

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Conflict has been becoming a worldwide phenomenon. Potentiality of rising conflict exists in all aspects of human's social life. The most accepted definition of conflict is that conflict occurs when two or more parties, either individual or groups make out their incompatible goals. Incompatible goals create a definite perception of the others to change their attitudes and behaviors (Tongeren, Brenk, Hellema, & Verhoeven, 2007, p. 11). Conflicts in different forms like ethnic, armed, religious, political and cultural nature have continued to catch the world's eyes. Conflicts occur because of the variety of reasons (Jevaseelan, 2008, p. 1). The Realist formula say that conflicts are caused by a scarcity of resources and attempts by states to win control over resources (Fetherston, 2000, p. 2) .

1.1 Meaning of civil society:

The meaning of the term 'Civil Society' is very complex to define. The role and potentiality of civil society yet have to be fully explored. The concept of civil society is derived from the genesis of political theory. The history of political philosophy provides ample evidence of the meaning of civil society in the scriptures/writings of the Roman, Hegelian, and Marxian and Gramscian interpretations. The history of civil society reveals that civil society is an alternative to or independent of the state. Hegel describes civil society is a necessary stage in the formation of the state, to Marx civil society is the source of power of the state, and to Gramsci Civil society is the space where the state constructs its hegemony alliance along with the dominant classes (Chandhoke, 2003, p. 11). In conventional social science notion, civil society refers to space in a given society that exists between individuals or families possible and is independent of state (Varshney, 2001, p. 366)

In recent times, the term civil society is brought into the realm of development policy and discourse. Although many political theorists, political thinkers have shared their own perspectives of understanding on the term; but LSE 'Centre for Civil Society' has elaborated this briefly but this definition manages to encounter the new neoliberal political discourse. Civil

Society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around where people can share their common interests, purposes, and values. There is a vast difference between what theory says and in reality what actually happens. The theory says that institutional forms of civil society are distinct from those of the state, family, and market, though, in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family, and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy, and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups (Manchandra, 2008, p. 146). In India, civil society initiatives have been inspired by both the European theory as well as the neoliberal theory of the state. The neoliberal theory of the state advocates strengthening civil society as counter-balance to the regulatory nature of the state. According to the neo liberal thinkers, civil society mediates between state and market and helps to contain state power. It represents a sphere outside the state control and one which gives maximum scope for individual freedom and self-determination (Joseph, 2002, p. 299). Following the discourse of neoliberals in India, we can refer civil society as the web of social relations that exist in the space between the state, the market (activities with the aim of extracting profit), and the private life of families and individuals (Tongerren, Brenk, Hellema, & Verhoeven, 2007, p. 7). This definition of civil society is regarded as the most acceptable one.

1.2 Statement of the problem and research questions:

In this frontier region of Assam, the voices of the people have always been neglected by the state machinery. During the time of war or conflict, civil people become the worst affected. In most of the cases, civil people bear the brunt of war's brutality whether the conflicts are interstate or intrastate, and civil society offers an important potential conduit for the public interest. By some estimates, up to 90 per cent of war casualties are among civilians as wars become more about attacking populations than armies fighting each other (Antony & Kew, p. 18). North East India is one of the conflict ridden regions in South Asia. Conflicts seem very common in this region. According to one estimate, about sixty-five major militant organizations are active in this region. All the states in the region except Sikkim is affected by some form of insurgent violence, and amongst the north east states, four of them (Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura) have

witnessed scales of conflict that could –at least between 1990 and 2000-be categorized as low-intensity conflicts in which fatalities were well over 100 but less than 1,000 annually (Das, 2007, p. 1). The causalities of conflict turned insurgency and violence affect the general people of this north eastern region.

Civil society can play an effective role to maintain a middle ground which further expands during the ceasefire and the peace process. Because both the state and non- state actors need a space to legitimize the peace process and civil society has a key role playing in the opening up of a political dialogue. Most of the peace processes in the north east India are restrained to negative peace-making. Negative peace simply denotes the absence of war. It is a condition in which no active, organized military violence is taking place (Barash & Webel, 2002, p. 6). Many insurgent groups have declared a cease-fire and they are ready to talk with the Central Government. But the pro-talks groups are stuck in a ‘traffic jam’. They are such as National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), Dima Haram Daogah (DHD), United People’s Democratic Solidarity (UPDS), National Democratic Front of Assam (NDFSA), United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)-the list is endless (Mahanta, 2010, p. 160). To break such stalemate, civil society groups have been trying to bring a peace building environment in north east India in general and in Assam in particular.

In Assam, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) has more than 30 years long history of extremist activities which hinder the development of a peaceful environment. Chronological events of ULFA reveals that civil society organizations like *Asom Jatitotabadi Yubo Chatro Parishad* (AJYCP), *Asom Satra Mahasabha* (ASM), *Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti* (MASS), People’s Consultative Group (PCG), and recently *Asom Sanmilito Jatiyo Abhibartan* (ASJA) has taken initiatives to build peace in many times. The nature of peace process regarding the ULFA issue in Assam is not going for a positive solution but is trapped into “politicization of peace”. Because people of Assam witnessed that peace building is being politicized by the warring parties.

The rise of civil society groups as a potential force in the northeast India is a fairly recent development (Baruah, 2002). Therefore, the present study is an attempt to study this potential role of civil society in peace building throughout the study. It also tries to assess the co-relationship between the state and the role of civil society in building peace in the conflict ridden

north east India. How do the civil society organizations create a space for resolving the conflicts? What is its critique of the Indian nation-state? By and large, we have the following research questions that we would like to see in our research-

- What are the different types of civil society in northeast India?
- What are the issues and ideologies of these civil society organizations? How do they operationalize- what are the methods of their functioning?
- 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 nature of the role played by women?
- 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.
- How much autonomous they are? Do they depend on state or militant organisations for their sustenance?
- Do they contribute to the peace negotiation? What is the nature of their intervention to end the conflict?
- What is the nature of the impact of these civil society organizations? To what extent only they influence in peace building?
- How is the voice of civil society viewed by the state?

1.3 Conceptual framework of civil society and peace building:

The concept of civil society was rediscovered and accorded pre-eminence in political practices in a very definite political context: in Stalinist states in Eastern and Central Europe, which had denied their citizens' basic rights, and in Latin America, where military regimes had managed to survive by employment of the same methods (Chandhoke, Civil Society, 2007). The concept of civil society swept into prominence in the 1980s for reasons that are by now well known. Intellectuals in Eastern Europe began to realize that the two options that had been historically

available to people struggling to emancipate themselves from unbearable political situations were no longer accessible to them. The first option was reform of state power from above. The second was that of revolution from below. Both had been ruled out by the Brezhnev doctrine, namely that the (former) the Soviet Union would not hesitate to intervene in the affairs of Eastern European states, wherever and whenever the need arose (Chandhoke, *Civil Society*, 2007).

Two scholars named Kamrava and Mora who investigated the comparative experience of Latin America and the Middle East said that there were four conditions for the emergence of civil society organizations. Firstly, when the state is weakened because it has failed to redeem its promises; secondly when society is culturally dominated by the state; thirdly, when economic adjustment policies being on problems, and fourthly, when dominant social actors mobilize constituents for specific purposes (Chandhoke, 2003, p. 11). So, the conception of civil society necessarily in an opposition to the state and it also seems to appear only when the state is in a condition of terminal decline.

The history of civil society had conceptualized it as an alternative to or as independent of the state. Writing in the late 17th century, Locke differentiated civil society both from the state of nature as well as a political society. Civil society emerges when the citizen's right to life, liberty, and property is guaranteed by law. Thus, legal recognition and protection of the natural rights of individuals transform a political society into civil society (Mahajan, 1999).

The state is separate from the civil society, and it is distinguished by Hegel. In Hegel's redefinition of civil society, civil society is no longer used as a synonym of political society but defined it one hand as distinct from the family, and on the other (and more crucially) from the state (Kaviraj & Khilnani, 2001, p. 23). Hegel had articulated very clearly about the relationship between state and civil society. He showed that there was a symbiotic relationship between the state and the civil society. The state apparatus, in particular, law and public authority were a part of civil society, and vice-versa, the spirit of freedom that civil society represents permeates the state. As such the two moments determine each other.

In contemporary India, the concept of civil society was incorporated with the neoliberal discourse of state and this discourse dominated the Anglo-American world in the 1980s and

1990s. In the writings of Indian political scientist Rajani Kothari civil society emerges as an alternative to the state. Conceived in this form, it is equated with non-state, non-governmental organizations and associations through which people participate directly to manage their own affairs (Mahajan, 1999).

So far as the peace building is concerned, the state generally adopts coercive steps to resolve conflicts. It is seen that the state is not keen to give a space to the Civil Society Groups in resolving conflicts in the region. The State's main aim to resolve conflicts is to create a conflict settlement in the region. During the conflict, civil society organizations often define themselves in opposition to the state. Civil society cannot replace the state (Tongerren, Brenk, Hellema, & Verhoeven, 2007, p. 9). But it can be independent of the state, but not in a complete sense, as Patricia Mukhim says that since civil society interacts closely with the state and the political sphere (Mahanta, 2010, p. 109).

Civil society can play a very effective role in peace building. John Paul Lederach (1997) claimed that peace building is more than just a post-conflict reconstruction; peace building encompasses, generates, and sustains a full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform a conflict toward a more sustainable, peaceful relationship (Maoz, 2004, p. 564). Civil society has a tremendous and potential role in peace building. In a four way, according to Camilla Orjuela, civil society has a potentiality to resolve the conflict. (1) Preventing violent conflict, (2) Working on war zones, (3) Supporting negotiations, and (4) endorsing reconstruction and reconciliation (Orjuela, 2003, p. 197).

The contemporary conflicts are changing in nature and they are defined by Mary Kaldor as "protracted social conflicts" (Kaldor, 1999). Protracted conflict is like a situation where neither peace nor war is happened (Galtung, 1980, p. 100). So, to break the stone of protracted conflict a strong and effective civil society is vehemently needed. An active civil society can create social capital. Social Capital is trust, cooperation over ethnic, religious, and other division, inclusiveness, and open debate (Putnam, 1992). Civil society and social capital are seen to be interlinked with social capital thought to generate civil society. Civil society can, therefore, operate more effectively if the social capital base is relatively strong (McIlwaine). As civil society creates social capital more chance to have peace and harmony between sections of society (Orjuela, 2003, p. 197).

During the time of armed conflict, civil society provides humanitarian assistance and monitors human rights, as in the times of conflict or war times it is very difficult for people to build peace when they feel threatened or under attack. So, the role of civil society during armed conflict is to give early warning of emerging crises, monitoring, analysis, and communication strategies to raise awareness and generate attention (Barnes, 2006).

The civil society can help in promoting peace negotiations and settlements; further, those help in developing and strengthening 'constituencies for peace'. When a peace process is under way, it plays a key role in legitimizing the peace process (Manchandra, 2008, p. 161). When conflicting parties are in a ceasefire, it is the function of the civil society to maintain the middle ground and to create an atmosphere for political dialogue since both the state and nonstate actors seek political legitimacy. Civil Society led dialogue processes and mediation efforts can have a number of impacts. They can build trust and understanding between the grassroots membership of divided communities. They can assist in identifying and resolving local-level conflicts, which can benefit the communities affected as well as build confidence between the conflicting parties (McKeon, 2007). It is not possible to involve all the affected people in the negotiations. However, all the affected groups must feel that they are being adequately represented in the negotiation process.

