

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion: Findings and Summary

The previous chapters are an attempt to find and analyze the details of the answers to the basic research questions of the present study. In this chapter, the basic findings of the research are tried to incorporate. The findings are based on both the primary and secondary data.

#### 6.1 The basic findings of the study:

The followings are the basic findings of the present study confining to the research questions specifically and broad objectives in general.

*What are the different types of civil society in northeast India?*

North East Region in India is one of the conflict ridden regions of the country. Among the eight north eastern states; Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland are the states where the problem of insurgency is more prominent. However, in north east India five states such as Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur, and Nagaland are suffering a lot because of the continuous strife and violence. Nagaland has the strongest civil society organizations like Naga Ho Ho, Naga Mother's Association (NMA) etc. Naga Ho Ho is the apex body of civil society. As far as civil society in Manipur is concerned, Maira Paibis is important women based civil society organization. Churches of Nagaland, Mizoram are also an active civil society who has a great impact on peacemaking in the recent past. In Mizoram, the churches are recognized as the important civil society and the churches of Mizoram played a very crucial role in the peace building process. Apart from these states, Assam too has different types of civil society, like student organizations, human rights organizations, citizens forum etc. representing by All Assam Students Union (AASU), Asom Jatiyatabadi Yubo Chatro Parishad (AJYCP), Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti (MASS), Peoples Committee for Peace Initiatives in Assam (PCPIA), People's Consultative Group (PCG), Citizen's Forum which have played very crucial role in conflict resolution in Assam.

*What are the issues and ideologies of these civil society organizations? How do they operationalize- what are the methods of their functioning?*

As far as the civil society organizations of the study, each organization has its own issues and ideologies. MASS as a human rights organization is much away from having any political ideology. To work for the well-being of the society by the means of keeping the human rights protected and secure is the only ideology of the organization at its best. International human rights organization such as AMNESTY has offered collaborative hands to the MASS, so, organizational set up is on the basis of two level committees. An executive committee is at the national level and another is at the north eastern co-ordination level committee. Functioning of the MASS is purely autonomous because they have their own source of funds; such as collection from new membership fees, annual membership of fees, earnings from the selling of documents and donation from the public etc. are the sources of funds of the MASS. Peace is viewed as political debate by MASS and from the perspectives of human rights, they define peace as the absence of human rights violation, full protection guaranteed to all citizens. From the political angle, they firmly believe that peace is not only absence of violence but also the presence of justice. In the present context of Assam, peace cannot be brought by the absence of police atrocities but people should have right to live with dignity. So, they not only demand to withdraw the army operations but also seek a political resolution to the issues related to the ULFA. Civil society's role in this regard is to pressurize the conflicting parties for sitting at the negotiation table to achieve a political solution. From their perspectives, the role of civil society in peace building is limited to the pre negotiation phase only. This view point of the members of civil society can help in bringing only an official settlement of the conflict. Peace building theory says that civil society has to build trust and dialogue between different groups of people so that it can influence the opinion of people. Moreover, civil society actors can influence the ambitions of the leaders. During the peace dialogue, civil society actors express the opinion of the people from grass root to the leaders. It is the role of a civil society to play as bridge builders between the conflicting parties and people in general. Thus, Rupensinghe emphasized the importance of the involvement of the grass root so that their grievances are addressed in the peace process (Orjuela, 2003, p. 197).

The AJYCP is student organization based organization with political goals to achieve total autonomy and demand for inner line permit system in Assam. On account of this organization, the source of funds is based on own donation from their own members and public donation. The ideologies of AJYCP are based on socialist principles. AJYCP also demands direct autonomy in Assam and they are always against the federal structure of the Indian Constitution. Exploitation of abundant natural resources by the mainstream India is another main issue, which the AJYCP mentions in their constitution. The AJYCP raised issues the demand for complete autonomy to Assam other than demanding a peace negotiation between the ULFA and GoI. One of the prime and active members of the AJYCP strongly believes that the colonial legacy was transferred from the British to the centre during the post independence period. Exploitation of natural resources by the Centre and the problem of migration are the core issues for which the AJYCP has been initiating protestation in democratic ways since its inception.

