CHAPTER III

AN OVERVIEW OF POPULATION DISPLACEMENT IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Northeast India refers to the easternmost region of India comprising of seven sister states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and new inclusion is Sikkim. The region is surrounded by foreign territories such as Bhutan, Tibet, China, Burma and Bangladesh on the north south and the east and is connected to the rest of India by a narrow passage.

Northeast India is the homeland of large number of ethnic groups who came to the region from different directions at different historical times. These groups belong to the different racial stocks, speak different languages and have varied socio cultural tradition. Thus the migration of people from various directions from different places at different times to Northeast India have made the region home of numerous ethnic nationalities. Especially the society in the hills of Northeast region reflect high degree of diversity as the each community living therein has its distinct characteristics.

According to the ‘People of India’ project sponsored by Anthropological Survey of India out of 5,633 communities living in India 635 are categorized as tribals, of which 231 are residing in Northeast India. The project had listed 325 languages of which 175 belonging to the Tibeto-Burman group and Mon-Khmer group are spoken in Northeast India.¹

For the past several decades the Northeast has received a continuous flow of economic migrants from neighbouring countries and as a result of that in the states like Tripura and Assam democratic imbalance has been rapidly tilting against indigenous population. The waves of refugees and migrants besides causing demographical change, have caused displacement of indigenous population from their ancestral land. In such cases displacement generally takes place quietly without direct conflict. Only when indigenous people
realizes the danger to their existence, they begin to express their grievances through mass protest and social movement and only then the displacement drew public attention. And that had happened in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Meghalaya.

1. Causes of internal displacement in Northeast India

Considering the magnitude of the problem of internal displacement in the North eastern region, it is difficult to outline all the causes of internal displacement but some prominent causes may be mentioned. It is worth mentioning here that all three kinds of internally displaced persons are found to be present in Northeast India especially in Assam. Most prominent causes of displacement in the region are listed below:

(a) due to natural disasters like earthquake, flood, erosion draught and climate change;
(b) due to violence – ethnic, religion and language conflict, wars and revolutions;
(c) due to development driven reasons and government policies;
(d) due to take over of land by migrating communities.

The entire Northeastern region, particularly Assam is prone to natural disasters like earthquake, flood, landslide, erosion and occasional drought. The natural disaster driven displacement is mostly beyond human intervention and control.

Like other parts in India development induced-displacement has caused massive population displacement in Northeast India. Development projects like dams, oil and gas fields, mines and other industrial projects have displaced thousands of people in northeastern states. Among these development projects, dams have so far been the largest cause of displacement. Sometimes development induced displacement results in ethnic conflict between different ethnic groups. For instance the Dumber dam of the Gumti Hydel project in South Tripura district displaced total 2,845 families, out of them a total of 2,117 tribal families have been displaced. The displacement aggravated the already degenerating ethnic
relations between Bengali migrants and ethnic tribal people. The reason being that while urban Bengalis got power from the project and the rural Bengali fishermen got huge reservoir to fish from, the tribal people lost their land and, with that their source of livelihood. Another example is the Kaptai Hydel Project in Bangladesh which uprooted thousands of Chakmas and Hajongs who would have been internally displaced in Bangladesh had they not been crossed over the international boundary of India. By taking refuge in India they have now become responsible for displacement of indigenous people in Arunachal Pradesh.⁴

Conflicts have regularly caused considerable internal displacement of population in most of the northeastern states. Internal displacement has been caused by violent conflict between security forces and insurgent groups, different dissident armed groups and counter-insurgency operations of security forces. The Northeast India accounts for almost half of India’s conflict induced internally displaced persons.⁵ The region has witnessed a number of major cases of conflict-induced internal displacement in recent years.

(a) displacement of Bengali Hindus and Muslims from and within Assam;
(b) displacement of Adivasis and Bodos within and from western Assam;
(c) displacement of Bengalis from Meghalaya, particularly from Shillong;
(d) displacement of the Bengalis from and within Tripura;
(e) displacement of Nagas, Kukis and Paites in Manipur;
(f) displacement of Reangs from Mizoram;
(g) displacement of Chakmas from Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.⁶

2. Internal Displacement in Arunachal Pradesh

2.1. Background

In the past several years tension between indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and the Chakma and Hajong tribes has been simmering in Arunachal Pradesh. The Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh belong to the tribal group which has for centuries inhabited the Chittagong Hills Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh.
Most of the inhabitants of Chittagong Hills Tracts are either Buddhists or Hindus. Despite that the region became a part of Pakistan against the will of the indigenous tribes of Chittagong Hills Tracts when India was partitioned in 1947. Chakmas belong to the Tibeto-Burman family and are generally known as ‘Jumma people’.

There are three important events following the Partition that devastated the Jumma tribe. First the abolition of Chittagong Hills Tracts Regulation of 1900, which debarred settlement of plains people in the hills. In 1900 British introduced a legislation banning the settlement of outsiders in the Hills Tracts and prohibited the transfer of land to non-indigenous people. The 1935 Government of India Act defined the hills as ‘totally excluded area’, taking it out of Bengali’s control. The actions of the Government to protect the tribal identity and economy were strongly resented by the Bengalis in Dhaka and Calcutta. Secondly successive regimes in East Pakistan and later Bangladesh supported the influx of Bengali speaking Muslims migrants into the area to outnumber the hill tribes. Third reason being the construction of Kaptai Dam on the river Karnaphuli in 1962, which is one of the first mega project in the whole South Asia. The Kaptai Dam reservoir submerged 40 percent of fertile land belonging to Jumma tribes and uprooted tens of thousands of people from the area.7

Hajongs, a Hindu tribal minority group from Mymensing district of Bangladesh, were also migrated to the Northeast India between the period of 1947 and mid 1960. By the middle of July 1964, at least 1,40,000 Chakmas and Hajong refugees had migrated to Assam via Tripura and Mizoram. Government of India while facing the 1965 war with Pakistan and fighting with insurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram, found it difficult to resettle them in those areas. The then Government of Assam also expressed its inability to settle such a large number of migrants in the state and consequently requested for their shifting. The Government of India in consultation with the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) administration and Government of Assam decided to settle the migrants in the sparsely populated North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) region. After that approximately 35,000 Chakmas and 1000 Hajongs were issued valid migration
certificate in 1964, confirming their legal entry into India. Prior to this in late 1963, a scheme for settlement of vacant land in the Tirap Frontier Division by agrarian families had been formulated by the NEFA administration. As a result 2920 Chakma and Hajong families were settled in the three districts of Lohit (Changlang), Tirap and Subansiri (now Papumpare). 8

Over the years since their settlement in India the Chakmas and Hajongs have built villages and developed lands granted to them and paid state taxes on their land. Under the Indira-Mujib Agreement of 19729, it was determined that India and not Bangladesh would be responsible for all migrants who entered India before 25th March 1971. Additionally they have become integrated into the social fabric of the state of Arunachal Pradesh. They have even voted in elections. 10

Under the agreement the Government of India asserted that the Chakmas and Hajongs have legitimate claim to Indian citizenship. But despite that the state Government of Arunachal Pradesh at behest of All Arunachal Students’ Union (AAPSU) denied the rightful status to the Chakmas and Halong refugees in the state.

2.2. Status of Chakma and Hajong refugees in different parts of Northeast India

Chakmas in India enjoys three categories of status. First category includes those who migrated to India in the wake of the partition and till March 1971 were accorded citizenship rights and Scheduled Tribes status in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. Many of them have entered the government services and have participated even in state elections. The second category includes those who live in south west of Mizoram. They enjoy a district level autonomy to implement their own development schemes. However, the third category of Chakmas and Hajongs, who entered India during the same period were given settlement in Arunachal Pradesh are treated as foreigners by the local tribes and continue to remain as stateless persons and threatened with repatriation from state. 11
The indigenous tribes of Arunachal Pradesh claim that Chakma and Hajong refugees were settled in their state when it was a union territory and was administered by central government without taking the local political leaders into confidence, not considering the interests of local population. Even though the local people resented the government action, they did not make it a political issue till 1972 as before the signing of the Indira-Mujib agreement in 1972, they thought that the Bangladesh government would eventually take the Chakma and Hajong refugees back. But, it turned it to be otherwise.\textsuperscript{12}

Till the end of 1970s, the Chakmas and Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh enjoyed all facilities as accorded to the fellow local tribals. But when the anti-foreigner movement swept the Northeast the Arunachal Pradesh government withdrew these facilities from them. After NEFA was upgraded into a full fledged state of Arunachal Pradesh in 1986-87, local political leaders began to mount pressure on the central government for repatriation of Chakmas and Hajongs from their state. But the central government failed to evolve a definite policy to deal with the problem. Over the years, the Chakma population has increased considerably and at present they constitute the third largest ethnic group in the state.

\textbf{2.3. Statelessness of Chakmas and Hajongs under international law}

At present there are about 65,000 Chakmas and Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh and large number of them were born in India between the period of 1965 and 1July 1987 when the citizenship Amendment Act came into force\textsuperscript{13}. Hence, there is no doubt that Chakmas and Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh have right to claim citizenship of India under the provision of the Constitution of India. Again the Citizenship Rules of 1956 as amended by act no. 51 of 1986 prescribes the process by which an individual may become a citizen of India under the provision of the Citizenship Act.\textsuperscript{14}

Customary international law has placed certain limitations upon states as regards the conferment of citizenship. The 1930 Hague Convention was the first document to recognize these limitations.\textsuperscript{15} The decisions regarding acquisition or
loss of nationality will be recognizes only when they are consistent with contemporary legal norms. Currently these norms are expressed in the Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954 and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 1961. The 1954 Convention on the Status of the Stateless Persons was the first attempt to deal with the problem of statelessness in its own right. The Convention require the states to grant to stateless persons many of the rights accorded to citizens under the national law. The Convention protects stateless person in all but exceptional circumstances. The definition as given in the Convention excludes large number of persons who have no effective nationality.\textsuperscript{16}

The Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, 1961 did not provide for an independent tribunal in front of which stateless person could press his nationality claim. However, the Convention did provide for the establishment of a body within the framework of the United Nations to which a person claiming for the benefit of this convention can apply for examination of his claim.\textsuperscript{17} The right of all persons to a nationality was reiterated in the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)\textsuperscript{18} and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)\textsuperscript{19}, but again no procedure or measures were mandated. Only recently the issue of stateless has received some attention and the Executive Committee of High Commissioner has adopted a conclusion on the Prevention and Reduction of Statelessness and the Protection of Stateless Persons which reiterates the need for UN High Commissioner for Refugees to act more actively to promote the welfare of stateless persons.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{2.4. Citizenship movement of Chakma people}

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh has systematically denied the Chakmas and Hajongs access to social, political and economic rights to which they are entitled under Indian and international law. In addition to it, the state government has not checked intimidation and threat issued by All Arunachal Pradesh Students’ Union (AAPSU). In fact the government has openly supported Students’ Union activities. In 1980, the state government banned the
employment of Chakmas and Hajongs. It has stopped issuing trade licences to members of the two communities. Furthermore, all trade licences issued to the Chakmas in the late 1960s were seized in 1994. Thus their employment options have been totally sealed off, and the Chakmas and Hajongs are locked in abject poverty. Not only this the state government has steadily dismantled the basic social infrastructure in Chakma and Hajong settlements. In India all legal residents are entitled to ration cards if their income falls below a specific amount. In 1991 the state government discontinued issuance of ration cards to Chakmas and Hajongs. In September 1994, the government began a campaign of school closing, burning and relocations that have effectively denied the Chakmas and Hajongs their right to education. Schools built by Chakmas using community resources were closed down or destroyed. Health facilities in Chakma and Hajong areas are almost nonexistent.²¹

In order to ensure basic human rights of Chakmas and Hajongs an organization called Committee for Citizenship Rights of the Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh (CCRCAP) approached the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) seeking protection of their life and property. The National Human Rights Commission filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court against the state of Arunachal Pradesh. On January 9 1996, the Supreme Court of India in its historic decision directed the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to ensure protection of life and personal liberty of Chakma residents in the state and to process their application for citizenship in accordance with law.²² As the State Election Commission officials refused to enroll the Chakmas and Hajongs, Peoples union of Civil Liberties and the Committee for Citizenship Rights of Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh filed a writ petition before the Delhi High Court against the Election Commission of India. In its judgment on 28 September 2000, the Delhi High Court ordered enrollment of all eligible Chakma and Hajong voters into the electoral rolls.²³ However, the Delhi High Court order was also flouted by the authorities and eligible Chakma and Hajong applicants are not enrolled on frivolous grounds during annual revision of electoral rolls in 2001 and 2002.²⁴
In 2004, 1497 Chakmas and Hajongs who were born in India were enrolled in the state’s electoral roll. Despite that there had been no further progress to the process of enrolling other Chakmas and Hajongs who are citizens of India by birth under the provision of Citizenship Act 1955. Pursuant to the directions of Election Commission of India. On 9 August 2006, the three writ petitions challenging the order of the Election Commission of India of 2 January 2004 directing the concerned Electoral Registration Officer to include names of 1497 Chakma and Hajong voters in the electoral rolls were dismissed by the Gauhati High Court.

2.5. Displacement of Sulungs (Puroiks)

Internal displacement may be caused by variety of factors but sometimes even well intentioned government policy may cause internal displacement as in the case of Sulung tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. The Sulungs are a small homogenous community living for centuries in erstwhile Kameng and Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. The word Sulung means ‘slave’ as per local vocabulary but now they prefer to call themselves as ‘puroiks’. From time immemorial the Sulungs remain as virtual slaves of the Nyishi community earlier called Daflas. However, the relationship between the two tribes is more of a feudal arrangement rather than slavery. In course of time, some members of the Sulung community got educated and became aware of their social status in the society and spearheaded a movement of struggle against their masters to get freedom.

In 1964 the government of Arunachal Pradesh took a decision to put a stop to the continuance of such an undemocratic system and liberated the Sulungs by paying Rs. 500/ to the masters for each adult slave. The government also spent a substantial amount for the rehabilitation of the liberated Sulungs. But even after that when a study was conducted by the government of Arunachal Pradesh in 1996 at the initiative of the Hon’ble Supreme Court of India, more than 3,540 bonded labours (Sulungs) were identified. However the decision of the government created a big problem. While the problems faced by the masters for
liberation of their Sulung working force were mostly of economic nature. The problems faced by the liberated Sulungs were of serious magnitude as it has caused large scale internal displacement of the Sulung community.  

To rehabilitate the newly liberated Sulungs a colony was constituted between Naharlagun and Itanagar called Taniang Colony. The colony was constituted purely on voluntary basis. A welfare society called the All Puroik Welfare Society (APWS) has taken up steps for rehabilitation and other welfare measures for the Sulungs. However, government grants are not forthcoming to rehabilitate the displaced Sulungs. The inhabitants of the colony have been experiencing the lack of basic amenities like road, water supply, electricity and school. They have become virtually sandwiched between liberation and lack of proper rehabilitation.  

