway of a very large catchment area, situated in the tropics between 20°45' to 26°40' North Latitudes and 88°03' to 90°42' East Longitudes.¹³ The unique geographical location of the country bordering Bay of Bengal to the south, the Great Himalayas and the Khashi-Jayanti-Garo Hills to the north along with prevailing monsoons, has shaped the country as one of the most watery regions of the world.

Floods in Bangladesh are normally associated with monsoon rains that pour into the entire Ganges – Brahmaputra – Meghna catchment area. Almost every year, between June and October, monsoon floods water inundate large areas of Bangladesh. The yearly monsoon flood of Bangladesh are much more predictable and usually less severe in terms of loss of life and property than some abnormally high flood that occurs in Bangladesh.

¹³ Ibid, pp.12-22

Rivers of Bangladesh



Source :

State of India's Environment: A Citizens Report, Floods, Flood Plains and Environmental Myths, Centre for Science and Environment, p.67.

Bangladesh is often referred to as a land of rivers. There are about 250 rivers of varying sizes forming a net work along the 3 major rivers of Bangladesh, viz. Ganges – Padma, Brahmaputra – Jamuna and Meghna.¹⁴ Ganges – Jamuna – Brahmaputra Delta, which is the largest Delta in the world drain a catchment of some 1.55 million square kilometres, 11 times greater than the area of Bangladesh itself. And the average peak flow of the combined rivers in the Meghna is about 2.5 times than that in the Mississippi river.¹⁵

Geographical location, topographical aspects, hydrological situation, climatic condition and excessive rainfall are some of the governing factors for flood in Bangladesh. Occurrence of floods in Bangladesh are due to a combination of natural and man made or human causes.¹⁶ The natural causes include unstable and migratory nature of the rivers of the region, tectonic situation of the region, rise in sea-level and tidal effect, filling up of channel beds with excessive siltation and excessive rainfall in the catchment basins of the country. Man made causes of floods are largely confined to human activities in the catchment areas of the rivers of

¹⁴ Narottam Gaan, *Environmental Degradation and conflict: The Case of Bangladesh-India*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 1998, p.28.

¹⁵ H. Brammer, op.cit, p.14

¹⁶ H. Brammer, op.cit, p.16

the country. Inefficient drainage system or poorly managed drainage system also adds to the severity of floods.

Impact of Floods on Migration

Floods create immense miseries to the people, destroy crops, properties, dislocate transportation and communication. Flood damages approximately 4% of the rice production annually, in addition to causing extensive damages to jute, sugarcane and summer vegetables.¹⁷ Areas that are located immediately along the Brahmaputra-Jamuna river are susceptible to severe flooding. For instance, in Tanguil district which lies along the banks of of the Brahmaputra-Jamuna river lost 11% of its rice production in 1967-68 due to floods. Faridpur, Pabna, Sylhet and Tanguil districts which lie in this flood prone area lose large quantity of crops to floods.

Displacement of people is high due to floods as 20% of the country is affected due to flood annually and 37% of the land is affected once every 10 years.¹⁸ Floods greatly affect marginal population who lose whatever assets they have and suffer from lack

¹⁷ Bimal Kanti Paul and Harun Rasid, "Flood Damage to Rice Crop in Bangladesh", *The Geographical Review*, vol 82, No 2 April, 1993 pp. 150 – 59.

¹⁸ Philip Gain (ed.), *Bangladesh; Environment: Facing the 21st Century*, Society for Environment and Human Development, 1998, p 206

of work and wages. People who reside in the flood prone areas have low indicators in all sectors of health, nutrition and education.¹⁹ Another feature that has been noticed is the distress sale of land and properties by the poor to the money lenders.

Flash floods cause extensive damage to crop, property, fish stock and other resources mainly due to its super critical velocity, particularly in the north, the north-east and the eastern parts of the country. People are left with no choice but to leave these areas in the event of a flash flood.

Cyclone and its Impact on Migration

Another factor that displaces people in Bangladesh on a large scale is cyclone. Bangladesh has the worst record of cyclones in South-Asia. Bangladesh borders Bay of Bengal the south which is the breeding place of catastrophic cyclones. Around some 80 tropical cyclones occur in the world annually, and out of which about 4 to 5% of them form in the Bay of Bengal.²⁰

Catastrophic cyclones have occurred in the past in the Bay of Bengal and hit Bangladesh and the Indian states of West Bengal

¹⁹ Ibid, pp 206-209

²⁰ C R Abrar, Saleemul Haq and A Atiq Rahman, "Environmental Security and Migration in South Asia" in D D Khanna (ed), *Sustainable Development*, Macmillan India Ltd., 1997. pp 409-432

and Orissa in the years 1584, 1876, 1919, 1942, 1960, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1970, 1985, 1988, and 1991 and 1997. Cyclones which form during the pre-monsoon and post monsoon periods are the most destructive due to the great instability of the atmosphere and weak vertical winds.²¹ They generally form over Andaman Sea or Southeast Bay of Bengal. They initially move west/northwards, then northwards and finally in a northeastern direction and cross Bangladesh or the Upper Burma Coast.

The four most damaging cyclones in the recent past occurred in November 1970, May 1985, April 1991 and 1997.²² The 1970 cyclone that struck the coast of Jaffrabad and travelled towards Noakhali with a velocity of 224 kilometre per hour killed at least 300,000 people. Most fatalities occurred outside the protective embankment. In 1985, a powerful cyclone hit Urichar near Sandwip and the Sunderbans. About 3000 people were reported missing after the cyclone. Nearly 140,000 people lost their lives when a cyclone hit the coast of Chittagong in April 1991 with a velocity of 225 kms per hour. People died mostly due to storm surges, which travelled through the canals. In 1997, again a cyclone hit the Chittagong

²¹ Mahendra P Lama, "Economic Resources and Environmental Concerns in South Asia: A changing Interface" in D D Khanna (ed), *Sustainable Development*, Macmillan India Ltd., 1997. p 244

²² Philip Gain, n.18, p.206.

coast with the strongest speed effected (in Bangladesh) of 275 km per hour. Recorded death was comparatively low – 188. It caused tremendous destruction of forest resources.

In Sandwip – an Island located in the ‘trough’ of the Bay of Bengal – where people faced disaster both in 1970 and 1991, only eight safe shelters were built. These shelters could accommodate at the most 1500 to 2000 people each and could protect only 5% of the population of Swandeeep.²³ Cyclone shelters are generally built near homesteads of large landowners and at great distance from the homes of landless and poor families. So in the event of a cyclone the landless and the poor families hesitate to make use of the cyclone shelters as it is far away from their home and also because of the fear of loosing their belongings.

Hundreds of the thousands of livestock perish during a cyclone. The programme for the building of cyclone shelters for cattle was abandoned in as early as 1974. Only a total of 157 mounds (killas) was constructed in Bangladesh, and each mound accommodated merely 300-400 numbers of livestock.²⁴ The rural

²³ Peter Custers, “Cyclones in Bangladesh: A History of Mismanagement, Economic and Political weekly, February 15, 1992 p. 327

²⁴ Ibid, pp.17-24.

population lose their cattle when a cyclone is severe as people are unable to take care of them.

Cyclones also have adverse impacts on crops, trees and vegetation, fisheries and infrastructure.²⁵ Coastal belt which is rich in trees and vegetation is affected by cyclones and tidal surges, many species of mangroves and homestead are also affected. Damages to paddy crops is severe. Standing crops are destroyed and harvested crops are washed away by the sea surge.

No official figure is available regarding the people displaced due to cyclones. But it is believed that millions are displaced due to cyclones and tidal surges. Cyclones affect all sectors of the rural economy – agriculture, fisheries, traditional industries like jute making, etc, where large number of people are employed. So the displacement of people is high in the event of a cyclone.

Cyclone relief work in Bangladesh has been thoroughly inadequate; thus, aggravating the miseries of the cyclone affected people. After the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, a cyclone preparedness programme was initiated at the request of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and with international assistance.

The programme comprised of construction of multistoried

²⁵ C R Abrar, et. al., n.20, p. 422.

cyclone shelter, raised mounds for the protection of cattle and the setting up of local disaster preparedness teams equipped among others things with wireless sets and megaphones. A review of the execution of this plan reveals that none of the Governments, which has ruled since 1971, has taken this plan seriously. The number of cyclone shelters built by the Government was far below the requirements. For instance the number of cyclone shelter construction were at around 300 in 1991. Whereas atleast 5000 would have needed to deal with a disaster.²⁶

Problem of Decreasing Ground Water Level and Salinity

The ground water level in Bangladesh is depleting at an alarming rate. It is estimated that since 1972, the period of rapid exploitation, the number of irrigation wells has increased from 1800 to 399000 in the 1990s, at a compound rate in excess of 40% annually.²⁷ The reduction and uncertainty in the availability of season rainfall and the resulting surface flows have forced the farmer to turn to deep tube wells (DTW) and shallow tube wells (STW) for water that is clearly needed for agriculture. This excess exploitation of ground

²⁶ Peter Custers, *op cit* p. 113

²⁷ Nahid Islam – Indo-Bangladesh Rivers: The Impact of Bangladesh, *Contemporary South Asian*, 1(2), 1992, pp.203-225.

water beyond its threshold has caused a series of ecological effects in Bangladesh. Dying of top natural vegetation is a direct result of the depleting ground water tables. The roots of vegetation are always adopted to a particular level of ground water. Because of the lowering down of the depth of the water level the vegetation fails to adopt to the new lower level which leads to the death of the plant.

The ground water level has decreased so low in the north-western areas, especially in the Rajshahi district, that the suction lift pumps (SLP) are unable to pump water.²⁸ As a result of the lowering down of the ground water level, the saline water enters inland in the coastal areas whereby the salinity intrudes into the mainland. Besides reduction in the ground water level, the reduction of surface water also contributes to the increased salinity.

An increase in salinity in the rivers of the coastal region has been reported, mainly due to the effect of upstream withdrawal by India. It is alleged that salination within the south-western region of Bangladesh is due to the diversion of water through various flood control and irrigation projects for the draught prone areas of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh undertaken by the upper riparian state, India. The saline intrusion would normally be ousted by strong upland

²⁸ Bangladesh Water Development Board, Master Plan Organisation, Second Interim Report (June 1984), Dhaka, pp 9-13.

flow, but because of upstream withdrawal in the dry season flow of the Ganges and Gorai-Madhumati receives an insufficient fresh water flow to check salinity. The permissible salinity limit is below 500 micro mhos/cm but in April 1983 salinity observed at Khulna topped all previous records reaching 17000 micromhos/cm and in 1992 salinity level was 29,500 micromhos/cm.²⁹

Seasonal fluctuation and withdrawal of water through numerous projects and dams by the upper riparian state, India have resulted in significant reduction of water in Bangladesh. The water registered at Hardings Bridge fell below the minimum ever recorded, i.e. 23,000 m³/s Compared to a historical average of 64,430 m³/s.³⁰ Due to this upper riparian withdrawal, the water level at Hardings which was 6.7 m came down to 5.2 m in the mid 1980's while in the 1992 dry season it came down to as low as 4.3 metres. Besides Ganges, India is withdrawing water from Brahmaputra, Teesta and other small rivers. Apart from its flood control and irrigation measures India has made 3850 km of embankments along the main

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Khurshida Begum, *Tension Over the Farakka Barrage: A Technopolitical Tangle in South Asia*, University Publishing Ltd, Dhaka, 1987, p 187.

river tributaries, 770 km of drainage channels and 44 town protection projects.³¹

The world's largest tract of mangroves, the Sunderban forest is facing destruction as a result of a process called 'desertification salinity'. The increasing rate of salinity and frequent droughts have hampered the germination of the local flora. Sundari trees after which the forest has been named are now in the process of extinction.³²

Desertification In Bangladesh

Desertification is reducing the area of farm land and the volume of rabi crop production in the greater Rajshahi, Faridpur, Jessore, Khulna and Barisal districts. Experts apprehend that more than 1.20 crore acres of cultivable land in as many as 21 south western and northern districts of the country may turn to arid land.³³ After the cessation of monsoon rains, the occasional rainfall is not sufficient for agriculture. Irrigation is dependent largely on the surface flow of water which reaches low levels mainly due to

³¹ Narottam Gaan, *Environmental Degradation and Conflict: The Case of Bangladesh-India*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 1998, p 31.

³² Mahendra P Lama, n. 21, p. 248.

³³ Ibid

upstream diversion. The result in the destruction of large amount of crops due to reduced water availability.

River-Bank Erosion: Its Impact on Migration

The behaviour of alluvial channels and the unique natural setting of Bangladesh in the region together with the characteristics of the tropical monsoon climate are mainly responsible for river bank erosion.³⁴ Low gradients of the river and about 80% of the total rainfall during the 4 months (June to September) together create an ideal situation for devastating floods which causes bank erosion. Human activities like irrational use of forest and other natural resources both in the up and down stream of the rivers cause further deterioration of the situation.

Bangladesh is a riverine country and during June to September, with the commencement of yearly monsoon rain, flood and bank erosion appear as a conspicuous feature in about 48 of its major and minor rivers. Several towns in Bangladesh are threatened by river bank erosion. During 1984-85, an investigation revealed that 283 areas of river banks and 85 towns and villages are subjected to severe erosion.³⁵ And about 1200 km of river banks are

³⁴ C R Abrar, et. al. n.20, pp.409-432

³⁵ Nahid Islam, n.27, p.207.

under active erosion, of which more than 500 km face severe erosion problems.

Another problem Bangladesh faces is of changing river courses. It is said that river Jamuna has never been in the same place for two successive years for the last 150 years. Same is the case with most other rivers of the country, which leads to displacement of people.

The earth line of rivers and its adjoining areas are under a constant state of change. "Satellite images of Ganges – Brahmaputra – Meghna (GBM) middle basin show that 10,63,000 hectares were lost to erosion while only 19,300 hectares was accreted over 1982-92. The net loss of 8,700 hectares means an annual loss of 87,000 hectares."³⁶ Most of these land was used for agriculture ' About one million Bangladeshis are affected by river bank erosion'.³⁷ Since river bank erosion is a gradual process it receives less publicity, but in reality it affects, a large no of people. Since people lose their land, they are forced to move to cities of Bangladesh and from there to the neighbouring states of India.

³⁶ Philip Gain, n.18, p.207.

³⁷ Ibid.

Threat of Sea Level Rise and Migration

Bangladesh is identified by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as one of the ten countries in the world that is most vulnerable to rise in sea level associated with global warming.³⁸ As a result of increasing emission of a Green House Gases (GHG), the average temperature is expected to rise (Global warming). Global warming will lead to changes in precipitation rates and a rise in sea level.