Apart from these two organizations, PCG, PCPIA, and ASJA are more structure based committees rather than a full proofed organization. The PCG was constituted by ULFA and there might be the slightest probability of funding from the outfit not in a direct way but through the indirect way. As PCPIA is the platform of total 29 organizations the funding of this committee is purely based on their own source of funds. So as the ASJA has also their own source of funding. Dr. Hiren Gohain made a candid that they have limited funds. All these committees have their own political ideology.

*What is the nature of the leadership of these civil society organizations? How is the organizational structure of them? Do women play a role? If so what is the nature?*

Structural functions of the organizations like MASS, AJYCP are comprised of President, Secretary, Advisor and other general members. In Assam, civil society groups are of two types; some are permanent and some are temporary. We can say the latter as 'peace group' rather civil society organizations as they are temporary in functioning. The PCG is a temporary peace group which had played a very limited role. In spite of three rounds of talks were held between GOI and PCG, these talks did not become fruitful. Centre expressed their interest to go for the direct talk with the outfit and initiative of the PCG was snubbed by the GOI.

Other organizations like MASS, AJYCP are permanent in nature. These organizations are established for acquiring human rights and rights of the indigenous people.

The social science research always supports the gender stereotype notion that women are more collaborative than men and women have more tenderness towards consensus and compromise. Thus women have kept aside in decision- making process and women are always treated as a second class citizen. Women can use their inner potentialities to empower themselves in a very innovative way to solve problems of their individual as well as societal problems. Women generally remain behind the rifle means they put in a distant place in any conflict. Hence in contrast to men, women have a less psychological distance to reach across a conflict line. It is so believed that women are more peaceful than men are (Hunt & Posa, 2001, p. 41). Theoretical understanding of peace argues that peace is a women's issue because of reasons of justice. In northeast India, one of the strongest women organization who leading peace building process is Naga Mother's Association (NMA) in Nagaland. Since their inception, NMA has been rendering valuable service for the cause of peace. NMA's role playing in the context of encouraging human development through education in conflict ridden Nagaland is worth mentioning. The credibility of peace work is espoused by NMA when they team up with other Naga Students Organization called Nagaland Students Federation (NSF). 'Shed no more blood' was the theme of their campaigning. The NMA peace workers were able to initiate peace dialogue with the underground militants and state governments so that violence and bloodshed could be stopped. Peace rallies were organized by them appealing both the conflicting sides, NSCN (IM) and Nagaland government to stop merciless killings of youths. Apart from this, NMA also works for some social causes like to fight against drug abuse and alcoholism among the youths of Nagaland.

Manipur's women have also been suffering the woes of armed conflict. As the impact of conflict causes the women directly, so they can take strong steps to empower themselves by standing together and raising their voices against all atrocities and odds. Maira Paibis in Manipur is the example of such strong step in conflict ridden Manipur. It is a woman based organization working for settling disputes within their families and outside the families i.e. society. Iron lady Irom Sharmila is the burning example of women's

endeavor for bringing peace in the society. Against the draconian Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Irom Sharmila's relentless non-violent standing is worth mentioning.

Women played a very strong and important role in the particular organization in this context. Individual effort burdened by Dr. Mamoni Roisom Goswami is known to every Assamese very well. She is a renowned literary persona in Assam who had got the opportunity to visit the various places in Assam and she realized the woe and miseries of people of the violence intricate state of Assam during her visit to various places. An urge was emerged in her deep heart to do something for the people of Assam. In her keynote address at the first workshop on 'Peace Process in North east India held' at Guwahati in 2005, she expressed the reason for her involvement in the terrain of peace building as,

*When I think why the boys took up arms, it seems more out of the sufferings from hardships and negligence that people of poor place like Assam had to face over the years. The rampant corruption in the government was an added factor. Many people were able to cope with livelihood and education even after selling off their family property. Everybody, of course, knows how the situation became complicated with the passage of time and also about the people who took advantage of the situation later. With the desire to bring an end to this violence, I prepared an appeal to be handed over to the Honorable Prime Minister of India. When I informed him my intention he invited me for a meeting. It was on November 26, 200 that the appeal was personally sent.*