2.6. Development related displacement in Arunachal Pradesh

The state of Arunachal Pradesh has huge potential to generate hydro-electric power. As per the estimates made by the Capital Electrical Authority (CEA), Arunachal Pradesh has the potential to generate 56,000 MW hydro-electric power, the highest in the country. At present the state has been focusing on developing its huge hydro power potential. The state has set up the Department of Hydro Power Development to oversee, coordinate and monitor hydropower development. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with central power generators and integrated power developers (IPD) for the development of 135 hydroelectric power plants, with an aggregate capacity of 25,722 MW.  

The construction of the 2000 MW Lower Subansiri Hydro Electric Project is the biggest hydro electric project undertaken in India so far and currently under construction at Gerukamukh in Dhemaji district bordering Arunachal Pradesh. The project is being built by the National Hydro Electric Power Corporation (NHPC) Limited on the river Subansiri.
In February 2006, the state government signed a Memorandum of understanding with three leading private companies namely Reliance Energy, Jaypee and DS Constructions for developing five mega hydro power projects in Siang valley.\(^{33}\)

In September 2006, Arunachal Pradesh Government signed at least three MoU with the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited for implementations of hydroelectric projects by NHPC. The projects include Tawang Hydroelectric Projects-I and II in Tawang district on Tawangchu river and the Dibang multipurpose project, which is a hydropower cum flood moderation scheme over Dibang river near Roing in Lower Dibang Valley district. Another project, Sippi hydroelectric project on river Sippi in upper Subansiri district is under active construction.\(^{34}\) Obviously these dams will cause huge displacement apart from destroying bio-diversity.

The 405 MW Ranganadi Hydro Electric Project (RHEP) stage I that has already come up in Arunachal Pradesh does not give much faith to the local people for commissioning other plans. The project diverts the flow of Ranganadi river into the Dikrong river because of which water flows in the river have gone down drastically. As a result fields have gone dry because the channels that were made to carry water to the fields have become dry. Horticulture, which is a very important source of livelihood to the people of the area has almost finished. Further, due to reduction of water flow in the river fishes are also gone.\(^{35}\)

For the last few years there has been controversy regarding construction of dams in Arunachal Pradesh. It is true that due to low population density the numbers of people displaced by projects in Arunachal Pradesh appear to be small. However social impacts of these projects are likely to be huge. This is because majority of the population consists of tribes with distinct identities and customs, dependent directly on land, forests and rivers for their sustenance. For instance the Subansiri (lower) project in West Siang district is supposed to displace only 38 families from two villages. But the impact is likely to be much bigger as the project will adversely affect the natural resource base on which people in the area depend for agriculture, fishing and other goods and services.\(^{36}\) The Subansiri dam is also likely to have serious impacts downstream as it will disrupt
the pattern of natural flow of the river. In particular, the Subansiri valley downstream is filled with wetlands called beels, which are important source of livelihood of many people. The impact will be felt even further downstream, in the riparian state of Assam too.

However the biggest impact of dam construction is likely to be on the culture and identity of local people. The local population of Arunachal Pradesh consists of about 20 major and several other smaller tribes. These tribes have their distinct identity, language, customs and traditions. As total population of these tribes small in number they are excessively vulnerable to the influx of outsiders that is likely to take place when such huge infrastructure projects are constructed. For instance, in the place where Dibang project is supposed to be constructed Idu-Mishmi is the major tribe. The entire population of the tribe is only 11,021. According to environment impact assessment report of the project, it is expected that a work force numbering about 5800 will come into the area from outside. Now, it can be easily determined what would be the impact on the local population. It has to be noted here that Idu-Mishmi tribe and language has been identified as one of the ‘endangered languages and locations of the world by the United Nations Educational, scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)."}

2.7. Displacement caused by other developmental activities

Tea plantation in Arunachal Pradesh is of recent origin. Vast tracts of forest hill slopes having community ownership of the land along with the favourable climatic condition present immense potential for tea cultivation in the state. Mass acquisition of land by planters in the Lohit, Changlang and Tirap districts have diminished the scope of expansion of agricultural land. Particularly, in the case of Lathao, where chief’s family has occupied almost all the village land for tea plantation. The action has deprived the common villagers from access to agricultural land, thereby resulting in migration of villagers to other remote areas and the nearby urban centers. The estates are generally set up by obtaining Land Occupation Certificates (LOC) from the district administration, despite the fact that the land in principle belong to the village community as a whole. The unsuspecting villagers enter into such negotiations with the estate owners, which
ultimately lead to the gradual displacement of villagers. As tea planters bring skilled workers from other places crowding the place and putting additional pressure on village resources.39

In Arunachal Pradesh, indigenous people are mostly dependent on land and forests. Land ownership pattern in Arunachal Pradesh is by and large community based. As per State of Forest Report, 1999 of Forest Survey of India Arunachal Pradesh has 82% forest cover which is about 62 percent of the total geographical area out of which 12 percent of the area is covered by protected and reserved forests, 12 percent includes reserve forests or national parks that cannot be used for development purpose. The remaining 38 percent of the total forest area is marked as unclassified state forest where customary laws prevail and the state cannot intervene without prior consultation with village authorities.40

Till date, no land settlement has been conducted in the state, nor any ownership patta has been issued to any tribal. The Jhum Land Regulation of 1947, which gives sanctity to the customary right to jhum land in favour of village or a community over jhum land. Thus a tribal may own a vast stretch of land, but when the land is taken up for development scheme and the question of claiming compensation arises, as a beneficiary, he is required to get his land demarcated and registered in his name because, development schemes are usually targeted to benefit an individual beneficiary.41 Sometimes when the developers cannot purchase land from those who do not legally own it, they resort to unfair means to wrestle land away from tribal control.

3. Naga uprising and displacement in Manipur

3.1. Background of Naga movement and consequent displacement

Naga people’s struggle for independence is one of the world’s oldest struggle for self-determination in independent India. After the transfer of power in 1947, the Nagas along with several frontier groups refused to join India and launched a resistance movement. The legendary Naga leader Zapo Phizo spearheaded the movement with the Naga National Council (NNC). Phizo demanded integration of
Naga inhabited areas of Manipur. Under Phizo, the Nagas declared their independence from the British on the 14 August, 1947, a day ahead of India’s independence on 15 August 1947. NNC led a guerilla movement which resulted in violent crackdown by India’s security forces. In 1951 a voluntary plebiscite was held in order to determine whether Nagas would come under the dominion of Indian Union or live by themselves. The result was that 99.9 per cent of the people were in favour of independence. In pursuance of their declared national decision, the Naga people launched Civil Disobedient Movement and successfully boycotted the general election of free India.

The colonial regime saw the Naga people as subjects. Similarly the Indian state was also unwilling to see them differently, as its national leaders were engaged in in the process of nation building through citizenship and territorializing India’s inherited frontiers. Pacifying the Nagas therefore, remained a problematic proposal for India.  

In 1963, when Nagaland was formed as a separate state within the Indian Union militants were not satisfied and continued their freedom struggle. In 1975, a section of militant leaders came out and signed Shillong Accord. Under the Accord, the militants were asked to accept without condition, the Constitution of India. This irritated leaders like Issac Swu and T. Muivah, who openly denounced the Shillong Accord and decided to continue their struggle. By aligning with S.S. Khaplang a leader of Kanyak Nagas the two radical leaders formed the Nationalist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) IN 1980. But NSCN suffered a jolt in 1988 when the organization was split into two factions one led by Swu and Muiva and the other by Khaplang.

However, the Government of India adopted a major policy shift towards the Naga insurgency in 1990s and made several attempts to negotiate peace with insurgent groups. Govt. of India concluded a ceasefire agreement with Muiva faction of NSCN in the year 1997 and later negotiated a similar ceasefire agreement with Khaplang faction of NSCN in 2001. The decision of the government to extend ceasefire agreement to all Naga areas in the Northeast was met with violent protest in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The
ceasefire agreement was seen as a step towards the establishment of a greater Naga state which could infringe on the territory of the neighbouring states. Some 5,000 Nagas, fearing revenge attacks fled the Imphal valley in Manipur to Naga dominated districts in Manipur and Nagaland. According to Naga International Support Centre, most of those internally displaced have returned to their homes.\textsuperscript{44} The riots forced the Indian government to reverse their decision, and limit the ceasefire to Nagaland only.