A study done by South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) on the impact of Greenhouse effect suggest that one metre rise in sea-level by the middle of the next century would inundate 15.8% of total area of Bangladesh.³⁹ This would result in the inundation of 13.74% net cropped area and 28.29% of forest area. Sea-level rise would lead to salt water intrusion into the inland areas which would adversely impact upon the cultivation of rice crop and other agricultural crops. It would also affect household water supplies.

³⁸ M Q Mirja and Ainun Nishant, "Development and Environment in Bangladesh: Past Approaches, Present concerns and Future crisis", in Q K Ahmad (ed.), *Bangladesh: Past Two Decades and Current Decade: Assimilating Past Experiences Towards Shaping The Future*, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1994, p 109.

³⁹ SAARC Secretariat Documents, *Regional Study on Green House Effect and its Impact on the Region*, Kathmandu, 1992. p ix

Greatest effect of Global Warming in Bangladesh will be on human migration as millions will be uprooted by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption. If the sea level rises by one metre by the year 2050, it is likely to displace about 17 million people in Bangladesh.⁴⁰ The displaced people would have the option of moving further to the inland areas of Bangladesh, but will have to compete for shrinking resources. The other viable option for them would be to move into the neighbouring states of India.⁴¹

Farakka Barrage and it's Impact on Migration

2510 kilometers long the Ganges river originates in Gangotri on the southern slope of the Himalayas in India and flows through Indian territory in the south-eastern direction to Bangladesh. Before entering Bangladesh, the mainstream of the Ganges bifurcate into 2 channels; Bhagirathi – Hoogly and Poda or Padma as the Ganges is known in Bangladesh. In 1970 India constructed a barrage at Farakka, 18 kms upstream from the Bangladeshi border. It included a 38 km canal of 40,000 cubic feet/second capacity to take off from the barrage to supplement the water of the Bhagirathi–Hoogly at the lower point. The diversion was to make the current of water strong enough to flush off the silt and on that part of Calcutta, which is

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ C R Abrar et al., n.20, p. 426.

situated on the banks of Hoogly river.⁴² Besides this, the agricultural demands of West Bengal and the growing demands of a growing city (Calcutta) induced the Indian Government to construct the barrage.

Bangladesh's main opposition pertained to the diversion of Ganges water during the dry season, i.e. from January to May. During the rest of the year there is sufficient water in the river for India to withdraw without causing problems for Bangladesh. In 1975, it was estimated that the average minimum flow in the dry season to Farakka was 55,000 cubic feet/sec, while Bangladesh maintains that it needs all that amount to avert an ecological disaster in that country. India at the same time maintains that it needs 40,000 cubic feet/sec. In 1995 Bangladesh complained of getting only 9,000 cubic feet/sec in the dry season. Increasing upstream withdrawal in northern India further reduced the flow at Farakka.

The entire south-west region and a portion of the north-west region of Bangladesh, that is, about 37% of the total area and 30 million people are dependent on the Ganges river as the source of water supply.⁴³ This area receives the lowest rainfall in the country.

⁴² Nahid Islam, n.27, p. 34.

⁴³ Nahid Islam, n.27, pp.203-225.

In this situation the Farakka barrage and the resulting diversion of water has severely affected the people in the region. It has disrupted fishing and navigation, brought unwanted salt deposits into the rich farming soil, adversely affected agricultural and industrial production, changed the hydraulic character of the rivers and brought about changes in the ecology of the delta.

Agricultural sector in the south-west region has been the worst affected due to the reduced flow in the dry seasons, i.e. the whole of pre-1993 Khulna division⁴⁴ and the Rajshahi division. Reduced water flow led to salt water intrusion into the delta region from the Bay of Bengal. This proved disastrous as it led to the closing down of industries, and also affected the water supply system. Salinity in south-western region led to the destruction of large tracts of mangrove forests. Riverine fishery on which the majority of population indulged in, mainly as a source of food and income, was severely affected due to the reduced flow and stagnation of water especially in the dry season. The decreased dry season flow has also exacerbated the excessive riverbed situation on the Bangladesh side, with consequent reduction in the conveyance capacities of the river channels, which in turn has been

⁴⁴ Since 1993, the Khulna division has been divided into two administrative divisions, Khulna and Barisal.

instrumental in increasing the number of devastating monsoon floods in Bangladesh.

Environmental Destruction/Degradation and Migration

There exists a direct correlation between environmental destruction/degradation and migration. Essan Hannawi, in a report prepared for the United Nations Environment Programme in 1985 has used the term 'environmental refugee' while categorising the people who were displaced due to environmental destruction/degradation. According to Hannawi' "environmental refugees' consist of "those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption, natural and / or triggered by people that jeopardize the existence and/or seriously affect the quality of their life."⁴⁵ International agencies and national governments do not officially recognise "environmental refugees" as refugees; hence the term environmental migrants is generally used in academic discusses.

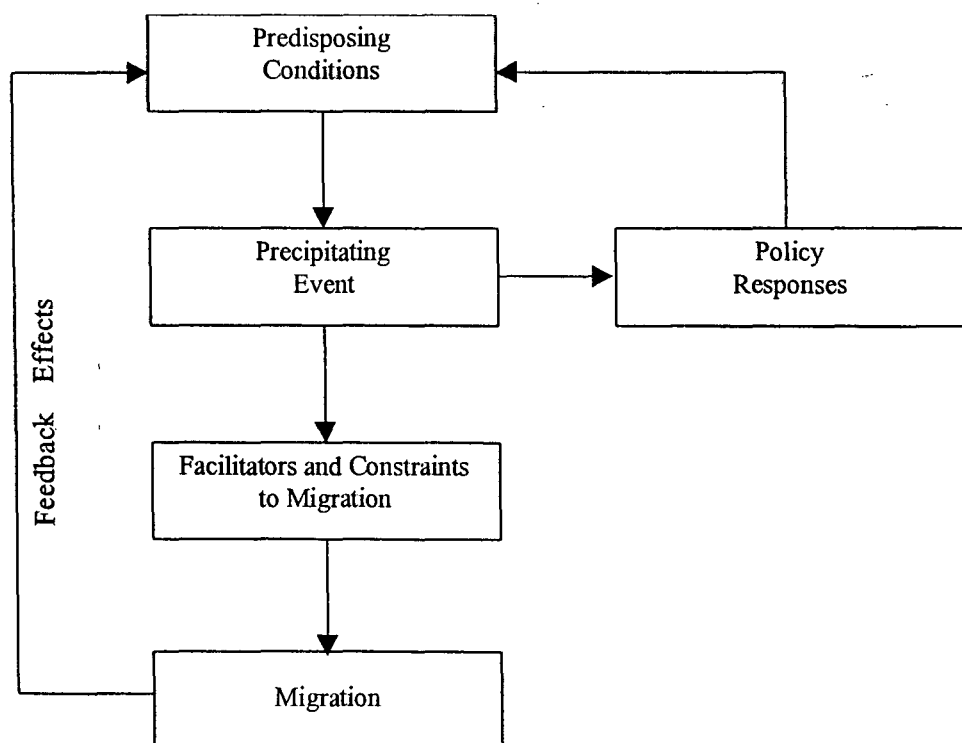
Richmond⁴⁶ has presented a model (Richmond Model) to

⁴⁵ E.E. Hannawi *Environmental Refugee* (New York), United Nations Development Programme, New York, 1985.

⁴⁶ A Richmond, "Environment and Refugees: Theoretical and Policy Issues." Quoted in Graeme Hugo, *Environmental Concerns and International Migration, International Migration Review*, (New York) Spring, 1996, pp.105-131.

explain environmental migration, which clearly explains the relationship between environmental disruption and migration. This model is very much relevant to this study of Bangladeshi Migration as migration can be explained on the basis of this model. Graeme Hugo⁴⁷ has presented Richmond's ideas in a graphic description, which is shown under, Fig I.

Fig - I



Source: Modified and Simplified from ideas in Richmond, *The Environment and Refugees, Theoretical and Policy Issues*, cited in Graeme Hugo, *Environmental concerns and International Migration*", *International Migration Review*, 1996 (Spring).

⁴⁷ Graeme Hugo, "Environmental Concerns and International Migration," *International Migration Review*, Spring, 1996, pp.105-131.

The Richmond model recognises that certain contexts are more susceptible to environmental disruptions which are likely to force out migration than others. These include ecologically fragile ecosystems, which when subject to excessive cropping, forest removal or other human use impacts, becomes less productive; areas at high risk of natural disaster - earthquakes zones, low lying areas subject to inundation; marginal agricultural or pastoral areas subject to frequent droughts; and areas of poverty where the residents do not have accumulated reserves to prevent, ameliorate or cope with the onset of a natural disaster.

Predisposing factors/conditions for environmental migration are environmental but also could include population pressure upon natural resources. These predisposing conditions are more prone to occur in Less Developed Countries.

Environmentally induced migrations likely to be precipitated by a particular environment – related event which forces people to move. Figure II is a list of factors identified by Richmond as being likely to precipitate reactive migrations. Richmond stressed that these factors are not independent of one another. ‘Precipitating events’ are partially influenced by the predisposing conditions.

Migration is also affected by a range of 'constraints and facilitators'. These include the existence of, or lack of escape routes in the form of transport networks, kinship and social networks. The presence of such networks acts as facilitator to migration movements while their absence constrains such movement. Richmond also talk of 'feedback effects' on migration The 'feedback' from the migrants who have left the country earlier act as an important source of information for the prospective migrants.

FIG-II

TYPOLOGY OF ENVIRONMENTALLY RELATED DISASTERS

<p><u>Naturally Induced Disasters</u></p> <p>Hurricanes, Tornadoes, Earthquakes, Floods (Fresh water and Salt water), Droughts, Famines, Avalanches, Volcanic Eruptions, Fires, Whirl Winds, Electric Storms.</p>
<p><u>Technologically Induced Disasters</u></p> <p>Pollution (Air, Water and Soil), Chemical, Nuclear, Oil Spills, Factory Accidents, Explosions, Building Collapse.</p>
<p><u>Economically Induced Disasters</u></p> <p>Deforestation, Crop failure, Fishery Exhaustion, Species Exhaustion, Mineral Exhaustion, Structural Adjustment.</p>
<p><u>Politically Induced Disasters</u></p> <p>War, Terrorism, Apartheid, Ethnic cleansing, Persecution, Totalitarianism, Extremism, Holocaust.</p>
<p><u>Socially Induced Disasters</u></p> <p>Ecological Extremism, Fanaticism, Class War, Jihad, Shunning, Boycott.</p>

Source: Graeme Hugo, Environmental Concerns and International Migration, *International Migration Review*, Vol. XXX, No. 1, Spring, 1996, p.112.

Internal Displacement in Bangladesh and Migration

As Swain puts it, the decision to leave ones homeland is not a simple one. People generally choose to remain in their own country, struggling until the hopes of survival peters out.⁴⁸ This is true in the case of Bangladeshi migration.

As stated earlier in this chapter, one of the direct consequences of environmental destruction/degradation in Bangladesh has been the migration of Bangladeshis into the Indian territory from the affected areas. Studies conducted by Maloney and Hagariter have proved this point.⁴⁹ They argue that millions of environmental and poverty migrants move from Bangladesh to India, particularly into the Indian state of Assam. This migration has been confirmed in academic researches by Hazarika⁵⁰ and Swain.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ashok Swain, "Displacing the Conflict: Environmental Destruction in Bangladesh and Ethnic Conflict in India", *Journal of Peace Research*, (Oslo) vol.33, no.2, 1996, pp.189-204

⁴⁹ C R Abrar, et al., n.20, pp.409-432.

⁵⁰ Sanjay Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from Indians North East*, Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989.

⁵¹ Ashok Swain, *Environment and Conflict: Analyzing the Developing World-Uppasala*. Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppasala University, Sweden, 1993 .

Migration trends are very visible in the Khulna and Rajshahi divisions in Bangladesh. It is estimated that at least two million Bangladeshi Muslims have 'disappeared' from the Khulna division during the period 1981-91. The same trend is visible in the Rajshahi division too. Pabna region (the southern part of Rajshahi division) which is most affected by Farakka withdrawal shows a low population growth of 1.99% for the period 1981-91, compared to the average of the whole Rajshahi division which is put at 2.09%.

Some scholars have argued that population density in Bangladesh is the reason for Bangladeshi migration to India.⁵² However, Khulna division, a major source of migration, has the lowest population density among the regions of Bangladesh. Population density of Khulna in 1991 was 613 persons per square kilometre, whereas it was 1081 person per sq. km. in Dhaka, 766 persons per sq. km. in Rajshahi and the corresponding figure for Bangladesh as a whole was at 750 persons per sq. km.

Internal displacement of people is very high in Bangladesh. The environmental factors like floods, cyclones, river banks erosion, changing of river courses, desertification, decreasing ground water

⁵² For example, scholars like Homer Dixon hold this view. Homer Dixon, Thomas P, "On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as a Cause of Acute Conflict: Evidence From Cases," *International Security*, vol.16 – No.2, pp. 76-116.

level and salinity, etc. displace millions of people from the country side on a constant basis.

Country side is the most affected by the natural disasters. This is significant because 85% of the population live in the country side.⁵³ Rural economy is badly hit as disasters like floods and cyclones damage large quantity of crops, standing as well as harvested. Other income earning activities of the people like fishing, cattle rearing, jute making, etc. also come to a halt. In Bangladesh approximately 78% of the labour force is dependent on rural based employment.⁵⁴ A considerable section of the population affected by natural disasters migrate to cities of Bangladesh. Rural to Urban migration per 1000 of the population was 6.48 in 1986 and 4.06 in 1987.⁵⁵

Dwindling urban economy of Bangladesh has been unable to absorb the huge migration of poor Bangladeshis from the rural

⁵³ Mahbub Ul Haq, *Human Development in South Asia – 1997*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 43.

⁵⁴ *A Report to the like minded Group, Rural Poverty in Bangladesh*, University Press Ltd, Dhaka, 1993, p.4.

⁵⁵ AKM Ghulam Rabbani, *The Population of Bangladesh: Its Current Demographic and Selected, Socio-economic Status with Emphasis on Nutritional Health Status*, in Q.K. Ahmad, *Bangladesh: Past Two Decades and Current Policies, Assimilating Past Experiences Towards Shaping The Future*, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1994, p.243.

areas. In 1981-82, poverty in Bangladesh was as high as 73%.⁵⁶ In the urban areas of Bangladesh there is surplus of labour.⁵⁷ Industry's share in the GDP is hardly 15%, and most of the public sector undertakings are running at loss.⁵⁸ Average wage in the large industries was only Taka 55-60 a day in the early nineties, and for skilled workers average wage was first Taka 40-50.

People who migrated to the cities found it difficult to get jobs because of the labour surplus situation and also because of the 'slow down' of the economy. In this situation migration to the neighbouring states of India like West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, etc presented an opportunity to find jobs, even if it was menial. Here migrant networks and kinships and also the porous nature of the Indo-Bangladesh border came in handy for the potential migrants. The Bangladeshi migration to India follow a pattern of environmental destruction/degradation in Bangladesh leading to internal displacement of people, which finally leads to migration.

⁵⁶ Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmad, *An Assessment of the Unemployment Situation in Bangladesh and Formulation of a National Employment Plan for the Country* in Q.K Ahmad, (ed) n.55, p.50.

⁵⁷ S M Al Husainy, *Wither Industries* in Q.K. Ahmad (ed), n.55, p.155-56.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER – IV

ECONOMIC CAUSES OF MIGRATION

Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world with an annual Gross National Product (GNP) per capita of US \$ 260 in 1997 as compared to that of India's US \$370.¹ It also ranks very low among the countries of the world in the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking² carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Human Development Report of 1999 ranks Bangladesh 150th among 174 countries of the world with an HDI value of 0.440.³ HDI reflects achievements in the most basic human capabilities – leading a long life, being knowledgeable and enjoying a decent standard of living. Bangladesh has slightly improved its performance, as it is now ranked 146th in the Human Development Report for the year 2000, with an HDI value of 0.461.⁴

¹ *Human Development in South Asia – 1999, Crisis of Governance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1999.

² HDI ranking is done by analysing the performance of a country on the basis of three variables – life expectancy, educational attainment and income. The values of HDI range from 0-1. HDI value of a country shows the distance that it has already travelled towards the maximum possible value of 1 and also allows comparison with other countries.

³ *Human Development Report – 1999*, United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p 136.

⁴ *Human Development Report-2000*, United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p 158.

Among the factors that cause migration to India, the economic factors play no less a role. In migration studies, most often than not, scholars give primacy to economic factors over other factors of migration.⁵ While analysing the economic causes of Bangladeshi migration to India we find that both the 'push' and 'pull' factors are at work. Poor economic conditions and the resulting economic misery combined with the lack of opportunities for advancement 'push' people out of Bangladesh. Availability of jobs in India (whatsoever menial, at times it may be) act as a 'pull' factor. For people who have no means of sustaining themselves, whatever jobs that comes their way, they tend to accept.

Poverty Scenario in Bangladesh

Poverty generally is defined as lack of 'means' in relation to 'needs' (i.e., absolute poverty) and lack of 'means' in relation to 'means' of others (i.e., 'inequality' or 'relative' poverty)⁶. In Bangladesh, the word poverty has three meanings—one, absolute poverty, two, relative poverty, and three, journalistic meaning of poverty.

⁵ Myron Weiner, "On International Migration and International Relations", *Population and Development Review*, (New York) Vol. 1, No.3, September 1985, pp.441-455

⁶ Kamal Siddique, *The Political Economy of Rural Poverty in Bangladesh*, National Institute of Local Government, Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1982, p.2

'Absolutely poverty' is what is meant by the word poverty in much of the literature of the development agencies for they try to achieve measurement and precision in selecting target groups for various programmes. Development agencies may measure poverty in terms of calories consumed per day or in a combination of landholding and income per day measured in rice. The important problem is in identifying the 'needs' and quantifying them while defining absolute poverty. An approach developed by the United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) experts defines poverty in terms of lack of "basic needs".⁷ Drewonski and Scott⁸ put nutrition, shelter and health as basic needs.

Relative poverty is concerned with the relative position of income groups to one another. The argument here is that poverty cannot be understood by isolating the poor and treating them as a special group. Society is seen as a series of stratified income groups and poverty is concerned with how the bottom layers fare relative to rest of the society. This concept look at poverty in the context of the society as a whole.

⁷ Ibid, p.3.

⁸ J. Drewonski and W. Scott, *The Level of Living Index*, U.N., Research Institute for Social Development, Report No.4, pp. 44-45, cited in Kamal Siddiqui, *Political Economy of Rural Poverty in Bangladesh*, National Institute of Local Government, Dhaka, 1982, p.3.

Poverty has also got a journalistic meaning in Bangladesh.⁹ Bangladesh is often compared with Taiwan, South Korea, or the more dynamic states of India, and by all such comparisons, it appears to be very poor. These countries to which Bangladesh is often compared to has progressed a lot economically in the past few decades, or are in the process of development. This gives the impression that Bangladesh is a very poor country lacking development. This impression is not totally misplaced.

In Bangladesh, about 48% of the population live below poverty line (National poverty line) or 28.50% of the population live by earning less than \$1 a day as per the 1997 figures.¹⁰ Rural poverty (people below poverty line) was 48% in 1988-89,¹¹ this figure is very important to this study since 85%¹² of the population live in rural areas, which is predominantly agrarian.

When we see the major indicators of development like literacy rate, infant mortality rate, access to health services etc., we find Bangladesh to be severely lagging behind. For example, adult literacy

⁹ Clarence Maloney, *Behaviour and Poverty in Bangladesh*, The University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1986, p.6

¹⁰ *Human Development Report – 1999*, United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 148.

¹¹ 'Meeting the Challenge', *Report of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation*, SAARC, Kathmandu, November, 1992 p.2.

¹² A Report to the Like-Minded Group, '*Rural Poverty in Bangladesh*', University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1993, p. 49.

of Bangladesh is only 40.1% and under-five mortality rate was as high as 117 per thousand births (in 1993).¹³ Female illiteracy was as high as 75% in 1993.¹⁴ People without access to sanitation was 66% and people without access to health services was 55% in 1993.¹⁵ About 22% of the population had no access to safe drinking water as in 1993. It is estimated that over 40% of the population regularly consume less than the absolute critical minimum of 1800 calories per day.¹⁶ These 50 million people (40% of the population of Bangladesh, as on 1991) are amongst the world's poorest by any standard of development.

Urban Poverty

Urban areas of Bangladesh are faced with the problem of overwhelming population growth and extreme poverty, though only 19% of the country's population live in urban areas as per 1991 census. Population of Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, in 1991 was 3.6 million out of the total Bangladesh population of 110 million and another 6 million were living in the greater Dhaka

¹³ *Human Development Report – 2000*, United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 158.

¹⁴ Mahabub ul Haq, *Human Development in South Asia – 1997*; Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997, p. 43

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Haider Ali Khan, 'Ecology, Inequality and Poverty: The Case of Bangladesh', *Asian Development Review*, (Manila, Philippines), Vol.15, No.2, 1997, pp.164-179.

area.¹⁷ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) carries out Household Expenditure Survey (HES) from time to time, which is a major source of information in income distribution and poverty. One such survey carried out in 1993 gives the following details.¹⁸ (see Table 4).

Table - 4

Percentage of Population in Urban Poverty (Head Count Ratio)

Percapita Expenditure	1973/74	1981/82	1983/84	1985/86	1988/89
Classification	63.2	48.4	42.6	30.6	33.4

Source: Nasreen Khundker, Wahiddudin Mahmud, Binayak Sen and Monawar Uddin Ahmed, "Urban Poverty in Bangladesh: Trends, Determinants and Policy issues", *Asian Development Review*, Vol. 12, No.1, 1994, p. 16.

All calculations are based on per capita consumption expenditure data as reflected in HES of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Percentage of urban poverty steadily declined from 63% the early 1970s to 33% in the mid 1980s. But, by 1988/89 incidence of poverty has again gone up to 33.4%. The survey also showed that a significant part of the urban labour force comprised of migrants from the country side.

¹⁷ Nasreen Khundkar, Wahiddudin Mahmud, Binayak Sen and Monawar Uddin Ahmed, "Urban Poverty in Bangladesh: Trends, Determinants and Policy Issues", *Asian Development Review*, Vol. 12, No.1, 1994 p. 7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Another study conducted by Amin in Dhaka city in 1985 showed that non-agricultural wage labour accounted for 14.5% of urban incomes, and the average monthly income of this group was Tk.2,699 in 1988 when the per household poverty level for 1988/89 using HES was TK.2,801.28.¹⁹ This means that the entire group of non-agricultural wage labours in Dhaka city were below the poverty line.

In 1989, Ministry of Land surveyed about 50,000 families living in squatter families of Dhaka city and found that 18.8% of families earned less than TK.500 per month, 38.75% of families earned between TK 501 and 1000 and 34% earned between TK.1000 and 2000. Only 8% of the families earned more than TK.2000.²⁰

Urban poverty in Bangladesh basically stems from low level of public expenditure and their inefficient allocation for services such as education and health services. Credit services of the banks and also of the NGOs do not reach the slum dwellers adequately.

Decline of agriculture had a negative impact on the industrial sector considering the inter-dependence of both these sectors. Agricultural products like jute, sugarcane, tobacco, bamboo, timber, etc. are all raw materials for the industry, where they are converted

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

into finished products. Bangladesh is a labour surplus country with acute shortage of natural resources. Per capita availability of natural resources is declining regularly at 2 % per annum.²¹

Rural Poverty

High rate of rural poverty (51% in 1995/96²²) should be seen in the context that 85% of the population live in the rural areas. And approximately 78% of the total labour force is dependent on rural based employment.²³ More alarming fact is that, the incidence of rural poverty is actually on the rise.

Bangladesh household Expenditure survey proved that by 1991, incidence of poverty both in rural as well as urban areas had risen compared to 1985.²⁴ Rajshahi, Barisal and Dhaka had the highest incidence of rural poverty (around 60%) in 1991. Literacy rate is abysmally low in the rural areas. As per the planning commission figures, in 1984 literacy rate was estimated to be 20 to 25%.²⁵

²¹ S.M. Al-Husainy, "Wither Industries", in Q.K. Ahmed (ed), *Bangladesh: Past 2 Decades and Current Policies: Assimilating Past Experience Towards Shapping the Future*, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1994, pp.155-156.

²² Mahbub ul Haq, n.14, p. 43

²³ Report to the Like-minded Group, *Rural Poverty in Bangladesh*, n. 12, p. 4.

²⁴ Mahbub ul Haq, op.cit., p.43

²⁵ Syed M Hashemi, "Bangladesh: Aid Dependence and the Structure of Poverty" in Ponna Wignaraja and Akmal Hussain (eds.), *The Challenge in South Asia: Development, Democracy and Regional Co-operation*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p. 141.

Condition of basic health services is abysmal. It is characterised by the shortage of (or even absence of) medicines and doctors. Diarrhoeal and respiratory diseases are rampant.²⁶ Majority of the people live without access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation facilities. A study showed that major causes of death in rural Bangladesh during 1975-83 were diarrhoeal diseases (16-22 %), malnutrition (13-15 %) and pneumonia (10-12 %).²⁶ The same study also showed that apart from diarrhoeal diseases and pneumonia, death rates from all other major diseases are more among the landless households.²⁷

Rural income at constant prices as a percentage of urban income has declined, more or less consistently, over the last few decades. This is widening the economic gap between the rural poor and the urban 'middle class'. Within the rural sector itself, incomes are unequally distributed among different fractile groups. The most important factor causing rural income inequality is the pattern of land distribution and access. Size of land holdings is the most crucial factor in determining employment of family workers and, hence, of family incomes. Incidence of landlessness is increasing in

²⁶ M Rahman, A Hai and A. Shraf, "Health Status of Rural Poor in Bangladesh" International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh, 1984, Unpublished, cited in *Report to Like-minded Group* n. 12, p. 58.

²⁷ Ibid.

the country side and this is a sign of increasing poverty in the rural areas.

Maternal mortality rate is highest in the world in Bangladesh- 5 to 7 % per 1000 live births. Even though poverty is a common factor for both men and women, they experience the state of poverty differently and often unequally.²⁸ Women bear children early and often have frequent and closely spaced child delivery. Deaths or serious delivery complications result when women who are malnourished are made to have frequent deliveries without adequate spacing between children. Prevailing 'family values' demand that women feed their husbands and male children (particularly adult males) first and also with the largest servings and the choicest of food. This often leaves very little for the women and in some cases are left without anything. So when we see that 58% of the rural population are malnourished, we can rightly presume that majority of it will be women.

Decline of Agricultural Sector and Unemployment

Most overpopulated Third World countries of the world face the problem of unemployment in agriculture due to lack of farm work.

²⁸ Naila Kabir, "Gender Dimensions of Rural Poverty: Analysis from Bangladesh", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, (London) Vol. 18, No.2, January 1991, pp. 241-282.

Bangladesh is not an exception to this phenomenon. World over, the relative importance of agriculture has declined in every developing country. Bangladesh faces the problem of high population growth (over 2 % till the 1990's), extreme land stress (average farm size has decreased from 3.12 acres in 1960 to 2.27 acres in 1983-84), severe environmental constraints such as flood, drought and soil salinity.²⁹ All these have hindered agricultural growth.

Rice, jute and wheat are the 'major' crops of Bangladesh and account for 87 % of gross cropped area of 31.5 million acres in the country.³⁰ Rice alone accounts for 80 % of the gross cropped acreage. In addition to these major crops a wide range of minor crops like tea, sugarcane, oil seeds, etc are also cultivated in Bangladesh. Agricultural growth remained at 1.9 % during both the periods 1973/74 to 1983/84 and also during 1983/84 to 1993/94.³¹ Output of rice, wheat, potato and tobacco registered a slightly positive growth rates, while it declined in the case of all other crops.

Bangladesh found it difficult to keep the growth of agricultural sector in pace with the growth of growing population

²⁹ Abu Mohammad Sajaat Ali, "Toward an Ecological Explanation of Agricultural Unemployment in Bangladesh", *Professional Geographer*, vol. 50, No.2, May 1988.

³⁰ *Report to the Like-minded Group*, op.cit., p. 68.

³¹ Philip Gain (ed), *Bangladesh Environment: Facing the 21st Century*, Society for Environment and Human Development, Dhaka, 1998, p.41.

during the period 1967-70 to 1979-80. During the period, the rate of growth of total crop output lagged behind the population growth rate, and consequently per capita output of total crops declined from Taka 636 in 1967-70 to Taka 531 in 1979-82.³² The rate of growth of output of food grains was no more than 1.24% during this period while rate of growth of population was more than 2.5%. As a result per capita food grain production declined from 392 pounds in 1967-70 to 353 pounds in 1979-82.³³ Absolute level of per capita total output of rice also declined from 389 to 329 pounds during this period.

Rate of growth of agriculture during the period 1983/84 to 1993/94 was 1.9% while the population growth rate was just above 2. % in the corresponding period. So during this period too per capita food grain availability declined. Though the agricultural production has been increasing it has not been able to counter the population growth rate, which has remained higher than the rate of growth of agriculture. Table 5 shows the population growth rate in Bangladesh from 1974-1991.

³² *Report to the Like-minded Group*, n. 12, p. 69.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.69

Table - 5

Population Growth Rate In Bangladesh

Census Years	Total Population (millions)	Population Growth Rate (%)
1974	76	2.48
1981	90	2.32
1991	110	2.03

Sources: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Year Book 1991*, and *Bangladesh Demographic Studies*, 1992.

Table - 6

Growth (%) and Structural Change of the Economy, 1973/74–1993/94.

Sectors	Average Annual Growth Rate		Share (% of GDP)	
	1973/74 1981/82	1983/84 1993/94	1973/74	1993/94
Agriculture	1.9	1.9	51.0	34.5
Crops	2.1	1.6	42.0	24.5
Fisheries	2.9	3.7	3.9	3.4

Source: Cited in Philip Gain (ed.), *Bangladesh, Environment: Facing the 21st century*, Society for Environment and Human Development, Dhaka, 1998, p.41.

In the case of jute, third major agricultural crop of Bangladesh, production has declined from 7.17 million bales in 1967-70 to 4.64 million bales in 1981-82, a decrease of about 35%³⁴. Jute industry is on a decline in Bangladesh. Decline in world market demand for jute with the introduction of synthetic substitutes affected Bangladesh, as it predominantly depends on

³⁴ Nasreen Khundker, et.al., n. 17, p. 21.

the international market for the consumption of more than 90% of its jute.³⁵ It also faces stiff competition from India. The export price of the Indian hessian was US \$22.90 per 100 yards in 1996-97 while the Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporations export price was US\$24.40 per 100 yards.³⁶

The jute yield has been much more than the demand in the national market. The average yearly requirement at the jute mills and other users was not more than 3.4 million bales while the jute production in the recent years has been about 5 to 6 million bales.³⁷ Jute industry also faced problems of over staffing and poor industrial relations. Wages also went up considerably in the industry without a corresponding increase in productivity which led to losses and the resultant closing down of the industries.

Production of minor crops has also been less than satisfactory. Production of all minor crops excepting tea, tobacco and potato has declined.³⁸ An important aspect of minor crops is that these can be produced by farmers with small holdings along with major crops and provides a supplementary income to a very large number of rural households – so decline in minor crop

³⁵ Philip Gain (ed.), *op.cit*, p.222.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.223

³⁷ *Ibid*, p.223

³⁸ Report to the Like-minded Group, *op. cit*, n. 12 pp. 68-69.

production affected a large number of rural households with small land holdings.

To arrest the decline in agricultural production, Bangladesh introduced High Yield Variety (HYV) technology. This technology consisted of three principle components: (a) irrigation facility, (b) seeds with high yield potential, and (c) chemical fertilizer and chemical insecticide. The growth in rice production under HYV showed an increasing trend first, but declined later. The growth of rice production was 1.41 % during 1969/70 – 1979/80, it rose to 2.45% during 1980/81 to 1989/90 but declined in the 1990s.³⁹ During the early 1990 the rate of growth exhibited drastic deceleration approaching virtual stagnation (0.37%). Yield rate of all HYV of rice which was about 5 tons/hectare during the late 60s- declined to about 3.8 tons/hectare by mid 1970s and had almost stagnated after the late 1980s.⁴⁰

Decline of agriculture production led to widespread unemployment in the country side, which in turn led to rural to urban migration. As we will see, later in this chapter, unemployment is widespread in the urban areas of Bangladesh; and

³⁹ Mustafa, K. Mujeri, Abu, A. Abdullah, "Agriculture in Bangladesh: Past Performance and the Potentials for the Next Decade". In Q.K. Ahmad (ed), *Bangladesh Two Decades and Current Policies Assimilating Past Experiences Towards Shaping the Future*, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1994, pp.121-122

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 128.

there exists a labour surplus situation in the urban areas. So, those people who move to the urban areas remain unemployed. Migration to the neighbouring states of India is one of the few options left to these internally displaced people and many of them take up this option for want of any viable alternative means of livelihood.

There exists a number of reasons for the not so satisfactory performance of agricultural growth, it is argued, is because of the prevalence of share tenancy and high concentration of land ownership.⁴¹ Farmers also do not receive adequate support from the Government agencies and often face difficulties in getting credit facilities. 32 % of the land is transferred through the tenancy markets, of which 92 % is share cropped.

*"Share tenancy is a system in which one of the parties (the land lord) supplied the land and perhaps shared the cost of some inputs like seed and fertilizer, while the other party (the share tenant) supplied all other inputs and undertook the responsibility of farming"*⁴² The output is shared between the two in a pre-determined proportion (usually 50-50). It is argued that the share cropping system, because of the insecurity of tenure, hinders agricultural growth and productivity. In this system neither tenant

⁴¹ M.A. Taslim, "Redistributive Land and Tenancy Reforms in Bangladesh Agriculture", *Journal of Developing Areas*, (Illinois) 27 (April 1993), pp. 341-376.

⁴² Syed M. Hashemi, op. cit, p. 144.

nor the landlord is interested in making big investments since the produce has to be shared.

Natural calamities like flood and cyclones destroy large quantity of crops. Annually floods damage approximately 4 % of the rice crops.⁴³ Jute, sugarcane and summer vegetables are also severely affected due to floods and cyclones. Highest damage to rice crop occurred in 1988 floods where 2.1 million metric tons of rice crops perished.⁴⁴ Loss of over 1 million metric tons of rice crops was reported due to natural calamities in 1962, 1968, 1984 and 1988. The four districts which (areas located along Brahmaputra-Jamuna river) are particularly prone to cyclones are Faridpur, Pabna, Sylhet and Tangail. Despite farmers' continuous attempts to cope with environmental constraints and to increase farm production, agricultural stagnation is now prominent in Bangladesh and there exists a high degree of agricultural unemployment.⁴⁵

The rate of unemployment in farming ranged from 19 % to 43 %.⁴⁶ Seasonal unemployment and underemployment are more

⁴³ Bimal Kanti Paul and Harun Rasid, "Flood Damage to Rice Crop in Bangladesh", *The Geographical Review*, Vol. 82, No. 2, April 1993.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ M.S. Abu Ali, "Unemployment in Agriculture and Opportunities for and Contributions of Off-farm Employment to Rural Economy: A Case Study from South Western Bangladesh". *Human Ecology* 18(1): pp.105-130, 1990, pp. 105-130.

⁴⁶ Abu Mohammad Shajaat Ali, n. 29, p.25.

prominent in rural areas, where it is also a major cause of poverty. Agriculture provides employment to about 59%⁴⁷ of the labour force in Bangladesh and any decline in the agricultural sector would have a serious impact on the unemployment rate in the country.

Stagnation of the agricultural growth in Bangladesh has led to wide spread unemployment in the rural areas. Unemployment in the primary sector is 47.4 % of the total unemployment.⁴⁸ Agricultural wage is also low compared to the average minimum wages in the country. Agricultural wage was calculated as US \$360 per worker per year as compared to the minimum wage rate of US \$ 492 per year per worker.⁴⁹ This shows that agricultural workers were paid much below the minimum wages in the country.

Fisheries Sector and Unemployment

Inland fisheries sector of Bangladesh ranks 4th in the world after China, India and the former Soviet Union. Fisheries sector accounts for 3.5% of the GDP, 10.4% of gross value added to the agricultural product and also constitutes 9 % of national exports.⁵⁰ About 8 % of

⁴⁷ Mahbub ul Haq, n.14, p. 44.

⁴⁸ *World Development Indicators-2000*, The World Bank, (Washington), 2000, p.58

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Kazi Ali Taufique, "A Simple Model of Power and Property Rights in the Inland Fisheries of Bangladesh", *Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol.XXV, Nos.1and2, March-June, 1997, pp.1-30

the total population depends on this for livelihood and about 73 % of households were involved in subsistence fishing in the flood plains in 1987/88.⁵¹ Around 10 million people are involved in fish marketing and fish processing.⁵²

There exists a strong consumer preference for freshwater fish. About 75 % of the total fish consumed in a year comes from fresh water sources. Ganges water diversion at Farakka in India has led to the reduced flow of Ganges water into the Bangladeshi rivers. This led to increase in salinity in the fresh water sources and rivers. Fisheries sector was badly hit as a result of increased salinity in the rivers. Most of the fishing villages in the Khulna district of Khulna division have disappeared.⁵³

Bangladesh is facing depletion of fish resources. Wetlands in Bangladesh are reported to have reduced to half its size and fisheries catch has dropped on an average of 9 % every year over the past decade.⁵⁴ The quantity of inland fisheries catch is declining. It has declined from 63% in 1983 to 52% in 1993.⁵⁵ All this affected

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ashok Swain, "Displacing the Conflict: Environmental Destruction in Bangladesh and Ethnic Conflict in India", *Journal of Peace Research*, (Oslo), Vol.33, No.2, 1996, pp.189-204.

⁵⁴ Philip Gain, op. cit., p. 96.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 96.

the employment pattern in the fisheries sector, as the number of people who are employed in the fisheries sector is very large.

Development and Displacement

In Bangladesh, thousands of people have been displaced due to infrastructural development projects. Development of hydropower projects, irrigation, flood control, roads and highways uprooted large number of people from their homes and communities and were subjected to economic and social hardships. Major infrastructural development projects: Jamuna Bridge project, Road Rehabilitation II project and Dhaka Water Supply project displaced thousands of people.

Construction of Karnaphuli Multipurpose Project during 1957-62 to accelerate the economic development had a disastrous effect on the economy and life patterns of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) people. For example, "the Kaptai Hydroelectric Dam, displaced close to 90,000 members of native hill tribes and they were never adequately rehabilitated."⁵⁶ Kaptai dam led to the inundation of 400 square miles including 54,000 acres of cultivable land, which was about 40% of the total acreage of CHT.⁵⁷ According to Mufazzalul

⁵⁶ David Sapher, "Population Dislocation in the Hill Tracts", *Geographical Review*, vol. 53, 1963.

⁵⁷ Mohammad Humayun Kabir, "Problems of Tribal Separatism in and

Haq about 90,000 to 110,000 tribal people were uprooted and rendered homeless by the Project.⁵⁸

In the Jamuna Bridge Project, about 2000 household have been directly affected due to the loss of agricultural land. The number of affected people are estimated to be around 80,000 and the total affected households to be around 12,000.⁵⁹ The Jamuna Bridge Project is a US \$800 million, multi-donor (World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Japan) infrastructure project where a 5 kilometre (8 km counting the two approach roads at both ends) long bridge has been built over the river Jamuna, which divides Bangladesh into its eastern and western halves.

Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMBA) which was established in 1985 to design, plan, coordinate and secure funds for the project acquired a total of 5,681 acres of land. Loss of agricultural land is very high on both banks, followed by homestead and fallow land. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) survey presents a clear cut picture of the impact of the project

Constitutional Reform in Bangladesh" in Iftekharuzzaman (ed), *Ethnicity and Constitutional Reforms in South Asia*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p.16.

⁵⁸ M. Mufazzalul Haq, "Changing Nature of Dominant Social Forces and Intervention in the Chittagong Hill Tracts", *The Journal of Social Studies*, (Dhaka) no. 54, 1989, pp.123-139.

⁵⁹ M. Q. Zaman, "Development and Displacement in Bangladesh, Toward a Resettlement policy", *Asian Survey*, (California) Vol. XXXVI, No.7, July 1996, p. 693.

affected persons. '1,169 households lost all of their agricultural land, 4,012 households lost part of their agricultural land, 1,693 households lost all of their homestead and 474 households lost part of their homestead'.⁶⁰

Dhaka Urban Development and Dhaka Water Supply Project together led to the displacement of 3,400 households and over 20,000 people were displaced due to these projects.⁶¹ This project consist of construction of a culvert, road and a pump station at the mouth of the canal at the Buriganga river to alleviate flooding during the monsoon seasons. Another major project that displaced over 20,000 people was 58 km long Ashuganj – Bakhrabad (A-B) pipeline project. The A-B pipeline project was to provide gas delivery by integrating the present network with the northern gas fields (Kailashtila, Habiganj and Rashaidpur) to meet the increasing demands in Chittagong and Dhaka. Road Rehabilitation and Maintenance (RRM-II) project which displaced about 4,000 people was to improve the existing highways and roads in north west Bangladesh and construct necessary bypasses and additions to avoid congestion near major city centres.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 697.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 694.

Resettlement Policy of Bangladesh

Bangladesh, till date, does not have a clearly formulated resettlement policy for people affected by large-scale development projects. It currently uses the 1982 Acquisition and Requisition of Immovable Property Ordinance and the 1989 Emergency Acquisition of Property Act to acquire land for all public sector projects in the country.⁶² Land acquisition by the government is resented by the people for the reason that the compensation paid is often delayed and is very low and in some cases land owners were subjected to harassment by the local revenue officials.

Bangladesh being a densely populated country, the Government often finds it difficult to find compensatory land for the resettlement of the project affected people. The present legal framework for the acquisition of property (the 1982 and 1989 laws), which is used in all land acquisition for development purposes, is unsuited to meet the needs of displaced as it essentially operates outside the context of the reality of loss suffered by the people. The laws do not cover all types of "losses" and the definition of "project - affected persons" is neither clear nor broad enough to cover both directly and indirectly affected people such as those without any

⁶² Hari Mohan Mathur and Michael Macrina, *Development, Displacement and Resettlement: Focus on Asian Experiences*, Vikas Publishing House, (New Delhi), 1995, p.87.

entitlement to land. Compensation paid for the acquired land is based on the market value of the land acquired. But in Bangladesh the registered market value is only about half of the actual market value, since people devalue land in transactions to avoid or lower the registration fees.

Because of inadequate compensation and resettlement of the 'project affected people'; these people form the category of internally displaced people. A considerable section of these internally displaced people migrate to India for want of adequate means of livelihood in their own country.

Rural-Urban Migration in Bangladesh

Decline of agricultural sector and the resultant unemployment in the rural areas has led to increasing migration of rural population to the urban areas of Bangladesh. Rural to urban migration per 1000 of the national population was 4.29 in 1981 and this figure rose to 6.48 in 1986. In 1987, rural to urban migration declined slightly – to 4.06 per 1000 of the national population.⁶³ (See Table 7).

⁶³ A.K.M. Ghulam Rabbani, "Population of Bangladesh: Its Current Demographic and Selected Socio-Economic Status with Emphasis on Nutritional and Health Status, in Q.K. Ahmad (ed.), *Op.cit.* p. 245.

Table - 7
Rural To Urban Migration Per 1000 of The National Population

	1981	1986	1987
Rural to Urban Migration	4.29	6.48	4.06

Source : Cited in AKM Ghulam Rabbani "Population of Bangladesh: Its Current Demographic and Selected Socio-economic Status with Emphasis on Nutritional and Health Status, in Q.K. Ahmad (ed.), *Bangladesh Past Two Decades and Current Policies: Assimilating Past Experiences Towards Shaping the Future*, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1994, p.245.

Table - 8
Levels of Urbanization, Growth and Changes During Intercensal Periods of Urban Population for Bangladesh

Period	Urban Population		Intercensal Variation	Annual rate of Growth	
	Number	Percent Levels	Percentage Change	Urban	Rural
1901	702,035	2.4	—	—	—
1911	807,024	2.6	15.0	1.39	.85
1921	878,480	2.6	8.9	0.84	.51
1931	1,073,489	3.0	22.2	2.00	.64
1941	1,537,244	3.7	43.2	3.59	1.58
1951	1,819,773	4.3	18.4	1.68	—
1961	2,640,726	5.2	45.1	3.72	1.83
1974	6,273,602	8.8	137.6	6.39	2.32
1981	13,228,163	15.2	110.9	10.63	2.2
1991	20,872,204	19.6	57.8	4.67	1.46

Source: Compiled from:

Census of Pakistan, Vol. 2, 1961.

Bangladesh Population Census 1974, Bulletin 2.

Bangladesh Population Census 1981.

Bangladesh Population Census 1991.

Cited in serajul Islam Laskar, "Urbanisation in Bangladesh: Some Contemporary observations, *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol. XXIV, nos. 1and2, March-June, 1996, pp. 207-215.

The 1991 census estimates 19.6 % of the population as Urban. In 1981 this figures was only 15.2 % and in 1974 Urban population was below 9 %.⁶⁴ The rate of Urban population growth has been much faster than the rate growth of rural population in Bangladesh, suggesting the important role of rural-urban migration. (See Table-8)

In urban areas poverty is widespread. Incidence of poverty in urban areas is on a rise, since the 1980s. It was 31% in 1985/86 and it rose to 33.4% in 1988/89.⁶⁵ People who are migrating from rural areas find it difficult to get jobs in the urban areas, since it already has excess labour supply. The people who moved from rural either remain unemployed as take up some menial jobs in the urban areas. For these people migrating to India is one of the few options left to eke out a living. Many of these people find migration as a better option than staying in Bangladesh, impoverished. They are helped by the favourable conditions like porous and long Indo-Bangladesh border and also less chances of detection in deportation from India. Bangladeshi's who enjoy wide kinship and network ties in India also helps them migrate to India without much hardships.

⁶⁴ Serajul Islam Laskar "Urbanisation' in Bangladesh: Some Contemporary observations", *The Bangladesh Development Studies*, Vol XXIV, nos. 1and2, March-June 1996, pp. 207-215.

⁶⁵ Nasreen Khundker, et al, n. 17, pp. 1-32.

CHAPTER – V

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CAUSES OF MIGRATION

Along with economic and environmental factors, social and political factors also play an important part in facilitating Bangladeshi migration to India. Deteriorating social and political conditions have been primarily responsible for alienating the minorities, especially Hindus from the national mainstream. These factors created among minorities a feeling of being alien in their own land.¹ Islamisation of the Bangladeshi society and the passing of various acts and orders like the Vested Property Act (VPA) that went against the interest of the minorities only added to the insecurity of the minority communities in Bangladesh.

Islamisation² process in Bangladesh started very explicitly after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh's first president in 1975. Thereafter Bangladesh saw a steady rise in the growth of fundamentalist Islamic forces which received political

¹ Afsan Chowdhury, "State and the Minority Identity: The Case of Hindus in Bangladesh", in Chowdhury R. Abrar (ed); *On the Margin: Refugees, Migrants and Minorities*, Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, 2000, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, pp. 145-166.

² Islamisation includes the changes in the secular character of the constitution, open appeasement of Islamic organisations by the Government, undue favour given to Muslims of the country compared to non-Muslims, etc.

patronage from the various Governments that ruled Bangladesh? Minorities in Bangladesh especially Hindus felt insecure when the Bangladeshi Governments (particularly military governments of Zia Ur Rahman and that of General H.M. Ershad) deviated from the path of secularism which was enshrined in the Bangladeshi Constitution of 1972.

For instance, Article 12 of the Bangladeshi Constitution of 1972 read as follows: "The Principle of Secularism shall be realised by the elimination of:

- (a) communalism in all its forms;
- (b) granting by the state of political status in favour of any religion;
- (c) abuse of religion for political purposes; and
- (d) discrimination against, persecution of persons practicing a particular religion'.⁴

Article 8 of the Constitution of 1972 read "The Principle of Nationalism, Socialism, Democracy and Secularism together with the principles derived from them set out in this part construct the

³ Partha S. Ghosh, Bangladesh: The Communal Scene, *Mainstream*, (New Delhi), Vol.XXVIII. No. 20, March 10, 1990, pp.21-23.

⁴ Anisuzzaman, "Religion and Politics in Bangladesh", in S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), *Society, Polity and Economy of Bangladesh*, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p.42.

fundamental principles of state policy”.⁵ A proclamation (Amendment) order was promulgated the very next day Zia Ur Rahman assumed the office of the President on 21 April 1977. By this order Article 12 was deleted and “secularism” in the fundamental principles of State policy was replaced by “total faith and belief in the almighty Allah.”⁶ A new clause was added to Article 25 to the effect that the state shall endeavour to strengthen, consolidate and preserve the fraternal relationship between the Muslim states on the basis of Islamic solidarity.⁷

The growth of communalism in Bangladesh is partially due to the various policies followed by the military governments like deleting the Article 12 of the constitution of 1972. The growth of communalism in Bangladesh and the migration of people from Bangladesh to India are closely related. According to Chakravarty “Mounting communal tension created sense of insecurity in the minds of the minority community.”⁸ He also argues that “communal tension is the principle cause of the post-partition migration.”

⁵ M.G. Chitkara, *Bangladesh, Mujib to Hasina*, APH Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1997, p.71.

⁶ Anisuzzaman, *op.cit.*, p.44.

⁷ *Ibid.* p.44.

⁸ S.R. Chakravorty, *Bangladesh Under Mujib, Zia and Ershad: Dilemma of a New Nation*, Har Anand Publications, 1995, p.130.

Liberation Struggle and The Role of Islamic Parties

(Former rulers of West Pakistan used to play up on the sentiments of people by raising the bogey of “Islam in danger” whenever they were faced with stiff challenges from the autonomy movement in East Pakistan. During the liberation struggle of Bangladesh in 1971, fundamentalist Islamist parties sided with the Pakistani army. They gave active report to the Pakistani military in their fight against the East Pakistani forces, which included ordinary people as well armed personnel.)

Islamic fundamentalist organisations like Al-Badar⁹, Al Shams¹⁰ and Razakars co-operated with the Pakistani army in their fight against the supporters of the liberation.

The abovesaid organisations’ main “target were not only the freedom fighters and their supporters but also Hindus”.¹¹ It has come to light that around 5000 execution yards were created by these ‘terrorist’ organisations to kill sympathizers of the liberation struggle.¹² In the urban areas intellectuals who supported the

⁹ Al Badr in Bangladesh is the students wing of Jamaat Islami and consists mainly of students of Madrasas.

¹⁰ Al shams is the students wing of Muslim League.

¹¹ Sukumar Biswas, Hiroshi Sato, *Religion and Politics in Bangladesh and West Bengal: A Study of Communal Relations*, Institute of Developing Economics, Japan, 1993, p.88.

¹² Ibid. 88

liberation struggle were mercilessly killed and tortured and in rural areas upper caste landed Hindus were particularly targeted and their shops and establishment were looted.

Islamic groups in Bangladesh comprise mostly of Ulamas, Imams, Madrasa teachers and their students. Bangladesh have nearly 130,000 mosques and almost equal number of Imams, 30,000 Madrasa teachers of all grades and 640,000 students in Madrasa education as of 1985.¹³ The number increased later and has reached nearly 60,000 and 700,000 Madrasa teachers and students respectively.¹⁴ Thus the total strength of the Islamic groups is around 800,000. These groups are able to exert a strong influence in the socio-political life of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Mujib Ur Rahman, Bangladesh's first President, who declared secularism as one of the fundamental principles of state policy had also deviated much from this avowed policy by the time he was killed. When he realised that he was losing popularity he gradually leaned towards Islamisation. He retained the study of Islamic and Arabic study in the school syllabi (Islamic and Arabic studies were withdrawn from the school curricula, earlier). A survey conducted by the Education Commission in 1974 found that only

¹³ Ibid. p.85

¹⁴ Ibid. p.85

about 21% of the population supported secular education and 75% were in favour of religious education as an integral part of general education.¹⁵ Mujib even Islamised his speeches by using the common favourite Islamic phrases such as “Allah”, “Inshallah”, “Bismillah” and end his speech with “Khuda Hafiz” in place of “Joi Bangla” which he used earlier.¹⁶

^ Mujib Ur Rahman also faltered in punishing the people who sided with the Pakistani Army. Pro-Pakistan leaders who fled the country to Middle East like Abdur Rahim of Jamaat Islami and Gulam Azam after the liberation of Bangladesh were allowed to return to Bangladesh and carry on their political and Islamic activities. Anti-Collaborators Act, which was passed in 1973 to punish the people who ‘collaborated’ with the Pakistan army during the liberation war was not effectively put to practice. Under the act 37,471 people were persecuted and of them, 2,848 cases saw final verdict but only 752 people were eventually convicted and only in one case was capital punishment awarded.¹⁷ Nalima Ibrahim Commission, setup following the independence to enquire into the

¹⁵ Syed Serajul Islam, *Islam in Bangladesh: A Dichotomy of ‘Bengali’ and ‘Muslim’ Identities*, *The Islamic Quarterly*, (London) Vol. XLI, No. 2, Second Quarter, 1997, pp. 218-231.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Whereabouts of the Killers and Agents of 1971*, Muktiyuddha Chetna Bikas Kendra, 3rd Edition, 1988, p.20.

massacres of intellectuals was dissolved in 1975 without being given a chance to submit its report.)

Mujib's retreat from the secularist principles was mainly due to the overall incapacity of his government to contain the deteriorating law and order situation, inflation and also from his failure to give adequate relief to the people at the time of the 1974 flood. This was inspite of relief materials sent from foreign countries. Mujib Ur Rahman's inability to deliver gave opportunity to leaders like Khondokar Mustaq Ahmad who rallied the support of rightist forces within the Awami League. So in order to regain the loosing ground within his party Mujib had to appease the Islamist forces. Mujib also restarted the diplomatic relations with Pakistan in 1974 in the wake of Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting in Lahore when Bangladesh formally joined the OIC . Here after pro-Pakistan, pro-United States leaders (like Khondokar Mustaq Ahmad) within the Awami League gained prominence as Bangladesh started to interact more with these countries, than India.¹⁸

¹⁸ India under Indira Gandhi was hit severely by the oil crisis of 1973 and foreign affairs received less priority during this crisis, and this resulted in lesser engagement with its neighbours.

(Zia Ur Rahman and Islamisation of Bangladesh

Though Zia Ur Rahman did not extend extensive patronage to Islamic forces like General H. Ershad, he too followed certain policies that were meant to appease the fundamentalist elements in the Bangladeshi society.¹⁹

Zia amended the Constitution to delete the articles relating to secularism (Article 12) and dropped 'secularism' and 'socialism' from the Constitution in 1977 and inserted the sentence "total faith in Allah" and "social justice".²⁰ During his rule, anti-liberation war of Islamic forces came back to the political arena actively.)

Among the Islamic parties, three were allowed to revive. Two factions of the Muslim League and the Islamic Democratic League (a frontal organisation of Jamaat Islami). Zia allowed the Islamic organisations that sided with the Pakistani army during the liberation struggle to enter national politics. He also appointed Shah Azizur Rahman, a far rightist, as the prime minister of Bangladesh in 1975.

¹⁹ M.O. Nurul Amin and M.O. Rafiqueul Islam, "Twenty Years of Bangladesh Politics: An Overview", *Regional Studies*, (Islamabad), Vol. 10, No. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 23.

²⁰ Sultana Kamal, "Move Towards State Sponsored Islamisation in Bangladesh", *South Asia Bulletin*, (California) Vol. 10, No. 2, 1990, pp.73-75.

Ershad and His Policy of Appeasement

H.M. Ershad when assumed office in 1982 followed the 'politics of patronage' as far as army and Islamic forces are concerned.²¹ He chose 'Islamic State' over Secularism and declared Bangladesh an Islamic state in 1988. His policy of open appeasement of the Islamic forces encouraged the fundamentalist and other such elements in the society.²²

Ershad allowed the Islamisation of the army and its institution. Policies were formulated to promote Islamic mores among the personnel and prayers were made obligatory. Army personnel were regularly sent to the Islamic Foundation (an organisation promoting Islamic values and ideas) to occupy the top positions. Since well known and reputed leaders of liberation war were either assassinated or died during the liberation war, all key positions in the army and civil administration were manned by people who had come back to Bangladesh as they had fled the country during the liberalisation war. These people subscribed to the idea of Islamisation over secularism. Ershad was a leading figure among them.

²¹ Sukumar Biswas, Hiroshi Sato, n.11, p.95.

²² Lawrence Ziring, *Bangladesh From Mujib to Ershad: An Interpretative Study*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1992, p.210.

In 1988 Ershad passed the Eighth Constitutional Amendment declaring Islam as the state religion, while assuring that other religions may also be pursued peacefully²³. It said “The religions of the Republic is Islamic, but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in the Republic”²⁴. According to Ershad, “eighth constitutional amendment gave the nation a national identity and independence”.²⁵

Ershad also allowed a lot freedom for the Islamic parties like Muslim League, Islamic Democratic League and Jamaat Islami to function. In 1984 there were 65 Islamic parties in Bangladesh and their number rose to more than 100 in 1986.

The policy of appeasement and encouragement of Ershad alienated the Hindus from national mainstream. Especially the declaration of Islam as the state religion created fear in the minds of the Hindus. Prevalent view in Bangladesh was that Hindus in Bangladesh was treated well compared to the Muslims in India.²⁶ Another policy that created suspicion in the minds of the Hindus was the move of Ershad government to introduce compulsory Arabic

²³ Sukumar Biswas, Hiroshi Sato, n.11, p.103.

²⁴ Ibid. p.96.

²⁵ Anisuzzaman, “Religion and Politics in Bangladesh” in S.R.Chakravorty (ed.) op.cit., p.45.

²⁶ Sukumar Biswas, Hiroshi Sato, n.11, p.105.

education.²⁷ This led to protest by various sections of students. Ershad also opened a university for Islamic studies in Kushtia in 1986. He encouraged mosques to have a moktab to disseminate knowledge of Quran as part of pre-school education.

After the Islamisation of Bangladesh, Hindus in Bangladesh felt little sense of protection, either social or official.²⁸ A Bangladeshi Hindu according to Afsan Chowdhury “suffers from a dispersed sense of nationhood. He is not sure whether he belongs to Bangladesh or if the ‘official and social’ Bangladesh accepts him as their equal citizens”.²⁹ Studies have showed that Bangladesh has lost substantial portion of the population during 1974-1981 due to migration.³⁰ The exact reason for migration is difficult to ascertain. But there is ample proof that it was during this period, especially after 1975 (after the death of Mujib Ur Rahman) that Bangladesh started the Islamisation process. Because of the changed socio political scenario, the minorities felt alienated in Bangladeshi mainstream, especially from when the concept of ‘Bangladeshi’

²⁷ Ibid. p.104.

²⁸ Afsan Choudhury, n.1, p.49.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Sharifa Begum, “Population, Birth, Death and Growth Rates in Bangladesh: Census estimates”, *Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies*, (Dhaka), 1990, cited in Sajay Hazarika, *Strangers of the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's North East*, Viking, Penguin Books, India, New Delhi, 1994, p.31.

Sanjay

nationalism got prominence over 'Bangalee' nationalism after the death of Mujib Ur Rahman.³¹

Migration got accentuated after the passing of Vested Property Act (VPA) in Bangladesh in 1974, which allowed the appropriation of Hindu Property by the state. The alienation of Hindus caused by the Islamisation of Bangladesh and the draconian laws like VPA acted as a powerful factor for the migration of Bangladeshis to India.³²

A series of acts and ordinances passed by the Pakistani Government and later by the Bangladeshi Government like the East Bengal Evacuees (Administration of Immovable Property) Act, 1965, The Enemy Property (Custodian and Registration) Order 1965 and the Vested and Non-resident Property (Administration) Act of 1974, etc., had a serious impact on the forced out migration of the Hindu community from the then East Pakistan and Bangladesh. These acts, when implemented led to the dispossession of land and properties of the minorities, especially Hindus; forcing them to leave Bangladesh for India.

³¹ Ranabir Samaddar, "Bangladesh Nationalism: A Thing of the Past?", in S.R. Chakravarty (ed.), *Society, Polity and Economy of Bangladesh*, Har Anand Publications, 1994, pp.51-62.

³² A M Quamrul Alam, "The Nature of the Bangladeshi State in the Past – 1975 Period", *Contemporary South Asia*, (Oxford: UK), No. 2, Vol. 3, 1993, pp. 311-325.

Here we analyze the various acts and orders passed by the Pakistani (before 1971) and Bangladeshi Governments starting with the Requisition of Property Act, 1948, that went against the interest of minorities, especially Hindus, that acted as a powerful factor for migration.

Requisition of Property Act, 1948

In 1947, the eastern part of Bengal emerged as the eastern province of the newly created independent state of Pakistan. Dhaka became the capital of the newly constituted province. Dhaka faced the problem of shortage of government offices and establishment for the functioning of the provincial administration. Since Dhaka was the capital city a lot of infrastructural facilities had to be set up especially in the field of communications, commerce, industries and other services. The then government of East Pakistan enacted a law titled The E.B. (Emergency) Requisition of Property Act in 1948 in order to meet all the requirements to run the administration.

The Act created scope of temporary and / or permanent taking over of any property that is considered by the administration

to be “needful for the purpose of the State”.³³ This act which was created as a temporary measure for a period of three years, but is still valid as it was prolonged in 1980 through an ordinance. This act was widely used against the minorities in East Pakistan and later Bangladesh.³⁴ The studies conducted by the scholars like Abul Barkat and others have proved this point beyond doubt.

**The East Bengal Evacuees
(Administration of Immovable Property) Act 1951.**

Religious minorities in East Pakistan, mainly Hindus were forced to leave the country with out settling their properties in most cases, during the partition of India in 1947 and also when the communal riots broke out in 1950 in East Pakistan. According to the Hindu custom of property ownership most of the properties belonged to the joint family. Because of this a serious administrative and legal problem arose regarding the management of properties left behind by the fleeing Hindu population. The Government of Pakistan responded to this situation by enacting the East Bengal Evacuees (Administration of Immovable Property) Act, 1951.

³³ Abul Barkat, Shafique Uz Zaman, Azizur Rahman, Avijit Poddar, *Political Economy of Vested Property Act in Rural Bangladesh*, Association of Land Reforms Development, 1997, Dhaka, pp.24-25.

³⁴ Ibid. pp.24-25.

By this Act an Evacuee Property Management Committee was created and entrusted with the right to take charge of properties of Evacuees, either on the basis of application from evacuees or on its own.³⁵ The Committee had the authority to grant, lease or let out such properties as it deemed necessary. Civil courts were restricted to call in question in any order passed or any action taken by the committee.

The East Pakistan Disturbed Persons (Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1964

In 1964 Pakistan Government enacted an ordinance named the East Pakistan Disturbed Persons (Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1964 “to provide speedy rehabilitation of persons affected by communal disturbance in East Pakistan in January, 1964”.³⁶

The Ordinance restricted the transfer of immovable properties of minority community without prior permission of the competent authority (Deputy Commissioner). Deputy commissioners (17 of them all in the East Bengal province) were the authority who could

³⁵ Abul Barkat, n.33, p.26.

³⁶ The East Pakistan Disturbed Persons (Rehabilitation) Ordinance, 1964, Law Department, Government of Pakistan 30th June 1964.

'transfer'³⁷ agricultural land amounting to two acres or a maximum limit of 1/4th of the total land (whichever is higher), and held by the title holder. In case of properties like buildings, structure etc., the compensation would be only to the tune of maximum 5000/- rupees. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner of the province had the competence to allow higher amounts. But the difficulty was that, there was only one commissioner for the entire province. So it became difficult for a small or slightly better off farmer belonging to the minority community to approach the relief and rehabilitation commissioners and sometimes even the Deputy Commissioner of the district for obtaining permission of transfer and even for filing a case, to establish his/her title rights. Thus "the minority community owners in East Pakistan was deprived of property right during 1964-1968 as the two basic component of ownership rights(a) right to ensure the title of his or her property, (b) right to transfer (including sell, gift, will, entrust with power of attorney etc.) became void during that time".³⁸

³⁷ The word 'transfer' include sale, exchange as gift, will mortgage lease, sub-lease or any other manner of transfer as change of management through a power of attorney.

³⁸ Abul Barkat, et. al., op.cit., p.31.

Even worse was the 'Enemy Property Act' on the minorities as it took away the properties belonged to the minorities and denied them even the right to approach courts.)

(**Enemy Property Act, 1965**

When war broke out between India and Pakistan on September 6, 1965, Pakistan government enacted an ordinance named Defence of Pakistan Ordinance on September 9, 1965 to provide special measures to ensure the security, the public safety, interest and defence of the state. Emergency was proclaimed throughout Pakistan as the country was fighting a war.

Under the provisions of emergency powers and the Defence of Pakistan Ordinance the Government framed Defence of Pakistan Rules (DPR) and under the DPR the government of Pakistan made an executive order named 'the Enemy Property (Custody and Registration) order II of 1965.³⁹ East Pakistan Government also made an order in 1966 titled⁴⁰ 'The East Pakistan Enemy Property (Lands and Buildings) Administration and Disposal Order.⁴¹ Though the war between India and Pakistan came to an end with the ceasefire of September 1965 and the Tashkent Declaration, there

³⁹ Abul Barkat, et. al., p.31.

existed a controversy regarding the question whether there had been an 'end of war situation' between India and Pakistan in the absence of a formal peace treaty. Using this uncertainty, both the Central and Provincial Governments continued to keep the aforesaid orders operative by amending them from time to time.)

According to the DPR, the 'Enemy' meant

- (1) Any state or sovereign of a state at war with Pakistan, or
- (2) Any individual resident in enemy territory, or
- (3) Any body of persons constituted or incorporated in enemy territory in or under the laws of state of war with Pakistan, or
- (4) Any persons or body of persons declared by the Central Government to be an enemy, or
- (5) Any body of persons whether incorporated or not carrying on business in any place, if and so long as the body is controlled by a persons who under this rule is an enemy, or
- (6) In respect to any business carried on in enemy territory, an individual or body of persons whether incorporated or not carrying on that business."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Defence of Pakistan Rules, 1965, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs (Law Division) Rule 161, Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1965.

And “Enemy Property” under the DPR meant any property for the time being belonging to or held or managed on behalf of an ‘enemy’ as defined earlier.

Enemy Property Act declared India as an enemy country. All interest of enemy, i.e. the nationals/citizens of India, those residing in the territory occupied/captured/controlled by India—in the firms, companies as well as in the lands and buildings situated in Pakistan to be taken over by the custodian of Enemy Property for control or management.

This act was discriminatory in nature, Muslims residing in India (including Indian citizens) were excluded from the category of enemy. A circular issued by the Deputy Custodian of Enemy Property dated 26.6.68. (Memo No. 1694-XHI-505/67 E.P.) specified this clearly.⁴¹ Property owned by the above said category, were taken over only in some exceptional cases where it was found that the interest of the absentees would suffer if they are not taken over. And all the interest of such owners were to be protected till they return to Pakistan. In contrast to this, in case of minorities, once his/her property is enlisted and/or taken over under the Enemy Property Act by the custodian, his/her ownership right was lapsed forever.

⁴¹ Abul Barkat, et. al., p.35.

Emergency declared in 1965 was lifted throughout the country on February 6, 1969. It was expected that with the withdrawal of emergency the Enemy Property Act will become invalid. But the government of Pakistan promulgated a new ordinance named Enemy Property (Continuos of Emergency Provisions) Ordinance, 1969 on the very day of the lifting of Emergency.⁴²

On March 25, 1969, Martial Law was promulgated by Gen. Yahya Khan. He cancelled the then existing constitution of Pakistan and introduced a provincial constitution on April 1, 1969. A new ordinance was incorporated from March 25, 1969 to maintain the previous Enemy Property ordinance.⁴³ Thus, the most discriminatory law against Hindu community was in force till the liberation war of 1971.

(Vested Property Act

Bangladesh Vesting of Property and Assets Orders, 1972 was only a slight modification of the Enemy Property Act. By this act, the properties left behind by the Pakistanis and the erstwhile 'enemy

⁴² Ibid. p.38.

⁴³ Ibid. p.38.

properties' were combined to a single category. In 1974, the Government passed the Enemy Property (Continuance of Emergency Provisions (Repeal) Act, Act XLV of 1974 repealing the ordinance of 1969. Even after this, all enemy properties and firms, which were vested with the custodian of Enemy Property in the then East Pakistan remained vested in the Government of Bangladesh under the banner of vested property.

Government of Bangladesh enacted another act called Vested and Non-resident property (administration) Act (Act XLVI) of 1974. This act was to provide the management of certain properties and assets of the persons who are "non-residents"⁴⁴ of Bangladesh or have acquired a foreign nationality. "Though principal aim of the act XLVI of 1974 was to identify and take over the properties of those residents who left Bangladesh during/immediately after liberation war and/or took foreign citizenship, in practice this Act was also widely used against Hindu minorities who had no connection with Pakistan...."⁴⁵)

⁴⁴ "non-resident" means a person who is not, or has ceased to be, a permanent resident of the territory, now comprising Bangladesh or who has acquired a foreign nationality, but does not include a person who is an evacuee as defined in article 2(c) of Bangladesh (Restoration of Evacuee Property) Order, 1976 (P.O. No. 13 of 1972)

⁴⁵ Abul Barkat, et. al., p.40.

In 1976, the military government under General Zia Ur Rahman enacted the ordinance XCIII of 1976 to empower the government not only to administer and manage the vested properties, but also to dispose off or transfer the properties. This ordinance was harsh on the minorities as all acts prior to this empowered the government only to be a custodian of the 'enemy' property in contemplating on arrangements to be made in the conclusion of peace with India; but this act allowed the government to dispose off or transfer the properties.

The vested property act is anti-constitutional. Article 27 of part III (part dealing with fundamental rights) of the Bangladeshi constitution proclaims that "All citizens are equal before law and entitled to equal protection of law."⁴⁶ But this right was denied to the minorities as they cannot seek any relief from the courts as a continuance of the Defence of Pakistan Rules (DPR) of 1965 and various circulars that followed it. And also Article 11, Part II: Fundamental principles of state policy proclaim that "the republic shall be a democracy in which the fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human persons shall be guaranteed". But this was not the reality in

⁴⁶ Abul Barkat and Shafique Uz Zaman, Forced Out migration of Hindu Minority: Human Deprivation Due to Vested Property Act in Chowdhury R. Abrar (ed.), *On the Margin: Refugees, Migrants and Minorities*, RMMRU, 2000, p.115.

Bangladesh where the fundamental human rights of the Hindus were not protected.

Article 2(1) of Part III of the Constitution (Fundamental Rights) states that “the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.” But in practice Hindus are discriminated. A Hindu who falls in category of ‘enemy of Pakistan’ converts to Islam, then, he is cleared from being incorporated as ‘enemy’.⁴⁷

Impact of Vested Property Act on Migration

Abul Barkat and others’ study showed that mass out-migration of Hindus from Bangladesh occurred from 1960 onwards (mostly to India) as a consequence of the implementation of Enemy Property Act and Vested Property Act and also due to communal riots. In their study, they argue that it is difficult to analyse the exact effect of the above said factors on migration, so they have linked “missing Hindu Population” in Bangladesh and migration, to prove their point.

⁴⁷ Abul Barkat, et. al., 115.