Civil society has a significant role in endorsing reconstruction and reconciliation. Civil society actors can be involved to sanction the reconstruction of infrastructure and the promotion of reconciliatory work. These are necessary for the pre negotiation and post negotiation situation (Gowerce, 2006, p. 444).

The conflict resolution and peace building literature emphasize that to resolve and/or transform contemporary conflicts; responses are required at different levels. Conflict transformation is a continuous process which can be enhanced by third parties having the capacity to create conditions to develop the political will. The transformation process may involve cultural, political, economic, psychological, regional, and international elements – all of which can be combined and focused to empower parties to reframe the differences (Spencer & Spencer, 1995). Due to the conflicts, relationships among people changes by altering communication patterns and patterns of social organizations. That leads to changes of images of self and of the other. For reframing these changes or differences, effective conflict transformation can be proved fruitful to improve mutual understandings. Mutual understandings improve perceptions of issues, actions,

of other people or groups. As John Paul Lederach suggests conflict transformation must take place at both the personal and the systematic level (Mahanta, 2010, p. 164). Change in personal level indicates creating an awareness, growth, and commitment to change the consequences of conflicts like anger, fear, grief, and bitterness. Conflict transformation could occur if these emotions should be acknowledged and properly dealt with.

There are three levels of work as John Paul Lederach suggests regarding the conceptualization of Conflict transformation. These simultaneous works for conflict transformation are done at top policy level, middle range (community and leaders) and grass root work. In addition, the involvement of multiple tracks is very important for enduring peace. All parts of community need to be involved including government, NGO/professional, business, private citizen, research/education, activism, religion, funding and communication/media. By bringing the civil society to the peace process, the peace table can become more democratically inclusive both in the process and content. In this way, the involvement of civil society in the peace process reflects the multi aspect nature of peace and peace building.

Track I negotiating teams occasionally include civil society representatives picked by the government or faction in question, such as trade union or religious leaders, NGO activists, academics, and so on. Civil society representatives typically do not take leading roles in such negotiations.

In Track I, negotiation holds between the governments, insurgents or international diplomatic interveners. Track I negotiators or mediators typically extend this invitation because the civil society groups in question are seen as providing a formal representation role; they are perceived as delivering the support of a sector of the population that is necessary for a viable agreement on the flipside of the argument: they are seen as potential spoilers – for this reason, they are believed to be in a position to undermine significantly any agreement that might be reached (Stedman 1997)

Track II is a process where civil society groups are sometimes active in Track II diplomacy initiatives. Civil Society's task is to supplement Track I negotiations among political elites by engaging key secondary actors across the conflict divide to support a peace process. In track II, it involves scholars, journalists, opinion leaders, former government officials and representatives from conflicting parties to work together with the intention of clarifying long standing

agreements, exploring different possibilities for resolving them, and in the process influence others and be influenced in the process (Mahanta, 2010). It often takes time before the ideas, relationships and personal changes that develop through these processes manifest into significant social and political change. Track II is linked to the negotiations and the larger political process (Gowerce, 2006, p. 444). Track II approaches have a dual purpose, first is to produce changes in the individual participants and to transfer these changes into the political process (Gowerce, 2006, p. 444).

Track III is what we call the Multi-level or Multi-track initiatives for peace building. In the multi-track peace process, all the parts of a community are needed to be involved including government, NGO/professional, business, private citizen, research/education, activism, religion, funding, and communication/media. Involvement of all parts of community makes the difference to lead an effective and lasting peace agreement. The term ‘multi-track diplomacy’ was coined by McDonald and Diamond argues that this is “a Systems approach to Peace” (McDonald, 2002)

Involvements of “common people” at the grass root level have a significant role in conflict transformation and peace building. In the process of involvement of common people indicates “getting to know each other” (Saunders). So, this can be called as people-to-people initiatives which can help, create, build, stabilize or strengthen relationships between two people.

1.4 Review of literature:

There are huge some ranges of academic writings on civil society because of its great importance in the contemporary world.

