CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION
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Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem:

The concept of development covers a far wider spectrum than commonly believed and aims mainly at improving the quality of life. 'Development' thus does not fall in to mere economic growth measured in quantitative terms only. Development can be understood as the gradual growth or formation of any entity or a process in which a person or thing matures, changes or advances to another stage to realize its inherent potentials. In general, it involves an improvement in the living conditions or material welfare of a given population- often inhabitants of a particular region (Mathur, 1998). Generally, the concept of development is of necessity anchored in the dominant socio-economic dependant capitalism in which their present urge for development is intrinsically tied up with their history of dependence- colonial or otherwise (Nayak, 1990).

It is worth mentioning that the planning process, which was introduced in India since 1951, has also failed to bring about the desired level of development in the North Eastern Region of India. The planning mostly fails due to lack of understanding of the people and their problems (Bordoloi, 1990). While the planners and social activists are trying to take India towards the 21st century, they are mainly concerned with the weaker section of the society in relation to meeting their basic minimum needs and
surprisingly precious little has been done as far as their spatial displacement is concerned. After more than 60 years of independence of the country, the newly created Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in general and the district Kokrajhar in particular still remains backward as the developmental opportunities offered to the region remained confined to the urban areas only. Moreover, after the creation of BTC opportunities like the State University, Central Institute of Technology (CII) remained confined in and Kokrajhar town only. So, the persistent neglect of other areas of the Kokrajhar district leads to its backwardness.

Although in Assam particularly in areas dominated by ethnic communities like the Bodos, displacement due to development programmes has not occurred very significantly, yet the impact of few projects like the Dhansiri irrigation project, Bongaigaon Refinery Petrochemical Ltd (BRPL), Salekati Hydro electric project etc. can not be under estimated. A study carried out by the Tribal Research Institute, Assam on the displacement of tribals due to installation of Dhansiri irrigation project was published in 1984 mentions that altogether 1001 number of tribal families had lost about 1184 bighas of land, which included cultivable as well as homestead. Due to acquisition of land, some families became impoverished, as they were not given compensation in time. Many affected families received their compensation after 5 or 6 years from the time of acquisition of their land. The affected families could not purchase equal amount of land
as the value of land increased manifold when they received their compensation. The compensation given in installment further worsened the conditions of the affected people. Thus, it was felt that while installing major irrigation project or industries, the families or villagers likely to be affected should be identified and rehabilitation scheme should be prepared and incorporated in the project report (Thakur, 1990). Development related displacement is not a problem faced by a particular area or region but virtually a global problem. During the last 20 years of the previous century, development induced displacement was much more significant and it displaced on the order of 10 million people each year or some 200 million people globally during that period. Development related programmes are indisputably needed as they improve the lives of many people, provide employment, improve infrastructure, generate long term assets, act as magnets for further economic growth and agglomeration of economic activities and so on. No doubt, these programmes are beneficial for nation building but for many the consequences can be disastrous creating several problems in the process of their re-adjustment in the new environment (Cernea, 2000).

The unexpected effect of forced displacement is the impoverishment of large number of people. A study carried out in India found that development programmes caused displacement to more than 20 million people during roughly forty years but out of these 75 percent have not been
rehabilitated (Cerneea, 2000). Such programmes have not only affected people in the global level but in different parts of India too.

Ethnic conflicts have generated tension in different parts of the world in general and the state of Assam in particular as different ethnic groups have sought to assert their identity and at times, have done so through violent means (Gupta, 2005). Such ethnic violence displaced more than 6,00,000 people in India. (IDMC, 2007). It has had great implications on civil administration, system of justice and maintenance of law and order. Conflict among the ethnic groups may arise when different ethnic groups compete for valued resources and opportunities in societies under going social mobilization, industrialization and bureaucratization. In a system of ethnic stratification in which one ethnic group is dominant over the other, some members from one ethnic group may attempt to move in to the economic niches occupied by the rival groups and if they fail to do so they are likely to protest against the system of ethnic stratification as a whole and attempt to mobilize the ethnic group (Brass, 1991). On the other hand the privileged group may mobilize to defend its interest and may also use ethnic sentiments in doing so. Such mobilization and counter mobilization leads to ethnic conflicts (Gupta, 2005)

Another factor of conflict in Assam in general and the Kokrajhar district in particular is the influx of population from neighbouring countries. Historically, the district of Goalpara was the main gateway for the influx of
population from Bangladesh to Assam. (Barooah, 1979) The presence of such numbers of immigrants whose language, manners and customs differ widely from those of the indigenous people, has affected the economic, political and social structure of the study area. Their hunger for land was so great that they even encroached the land belonging to tribal communities. