

Chapter 3: Human Rights Violation and Armed Conflict

3.1 Introduction:

Human right is a concept which tends to emphasize the worth of the individual and to recognize his or her rights against the society. The word 'right' in the most general sense means that it is something to which we are entitled. The term human rights cover the series of disparate rights and freedoms asserted by many to be universally accepted and essential prerequisite for people's enjoyment of a life based on the centrality of human dignity. Human Rights mean the rights relating life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the constitution or embodied in the international covenants, conventions and treaties. Human Rights are the birth right of all human beings and people enjoy them simply by virtue of their human existence, as such, they do not have to be granted to them by any superior or sovereign authority; human rights are inalienable in the sense that people cannot agree to give them up or have taken away from them; and universal because they do not just apply to individuals as citizens or groups but to all persons regardless of their group identities.

In the free world, the concept of human rights has emerged as a live and vibrant issue. The process of human rights took a definite shape gradually in the past and some important resolutions and decisions such as Magna Carta in England in 1215, Petition of Rights in 1628 and US Declaration of independence, 1776 followed by the Bill of Rights embodied in the US Constitution in 1791 and also the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, 1789 were the remarkable achievements. The Magna Carta stated that "No free man could be arrested, imprisoned or dispossessed of his goods, declared the

law, exiled or injured in any matter and we will not be against him or send anyone against him without a loyal judgement of his equals or in conformity with the law of the country” (Comeliu Barsan-European Convention of Human Rights,p.21).The American Declaration of Independence ,1776 was based on the understanding that certain rights, such as ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’, were fundamental to all people. The United States Constitutional Amendments or ‘Bill of Rights’ (1791) recognised freedom of speech, religion and the press in its constitution as well as the right to ‘peaceable’ assembly, private property and a fair trial. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) challenged the sovereignty of the aristocracy and recognised the ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’ of individuals and it defined a set of ‘individual rights and collective rights’.

With the horrors and impact of two World Wars offending the conscience of man, the representatives of the assembled nations at San Francisco on June 26, 1945 adopted United Nations Charter which interalia is the declaration of faith. It reads in fundamental human rights, of the dignity and worth of human person, in the equal rights of men, women and of nations large and small. Soon thereafter on 24th October, 1945 the world at large witnessed the establishment of the Rights of Man. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (10th December, 1948) was the first manifestation of human rights values. In the year 1959, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the adoption of the International Covenant of Economic, social and Cultural rights; the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights based on UDHR were adopted by the General Assembly of United Nations in 1966 which

came into force in 1976. Article 3 to 21 of the Declaration deals with civil and political rights. Article 22 to 28 deals with economic, social and cultural rights. Articles 29-30 provide a larger framework in which all human rights are to be universally enjoyed. The civil and political rights include the right to life, liberty, security of person, freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments, right of equality before law; right to freedom of movement, the right to own property; the right to take part in government. The economic, social and cultural rights include the right to social security; the right to work; right to the choice of employment; right to just and favourable conditions of work; the right to decent standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, the right to education, the right to participate in the cultural life of the community (UDHR: 1948). The year 1979 marked the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination against women. These conventions, covenants and declarations constitute, and act as a friend, philosopher and guide to human rights to all concerned all over the world. This was followed by a number of international conferences to promote the rights of the child, women, indigenous, refugees, prisoners against torture and inhuman treatment etc. under the auspices of the United Nations. The Preamble to the UDHR is significant for several reasons. Its Fundamental message lies in the statement that 'recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world' (Paragraph 1). The Preamble thus refers to the concept of inherent human dignity and the inalienable nature of human rights as the philosophical source of the UDHR and inspiration for further development of human rights.

Thus, the 20th century brought a new and changing political context for human rights and transformed the philosophical and ideological debates of it. The post-war era heralded the adoption of equality, liberty and social justice as the cardinal principles of human rights, but operationally reinforced after the end of the cold war. Today there is an extensive international regime on humanitarian law and human rights law. Particularly after the end of the cold war, the international community led by the U.N is focussing on human rights and U.N agencies like UNDP have emphasized the need to promote and protect human rights under all situations.

3.2 Women Rights are human rights:

There are historical reasons why the claim that women's rights are human rights has gained ascendancy in the world today. 'Rights offer a recognised vocabulary to frame political and social wrongs'. Women are increasingly using this vocabulary to articulate their grievances (Charlesworth, 1994). The availability of human rights discourse for the translation of women's rights into internationally acceptable norms allows for a greater visibility for the issues of women's rights. In addition, the diverse machinery set up at the international level for the promotion of human rights now remains available for women's rights activists.

The relationship between international human rights law and women's issue has not been a happy one. International human rights law was state- centred and individualistic in content. Its structure and appeal were basically towards male subjects, with only passing reference to women's inequality. Most importantly, international human rights law reinforced the division between the public world and private life. There was considered to be a public sphere where the state and the international system may intervene private sphere where state intervention and international scrutiny were

prohibited. It was assumed that privacy was a neutral, powerless realm of human experience and that there was no hierarchy of the private space of the family. The absence of legal intervention to protect women in the community and in the home devalued women's role and kept the traditional male dominated hierarchy of the family intact. The founding theorists of international law were male and did not recognize the political nature of private life (Romany, 1994).

In every society, we see that women are neglected gender in society. They are recognised as most vulnerable section of society. After the long struggle women's rights have recognised as well as accepted violence against women as a violation of their human rights. Women's movement worldwide found in a way significant recognition with the UN declaration of 1975 as the International Women's Year. The First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in June-July 1975 adopted a declaration on the equality of women and their contribution to development and peace. The UN General Assembly proclaimed the period 1976-85 as the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. The mid 1980 World Conference on women held in Copenhagen discussed within the framework of equality, development and peace, problems relating to violence against women. The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the General Assembly on 19th December 1979 and came into force in 1981. It is regarded as Bill of Rights for women. The Convention recommended wide-ranging principles for eliminating discrimination against women. The convention insisted on bringing equality between men and women by ensuring women's equal access to, equal opportunities in, political and public life through providing political rights like right to vote, right to contest in election etc. The third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi met, the

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) identified in 1989 five articles relating to violence in the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (1979). In 1993, the UN adopted the Declaration on the ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. The Violence against Women Declaration outlined a set of actions. Governments and communities should take to prevent such actions relating to physical, sexual or psychological violence. Earlier, in June 1993, the World Conference on Vienna reaffirms that women's rights are also human rights. The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China (4-5, September, 1995) stated in the Report of the Main Committee Addendum relating to PLATFORM FOR ACTION: Gross and systematic violations and situations that constitute serious obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights continue to occur in different parts of world.... The 'Platform for Action' of the 4th World Conference stated on violence: In all societies, to a greater and lesser degree, women and girls are subject to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across the lines of income, class and culture, in both public and private life. They often face rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation in the work place. They are particularly vulnerable to systematic violence during war. Sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, sterilization and forced abortion, pre-natal sex selection and female infanticide are also acts of violence. All such acts of violence violate and impair or nullify women's enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms..... The massive Beijing document deserves to be studied in both theory and practice of the women's movement, women's studies, and all women -related matters devoted to 'the cause of women's human rights'. Hillary Clinton, the first lady of USA in her speech at Beijing Conference stated that "Human Rights are women rights and women rights are human rights once and for all. Since

women constitute more than halves of total population it is no longer to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights. Since women's rights have come to be recognized as an integral, indivisible and inalienable part of universal human rights, it ought to be society's concern to promote and protect human rights, which are women's rights.

3.3 Human Rights Violations:

In today's world we have seen human rights of people are violated badly. Advocates of Human Rights agree that sixty years have passed since this issue, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is still more a dream than reality. The security forces including the army do indulge in activities which are the gross violation of human rights. Detaining persons of suspicion, torturing them to extract confessions or killing them in engineered or fake encounters are definitely violation of human rights. In the maintaining law and order the guardians of law are themselves breaking the law and resorting to terrorism. At the same time, the insurgent group like ULFA violates human rights of freedom of movement, action and speech. Various efforts are taken in matters of protection of human rights of women, still a large number of women continue to be the victims of human rights abuse, victims of violence, sexual exploitation and subjects of abuse during armed conflicts. A violation of economic, social and cultural rights occurs when a state fails in its obligations to ensure that they are enjoyed without discrimination or in its obligation to respect, protect and fulfil them. Often violation of the one of the rights is linked to a violation of other rights. Violations exist in every part of the world. Countries like Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Myanmar, Iran etc are the examples of human rights violations. In India states like Kashmir, Manipur etc is the same as a result of the imposition of draconian law Armed Forces (Special) Powers Act.

The AFSPA gives unlimited powers to the paramilitary force curbing women's physical mobility and has threatened their lives even when they were not involved in the conflict. The body searches that are routine in such areas often lead to molestation, sexual abuse and, women and the community feel violated and 'dishonoured'. Under this legislation, both Central /State Government has the special power to grant security forces including local police, paramilitary and armed forces to arrest, detain and use force against individuals. The Act has given uncontrolled powers to the armed forces over the citizens of the North Eastern Region to perpetuate human rights violations of any sort. Men, women and children are tortured /killed on suspicion of being members or relatives of militants. Acts like TADA, POTA and others further supplement this act. So, all these acts have highly draconian features that give the military and paramilitary wide-ranging powers with little accountability, grossly restricting civil liberties.

In Assam also the security forces act as an organised criminal network. All this is being done in the name of curbing militancy/insurgency in Assam. While this has resulted in gross violation of human rights for the entire common people, women are singled out for sexual violence and tortures also, and bear the brunt of the onslaught unleashed by the repressive regime. Rape, sexual harassment, molestation etc is faced by many women. The civilians have always been caught in the crossfire between the extremists and the army. Women, whether participating in the underground movements, supporters, relatives of suspected militants or even those ones who are completely away from all these political movements, live in constant threat of security forces at all times¹. Gross human rights violation is taking place in Assam as a result of the army and paramilitary forces operation right from the days of the Assam Movement. Besides, the Government of India is adopting a lot of draconian laws which blatantly violate the

human rights by giving sweeping powers to the police and the army. One section provides examples of violations six articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights such as rights to live free, no torture, inhuman or degrading punishment, freedom to move, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and lastly right to democracy. The gross violation of human rights has undermined human security. Humanity has been the worst victims in the hands of both state and non state actors in an armed conflict situation. While it is true that in situations of conflict, the entire community, whether they are directly or indirectly involved in the conflict are greatly affected, the impact of women is especially complex. Women are denied their rights to be, their rights to personhood and to an expression of their individuality. Often in such situations of ongoing conflict, as the one prevailing in the North East Region, the gross violations of civil and political rights are often used as justification to disregard the violations of women's rights. On the one hand the state targets women and uses violence against them as a means of suppression and on the other, the community is apathetic to the special violation of rights that prevails in general because of the political situation or those that are either consequent upon discrimination against women that is sanctioned by the community or not addressed by the state (Goswami, R. & Dutta. I, 1999). Although armed conflict affects the entire community inhabiting a particular area, women and children are more susceptible to the misery, killings, disappearances, displacement etc. Women are especially vulnerable to torture during times of war and internal conflict when their bodies are seen as the legitimate instruments and spoils of war².

Women of North East are vulnerable to a wide range of human rights abuses from restrictions on freedom of movement to custodial violence including rape to arbitrary

¹Voice of MASS, Newsletter of MASS, December, 2002, pp70-71.

²Rights of Women, International Women's Tribune Centre, New Work, 1998

arrests and detention in search of “wanted family members and arbitrary killings etc’”. Amnesty International is highlighting three specific areas of concerns about human abuses suffered by women living in areas of armed conflict i)Increased vulnerability of women under special legislation; ii)Rape and sexual abuse by security forces; iii)Increases problems of access to redress.

In order to understand under what condition human rights of women are violated in Kamrup and Nalbari District in Assam and how they are violated, there is the necessity of studying the various cases. Since, case studies reflect the views and narratives of several women interviewees who have experienced the nature of violent conflict at different levels. As we know there are six different types of women victim, we are trying to explain here one case from each category of women victim.

Case Study 1.PADUMA BEGUM (Housewife)

Paduma Begum is a resident of an interior village near Hajo. Her husband is a retired Head Master of a school and has three children.

Neither she nor any members of her family had a relationship with the banned outfit ULFA. Paduma Begum had a dream. Dream to give education to her children outside the state. To fulfill this dream she was saving money whenever she could. One person who had a link with police and army came to know about her money. That person informed the police and army that ULFA, an insurgent organization was keeping money in Paduma Begum’s house. On the basis of that information, one day army and police came to their house. During that time, her husband was not present. He was in the Masque for namaz. When the house was cordoned from all sides by the police and armed force, Paduma Begum hid herself in a room along with her daughter and she observed the whole incident through a hole in the wall of that room. The family of

Paduma Begum had a good reputation in the village. For this reason, the villagers came to their house to save them from the possible atrocity of the police and the army. A clash took place between the villagers and the police-armed force where seven persons had to lose their lives in the spot. Though Paduma Begum and her family members escaped unhurt, she can never forget that violent day where the colour of the road in front of her house became red with the blood of the innocent villagers. That incident has been a vicious mental attack for her. She regrets that no organizations like Human Rights organizations, Mahila Samities, Governmental, Non -Governmental organizations came forward to help her.

Paduma Begum admits that she is interested in peace.

Case Study 2(i): PRATIKSHA SARMA alias GITANJALI CHAKRABORTY

(Woman Militant)

Pratiksha Sarma, a graduate girl is hailing from Amayapur, Pub Nalbari Block. She is from a middle class family. Mesmerised by the ideology of ULFA, Pratiksha alias Gitanjali joined the banned armed outfit in 1998 without thinking much of it. Her family members were completely unaware about her joining the armed organization. She received minimum training that was required militarily as well as for protecting herself. She had to bear the responsibility of editorship of the library and the wall magazine of the outfit. Along with this, Pratiksha had to manage the cultural aspect also. She was arrested along with the other members in the 'Operation All Clear', a joint venture of Indian and Bhutan army in 2003. She was put in the jail for her twin crime- associating with a banned armed organization and taking shelter in a foreign country illegally. Pratiksha was freed from jail on January 12, 2006. She is still not been freed

from the accusation levelled against her. Cases are still going on against her in the lower Court.

Pratiksha is dissatisfied with State Human Rights Commission, State Women Commission and the judicial system. She regrets that not a single organization, whether governmental or nongovernmental, was sympathetic towards them.

At present, Pratiksha has no occupation. She feels that the society is not ready to accept her as before. Nobody from the society dared to come forward to marry her. At last she has to get married to an ex- member of the outfit.

Still she has a ray of hope that the ULFA issue will be solved through discussion and deliberation. Pratiksha still has the dream of sovereign Assam in her mind. Once an active cadre, Pratiksha admits that she is still maintaining link with ULFA.

Case Study 2(ii): KABITA CHAKRABORTY (Wife of Missing Militant)

Hailing from a remote village of Nalbari, Kabita Chakraborty used to attend the meetings of the armed outfit ULFA from the tender age. The ideology of ULFA attracted Kabita from the time when she was a student of class VII-VIII. Soon after taking graduate degree she got married to an active member of the outfit without the knowledge of her family. She became the mother of a baby boy. Kabita went to a secret camp of the outfit and continued her married life there. She was engaged in household activities in the organization. She received only the basic training there in the camp. She was arrested along with the other members during the 'Operation All Clear' in 2004. Her husband went missing from then on. Kabita had to stay behind the bar along with

her child but was released soon from the jail as the level of accusation was not strong against her. Ironically case is still going on against her missing husband.

At present, she is living an uncertain life with her son. Right now, she has no occupation. She received a small loan to start a business. But due to inexperience she failed. Obviously every day is a day of struggle for Kabita Chakraborty.

She is very much dissatisfied with the State Human Rights Commission, State Women Commission and the other governmental and nongovernmental organizations. She still believes that her husband is alive and will return one day. Kabita Chakraborty thinks that the idea of sovereign Assam is not wrong. According to her the ULFA problem will be solved and the peace will return to the state with the success of ongoing talk between ULFA and the Government of India. She admits that she is still maintaining relation with ULFA. She also admits that the outfit has been offering financial help to her whenever necessary.

Case Study 3: RANJANA PATOWARY (Wife of a Government Employee)

38 years old Ranjana Patowary is now working as a high school teacher in Rangia. Her husband Biren Patowary was a lecturer in Commerce Stream of Rangia College. He was an active member of Asom Gana Parishad. He was found missing on April 17, 2001 when he went to attend an election meeting to be held in Baranghati, Barbhag. His bullet ridden dead body was found in the next day. The uncertain life of wife Ranjana and their six years old son Arindam started immediately after the heart burning incident. Ranjana Patowary suspects that her husband was killed by members of banned outfit ULFA. According to her, this type of organization has destroyed many families. Many women have to lose their husband; many children have to lose their

father in the hands of the insurgent organization. She feels that the act of creating terror in the society is supported by none. Terror can never bring peace to the society.

No government or nongovernment organizations came forward to solve the problem faced by Ranjana Patowary. She received a financial assistance of Rs. One lakh from the government. According to her, one lakh can never be bigger than that of a life of man. She regrets that the then Asom Gana Parishad government did nothing for the family of dedicated member of the party like Biren Patowary. She was fortunate to get financial assistance from AASHWAS, a government financed project for her son's study. She has got the job of teacher in a high school on the basis of her merit.

Ranjana Patowary wants to take her life struggle with a positive outlook. According to her peace will never come to the society so long there will be terrorism.

Case Study 4: GIRIBALA MEDHI (Relative of Militant)

60 years old Giribala Medhi is living in a village Lashi under the Kaya police station of Rangia. This ill-fated woman has to lose three sons in her life.

One of her sons joined the banned extremist outfit ULFA without the knowledge of the family while he was studying in the Arya Bidyapeeth College, Guwahati. Her husband was the village head man (Gaonburha). He took active part in all the events in the village. But as soon as the villagers came to know about the joining of their son in ULFA, the villagers began to ignore them. And in the month of November, 1998 the bullet ridden dead body of their son, who was in ULFA, was found.

After that incident, the police began to keep close look at their family. After some days, police with the support of the army killed her two sons Apurba and Ajit claiming them as ULFA cadres in a fake encounter while they were working in their

broiler farm. The family broke down mentally after this incident. The family failed to escape the atrocities of the police and army. They destroyed their household properties. Giribala Medhi has been alleging that they have to face atrocity only because of the fact that they are the family members of a ULFA member. Facing the mental trauma after losing three young sons, Giribala Medhi's husband expired. None of the society came forward to marry their daughters. All the other sons had to give up studies without completing the course.

She regrets that no governmental as well as nongovernmental organizations came forward to help the family. They could not even dare to lodge a complaint in the court because of lack of money, regrets Giribala Medhi.

Case Study 5: RAJUBALA KALITA (Shelter Provider)

Rajubala Kalita is the wife of Rampati Kalita of Banmajha village of Kamalpur block of Kamrup district. Mother of seven children, Rajubala is an illiterate yet kind hearted woman. One of her sons was in the extremist organization without the knowledge of the family. Because of this, some of his friends frequently visited their home. Rajubala treated them well. Sometimes some of them stayed in the house of Rajubala at night also. One day when her extremist son was in the home, police cordoned the house from all sides. Her son was killed in the police firing when he tried to escape.

Even after the death of her son, the cadres of the extremist outfit continued their relationship with the family of Rajubala. They frequently visited Rajubala's house. Rajubala had to face the cruellest incidence of her life which took place on 13th March, 2000. That day was the day of Holi. A feast was organised at their house to celebrate the

occasion at night. All the family members were busy for the feast outside their house. During that time, some friends of her demised son from the extremist outfit came there and requested to arrange dinner for them also. Without thinking much Rajubala's family agreed to do so.

Meanwhile on the basis of the information got about the presence of the cadres of the extremist outfit, police with the help of army cordoned the house of Rajubala. Exchange of fire took place between the members of the extremist outfit and the police and army. All the extremists were killed in the clash. A neighbour woman who tried to look at the clash through a window was also killed in the hands of police. After that, all the family members of Rajubala were kept in the paddy field with knee down. Rampati kalita was injured seriously when he was hit by the butt of the gun of police. Rajubala also could not escape the torture of the police. She had to operate her knee later.

After this incident, the family of Rajubala had faced many problems. After one year another son of Rajubala who just started his own business was killed by the army suspecting him as a member of extremist outfit. He was taken to an army camp where he was brutally tortured and as a result of this he lost his life.

Rajubala broke down completely after this incident. Other families of the village also began to ignore the family of Rajubala treating them as the family of extremist. Both the husband and wife are now finding it difficult to even walk as a result of constant torture of the army.

Illiterate Rajubala knows nothing about State Human Rights Commission, State Women Commission etc. She alleges that no governmental or nongovernmental organisation either came forward to communicate with the family or offer financial assistance after those incidents.

Rajubala doubts about the returning of peace to Assam.

Case Study 6: KHIRODA BUJARBARUAH (Peace Negotiator)

Wife of a well reputed doctor of Nalbari town, Khiroda Bujarbaruah is an educated lady of above 70 years of age. Once she was the president of *Nalbari Mahila Samiti*. Khiroda Bujarbaruah took an active part in the foreigners issue movement led by AASU. But she has not been hesitating to protest the violent activities of the extremist organizations time to time. She has been consistently supporting the creation of a favourable atmosphere for peace.

According to Khiroda Bujarbaruah, different organizations were not coming forward to help the victims of police or army atrocities during the troublesome days as they thought that if they do so they may lose the financial assistance from the government as well as they may fall into the suspicious eyes of police. During the days of Foreigner issue movement, Mahila Samities staged protest movements occasionally. But it was just a show business as they were never serious about that. Smt. Bujarbaruah says firmly that no Mahila Samiti came forward to help the families who became victims of atrocities of either police or army or the extremist groups.

Though women are relatively peace loving, still they did not dare to stage protest movement as they thought that they will likely to have face the discontent of the society.

Smt. Bujarbaruah still has full faith in peace. She believes that ULFA related problem will be solved through talk and mutual understanding.

The above mentioned cases show a gloomy picture of human rights violation of women in armed conflict situation. Besides these, human rights were violated of families of secret killing victim also.

3.4 Secret Killings:

Secret Killings of Assam was probably darkest chapter in Assam's political history when relatives, friends, sympathisers of ULFA insurgents were systematically killed by unknown assailants. These extra-judicial murders happened in Assam during 1998-2001. During the rule of Government of Asom Gana Parishad, a number of family members of ULFA leaders were assassinated by unidentified gunmen. Since 1998, more than 150 people have been victims of these secret killings. (Mahanta N. G., 2013) With the fall of this government following elections in 2001, secret killings stopped. As a result of secret killings, human rights of the family members of the victim such as the right to life, liberty as well as security etc. was violated. Maloti Das, wife of Parameswar Das, a secret killing victim has lived a life of loneliness and trauma along with her daughter. Though she got three lakh and later two lakh as compensation, for her mere compensation never ends one's own problem (Field work observation).

3.5 Impacts of Armed Conflict on Women:

In the armed conflict process, women and children are usually the worst-hit. Insurgency has resulted in separation, displacement and dislocation of the family, shattering the sanctuary of their homes and communities. Since women are not a homogeneous category, the diverse impacts of insurgency on women are discussed differentially –as mothers, widows, adolescents and women at large.

Mothers are experiencing psychological disorder .During the survey, the majority mothers could not express how they had been affected by the deaths of their sons since they were overwhelmed with grief. Those who responded reported of constant grief, sleeplessness, nightmares, and loss of appetite. Woman who had lost her son but was not ready to accept it was found to be living on false hopes and waiting for

her son's return. They also reported physical symptoms of weakness and dizziness, breathing problems and trembling of the body, weakening eyesight due to continuous weeping, and throat ailments due to screaming and wailing. Some mothers were dependent solely on their sons' incomes. Some mothers believed their sons had committed no crime to be killed so ruthlessly.

After the death of their husbands the responsibility of the family, especially of children, falls on the widows. In the absence of adult males in the family, women are in a constant state of anxiety, stress and fear. So the hardship of single parenting, difficulty in continuing agricultural activities as a means of livelihood were some of the problems widows had faced. The widows interviewed were finding it very difficult to support the education of their children. Children are now barred from pursuing their education. Due to poverty many of them could not even bear the expenses of child's education.

All the widows had aged prematurely. They had reduced weight and were anaemic. Gastric problems due to stress, worry and lack of adequate food consumption were also reported. Widows also complained about kidney damage and bleeding in the uterus.

Psychological symptoms were also reported such as difficulty in completing tasks; difficulty in making decisions on their own; lack of confidence in facing outsiders, lack of sleep; headaches; restlessness; mood swings; anger and irritation; a sense of hopelessness and sadness alternating with laziness and inertia. Lack of appetite and physical symptom of munching without being aware of the action, alcohol consumption, smoking, and several mental problems were also found. (Darshan. A. & Thapa. R., 119-120, 2007). The situation is far worse for those, whose husbands are 'missing' or have 'disappeared'. These women live in constant grief and uncertainty and

have fewer rights and lower status than widows (Fieldwork Observation). Kavita Chakravarty, Luna Deka, Anima Rabha and Rupali Thakuria, wives of missing militants have felt the same.

Almost all the widows reported economic problems with the deaths of husbands. This was followed by children dropping out of school and less access to the basic need, such as food, clothes, shelter and health care. However, they seemed to be coping with the help of natal homes, friends, relatives and other family members, undertaking income generating activities such as livestock and poultry rearing, tailoring, selling milk, working as wage labourers, and by taking loans. Economic life and movement are disrupted due to emergency orders, curfews, and restrictions. Most women feel there is a restriction on economic activities. Years of conflict have resulted in human rights abuses and trauma and the region is in a state of siege. Furthermore as shelter and food providers to militant groups they and their family face great security risks (Mahanta,2002). The other burden that women have had to carry as a fall out of conflict is additional socio-economic responsibilities. Women of different age groups and occupations, including survivors of sexual violence have been forced to single handed run households. This is no provision of alternative means livelihoods which results in increased powerlessness and dependency of the women. The economic burden of the women is further increased that they have to provide food and shelter to militant groups. Thus not only are women forced to become the primary bread earners but also forced to grapple with the problems of providing for the family when means of livelihood have been lost and food security threatened. After husband's death , many stated us they get difficulty in running their homes properly.

In spite of the psychological trauma that widows faced due to their widowhood, very few have received psychological and medical help from hospitals. Majority are uncertain about their future. They are living now in the midst of insecurity. They spoke of verbal and physical sexual advances or sexual abuse. These were from neighbours, relatives, or strangers. Most of the victim families interviewed by us had stated that they could not take medical help to overcome their psychological disorder due to poverty. One Ex Militant stated that she could not bear the expenses of her operation due to poor financial condition (Field work observation).

Women relatives of state officials like police and army wives have been struggling with trauma, widowhood and tragedy.

Women victims of sexual abuse have been rejected by their families and by society. Women tend to deny the incident when they are raped because their 'honour' has been violated and their family and community avoid them. Two rape victims of Army Operation in Nalbari District refused to talk with us. At present, they don't want to tell the incident as rape due to the fear from society. (Fieldwork Result).

The psychological trauma associated with sexual violation and with the loss of disappearance of family members lasts long after peace returns. In many areas women have lost traditional support bases and in many these have led to disastrous consequences like drug addiction, prostitution, starvation and psychosomatic disorders. (Goswami, R., Sreekala, MG. & Goswami. 2005). One women relatives of militant from Udiyana village Rangia block stated that her son became alcoholic to overcome his frustration after father's unnatural death(Fieldwork Result).

The psycho-social implications on women and children are vital. Women and children continue to be dependent on their male counterparts. Men continue to be the

bread earner providing security and succour for their women and children. Needless to say, women's life does revolve around the hearth. The hearth that is so valued is shattered in a revolt or insurgency. Death of spouse in undue circumstances is the strongest life event that can cause depression or suicide. Widowhood is often worsened due to social taboos, constant economic problem and enhanced role performance. The stigma of belonging to an insurgent family is traumatic for a woman. Social status and prestige are always under question for a family of the insurgent. The most serious of these is the possible loss of freedom, the uncertainty of future along with loss of self-esteem and social prestige. Stigma attached to psychological trauma manifests as physical problems and due recognition of the real problems is never undertaken. This is especially so in a conventional society where ignorance and literacy are very much high. (Sonowal, 2002.) Anima Choudhury, widow of Rajkamal Choudhury, victim of insurgency told us that society's attitude towards her is not positive.

Rupali Thakuria's husband Govinda Baishya was missing during Indo-Bhutan Operation under 'Operation All Clear'. At that time she was pregnant. She spent her pregnant days with extreme mental stress. After giving birth a child, she was sent to Gauhati Central Jail along with her daughter. The conditions of the jail with her daughter and anxiety regarding her husband were unbearable. She was released on bail on March 2, 2005. Since then she and her daughter have been staying with her mother. All her efforts to get information about her husband have proved futile. She has not been able to get anything even after knocking at the doors of justice. Society's attitude towards her is not friendly at all (Conversation with Rupali Thakuria, wife of missing militant). Kabita Chakravarty, wife of missing

militant Nilu Chakravarty has to take economic burden after her husband's gone missing. She has to live this life of loneliness. Still the mother of ULFA militant Rupjyoti Boro alias Sapun Daimary behaves abnormally thinking that Indian Army are coming their home in search of her son. The family has no sufficient money for her medical treatment. Giribala Medhi, a relative of ULFA militant is still kept asking repeatedly why her other two innocent sons were killed by the army. The traumas of war continue and haunt the victims for the rest of their lives: for them the war never ends. (Field work observations).

3.6 Role of Media:

Various newspapers had played an important role during insurgency and counter insurgency operations. A series of articles/reports were published in Dainik Asom, a vernacular daily news paper depicting the fear psychosis of Assamese Nationality. Dainik Asom gave a concrete shape to Assam Movement by publishing series of articles, reports, and editorials on the issue of land, immigration and threat to the Assamese nationality from outside dominating groups of India. Nagarik was another periodical that played a pivotal role in the generation of a new thought for protecting Assamese identity. Other periodicals like Budhbar, Sadin etc also played an important role in publishing various news, criticism against counter insurgency (Mahanta, 2013). But it should be remembered that although women faced armed atrocity, insurgency, casualty due to armed conflicts, news of various newspapers could not cover the news of women in armed conflict situation in remote areas. Moreover, it could not cover the tremendous physical, psychological suffering of women in conflict situation (Field work Observation).

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