\section*{3.2. Background of the Kuki-Naga conflict}

Manipur has witnessed large scale forced displacement during the early part of 1990s till the end of the last decade. Manipur is inhabited by 29 recognizes tribes, six scheduled castes besides Meiteis and Muslims.\textsuperscript{45} Majority of these people originated from Mongoloid stock. Approximately one tenth of the total geographical area of Manipur is comprised of hills and these hills are inhabited by which can be broadly categorizes as Nagas and Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups. The valley portion of the state is inhabited by the majority Meiteis, Manipuri Muslims (Meitei Pangal) and few tribals. The Nagas and Meiteis claimed to be original settlers of the present day Manipur and they have similarities in customs, traditions and lifestyle though majority of the people of both the communities adopted different religions. \textsuperscript{46} There is no particular district in Manipur which is exclusively inhabited by any group. Out of nine districts in Manipur four districts in the valley are dominated by Meiteis and five in hills dominated by Nagas Kukis and other kin tribes. The Nagas constitute the major group in three districts of the hills namely Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong and one district Churachandpur is overwhelmingly dominated by Kuki tribe. The fifth district Chandel is inhabited evenly by both the Kukis and Nagas.\textsuperscript{47}

The Kuki-Chin-Mizo groups are believed to have originated from the hills of Burma (Myanmar) and its surrounding hills and some of them settled in the hills of Manipur and spread to other areas of the state. The group is said to be nomadic in nature and in course of time these people migrated to the hills of Manipur in search of cultivable lands and other economic activities. However both the Nagas and Kuki-Chin groups practiced jhuming cultivation and they
have similarities in mode of cultivation despite the fact that they belong to entirely different racial stocks. 48

The Meitei Muslims or Meitei Pangals have been living in Manipur since seventeenth century. They adopted Meitei language as their mother language and now form an integral part of the society of Manipur. Many Indian communities such as Biharis, Bengalis, Marwaris and Nepalis came to Manipur during the colonial period. After independence the Punjabis, Tamils and others settled in Manipur.49

3.3. Kuki Naga conflict

There was no major conflict between Kuki and Naga tribes during the reign of the kings, the British period or the post independence period and both the tribes had been living in perfect harmony since time immemorial. Kuki is a generic term for a large number of sub-tribes and clans. There had been intermarriages between the two groups and practiced the same religious faith that is Christianity. But from the middle of 1992, conflict between the two groups resulted in wanton killing and kidnappings, burning and destruction of houses. Conflict had forced the common people to flee from their original place of settlement. A large number of people affected by ethnic clashes moved to villages and towns where there is sense of security and more economic opportunities leading to significant change in demography in the hills districts of the state. As a result of that the population in the state’s least populated district Chandel that had only 71,014 as per 1991 census jumped to 1,18327 in 2001 census.50 Four other hill districts of the state namely Senapati, Churachandpur, Ukhrul and Tamenglong also showed the same trend.51

The conflict between the Nagas and Kukis reported to be originated in Moreh town of the Chandel district. However, no study had been conducted to find out the actual cause of the conflict whether by the Government or by any other group. The people who became causalities in the clashes were confused as to why they were targeted. Unestablished reports published in both national and local newspapers pointed to the theory of ‘ethnic cleansing’.52 It implies that one
of the Naga rebel group tried to expel all the non-Naga population out of some of the districts of Manipur in order to obtain a territory dominated by Nagas, that might eventually help them to form a greater Nagaland.

The United Naga Council (UNC) of Manipur, which has close relations with the NSCN’s Issac-Muivah faction, issued ‘quit notice’ to all Kukis who lived in the state. A new militia, Naga Lim Guards, formed by Nagas of Manipur as a back-up force to the NSCN came into existence and they started rampant attacks against the Kukis. The worst carnage occurred at Zopui, a remote hill village north of the state capital Imphal, where 87 Kuki males were beheaded one night. The NSCN alleged that the Kuki National Front (KNF) and some other militant groups enjoyed support of the Indian Army and were helping them to curb activities of NSCN.

The Kuki militants retaliated in the few areas where they had their control. Soon fierce tribal feud took place between the two groups. The Kuki Inpi- the Kuki tribe’s representative body submitted a series of memorandums to the Indian and the Manipur governments, demanding more security and restoration of their lands to the Kuki owners. It is only in 1998 the Indian government reacted and formally asked the Manipur government to furnish details and comments on the charges made by Kuki Inpi. The violence was finally controlled after Baptist Church intervened and convinced the leaders of both Naga and Kuki communities to accept a ceasefire agreement. According to the Manipur government not more than 15,000 Nagas and Kukis had been permanently displaced. However it was only in those districts where one ethnic group was in total dominance and the others find their position untenable because of which groups forced to move out.

3.4. Sadar hills issue

Another issue that divides the Kukis and Nagas, is that of Sadar Hills issue. Prior to the Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919, there was practically no administration in the hill areas. The British divided the hills of Manipur into north-east and southwest subdivisions with headquarters at Ukhrul and Tamenglong.
respectively. Later on in 1933, another subdivision was created for administrative convenience called Sadar subdivision with its headquarter at Kongpokpi. After independence when princely state was merged with the Indian Union in 1949 and districts were re-organized, the Sadar Hills subdivision was put under the newly formed North district, later on renamed as Senapati district. While the Nagas of Manipur are against the conversion of Sadar Hills into full-fledged revenue district, claiming the area belong to them, the Kukis are pressing for creation of Sadar hills district. In 1974, the Nayal Commission was appointed which not only recommended for creation of Sadar Hills district, but also suggested for inclusion of some villages of Senapati and Ukhrul districts in the proposed Sadar Hills district for administrative convenience and development.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{3.5. Kuki-Paite conflict}

The Paites are the ethnic cousins of Kukis but had developed close ties with the Nagas. There is no particular history of conflicts between the two communities. The Paites tribe constitutes fifth largest tribe in Manipur and inhabits mainly in Churachandpur district of Manipur. According to Paite sources, misunderstanding over the issue of nomenclature was the cause of the conflict. The Kukis on the other hand, states that during the height of Kuki-Naga conflict, the Paites instead of supporting them, maintained closer relation with the Nagas both at the underground and over ground levels. However, the main reason appears to be the apprehension of the Paites that the Kukis displaced as a result of Kuki Naga conflict would dominate and subrogate them in various ways.\textsuperscript{59} The Paites killed 210 Kukis in clashes and lost 298 of their own tribesmen during the feud. Three thousand houses in 47 villages were destroyed and 22,000 Kukis and Paites were displaced.\textsuperscript{60}

Finally, in 1998, an agreement between the leaders of the Zomi Council and the Kuki-Inpi brought an end to the Kuki- Paite feud. Both the parties agreed that the nomenclature Kuki and Zomi shall be mutually respected by all. It was also agreed that any land, building, house and quarter wrongfully and illegally occupied shall be returned and restored to the rightful owner and no Kuki and
Zomi militant shall indulge in any forcible collection of taxes against their counterpart.\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{3.6. Meitei-Pangal Muslim conflict}

On May 3, 1993 an aberration had taken place in the history of ethnic relations between Meiteis and Meitei Pangals (Manipuri Muslims). The feud was provoked by a militant group called People’s Republican Army (PRA) which left 102 Muslims dead and five Meiteis killed. Fortunately the trouble did not last long and displacement was virtually nil but many Muslim villages were burnt down.\textsuperscript{62} The People’s Republican Army had a deal with one Md. Adonbi for arms purchase. However, Mr. Adonbi failed to deliver arms as per the agreement. When three PRA men tried to take away the Yamaha belonging to Adonbi, he started shouting and some people gathered and beaten up the RPA men. The following day the PRA men spread the rumors that Muslims had seriously beaten up the Meiteis. This was how the conflict started.