The writings on the civil society are divided into two categories. First is theoretical writings on civil society and the second is writings on civil society relating to conflict resolution and peace building perspectives.

The first category of books is based on the theoretical understanding of civil society. The writings of Indian writers contributed on theoretical aspects of civil society. Neera Chandhoke is a prominent writer who talks about civil society. Her book “**The Conceits of Civil Society**” provides some contemporary focuses on the theoretical perspective of the ideas of civil society. In the Neo-liberal discourse, the market is a very important factor. In her book, Neera

Chandhoke raises the question that can civil society separated from state and market? Civil society is the third sphere, neither related to the state nor the market nor constituted by the two (Chandhoke, 2003, p. 47). Civil society encompasses with voluntary sector or nonprofit sectors like non-governmental organizations, foundations, and philanthropies shoulder community rebuilding activities, and provide education, health and community development in a mode that is different from the state. Again, the services of non-governmental organizations as a provider of services and upholders of democracy, act as an alternative to the market. In this book, Chandhoke has given a theoretical ground of civil society concepts and some civil society movements initiated in India. But the civil society initiatives in north east India are not mentioned in her book.

Neera Chandhoke's another book, **"State and Civil society"** is the political history of the emergence of civil society and this book also encompasses the retrospection of traditional ideas on civil society by Hegel, Marx, and Gramsci. These are basically on the theory of state and civil society and their interrelationships.

In the book titled **"Civil Society and Democratic Theory"**, offers a new model of civil society in democratic theory. In this book, the author Gideon Baker explores different models of civil society and democracy from Eastern Europe and Latin America respectively. The liberal democratic model of civil society during the 1990s is described by the author and also focuses on the academic debates about democratization in the two regions (Eastern Europe and Latin America). The author also traces the new idea of the civil society which is "Global Civil Society" which has coined a growing sense of democratic possibility to the increasingly transnational actions of new social movements and another nonstate- association with global ambition and reaches (human rights and environmental movements). But this book is silent about the role civil society can play in conflict resolution.

'Supporting Civil Society: The Political Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Central America' written by Laura Macdonald traces the workings of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) as a civil society. Some advocates of NGOs have suggested that international development organizations have an important role to play not just in the construction and consolidation of democratic civil societies at the national level, but also in the

emergence of a 'global civil society'. But the book has covered only the workings and activities of NGOs in Central America and not of other countries.

'Civil Society and Democracy' is a collection of 19 articles on theoretical and empirical writings on civil society edited by Carolyn M. Elliott. Most of these writers here analyze about the different theoretical aspects of civil society, the contested definition of civil society and elaborate the relationship between civil society and state and citizenship. The empirical writings are based on the civil society initiative in China and in India.

Another comprehensive book on civil society titled **"Does Civil Society Matter: Governance in Contemporary India"** enhances the theoretical as well as conceptual debate relating to the interface of civil society with governance. This edited volume of the book is enlightening with theoretical perspectives by many distinguished writers and also substantiated by empirical insights drawn from the study of assertions of civil society in Indian society.

The second type of literature is the academic articles on civil society published in journals and magazines. Most of the articles are from the Economic and Political Weekly.

In some of the scholarly articles, the meaning and different perspectives of civil society have been discussed. Hegel is one of the political philosophers who has contributed to the understanding of the concept civil society. Distinguished both from the state and family, civil society is the realm of economics and economic relationship (Stillman, 1980, p. 623) while Hegel's account of civil society becomes relevant to understand the theory of international relations (Jaeger, 2002, p. 499).

Some Indian scholars and writers discuss and reiterate the importance of civil society in the contemporary world. Sujit Lahiry (Lahiry, 2005, p. 29) argues that the necessity of civil society was never felt earlier so as it is in the contemporary world but throughout his article, he explained the theoretical aspects of civil society in western philosophy. As far as Indian political thinker and scholars are concerned, Neera Chandhoke has written ample numbers of scholarly articles on civil society. Some of the articles are 'Civil Society', 'Civil Society in Conflict Cities', 'Bringing People Back in: Political and Intellectual Agendas' and 'Introduction'.