Women are the worst sufferer as far as the armed conflict in any conflict ridden place is concerned. Many women came forward to participate in the peace building initiatives in Assam as well in other conflict prone states in north east India. In Assam, representation of women in peace initiatives was not adequate, very few names were incorporated into the peace building initiatives of AADCA's where Ms. Preeti Baruah and Ms. Minati Hazarika joined the other members to visit the violence hit places in Tinsukia district. Again, PCPIA, which is a platform of 29 different organizations, only one civil society organization based on women can be noticed. Amiya Gogoi was the President of *Asom Mahila Sacheton Mancha*. Despite women in Assam raised their voices against the all odds in violence tuned Assam but their participation is not recognized by the society and

government. During the first half of the 90's decade, in two districts, Lakhimpur and Nalbari, army atrocities became a common factor of violence for the people in general. A women forum based in Guwahati, 'Matri Manch' worked for the mothers whose sons have disappeared and for the women who got harassed and sexually abused in the name of the search operations. Their efforts to woo the women were not welcomed either by the armed group or their pursuance was hailed by the state.

*Do they operate singularly or have networks? What are these networks? Where do they come together? We would like to see the nature of convergence and confrontation among them.*

Although the organizations of the study are under different headings, in most of the times they had their link ups and convergence. For example, PCG members were selected from different backgrounds; among them, one member was from MASS and other was the advisor of AJYCP. Moreover, PCPIA is the platform of more than 29 organizations, whereas ASJA also got supports from more than 100 civil society organizations including PCG, PCPIA, and MASS. But few individuals offered their moral support to the efforts of ASJA. In Chapter V, it is found that an internal difference of PCG was still showing off in the convention of *Asom Jatiya Mahasabha* or *Asom Sanmilito Jatiyo Abhibartan*. The conclave was attended by notable peace activists and most trusted face of Assam for convention Lachit Bordoloi and Dilip Patgiri but it was deserted by other notable members of PCG like journalist Ajit Bhuyan, lawyer Arup Borbora, Hiranya Saikia and Haidar Hussain.

Despite the PCG and PCPIA were met together at various points as few members from the PCG were also members of the PCPIA like, Lachit Bordoloi, Dilip Patgiri etc. but they had experienced differences in their path of working for peace building. During the fast unto death campaigning by the wives of the missing ULFA leaders, differences among the members were visible to the media and the citizens of Assam. When the state government started talking to the wives who were on fast unto death, a cloud of differences in views and decisions started to grow among the members. Some members of PCPIA doubted that the wives of these ULFA leaders were lured by Hiranya Saikia who was a controversial member of the PCG. It was also alleged by these PCPIA

members that state government made a conspiracy with Hiranya Saikia to breach the fast unto death by the wives of ULFA.

The General Secretary of AJYCP, Diganta Konwar said that the get together by 24 organizations held at Natya Mandir was the first initiative by civil society to bridge a connection between the conflicting groups, the ULFA and the GOI. He recalled that the organizers of the convention were threatened by the local police for not to hold the meeting. Moreover, Dr. Mamoni Roisom Goswami, one of the chief guests of the convention was also threatened by the local police for avoiding the convention and not to present at the convention. To resolve the conflict between ULFA and government (both State and central) and for finding a political solution to this conflict were the prime objectives of this 24 organization initiative. On the other hand, this initiative was faced obstacles when arranging the convention by other civil society organizations like Assam Public Works (APW). It was an initiative to create a mass mobilization from the grass-root level. A new platform was created to give a right way and utmost direction to ULFA – Government conflict, and it was named as People’s Council for Peace and Development (PCPD) on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2011. The objectives and goals of PCPD are to retard the conflict and find out the reasons for the conflict and to find out the solutions. This platform wants a respectful resolution of the conflict. During the last 30 years, those people who were abused/dominated they must get justice and this platform would act as a pressure group to take out a political solution to this three-decade long conflict and appeal to both government as well as the rebel group. Otherwise, this platform would start a movement against both of the government.