\textbf{3.7. Hmar displacement}

For a long time Meitei militants had used the Tipaimukh subdivision as their stronghold after they were flushed out of Sajik Tampak area of Chandel district, close to the Myanmar border. They were then allies of the Hmar militant group Hmar People’s Convention (HPC). But towards the middle of 1995 the two groups fell out as many Kuki militant groups at that time entered into a clandestine accord with the army. As a result army crackdown began on the Meitei insurgent groups and bitterness between Meitei militants and Hmar militant groups grew. On January 16, 2006 a group of 18 militants attacked the villagers at Lungthulien and brutally killed 400 people and allegedly raped 21 girls. After the incident more than 800 Hmar villagers fled their villages and took shelter in neighbouring Mizoram. As on October 24, 2006 more than 600 Hmar villagers have returned to their homes from Sakawrdai refugee camp in Mizoram.\textsuperscript{63}
3.8. Conflict among Kukis, Nagas and Meiteis

There are some other reasons for creating feeling of hatred and mistrust among Kukis, Nagas and Meiteis. The first issue is the inclusion of Manipur language in the eight schedule of the Constitution of India. It has created widespread apprehension among the tribals. The tribals feared that their languages and cultures would be in danger if Manipuri linguistic policy is adopted. There were instances where the imposition of language on minority communities caused political unrest in Northeast India. The adoption of Assamese language led to the creation of Mizoram, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh.\textsuperscript{64}

The second issue is the extension of sixth schedule to the hill areas created misunderstanding between Meiteis and tribals. The Meiteis’ move to extend Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms Act, 1960 to the hill areas has been interpreted by the tribals as threat to their rights over land. It has to be noted that even though the Act was meant for the whole territory of Manipur, the hill areas were exempted from the purview of the Act.\textsuperscript{65}

3.9. Tipaimukh project, its impact and displacement

The Government of India has taken up a project for construction of a dam for the purpose of power generation in the confluence of Barak and Turai rivers in south western corner of Manipur over Barak river. The Tipaimukh project was conceived as a multipurpose storage project in Churachandpur district of Manipur. The project has been one of the most controversial mega development project. The Barak valley or the Cachar plain is the natural flooding plain of the Barak river and the proposed Tipaimukh dam is an attempt to control frequent flooding in the lower Barak plain.

The dam will permanently submerge an area of 275 square kilometers of prime farmland and displace 60,000 people in the state of Manipur. A large number of these people belonging to Zeliangrong and Hmar tribes will be displaced permanently and deprived of the right to their environment and to their age old occupation.\textsuperscript{66} Official figures state that 1,461 Hmar families will be directly
displaced due to the project, but the number of villages to be affected is yet to be independently verified. Huge areas of cultivated and cultivable land, particularly in the Tamenglong district and some of the orchard areas in the Churachandpur district will be submerged. Moreover the people use the river extensively for transportation as road connectivity is poor. They carry Bamboo and ginger through the Tuirai river to Barak and then all the way to Lakhimpur in lower Assam.\textsuperscript{67}

The site selected for the Tipaimukh project is located in most ecologically sensitive and topographically fragile region. The entire Northeastern region falls under one of the most seismically volatile regions in the entire world. Another important aspect of seismic activity is that shallow earthquakes are far more disastrous than the deeper ones even if the magnitude is relatively low. The majority of earthquakes that take place on the western side of Manipur are shallow due to the nature of tectonic setting of the Indo-Burma range.\textsuperscript{68} Under these circumstances, wisdom of constructing a huge dam needs to be thoroughly discussed and investigated.

The project makes no mention of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries in the submergence zone. There are, in fact, two important wildlife sanctuaries, Kailam and Bunning. This area is one of the most important bird areas in the Sino-Himalayan temperate forest, Sino-Himalayan subtropical forest and Indo-Chinese tropical moist forest. About 160 endemic fish species have been recorded from the Barak drainage system.\textsuperscript{69} Thus it is clear from these facts that the project report has been prepared without conducting serious research in the area.

For the last several years people have used all possible democratic means to seek Government’s intervention to stop the project. Five public hearings conducted by the government have been boycotted. But there is no response from the government and all went into deaf ears.

One of the most disastrous consequences of large dams are the long term health impacts due to drastic changes in the ecological balance, displacement and loss of livelihood, sudden alterations in the demographic character of the area and
movement of large number of people involved in construction and other activities. There is no indication that these factors have been considered in case of Tipaimukh dam.

4. Displacement in Tripura

The two states Assam and Tripura accounted for the bulk of the internally displaced population in Northeast India. Tripura is surrounded by Bangladesh on the north, south and west. Before the merger of Tripura into the Indian Union on 15th October 1949 it was a princely state. During that time the state of Tripura was much bigger than the present one and large parts of eastern Bengal called Chakla Roshanabad now a part of Bangladesh was included in it.

4.1. Background for ethnic conflicts

Tripura was an independent princely state during the British rule. It was independent in the sense that the Manikya King was obliged only to pay annual tax and royalty to the British and in turn British did not interfere into the day to day administration of the state. Before the state was merged with the Indian Union, nearly three fourth of its revenue came from these areas of East Bengal.

After independence, the whole picture changed suddenly. The plains of Tripura or Chakla Roshanabad went to East Pakistan. As a result, the economy of Tripura was badly affected. Chakla Roshanabad which produced surplus revenue, was taken away from Tripura. The railway lines that connected the commercial centers of Tripura with that of East Pakistan was severed after independence.

The indigenous people of Tripura are basically tribals who have been poor and marginalized as compared to the non-tribal people of the state. The tribal people in the hills practice jhum cultivation. Jhum cultivation barely produces surplus, and it simply meets the basic necessities of their lives.
4.2. Migration of Bengali people, ethnic conflict and growth of insurgency

Following partition a large number of Hindu Bengali entered into Tripura from Chakla Roshanabad resulting in sudden pressure of migratory population in the area. The influx of large number of people over a long period of time brought about demographic changes in the state. The indigenous people, who accounted for 95 percent of the population of Tripura in the 1931 census, had been reduced to just 31 percent at the time of the 1991 census. This has resulted serious discontent among the tribals, who have become minority in their own land. The demographic explosion which reduced the tribals to minority created fear psychosis in the minds of the tribal people and paved the way for ethnic conflict.

The continuous influx of Bengali people from erstwhile Bangladeshi intensified the progressive alienation of tribal lands and traditional forest rights. As the Bengali migrants practiced relatively advanced pattern of wet-rice cultivation compared to the age-old jhum cultivation, there were large scale transfer of cultivable land of the tribal people to the Bengali migrants. Almost all writers on Tripura insurgency have identified land alienation amongst the tribal people as the major cause that has fuelled the violent insurgency in the state. In settled agricultural areas like Khowai and Sadar, between twenty to forty per cent of the tribal lands have been alienated by the end of seventies, when tribal insurgency gathered momentum. In some parts of south Tripura district, as much as sixty per cent of the tribal lands were sold in distress conditions as a sequel to an unequal economic competition with the Bengali settlers.