Many Indian writers have also contributed their systematized thought and study on the topic civil society and its allied perspectives in India in particular and the global civil societies as a whole. They are namely Ajit Roy (Roy, 1995), Arun Bose (Bose, 1986), Sarah Joseph (Joseph, 2002), Andre Beteille (Beteille, 1999), Sanjay Kumar (Kumar, 2000), Gurpreet Mahajan (Mahajan) and others.

As far as the civil society in north east India is concerned, Samir Kumar Das in his book **“Conflict and Peace in India’s North East: The Role of Civil Society”** has critically examined about the civil societies of north east India like Naga Mothers Association (NMA), PCG, Naga Ho Ho, Meira Paibis, prayer halls, Vaishnave monasteries, Keithels, Lups, Marups etc. He has divided the civil society organizations in north east India into three categories, student organizations composed of their respective ethnic groups, peace groups like PCG and civil society consists of groups and organizations like the church in the hills of Manipur and mothers vigilante groups in Nagaland and Manipur. According to him, civil society cannot guarantee a durable and stable peace. But reforming of civil society is essential to ensure peace making in the northeast. In this regard, according to Das, both the state and the civil society have a significant role to play. Though the author has successfully drawn the peace building scenario and its different aspects; he has not critically examined their role relating to the theoretical understanding of conflict resolution.

For understanding the technical tools for building peace writings of great scholars and famous political scientists such as Johan Galtung, J. P. Lederach, and Kelman are worth mentioning. In a writing of Michelle I. Gawerc, he has analyzed the peace building tools for example conflict transformation and their different initiatives.

The book titled **“People Building Peace: Successful Stories of Civil Society”** edited by Paul Van Tongeren, Malin Brenk, Morte Hellema, and Julliette Verhoeven is the elaborative analysis of peace building activities of civil society in world wide. This book has given the theoretical understandings of activities of civil society in the time of conflict and the post conflict situations. This book encompasses the United Nations interactions with civil society organizations in peace keeping in different conflicts. The role of NGOs in civil society in bringing peace education and peace building activities in the conflict zones are also contained in this book. These include Oxfam Great Britain in Sri Lanka and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Mali.

Johan Galtung is a Norwegian sociologist and founder of the principle of Peace and Conflict Studies. His book **“Searching for Peace: The Road to TRANSCEND”** co-edited by Carl G. Jacobsen is on the analysis of different approaches by TRANSCEND in resolving the conflict. Peacemaking is one of the tools for conflict resolution and Galtung examined and tested them in the real conflicting situation. Based on real experiences of 40 conflicts during the cold war, Galtung discussed the dialogue method to resolve the conflict.

“Peace Problems: Some Case Studies” is another book by Johan Galtung containing essays on peace research and methodology. The conflicts in the Middle East, Rhodesia, Zimbabwe, Japan etc. and their political scenario are discussed in this book.

“Conflict Transformation” is the theoretical writings with practical examples of conflict transformation in war affected countries like Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Liberia. This book is edited by Kumar Rupensinghe and he puts emphasis on conflict transformation as a multi-sectoral approach in developing effective and sustainable citizen-based peacebuilding initiatives because of its increasing needs in the complexity of many existing and emerging conflicts. Conflict transformation is a designed process and the involvement of local actors and the non-governmental sector in developing effective and sustainable citizen-based peace building initiatives.

Independent peace movements in Soviet Blocks are the main theme of the book **“In Search of Civil Society”** edited by Vladimir Tismaneanu. Dissolving of USSR into independent states is a very important part of our world history. Social movements against the authoritarian governments were seen in the USSR and East Central Europe since the late 1970s. These peace movements are nothing but were a representation of new reconstruction of the civil societies where the conflict between government and opposition caused direct confrontation. But this book could not relate the role of civil society in terms of the theoretical ground.