“The Missing Hindu” Population

The “Missing Hindu Population”⁴⁸ has been defined as the difference between the size of Hindu population as reported in the official census documents and the estimated Hindu population assuming “no out migration”. The size of Hindu Population in “no out migration” scenario is estimated on the basis of two assumptions.⁴⁹

(1) Mortality rates are assumed to be similar for all religious communities between 1961 and 1991. (2) During the same period the fertility rates among the Hindu population was 13%, less than the fertility among the Muslims population. ‘According to the information in the population census, the average annual growth rates of the Muslims population was 3.13% for 1961-74, 3.08% for 1974-81 and 2.20% for 1981-1991 periods. Assuming a 13% lower fertility rates for the Hindus compared to the Muslims, the average annual growth rates in the Hindu population under “no out migration” situation would have been 2.72% during 1964-71, 2.68% during 1971-1981 and 1.92% during 1981-91.⁵⁰)

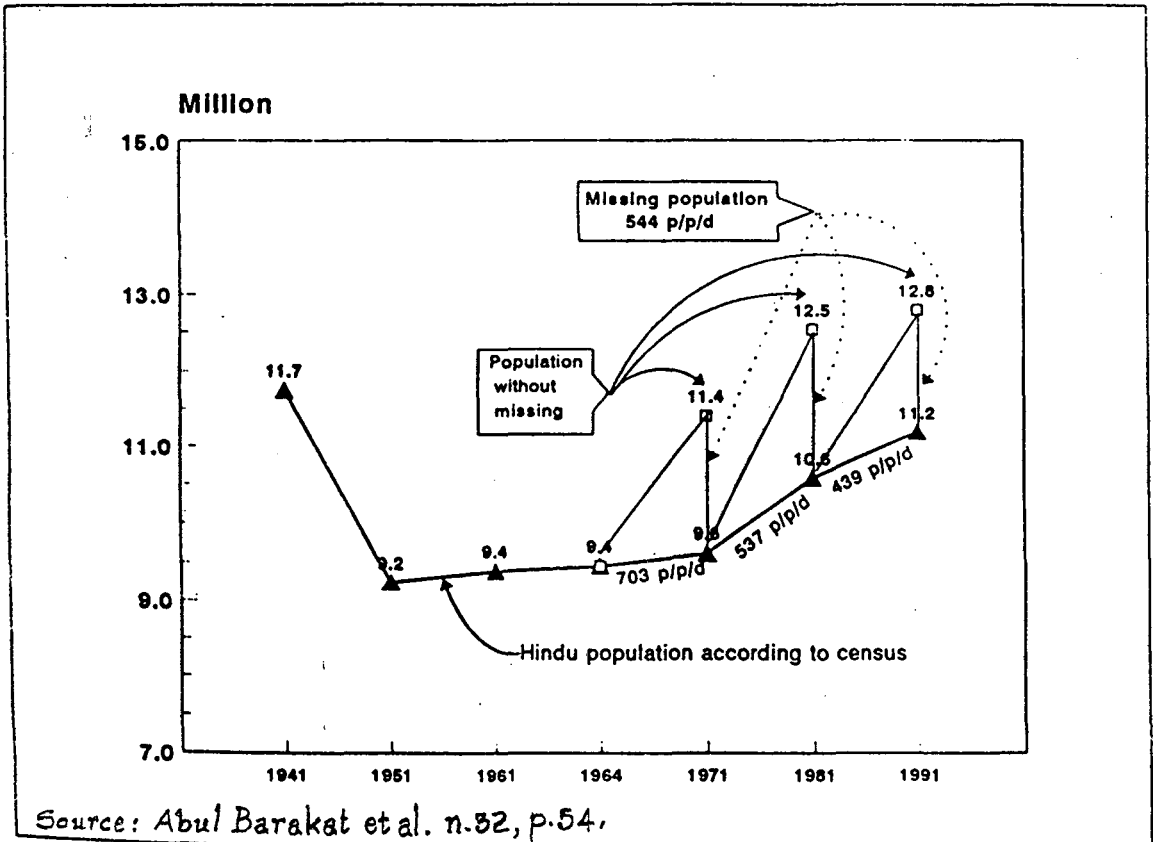
Abul Barkat and others by extrapolating the above rates found that (shown in fig. III) the Hindu population in 1971 would

⁴⁸ Abul Barkat, et. al., p.52.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p.52.

⁵⁰ Abul Barkat, n. 46, pp.113-144.

Figure III Missing Hindu population: 1964-1991



have been 11.4 million instead of 9.6 million as per the official figures. And correspondingly the Hindu population in 1981 would have been 14.3 million (12.3 million of 1981 plus 1.8 million missing during 1964-71) instead of 10.6 million as reported in the census. And similarly the Hindu population in 1991 in a no out-migration situation would have been 16.5 million (12.8 million as on 1991 census plus 3.7 million missing during 1964-81) instead of 11.2 million as reported in 1991 census document. Thus, the estimated total missing Hindu population during 1964-1991 was 5.3 million i.e., 196,296 Hindus missing every year since 1964 in other words 538 persons “missing” from Bangladesh each day, since 1964.⁵¹

The size of out migration was not constant through the 1964-1991 period. The study shows that, the approximate size of the missing Hindu population was as high as 703 persons per day during 1964-71, 537 persons per day during 1971-81 and 439 persons per day during 1981-1991. “If the above estimates are close to reality, then the inference emerges that the Enemy Property Act and Vested Property Act acted as an effective mechanism for the extermination of Hindu Minorities from their Motherland.”⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid. p.118.

⁵² Ibid. p.118.

(The authors in order to ascertain the extend of the Vested Property Act on Hindu Households, conducted a detailed study of randomly selecting eight sample spots (8 unions) which falls under six thanas of six districts. Those districts are Barisal, Brahmanbaria, Gazipur, Habiganj, Pabna and Sirajganj.)

Table - 9
Distribution of Population in the Sample Districts by Religion: 1961-1991

<i>Sample District</i>	<i>1961^a</i>			<i>1981^b</i>			<i>1991^c</i>		
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Hindu</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Muslim</i>	<i>Hindu</i>
Barisal	1218.9 (100)	972.8 (79.8)	237.5 (19.5)	1962.4 (100)	1658.3 (84.5)	288.2 (14.7)	2207.4 (100)	1902.8 (86.2)	289.2 (13.1)
Brahmanbaria	1151.3 (100)	930.5 (80.8)	220.7 (19.2)	1728.3 (100)	1541.8 (89.2)	184.8 (10.7)	2141.7 (100)	1943.2 (90.7)	194.3 (9.1)
Gazipur	652.6 (100)	NA	NA	1057.2 (100)	958.8 (90.7)	93.7 (8.9)	1621.6 (100)	1486.6 (91.7)	127.0 (7.8)
Habiganj	852.7 (100)	602.0 (70.6)	248.6 (29.2)	1337.4 (100)	1044.2 (78.1)	278.2 (20.8)	1526.6 (100)	1225.0 (80.2)	291.9 (19.1)
Pabna	850.6 (100)	732.5 (86.1)	116.1 (13.7)	1545.7 (100)	1440.0 (93.2)	101.4 (6.6)	1919.9 (100)	1826.2 (95.1)	86.6 (4.5)
Sirajganj	1108.5 (100)	963.3 (86.9)	145.1 (13.1)	1878.0 (100)	1727.4 (92.0)	148.9 (7.9)	2263.6 (100)	2114.9 (93.4)	146.0 (6.5)
Mean	863.7 (100)	700.2 (81.1)	161.3 (18.7)	1584.8 (100)	1395.1 (88.0)	182.6 (11.5)	1946.8 (100)	1749.8 (89.9)	189.1 (9.7)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage of total population.

Sources:

- (a) *Census of Pakistan 1961*, Vol.2.Karachi: Home Affairs Division, Ministry of Home and Kashmir Affairs.
- (b) *Bangladesh Population Census 1981*, Analytical Findings and National Tables, Dhaka: BBS, 1984.
- (c) *Bangladesh Population Census 1991*, Vol. 1. Dhaka: BBS, 1994.

Cited in Abul Barkat, et. al., op.cit., p.56.

Abul Barkat and others showed that there is a gradual declining trend in the relative size of the Hindu population in all the sample districts during the last 30 years since 1961. (Table 9 and Fig.IV).

Compared to 1961, relative reduction of Hindu Population in 1981 was highest in Brahmanbaria district and lowest in Barisal district. But compared to 1981, the relative reduction of Hindu population in 1991 was highest in Pabna and lowest in Gazipur district. Thus, during the last thirty years the relative size of Hindu population has declined in all the sample districts (figureIV). The absolute size of Hindu population has declined in Pabna and Brahmanbaria, and this has remained almost same in the other districts.

Hindu households and officially estimated land under VPA was given by Abul Barkat, et. al., as follows:

Figure IV. Decline in the relative share in the Hindu population during last 30 years by sample districts (1961-1991)

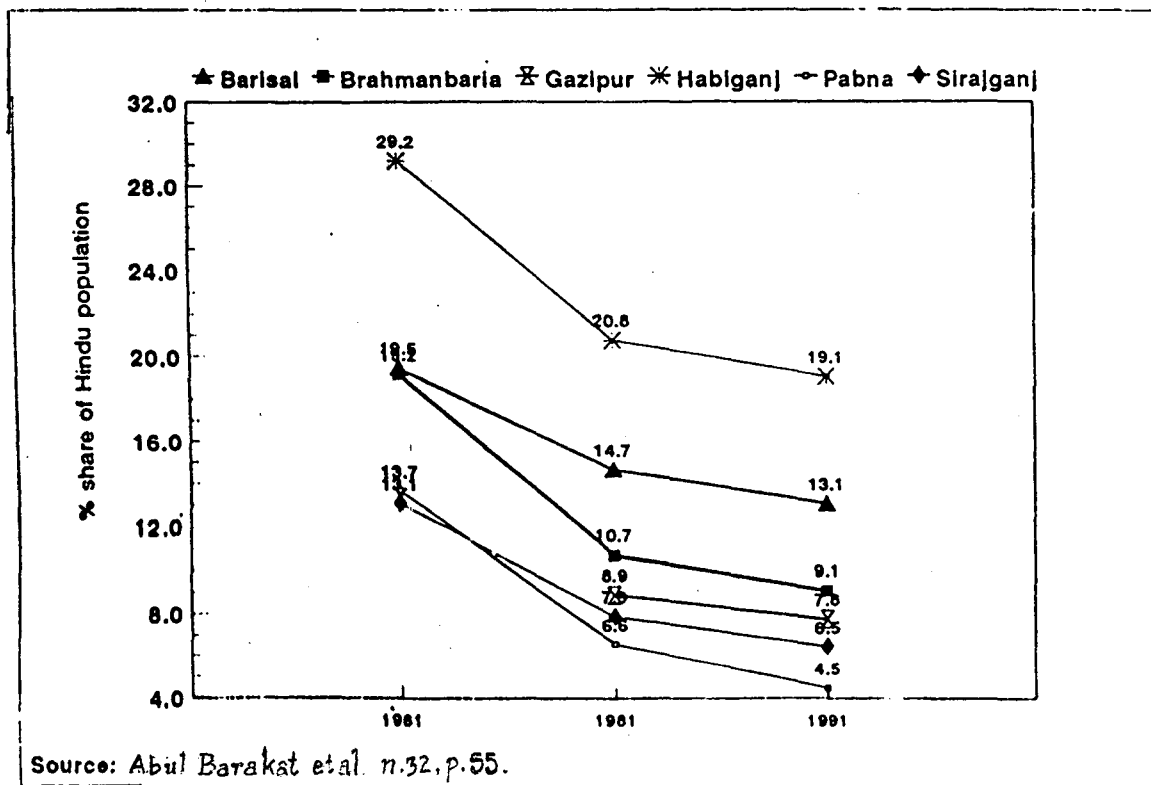


Table - 10

Hindu Households and officially enlisted amount of land under VPA by sample unions

Union	Number of total Hindu households (at present) ¹	Number of households affected under VPA ²	Households affected under VPA as percent of total households	Amount of land enlisted under VPA (in decimal) ²	Amount of land per household affected under VPA (in decimal)
Barthy	753	705	93.6	50352	71.42
Kalicochha	345	69	20.0	5372	77.86
Kaultia	795	262	33.0	40995	156.47
Chatmohor	283	390	137.8	49115	125.94
Gunaigacha	110	229	208.2	19259	84.10
Chandaikona	340	96	28.2	19827	206.53
Madhabpur	803	99	12.3	2993	30.23
Adaair	706	54	7.6	2148	39.78
Mean	517	238	46.03	23758	99.82

Source:

- 1) Estimated from Bangladesh, *Population Census 1991*, Vol. 1 (Dhaka: BBS, 1994) and Vol. 2 (Dhaka: BBS, 1993), as in Table 2.
- 2) Official VP list collection from Union Office through personal contact. From now onwards, any land or household affected under VPA will mean either consequence of enemy property act and/or vested property act.

Cited in Abul Barkat et. al. op.cit., p.60.

Distribution of households in the sample union affected under VPA and amount of land officially enlisted under VPA has been presented in a tabular form by Abul Barkat and others. (Table-11)

Table - 11

Distribution of households in the sample unions affected under VPA and amount of land officially enlisted under VPA by type of land

<i>Type of land</i>	<i>Number of Households affected</i>	<i>Amount of land (in decimal) enlisted under VPA</i>
Homestead	734 (38.6)	16,192(8.5)
Agriculture	1566(82.2)	141,719(74.6)
Garden/Forest	190(10.0)	4,996(2.6)
Pond/Water Bodies	583(30.6)	23775(12.5)
Commercial land/shops	46(2.4)	124(0.1)
Religious places (worship/cremation)	11(0.6)	1,181(0.1)
Others (common land, roads, canals)	197(10.3)	2,081(1.1)
N	1904	190,068(100)

Note: The figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of households and percentage of households and percentage of total vested land respectively.

Source: Official VP list collected from union office through personal contact.

Cited in Abul Barkat et. al. op.cit., p.61.

Abul Barkat and others after their study, concluded that the estimate of total Hindus households affected by EPA/UPA would be 10,48390. In other wards 10 out of 34 Hindus are victims of these acts. The estimated amount of total land dispossessed would be

about 1.05 million acres. The average amount of land lost by an affected person was calculated at 123 decimals.

Study conducted by Abul Barkat et. al., have proved beyond doubt that minorities, especially Hindus, were forced to leave Bangladesh for India due to acts like EPA and VPA.