As a consequence of influx of large number of migrants, a growing number of ethno-centric tribal parties mushroomed. The Debar Commission and Hanumathiya Commission which looked into the development of the Schedule Tribes (STs) and Schedule Castes (SCs) suggested a tribal compact area to fulfill the aspirations of development of the tribal people. In the mean time government enacted the Tripura Land Refoms and Resoration Act in 1960 to restore alienated tribal land. The Act was amended in 1964. But all these efforts failed to prevent continuing land alienation, creating a mistrust and betrayal among the tribals. This led to the formation of Tripura Upajati Juba Samity
Its main objectives were restoration of tribal land, formation of Autonomous District Council and introduction of Kok-barak language.

The Sengkrak movement, Tripura's first manifestation of ethnic militancy started in 1967 as a direct fall-out of the large scale alienation of tribal lands. The ruling Congress government backed the forcible occupation of tribal lands in the Deo valley by the Swasti Samity an organization of Bengali settlers. After that Reang tribesmen also organized themselves into a military group to retaliate against the Bengali settlers. The Sengkrak organization was subsequently outlawed by the state. The state witnessed serious ethnic conflicts between tribal and non-tribals since 1980 till March 2002 and during the conflict about 2000 Bengalis killed and more than 100000 Bengalis displaced in the state.

In an attempt to tackle tribal insurgency, the state government enacted Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council Act under the sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India with a view to empowering indigenous people to bring all round developments so as to protect and preserve their culture, customs and traditions.

Emergence of large number of tribal insurgent groups such as Tripura National Volunteer (TNV), All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), Borok National Council of Tripura (BNCT), Bru National Security Force (BNSF), Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT), Indigenous National Party of Tripura (INPT) created a chaotic situation in Tripura. In 1999 United Bengali Liberation Front (UBLF) was formed with an objective to counter the attack of tribal insurgents.

Thus the internal displacement in the state have been due to the clashes between tribals and non-tribals, secondly the attacks by the tribal and Bengali insurgent groups in isolated villages and lastly fleeing of the villagers fearing retaliation from the other community. The pattern of insurgent attacks since 1993 shows that the tribal insurgent groups not only attacked the non-tribals but also resorted to the burning of their houses. The census figure of 1931 and 1941 show that the state was a tribal majority state. But the tribal population in 1951
reduced to 36.85 per cent when major influx of Bengalis took place after the partition of India in 1947. The percentage of tribal population came down further to 30.94 per cent in 1991 as influx of Bengalis continued in the later years. 76

Ethnic tension and consequent displacement in Tripura is a by product of land alienation owing to demographic change. Probably Tripura is the only state in India which has been transformed from a predominantly tribal state to a predominantly non-tribal state due to demographic explosion. The paradox in the state is that the Tripuris who are supposed to exercise political control over the state has been politically displaced.

4.3. Dumber hydel project and displacement

The loss of land at the level of individual was further aggravated by the loss of large area of arable lands owned by tribals in the Raima valley due to the commissioning of the Gumti hydel project in South Tripura. A thirty-metre high dam was constructed across the river Gumti about 3.5 kms upstream of Tirthamukh in South Tripura district for generating electric power. The project submerged a valley area of 46.34 sq.km. This was one of the most fertile region in an otherwise hilly state, where arable flatlands suitable for wet rice cultivation is a mere 28 per cent of its total land area. Official records suggest 2558 tribal families were ousted from the Gumti project area, these were families who could produce land deeds and were officially owners of the land they possessed. Unofficial estimates varied between 8000 to 10000 families or about sixty to seventy thousand tribal people displaced by the project.77 It has to be noted here that in the tribal societies of Northeast, ownership of land is rarely personal and the system of recording land deeds against individual names is a recent phenomenon. 78 As a result majority of the people ousted by the Dumber project failed to get any rehabilitation grant and were forced to settle in the hills around the project and returned to slash and burn agriculture called jhum cultivation thereby caused irreparable damage to the ecology of the upper catchment of the river Gumti. 79
Prior to the commissioning of the dam, the hills around the project area were sparsely populated and the area was covered by dense forests supporting wildlife. The area was an abode of deer, bears, wild boars, tigers, elephants and wide variety of jungle cats. Vegetation around the project area was very rich with flora and fauna. The commissioning of the hydel project has opened the rich forest areas to the illegal logging by the businessmen backed by politicians as well as by some insurgent groups causing further damage to the ecology in the area.  

If the landless tribal of Tripura are given back their land by decommissioning the Gumti Hydel Project rather than persisting on such a small and insufficient project, it would go a long way to improve their financial empowerment.

4.4. Border fencing

In Tripura another source of displacement has been the fence built along the border with Bangladesh. Tripura shares 856 km long border with Bangladesh. India has been erecting barbed wire fencing to prevent cross border infiltration and smuggling militant movement and trans-border crime. India shares its longest border with Bangladesh which is also porous. The border runs through jungles, hills, villages, paddy and jute fields making it easy to cross. It is a known fact that many militant groups have set up their training camps in Bangladesh and members of different militant groups move into the Indian side from Bangladesh through the porous border.

The building of fence on the Indian side of the border has created a lot of controversies leading to occasional exchange of fire between the border forces of the two countries. The Central Government tried to set up the border fencing at zero point but Bangladesh Government raised objection on the ground of Indira-Mujib Agreement. As a result, India had decided to build the fence 150 yards from the zero point. The barbed wire fencing along the Tripura-Bangladesh border uprooted about 40,000 people from their homes. They were not provided rehabilitation. About 11,375 hectares of cultivable land belonging to farmers fell outside the international border due to the border fencing. These people have
been leading a life of uncertainty because the government has been unable to rehabilitate them due to scarcity of funds. Even the Union Government rejected their plea to provide assistance by saying that it is up to the State Government to provide assistance to the displaced. If the fencing could have been erected on the zero line of the international border, this problem of displacement would not have come up.⁸⁴

Ethnic tension in Tripura is a by product of land alienation owing to demographic change. Therefore it is obvious that peace can be brought about only through land restoration, poverty alleviation, education and development particularly in rural areas. Problems of indigenous people of Tripura have been continuously ignored by the successive governments. Instead of exercising control over their land these indigenous people have found themselves politically displaced.

5. Displacement in Mizoram

Mizoram was one of the districts of Assam until it became a union territory in 1972. It became a full fledged state in 1987. At present the state has eight districts and three autonomous district councils.

The word Mizoram means the land of hill people. Earlier Mizoram was called Lushai hills. Mizo people belong to Tibeto-Burman group and has close relation with that of Chin people in the adjacent Chin state of Myanmar, as well as those of the Nagas, Kukis and others. The Mizo people is the combination of many distinct ethnic tribes who have their own particular tradition and cultures and have similarities in many ways. Some tribes living outside the state of Mizoram may be easily included under the term Mizo but instead they call themselves ‘Zomi’.