“Peace Tools & Conflict Nuances in India’s Northeast” edited by Wasbir Hussain is the collection of some scholarly articles on present scenario of conflict and peace building in India’s north east. Most of the articles are based on the theoretical ground of peace building, conflict resolution and its practical realities in north eastern states. But in this book has not covered one

of the conflict and insurgency prone states, Manipur where immense human rights violation is going on.

“**Search of Peace with Justice**”, edited book by Walter Fernandes is the collection of articles on the background of conflicts in the north east India and some indications of possible steps towards peace. Some of the articles have traced out the role that civil societies in this region can play and their scopes and limitations in peace building.

“**Identity Politics of Peacebuilding: Civil society in War Torn Sri Lanka**” written by Camilla Orjuela is a combination of both theoretical and empirical relationship between civil society and peace building. In the introduction of the book, she argues that idea of peace in the present world is ‘liberal peace’ which depicts the end of violence. The writer also argues that in contemporary conflicts ordinary people become the direct targets of political violence but in conflict zones, sometimes, ordinary people also become a perpetrator of violence by turning into a mob. The politicization of conflict led to the dividend in ethnic communities where populations with different identity lines remain. Thus, in this book, analyzing of the background of the conflict in Sri Lanka is blended with some theoretical aspects of civil society and peace building. Moreover, history of conflict in Sri Lanka is discussed and the impact of civil society in peace building is critically analyzed in this book.

1.5 Objectives of the study:

In connection with the research questions that we have highlighted earlier, the following broad objectives can be mentioned.

1. To study the role of civil society organizations in Assam, specifically, *Asom Jatiyotabadi Yubo Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP)*, *Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti (MASS)*, and People’s Consultative Group (PCG), People’s Committee for Peace Initiatives in Assam (PCPIA), *Asom Sanmilito Jatiyo Abhibartan (ASJA)* etc.
2. To trace out the state’s response to those civil society organizations (CSO).
3. To study the impact of these CSOs in peace building.

1.6 Hypotheses of the study:

The hypotheses of the research are:

1. Civil Society initiatives in Assam are fragmented and divide in nature. Hence their presence is not very durable.
2. The State often takes the initiative of civil society organizations with suspicion and doubt.
3. Civil society organizations are not accountable and transparent.
4. The role of civil society in Assam is confined to the pre negotiation phase only.

1.7 Methodology:

The present study is a qualitative research. The study is based on both theoretical and an empirical one. The theoretical framework of civil society has been developed through the study of wide ranging perspectives of civil society discourse. On the foundation of the study, the researcher's own understanding arising out those wide ranges of civil society discourse contested meaning and perspective of civil society has been added. Moreover, theories of peace and its allied perspectives are also added in the theoretical framework.

The empirical part is related to study of the peace-building and conflict resolution issue in the practical ground. For the collection of the data, both primary and secondary source has been used.

As far as the research methodology of the present research is concerned, it is a qualitative research. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. For collecting primary data, three methods have been adopted. First, a structured interview schedule has been developed to interview the activists/members, representatives of civil society organizations. Secondly, unstructured interview schedule is used to collect primary data from the activists/members and representatives of these specific civil society organizations. Thirdly, the group interviews of representatives, peace activists and members of different civil society organizations are for understanding the organizational entity and for studying the activities for conflict resolution and steps they made for bringing peace with the help of unstructured interview schedule. Participant

observation is also used to go deep into the subject. Content Analysis is also used where news paper items on the related issues, articles on national periodicals are documented and recorded by the researcher to analyze the chronological orderings of activities and events of civil society organizations.

Moreover, the memorandums, press releases, newsletters, pamphlets published by the civil society groups are used as prime secondary data for the study.