*How much autonomous they are? Do they depend on state or militant organizations for their sustenance?*

Autonomy is one of the characteristics of civil society organizations. During the field study, we got to know that all the civil society organizations are autonomous in their functioning. But in it is really a big challenge for these organizations to be seen as autonomous by the conflicting parties. Because they have to represent their autonomy not just like not to be identified as one of the warring parties. Autonomy of most of the civil society groups became a debatable issue. For the civil society groups to prove their

autonomy was a real challenge. One of the reasons of failure of the PCG was that it failed to achieve the support of citizens for rejuvenating the peace talks. So, the PCG is considered as the rubber stamp used by the ULFA by critics. On the other hand, few leaders of ULFA namely, Arbinda Rajkhowa, Pradip Gogoi were ex-leaders of the AJYCP and that indicates the stronghold of the shadows of issues and ideologies between the outfit and the AJYCP.

Some organizations related with peace building and peace process are alleged to be the mouthpiece of the outfit. Critics label them as the over-ground section of the outfit. This allegation pointed to the MASS and its allied organizations like Nari Adhikar Sangram Samiti (NASS), Krishak Adhikar Sangram Samiti (KASS), Gana Adhikar Sangram Samiti (GASS) etc. And all these organizations are the frontal organization related with ULFA. As revealed by one of the activists of the AJYCP, Kaberi Kachari, Pranati Deka were active members of the NASS. Later, both of the ladies joined the outfit and former is the wife of ULFA's chairman Arabindo Rajkhowa and later is the Cultural Secretary of the ULFA (now, a pro-talk group of ULFA). The existence of NASS, KASS, and GASS is not available nowadays, but Special Branch of Assam Police confirmed that all organizations are used as 'intelligentsia' by the ULFA. The members of these organizations had played the role of the communicator. They were engaged in the collection of necessary address, place and phone numbers for ULFA. Arrest and detention of Lachit Bordoloi, an active member of the MASS are the examples of this allegation that member of such organization especially MASS is used as link man of the ULFA. Moreover, popular journalist of Assam Ajit Bhuyan also arrested for having a link with ULFA.

The member of the MASS joining a Maoist organization is coming to light by the police source. This proves the link up of such organization with another outfit too. Arresting of former secretary general of the MASS, Pallab Borbora by National Investigation Agency (NIA) is an example that the members of the MASS moved to militarist organization. The recent arrest of Aditya Bora confirms the link up of Maoist rebels with other militant organizations like NSCN (IM) and Peoples Liberation Army of Manipur (PLAM). This also raises a question that for what might be the reason of movement from human rights

organization to red rebels is it due to change of ideology in mind or for finding sustenance in another outfit.

*Do they contribute to the peace negotiation? What is the nature of their intervention to end the conflict?*

All the civil society of the study played their respective role to bridge builders between the ULFA and GOI. According to the characteristics featured by Samir Kumar Das, civil society in northeast India is slightly different from the one another so we cannot categorize them or fit them into just one category. So far as the civil society in Assam is concerned, they are more like peace groups who facilitate the peace negotiation between the warring parties. Whether the PCG was constituted by the outfit itself it marked its path to initiate three parleys of talks with the central government and these talks with the centre happened when both the warring parties were not in any ceasefire. Lederach argued that by maintaining a dialogue with the armed actors in the area, civic leaders can voice the concerns of civilians and convey information which will improve the everyday life of ordinary people. Setting up mechanisms for communication between civilians of different groups as well as between civilians and armed groups can improve relations and reduce violence and day-to-day problems. Civil leaders who have kept their contacts across conflict lines and who are prominent and respected can also find spaces to act in a situation of war (Orjuela, 2003, p.35). This theoretical perspective by Lederach is applied in the context of Assam. The civil society tried to set communication between the armed group and the government whether it was PCG, or AJYCP or others.

Civil society groups in Assam are seen as either permanent or temporary. Whereas organizations like ASSU, AJYCP, MASS etc. have a strong basis, so they remain as a permanent entity. On the other hand, civil society groups like PCG, PCPIA, AADCA, ASJA etc. were seen as temporary groups that established with great enthusiasm but later it could not survive due to the hidden fragile factors.