5.1. Bru/Reang-Mizo conflict

The Mizo people have always lived in isolation and they have strong attachment to their homeland. Therefore, if any minority tribal group talks of autonomy or creation of separate district council for themselves, Mizos consider it as an
attempt to fragment the Mizo state and become very emotional. To counter such demands of minority tribal groups Mizos branded them as outsiders. All sorts of attempts are made to nullify their claims like deleting their names from the voter’s list, questioning the census report. This has happened to Reang community presently known as Bru which is the second largest tribal group of Mizoram. The trouble started when Bru National Union (BNU), a political party of Reang, formed in early 90s passed a resolution in 1997 demanding an Autonomous District Council for Reangs within Mizoram. According to Brus leaders, their cultural practices were obstructed and they were forced to adopt Mizo language. Despite their having native language Kokborok they were forced to accept Mizo language as medium of instruction. Bru leaders also alleged that the names of about 20,000 Reangs were deleted from electoral rolls. 85

In 1997 the Mizos had reportedly unleashed a wave of terror against the minority Reangs. As many as 35,000 to 50,000 people belonging to Reang tribe crossed over from Mizoram to Tripura since October 1997 following atrocities committed against them allegedly by Mizo tribes. 86 Reang women were raped and men beaten up and killed. The Reang militant group, which calls itself the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) started attacking Mizoram police and that further provoked the Mizos to commit atrocities on the Reangs who straddle Mizoram’s western border with Tripura. The Tripura Government says that 30,690 Reangs belonging to 6,859 families have fled into Tripura during the period of three years. But the Mizoram government refuses to accept them. They say that the Tripura Government has not given details of residence of 10,435 people belonging to 2,075 families. Therefore their claim to be residents of Mizoram is untenable. 87

Members of the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) that is Mizo Students’ Union and Young Mizo Association (YMA) systematically used voter list to identify the Reangs as outsiders. On the direction of the Election Commission of India, many Reangs were enrolled in the voter list. However only 1733 voters out of 2406 in Kawrthah and 971 out of total 1240 voters in Phuldungsei constituencies could cast their votes through postal ballots in the bye-election held on 10 December 2005 as the
YMA and MZP members physically prevented them from exercising their constitutional rights.\(^{88}\)

In April 2005, the Mizoram government and BNLF signed an agreement after 13 rounds of talks to solve the decade old ethnic conflict. As a result about 1000 militants of BNLF and Bru Liberation Front (BLF) surrendered. In the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) there was no time frame for repatriation of Bru IDPs. Rather MoU provides for the identification of the so called genuine Brus and exposes Mizoram Government’s tacit support MZP and YMA which try to uproot Brus from their hearts and homes.\(^{89}\)

As of in January 2006, in the relief camps under Kanchanpur sub-division in North Tripura over 34,000 displaced Brus were living in sub-human conditions. The daily cash dole of Rs.2.90 i.e. Rs.87 was given to each adult Bru which is extremely discriminatory in comparison to the displaced Kashmiri Pandits from Jammu and Kashmir who have been given Rs.800/- per month. In the 2001 census report new born babies have been included only in the census but not in the relief cards to makes them eligible for food items. Those who have become adults in the last five years continue to be given rations as minors.\(^{90}\)

Medical facilities are almost non-existent. Doctors visit the camp only when death of the inmates in the camps takes place in epidemic proportion. Conditions of children and pregnant women are worse. As there are no primary health care centers, pregnant women are forced to deliver at the relief camps. As a result maternity death is quite high.\(^{91}\)

Most tube wells are out of order. The Brus are forced to drink water from streams and ponds, causing water born diseases. Sanitation facilities in the camps are almost non-existent. No education facilities are provided to the Bru displaced children living in camps. Over 5,000 minors have been denied the right to education.\(^{92}\)

About 30,000 Bru displaced persons taking shelter in Tripura have agreed to return to their homes in Mizoram following assurances from the Ministry of Home
Affairs on 5 January 2011 through ACHR for the sustainable development of the returnee Brus. Government has agreed to pay an amount of Rs.80,000 cash assistance to each Bru family and one year free ration.  

5.2. Insurgency in Mizoram

Insurgency in Mizoram was led by Mizo National Front (MNF) that started with the infamous famine of 1960s, and ended with the Mizo Peace Accord of 1986. Every fifty years with the flowering of bamboos comes the crisis of food known as ‘mautam’. The flowers attracted rats like honey draws bees and millions of rats swarmed the jungles and rice and vegetables fields, devouring everything leading to starvation and death of people. After the Peace Accord the former insurgent leaders were absorbed into the political stream in the state and since then the state has remained more or less peaceful except for the peripheral conflict of Brus or Reangs.

The autonomy movement in Mizoram can be traced back to the pre-independence period and has two distinct dimensions. One is the movement of abolition of chieftainship, with the objective of acquiring democratic self-government and achieve a ‘Greater Mizoram’, which was internal in nature, and the other is to attain complete independence and to achieve a greater Mizoram that was external in nature.

There are various causes for the growth of insurgency that engulfed Mizoram for several years. Exploitation by chiefs, poverty, economic imbalance, lack of civic amenities, poor communication, lack of contact between the government and people and a long history of neglect, internal corruption, nepotism, favouritism and non-participation in the processes of development alienated the people from the ruling elites. Further differences in culture, language, religion, habit etc. also contributed towards the growth of insurgency.

Immediately, after the outbreak of insurgency in Mizoram, the Government of India launched a counter insurgency operations both by land and air. During the operation houses were burnt and demolished, men were arrested and tortured.
As a result, many Mizos had to leave Mizoram and taken shelter in neighbouring states viz., Manipur, Meghalaya. Magnitude of internal displacement during the period of insurgency was so much that at one time Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram was almost empty. But this was not for a long period. Those who fled to interior villages used to come back after two or three weeks. Majority of Mizo families who fled to Manipur and Meghalaya came to Mizoram after staying there for some years. But some of them did not go back to Mizoram and remained there till today.\(^97\)

During insurgency, many private lands were occupied by military and police forces displacing the owners of the lands. For a long period, the owners could not utilize their own land as they were occupied by the said forces. Compensations for the said land were released lately and in most cases the amount was smaller than expected.\(^98\)

### 5.3. Grouping of villages

One of the biggest causes of internal displacement in Mizoram is the grouping of villages during the period of insurgency. The grouping of villages scheme envisaged that the scattered habitations should be brought under grouped villages and named as Progressive and Protected Villages (PPVs). The grouping of villages was undertaken by invoking the Defence of India Rules (DIR) 1962.\(^99\)

Under the order of the Government all buildings, structures in the abandoned areas would be destroyed or rendered useless except religious buildings and places of worship. About 45,000 people from 109 villages were grouped into 18 group centers.\(^100\) Villagers were compelled to move from their old villages even without their consent. Reorganization was done mainly for two objectives to contain the rebel activities of the MNF and to accelerate economic development of Mizoram.

Grouping of villages affected adversely the lives of the people in various ways. As the each village has its own distinct practice and value, therefore effort to integrate the villages had disastrous effect. In addition, food security was experienced almost everywhere. Scarcity of water, medical facilities added to the
problem. Stealing or theft which were very uncommon in the Mizo society became very common in the new environment. Finally, many people returned to their old villages and started their life afresh. But they had to bear the burden of re-shifting by themselves.101

Nearly 45,000 Mizos from 109 villages were herded into 18 group centre guarded by a military company in the first phase of regrouping. In the second phase, another 87,000 Mizos were grouped in 84 Regrouping centers. Almost half of the population of the Mizo hills was affected by the displacement engineered by the army. However, the final phase of regrouping could not be carried out due to stay order issued by the Gauhati High Court.102

6. Internal displacement in Meghalaya

Meghalaya is a small state in the Northeastern region of India. Meghalaya was formed by curving out of two districts of Assam- the United Khasi hills and Jaintia hills, and Garo hills on January 1972. Meghalaya emerged as a separate state following non-violent hill state movement resulted from the redrawing of state boundaries based on linguistic line and the policy of using and promoting regional languages within the states. Khasi, Garo and Jaintia tribes resisted the imposition of Assamese as a state language.