1.8 Significance of the study:

Peace and conflict study is an intimate part of socio-political science. Peace studies want to know how human beings can live together with one another. Peace today has concerned itself with a wide range of subjects varying from interpersonal relationships. The problem of peace has occupied a very important place and become the concern of mankind throughout the human race. The biggest danger in front of us today is that conflict and violence arise in pro conflict or post conflict situation. Conflict situation not only destroys the peace of universe but also threaten the very existence of the humanity.

John Paul Lederach (1997) claimed that peace building is more than just a post-conflict reconstruction; peace building encompasses, generates, and sustains a full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform a conflict toward a more sustainable, peaceful relationship. Peace building is described as involving a range of activities and structures before, during, and after formal peace agreements between parties are signed. In north east India, peace processes between different insurgent groups and the central government have not got their ultimate momentum or result. For durable peace to bring in the north east India the voice of civil society is vehemently needed.

Civil society organizations in north east India have been playing an important role. Therefore the study of their role in the path of peace building is very significant for studying. Realizing the need of a depth study on the role playing nature of different civil society organizations in north east India, our research would be a contribution to the gap or lack of research on this connection. Though many writers have written books on this topic, our research would try to contribute a scientific research on this area

1.9 Characterization:

The present work has been designed with six chapters including introduction and conclusion. Basic arguments and a brief glimpse of the chapters are as in the following.

Chapter I:

The first chapter is ‘introduction’ chapter which is the introductory part of the present research. As the details of the introductory chapter show, it starts with the meaning and the statement of the problem of the study topic. It also includes conceptual framework, research questions, and review of the literature, broad objectives, hypotheses, methodology and significance of the present study.

Chapter II:

The second chapter is titled as ‘Theoretical background of civil society’. As the title reveals it is based on the theoretical background of the term civil society. Civil society is defined by many scholars in different ways. Definitions, contested meaning and the history of civil society are tried to encompass in this chapter. The basic argument of the chapter is that from the period of the state of nature to the formation of global civil society, the term civil society is connoted and discussed by different philosophers in different ways. Hence, this chapter discusses and tries to go to the deeper side of the theoretical background of civil society. How the term civil society is expressed by political thinkers like Hegel, Marx, Gramsci is the basic structure of this chapter. Reflections of Indian political thinkers on contested meaning of civil society are also added.

Chapter III:

The third chapter titled ‘Engulfing the theories of peace building’ tries to argue that civil society has a close relationship with peace building as civil society can play a very important role in peace building. The theoretical understandings of peace building are discussed in this chapter. The meaning of peace from the theoretical perspectives is the core of this chapter. Peace building approaches, other measures for building peace like peacemaking, peace keeping, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation are broadly discussed throughout this chapter. In this connection, the theoretical ideas of the role of civil society in building peace are also discussed. Peace building by civil society in different conflicts is discussed with examples in this chapter.

Chapter IV:

The fourth chapter titled ‘Genesis of conflict in Assam and initiatives by civil society towards peace building’ is the exploration of nature, the genesis and the cause of conflicts Assam. Along with this, the insurgency issue is discussed. How did the initiatives of civil society to act as a mediator between the ULFA and the GOI start and what the major initiatives are taken up by the civil society in Assam are the core of this Chapter. Exploring these core issues, this chapter is confined to initiatives of *Asom Jatiyotabadi Yubo Chhatra Parishad (AJYCP)*, *Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti (MASS)*, Peoples’ Consultative Group (PCG) and People’s Committee for Peace Initiatives in Assam (PCPIA).

Chapter V:

The fifth chapter titled ‘Analysis of the Role of the Civil Society in Assam’ analyzes the role played by different civil society initiatives starting from All Assam Democratic Citizen’s Association (AADCA) to *Asom Sanmilito Jatiyo Abhibartan (ASJA)* from a particular time period.

Chapter VI:

The sixth chapter titled ‘Conclusion: Findings and Summary’ summarizes the major findings, theoretical as well as empirical findings of the study. The researcher would also try to give suggestions regarding the research. Also, further scopes for the research are added in this chapter.