*What is the nature of the impact of these civil society organizations? To what extent only they influence in peace building?*

When we talk about the nature of the civil society initiative, the impact of civil society initiative was not durable. Unfortunately, the voices of these organizations were not taken for granted by the outfit and the GOI. Many of the organizations like PCG, MASS, PCPIA are often eyed with doubt and suspicion by the latter. Notably, the pro talk group of the ULFA led by Mrinal Hazarika made the comment that the PCG never tried to incorporate the voice of the general people with their initiatives or never dared to know the public opinion on the issue of sovereignty and all. All the endeavors by civil society created negative peace. A fraction of ULFA left their camps in outside country

*How is the voice of civil society viewed by the state?*

Unfortunately, the voice of the civil society was not taken seriously. The initiatives of the civil society are always taken as a political gimmick for restoring their own political gain by the state government. On the other hand, views and attitudes of the central government towards the peace negotiation were that they always expressed their confidence to contain, control and to resolve the conflict. Central Government always said that they would rather talk directly with the outfit and thus rejected the endeavor by the civil society indirectly.

The State often takes the initiatives of the civil society with doubt and suspicion. The members of civil society groups are branded by the state agency as over ground member of militants. In suspicion of link up with civil society, army or police arrest members of civil society groups. In this connection, Lachit Bordoloi who was arrested by Assam state government said that state did not take easily the voices of a member of civil society representing the whole society. When anyone confronts state sponsored violation of human rights perpetrated by state agencies, the state does not take for granted such confrontation. State misunderstands the protest as voices of the militarist organization.

Although civil society initiatives tried to mediate between the state and the outfit, the state never appreciated and welcomed them. Lack of political will for resolving the conflict is one of the reasons for such ignorance to the civil society initiatives. The agencies of the state in many times expressed their ignorance publicly. A high official of Home Secretary expressed one statement that reveals this attitude. A news paper 'Mail

Today' quotes the statement as "We do not want the civil society representatives to be involved in the peace process. We want to dialogue directly with the armed groups (Manchandra, 2008, p.159)." The date of publishing the statement was February 13, 2008, and the initiatives by the PCG failed due to the above mentioned reason.

## **6.2 Testing of hypotheses:**

The study contains four hypotheses and all the hypotheses are proved right.

*Hypothesis1. Civil Society initiatives in Assam are fragmented and divide in nature. Hence their presence is not very durable.*

The above hypothesis in the present context of the study is proved right. Facilitating peace negotiation between the conflicting parties the initiatives of civil society organizations has played a crucial role as analyzed in the previous chapters, chapter IV and Chapter V. An inherent problem of these civil society organizations is that in spite of having a good will do something for peaceful Assam; they do not stand together at the right time. Lack of capacity building among the members is being often noticed in due course of time. Internal differences among the members led to deviances of thoughts and decisions regarding their activities. For example, the members of the PCPIA criticized and condemned Hiranya Saikia's doubtful stand regarding withdrawal of the hunger strike by the wives of the ULFA leaders where latter was one of the members of the PCG.

Again, fragmentation within the civil society is being noticed during the conclave organized by the Asom Jatiya Mahasabha in the year 2010. Although the conclave was supported by more than 100 civil society organizations, it was abandoned by many members of the PCG like Ajit Bhuyan, Arup Borbora etc.

*Hypothesis 2. The State often takes the initiative of civil society organizations with suspicion and doubt.*

This hypothesis is also proved right in the present study as state government never took the initiatives by the organizations like the MASS, PCG, PCPIA etc. easily and often these organizations were labeled as sympathizers of the outfit ULFA. Arrest and detention of one of the activists of peace negotiation from these organizations divulge the attitude of the state

government towards the civil society initiatives. The Central, as well as State government never accepted the endeavor as civil society initiative, rather; it was looked them as the mouthpiece of the militants. Describing the case of the advisor of MASS and active members of the PCG as well the PCPIA, Lachit Bordoloi, in Chapter IV proved the hypothesis right in the present context.