One of the unique feature of the state is that a majority of the tribal population in Meghalaya follows matrimonial system where linage and heritage are traced through women. The state has about eighty five per cent of tribal population and the remaining fifteen per cent comprising of non-tribal population103. The non-tribal communities in Meghalaya are made up of migrants from other parts of India and recent migrants from other parts of India and recent migrants from neighbouring countries particularly Nepal and Bangladesh. The Khasi and Garo tribes fall under the sixth schedule of the constitution that provides for establishment of autonomous district council to enforce customary law, occupation and use of land as well as reservation in parliament, educational institutions and government employment.
Inter-tribal rivalry and common acrimony against the outsiders has led to growth of a number of militant organizations. The first militant tribal council in the state was the Hynniewtreps Achik Liberation Council (HALC). In the Council, Hynniewtreps represented the combined aspirations of Khasis and Jaintias tribes and the Achik represented the Garos, in a common fight against the ‘Dkhars’, a generic term for outsiders. In 1992, the council underwent a split as a result of inter-tribal antagonisms, leading to formation of the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC) and Achik Matgrik Liberation Army (AMLA). Since then the Khasis and Garos have parted ways by forming their own insurgent groups.

The HNLC aims to transform Meghalaya into a state exclusively for the Khasi tribe, which, it claims, has long been dominated by the Garos. The other prominent insurgent group in Meghalaya is the Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC), founded in December 1995, which demands establishment of ‘Achik Land’ in the areas of Garo hills comprising the present districts of Garo hills in Meghalaya and a large chunk of Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam. Other political groups such as the Hill State People’s Democratic Party (HSPDP) fight for the self-governance of the Khasi-Pnar and Garo people. The Garo National Council (GNC) is an independent separatist organization, which demands a Garo State comprising the three districts of the GARO hills in the state.\textsuperscript{104}

It has to be noted here that unlike some of the states in Northeast which have been passing through violent insurgencies, Meghalaya has not yet experienced a full blown insurgency. But large-scale anti-Bengali and anti-Nepali riots have occurred in the capital city of Shillong on several occasions.

Since late eighties, numerous cycles of ethnic cleansing have rocked the state. Nepalis, Bengalis, Marwaris, Biharis have all become target of attack. Nepalis are largely economic migrants and work as labourers and housemaids. Bengalis dominated the bureaucracy and the professions. Marwaris control business activities. However, in Meghalaya. However, unlike some of the states in Northeast which have been passing through violent insurgencies Meghalaya has not yet experienced a full blown insurgency and violent conflict was largely
restricted to Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya. In the 1990s, Bengalis remained the prime target of tribal violence. The pattern was repeated at regular intervals-mostly before or during the main Bengali Hindu festival Durga Puja. Unlike Tripura or Assam only about 50 people had died in these attacks, but that was scary enough to trigger a Bengali exodus. Since the early 1980s, an estimated 25,000-35,000 Bengalis have left Shillong and some other parts of Meghalaya and settled down in West Bengal and other states of India. In 1981, there were 119,571 Bengalis in Meghalaya—8.13 per cent of the state’s population. Ten years later, in 1991 it stood at 144,261—only 5.97 per cent of population. 105

Ethnic conflict between Garo and Rabha communities in December 2010 and January 2011 displaced tens of thousands of people in Assam’s Goalpara district and adjoining East Garo Hill District of Meghalaya along the Assam-Meghalaya border. During conflict ten people had been killed and more than 50,000 persons displaced from both communities. More than 34,000 people took shelter in 37 camps in Assam and over 19,000 in 18 camps in Meghalaya. 106

Rabha people are majority group in Assam but a minority in Meghalaya, while opposite is true for Garo people. Conflict between the two groups took place because of tension between the communities over the legislative and executive status of the Rabha dominated Rabha Hajong Autonomous Council, which covers most of the Goalpara district and Garo groups strongly opposed it. 107

Comment

Most of the native people of the Northeastern region have strong cultural and social similarities with the people of East and Southeast Asia rather than the mainland India. Discriminatory treatment meted to the region is obvious right from the time of post independent period. Development in the region always gets low priority and Indian government maintains an extremely oppressive hold over the region. As a result the region has become the breeding ground of numerous insurgent movements. The ongoing conflict between government forces and rebel groups, and between rebel groups and different ethnic groups has adversely affected lives of the people of the region resulting in serious violation of
human rights, insecure livelihood, difficult working condition and economic backwardness.

It must be admitted that there is dearth of strong and dedicated leadership in the region because of which human resources of the region can not be utilized in an effective and productive way.


7. Interview with Upendra Lal Chakma, published in Grassroot Options, Dec. 1995. Upendra Lal Chakma is a Jumma leader and former Member of Parliament who cited these three events that had completely devastated the Jumma Tribe.


9. The Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace was a treaty that was signed on 19 March 1972. The Treaty forges a close bilateral relations between India and newly established state of Bangladesh. The Treaty is also known as Indira-Mujib Treaty.


13. Sec. 3 (1) (a), Citizenship Act ,1955 reads: except as provided in sub section (2), every person born in India on or after 26 January,1950, but before the 1st day of July, 1987 shall be citizen of India by birth.

14. Sec. 5 (1)(a) reads: persons of Indian origin who are ordinarily resident in India and have been resident for five years immediately before making an application for registration shall be eligible to be registered as citizens of India.

15. Art. 1, Convention on Certain Questions Relating to the Conflict of Nationality Law, the Convention reads: It is for each state to determine under its own law who are its nationals. This law shall be recognizes by other states in so far as it is consistent with international conventions, international customs and the principles of law generally recognizes with regard to nationality.
Art. 1(1), Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless persons, of the Convention defines stateless person as a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of law. Article 1(2) excludes certain categories of person from the application of the convention. (i) the persons who are receiving protection and assistance from organs and agencies of United Nations other than the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; (ii) persons who are recognized by the competent authorities of the country in which they have taken residence as having the rights and obligations which are attached to the possession of nationality of that country; (iii) persons in respect of whom there are serious reasons for considering that: if (a) they have committed a crime against peace, a war crime, or a crime against humanity; (b) they have committed a serious non-political crime outside the country of their residence prior to their admission to that country; (c) if they have been guilty of acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Art. 11.

Art. 24 (3), ICCPR.

Art. 7 (1).

UN Doc. No. 106 (LVII) 6 October 2006.


In this case the Court has held that the State is bound to protect the life and liberty of every human being whether citizen or non-citizen.


Supra, Note 13.


Ibid, p. 63.

Ibid, p. 64.


Informations are based on the field trip made by Dutta and Showren to Taniang Colony, Naharlagun on 23 Oct. 2000.


34 Id.


36 Id.

37 Id.


43 Shillong Accord was signed between representatives of the Naga underground and the Government of India which was the beginning of a series of accords that Government of India signed with separatist rebel groups.


48 Thongbam, loc.cit.

49 Haokip, loc.cit.
Kuki Rebellion of 1917-1919 was the first resistance movement by the Kuki people against the British hegemony. Kuki country was subjugated by the British and divided between British India and British Burma administrations following the Kuki uprising 1917-19. The Kukis were independent people ruled by their chieftains till their defeat in 1919. See “Kuki Peoples” Available at www.en.wikipedia.org, Accessed on 31/08/2011.


Hussain, and Phanjoubam, op.cit., p.32.

Hussain, and Phanjoubam, op.cit., p. 34.

Hoakip, op.cit., p. 224.

Id.


Id.

Id.


Ibid, p.198.


Bhaumik, Subir., loc.cit.

Id.

Id.

Id.


Supra, note 9, The agreement covered several diplomatic, economic, political and other understandings, one of which was that no country would allow any permanent construction within 150 yards the borderline.


Bhaumik, Internal Displacement in South Asia, op.cit., p.163.


Id.
90 Id.
91 Id.
92 Id.


98 Ibid, pp.245-246.

99 Grouping of villages was a method employed by the Union Government in 1967 to contain and crush Mizo insurgency in the hill district of Mizoram. Villages were re-grouped to isolate civilians from insurgents under the provision of Defence of India Rules 1962.

100 Lianzela, op.cit., pp. 246-247.

101 Id.

102 Bhaumik, Internal Displacement in South Asia, op.cit., pp. 164-165


107 Id.