(State Repression and Migration – CHT Case

The problem of tribal separatism in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) started even before the creation of Bangladesh. The districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts lies in the south-eastern portion of the Chittagong Division (South of Bangladesh) and has a total geographical area of 5,138 square miles.⁵³ The CHT are inhabited by thirteen distinct tribes, which are ethnically different from the majority Bengali community and forms only 1% of the total population of Bangladesh.⁵⁴ The problem in CHT is basically an “apparent ‘clash’ between the demands of less than 1% of the population for exclusivity and the ‘requirements’ of the rest who perceive their interest under threat if such exclusivity is provided

⁵³ R. H. Sneyd Hutchinson, *Chittagong Hill Tracts*, Vivek Publishing Company, Delhi 1978, p.41.

⁵⁴ Shahdeen Malik, “Overview of the Situation of Refugees, Stateless Person and Internally Displaced Persons in Bangladesh, in *Regional Consultation on Refugee and Migratory Movements in South Asia*, New Delhi, 1996, p.42.

for:⁵⁵ Tribal people of CHT started migrating to India when the Bangladeshi forces began employing excessive force on them to crush the separatist movement.)

The major tribes of CHT are the Chakma, the Marma, the Tripura, and the Mros. The Chakmas forms the largest population and hence CHT people are generally referred to as Chakmas (All the indigenous people of CHT are also called Jhummas). Historically CHT had always enjoyed autonomous or quasi-autonomous status under the Mughals, British and in United Pakistan until 1964.⁵⁶ Problem in the CHT started when the safeguard on immigration to CHT was withdrawn in 1930 and the role of the hill chiefs was restricted, who earlier enjoyed wide ranging powers.⁵⁷ In 1964, the special administrative status of CHT, which was introduced in 1860, was withdrawn. This led to a flurry of Bengali immigration to the CHT. Bangladesh also followed the conscious policy of encouraging Bengali migration to the CHT area without considering the sentiments of the tribals, who feared that their distinct identity would be lost in the face of such large scale migration.

⁵⁵ Mohammad Humayun Kabir, "The Problems of Tribal Separatism and Constitutional Reform in Bangladesh", in Iftekharuzzaman (ed.) *Ethnicity and Constitutional Reforms in South Asia*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi 1998, pp.10-26.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.42.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.42.

(Migration to CHT are of two types⁵⁸ - 'natural' and 'political'. The former category consisted of people migrating to CHT in search of jobs and business opportunities, while, the latter category consist of settlers who came under the Government sponsorship from other districts of the country. In 1947, the tribals consisted of more than 98% of the population of CHT, the Bengalis being less than 2%. The Bengali 'population' rose to 11.6% in 1974, 43% in 1981 and 48.5% in 1991.⁵⁹

The rise of Bengali population in CHT was mainly due to the encouragement and assistance provided by the Bangladesh Government.⁶⁰ Any Muslim family migrating to CHT was given 5 acres of highland, 4 acres of mixed land and 2 ½ acres of paddy land by the Government. In addition to this they were given free transportation service, food and protection, virtually free of cost. In 1981-82 the Government of Bangladesh earmarked 60 million Taka for settling 1 lakh Bengalees in the CHT.⁶¹)

After the death of Mujib Ur Rahman and the taking over of the country by the military, the insurgency in CHT saw an alarming

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.42.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.42.

⁶⁰ Saradindu Mukherji, *Subjects Citizens and Refugees: Tragedy in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (1947-98)*, Indian Center for the Study of Forced and Migration, New Delhi, 2000, p.67.

⁶¹ Ibid. p.67.

rise.⁶² By 1980 about 30,000 paramilitary troops were stationed in CHT. The number of police stations more than doubled, from 12 to 28 during the period 1976-1980. During the 1980's total strength of Bangladeshi and auxiliary army ancillary forces in CHT were as follows:

Table - 12

Bangladesh Army and Auxiliary Focus Stationed in CHT

Bangladesh Army	24 Infantry division	80,000
Bangladesh Rifles Sector	6 Battalions	25,000
Ansans	2 Battalions	5,000
Armed Police	5 Battalions	10,000
Training Centre	—	800

Source: *Survival International Review*, "Genocide in Bangladesh", No. 43, Survival International, 1984, p.13.

Army used to harass people in every conceivable way. The Disturbed Area Law of 1981 gave unrestricted power to shoot anyone suspected of 'anti-state' activities.⁶³ Uncontrolled military operations have resulted in all kinds of human rights violations such as mass killings, imprisonment without trial, rapes,

⁶² Ibid. p.67.

⁶³ Ibid.

harassment of innocent civilians, restriction of movement of essential commodities, persecution of tribal people for their religious beliefs, desecration and destruction of Buddhist temples.⁶⁴ Girls and housewives were raped by the military personnel and men and boys were shot dead indiscriminately or crippled by having their fingers or legs broken. Check post were erected at all public places to restrict the movement of tribals and military even erected one in front of Chitamarang temple, the holiest of Buddhist shrines in the CHT, which was frequently visited by the local people.⁶⁵ Faced with this terror and torture, tribal people of CHT are fled the country, mainly to India.

Chakma Refugees In India - Environmental and Political

Chakma refugees are of two types – Environmental and political. Environmental refugees came to India in the mid 1960's, when they were displaced as a result of Kaptai hydroelectric dams construction as part of the Karnaphuli Multipurpose Project (1957-62). About 90,000 member of the native hill tribes were displaced and they

⁶⁴ Survival International Review, Genocide in Bangladesh, *Survival International*, (London), No. 43, 1984, p.13.

⁶⁵ Anti Slavery Society: Indigenous Peoples and Development: The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Militarisation, Oppression and Hill Tribes, *Anti-Slavery Society*, (London), 1984.

were never adequately rehabilitated.⁶⁶ Political refugees on the other hand are people who are displaced out of political tensions and conflicts. Chakmas fled to India when the Government of Bangladesh started using excessive force against them.

Refugee camps were set up in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Assam and Nagaland to accommodate the Chakma refugees from Bangladesh.⁶⁷ As of 1996 Tukumbari camp in south Tripura still has about 14,370 refugees from Bangladesh in which Chakmas constitute 13,227 people and Tripurians 1089 and Mogs just 54.⁶⁸ In Mizoram there are about 86,000 refugees from the CHT region and some people have been staying there since 1947 and became Indian citizens⁶⁹ Kaptai Dam Construction in the CHT had displaced around 90,000 people⁷⁰ out of which around 4000 reached Arunachal Pradesh.)

Chakmas started settling in Arunachal Pradesh in 1964, the area was then known as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). It was decided by the then Chief Minister of Assam B.P. Chaliha on a

⁶⁶ David Supher, "Population Dislocation to the Hill Tracts", *Geographical Review*, Vol.53, 1963, p.182

⁶⁷ Saradindu Mukherji, n.60, p.6.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 102

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ David Sapher "Population Dislocation in the Hill Tracts", *Geographical Review*, Vol. 53, 1963, p.185.

suggestion from the then Governor of Assam Vishnu Sahay that it would be better to move the Chakma refugees to the NEFA or otherwise there could arise trouble between Chakmas and Mizos in the Mizo district.⁷¹ After this decision Chakmas who entered Assam were directed to the NEFA which subsequently became Arunachal. During 1964-1969 a total of 2,748 families of Chakmas totalling about 14888 people had gone to then NEFA. They were settled in 10,799 acres of land in the district of Lahid, Miao, Bordumsa and Changlong and Papum Pare and are still living there.⁷²

⁷¹ Vishnu Sahay, Governor of Assam to B.P. Chaliha, Chief Minister, Assam, Shillong, D.O. No. GA-71/64, 104 April, 1964 (White Paper) p.47, Annexure, cited in Saradindu Mukherji, n.60, pp.86-87.

⁷² Saradindu Mukherji, n.60, p.87.

CONCLUSION

Since the dawn of civilization mankind has been witness to migration. It is a global phenomenon and the South Asian region was never immune to it. People in south Asia used to move freely from one place to another in search of livelihood. But the whole scenario changed in the 20th century with the redrawing of international borders and the resultant birth of new nation-states.

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, migration of Bangladeshis to India is not a recent phenomenon. It started even before the creation of that nation, which was then known as East Pakistan. After the initial mass exodus of people during 1947 and 1971 there has not been any mass movement of people from Bangladesh to India. Instead, the migration has been taking place on a limited scale.

North-Eastern states of India and West Bengal are the favourite destinations of the Bangladeshi migrants. The North-Eastern states of India, especially Assam, is facing political problems because of the large migration of Bangladeshis into their territory. It has also led to violent conflicts between the migrants and the 'foreigners'. Though migration of Bangladeshis originate

from all part of Bangladesh; it has been well established that the majority of people come from the south-western part.

There are several factors that cause Bangladeshi migration to India. In the migration literature it is called 'Push' and 'Pull' factors. The major Push factors that cause migration of Bangladeshis are environmental, economic, social and political. Pull factors include porous nature of over 4080 kilometers of open border between India and Bangladesh, better economic opportunities in India as compared to Bangladesh, and low detection and deportation rates of Bangladeshis in India.

This study focussed on the push factors of migration while examining the causes of Bangladeshi migration.

Environmental degradation or destruction in Bangladesh are the primary movers of people. It has been estimated that about 19 million people are affected annually and about 1 million people are displaced due to natural disasters. Wide range of environmental destruction/degradation takes place in Bangladesh. Floods, cyclones Riverbank erosion, desertification, decreasing ground/water tables and salinity are the major environmental destruction/degradation that takes place in Bangladesh.

Geographical location, topographical aspects, hydrological situation, climatic condition and excessive rainfall are some of the

governing factors for floods in Bangladesh. Flood cause immense miseries to the people. Displacement of people is high due to floods as annually about 20% of the country is affected by floods. It also causes extensive damages to crops, property, fish stock and other resources.

Displacement of people due to cyclones is also high. The cyclone that occurred in 1970 in Bangladesh killed about 3 lakhs people and displaced millions. Cyclones also causes extensive damages to crops, trees, fisheries, vegetation and infrastructure. Other environmental factors like salinity, decreasing ground water tables, etc takes place over a period of time and hence it receives less attention. But in reality it also displaces a large number of people.

Economic factors also play an important role in displacing people. Bangladesh is one of the poorest and also one of the most densely populated countries of the world. In Bangladesh 48% of the people live below poverty line as per the Human Development Report – 1999, brought out by the UNP. Decline of the agriculture sector in the late 1970's and 1980s led to wide spread unemployment in the country. Approximately 78% of the labour force is dependent on rural based employment and hence any decline in the rural economy which is based on agriculture is

bound to have an impact on the life of the majority of the people of Bangladesh. People who are left unemployed as a result of the decline in agricultural sector migrate to the cities of Bangladesh. As a result Urban population growth has been much faster than the rate of growth of rural population. Urban population growth was 4.67 in 1991 as compared to the rural population growth of 1.46. In 1981, the corresponding figure were 10.63 and 2.2 respectively.

Cities of Bangladesh have excess labour. The people who move to cities from the rural areas, either remain unemployed or take up some menial jobs. These people who are looking for better economic opportunities, see migrating to India as a better option than staying in Bangladesh, impoverished.

Open Islamisation of the Bangladeshi society and the enactment of various orders and laws like the Enemy Property Act and vested property Act led to the alienation of the minorities in Bangladesh. Enactment of Enemy Property Act and vested property Act of Bangladesh led to the dispossession of land and property of minorities, especially of Hindus. Abul Barkat and others who have done a study on the impact of vested property Act on minorities concluded that about 10,48,390 Hindu households would have been affected as a result of EPA/VPA. And the amount of total land

dispossessed by these household was calculated to be about 1.5 million acres and the average amount of land lost by the affected persons was calculated to be about 123 decimals.

Islamisation policies followed by the various rulers after the death of Mujibur Rahman led to the growth of communalism in the country. Zia Ur Rahman Amended the constitution to delete the articles relating to secularism and dropped secularism and socialism from the constitution in 1977. Ershad when assumed power in 1982 followed more vigorously the Islamisation process and declared Islam as the state religion of Bangladesh. All this created fear and suspicion in the minds of the minorities. Islamisation process together with the passing of laws like EPA/VPA severely affected the minorities. People who were dispossessed by land and properties left Bangladesh for India. This has been proved beyond doubt by the works of Abul Barkat and others. They have calculated that the approximate size of the Hindu population that migrated per day during 1964-1971 as 703. During 1971-1981, the Hindu migration to India was at the rate of 537 persons per day. Corresponding figure for the period 1981-91 was given as 439 persons per day.

When we analyse the role of push and pull factors in causing migration, we see that at the origin (in Bangladesh), push factors appears to be prominent.

While analysing the Bangladeshi migration to India, it is clear that, it is from the south-western part that most of the migration takes place. As stated in the second chapter, migration from Khulna and Rajshahi divisions (south-western part) is very evident. The entire south-western region and a portion of north-western region of Bangladesh that is, about 37% of the total area and 30 million people are dependent on the Ganges water. This area receives the lowest rainfall in the country. In this situation, the Farakka barrage and the resultant diversion of water has severely affected the people in the region.

Agricultural sector in the south-western region has been the worst affected due to the reduced flow in the dry seasons. Reduced flow has led to salt water intrusion into the delta region from the Bay of Bengal. It led to the closing down of industries in the region. Riverine fishery on which a majority of population indulged in, mainly as a source of income and food was severely affected. This affected a considerable section of the population of Bangladesh, as was proved by a study conducted by Ashok swain. Migration of people from the south-western part of Bangladesh and the Farakka

water diversion are closely related. There is enough proof to show that people in the south-western region were forced to leave their native place due to reduced flow in the Ganges.

Push factor – environmental, is mainly responsible for the migration of people from the south-western part of Bangladesh.

As said earlier, social and political factors do play an important role in the migration of Bangladeshis. It has been conclusively proved by Abul Barkat and others the relationship between the migration of minorities in Bangladesh and the enactment of laws like VPA/EPA. Minorities were not ‘pulled’ to India instead they were ‘pushed’ out of Bangladesh. In the same way economic factors, also played a role in causing migration. Internal displacement of people Bangladesh occurred when they were thrown out of employment due to decline in the agricultural sector. Urban economy of Bangladesh was unable to absorb the rural population that migrated to the cities. This led to large number of internally displaced people in Bangladesh.

The role of natural disaster in causing displacement of people, as already mentioned in this section, is very clear. It is true that pull factors also help in facilitating migration. But pull factors are not the primary cause for migration of Bangladeshis into India. As Swain put it people generally choose to remain in their own

country, struggling until their hopes of survival wear out. In Bangladesh this appears to be the case. The push factors – environmental, economic, social and political – act in varying degrees at different points of time causing migration.

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