Hypothesis 3. *Civil society organizations are not accountable and transparent.*

Many a times accountability and transparency of the organizations those facilitating the peace negotiation became a question in the minds of the citizens and the governments. Too much sympathy for the ULFA raised questions on the probable link with the militants.

Hypothesis 4. *The role of civil society in Assam is confined to the pre negotiation phase only.*

As described in Chapter III, civil society can bring the conflicting parties together and can make efforts to end the conflict through negotiation. In Assam's scenario, initiatives burdened by the civil society organizations confined to pre negotiation phase only. Playing the role as facilitators, civil society efforts ended in the pre negotiation phase. While in the first effort shouldered by AADCA was limited in the pre negotiation phase. Next, the second civil society endeavor by the PCG also cannot be recognized fruitful as the negotiation by the PCG was withdrawn by the GOI after the three rounds of talk clarifying the stand that GOI would talk directly to ULFA. After these three rounds unfulfilled trail to facilitate the peace talks between the GOI and the ULFA, which were 'preparatory talks' in nature with the centre to prepare the ground of possible and desired direct talk between the warring parties. Another initiative by the Jatiyo Mahasabha also just ended in the pre negotiation phase. Relief was that the pro talk ULFA faction led by the chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa accepted the charter demands framework adopted by the Sanmilito Jatiyo Abhibartan and they submitted it to the Home Minister in 2011.

### **6.3 Future area of research in this area:**

Summarize the study we come to the conclusion that endeavor of civil society in Assam to peace building and conflict resolution is confined to pre negotiation phase only. The state never accepted any of the civil society efforts wholeheartedly so that more than three- decade long

conflict between the Indian state and ULFA can be transformed with permanent peace. Some initiative was limited at the initial level of urging the warring parties to come forward for finding a political resolution, some reached the level to facilitate the peace talk but ended for suspicion and doubt having a link with the outfit. The only initiative by ASJA got support from other civil society and one part of the outfit as well as GOI.

The question arises do the voice of the civil society really represent the voice of the common people of Assam? Civil society is regarded as the ‘third voice’; what is the opinion of the common people towards the ‘third voice’? There is ample scope for future research to know and analyze the opinion of the citizens of Assam regarding the initiatives of the civil society.

#### **6.4 Suggestions and final Conclusion:**

The issue of ULFA is correlated with many other ethnic dividends in Assam. Assam is mosaic of different ethnic communities. Integrity and unity of Assam are threatened by the polarization of these ethnic communities for a separate land for their own communities like the Bodos and the Koch- Rajbongshis, the Karbis, and the Dimasas. In such a crucial situation, the role of civil society needs a challenging turn over in the path of peace building. Analyzing the study, the researcher comes to a final conclusion with some suggestions to add in the study.

1. Despite the civil society initiative in Assam, peace building is waiting in a miles of distance from the utmost destination. Lack of durability and consistency has to be wiped out by the civil society groups. The efforts and endeavors by the civil society groups are incredible. Rejuvenation of the vibe of the civil society initiatives is utmost demand for sustainable peace building.
2. Involvement of grass root is very important to apply multi-track diplomacy for transforming conflict into a sustainable peace building. Civil society initiatives can aware people about their rights and happenings but opinion of the every common citizen.
3. Acceleration of the peace talks between the ULFA and GOI is the need of the hour. The pro talk group of ULFA is still waiting for a peace talk to be held directly with the Indian state. They revised the charter of demands as General Secretary of ULFA; Anup Chetia joined the pro-talk group in the last year. Another role of the civil society in peace

building is to act as a watch dog during the peace process, and this role by civil society organizations was not noticed in case of Assam.

4. The anti-talk faction of ULFA led by Paresh Barua is reluctant to join the process. His adamant attitude for not give up the demand of 'sovereignty' is harming the peace process in a true sense. Sustainable peace is impossible without the full participation of all the sections of ULFA. Civil society should pressure the anti-ULFA group to take part in the peace process. Otherwise, the escalation of violence will not be stopped in future. Army search operations for anti-talk ULFA cadres are still going on. Killing of ULFA cadres and retaliating activities by this section in the form of bombing and killing of Assamese people can harm the peace process.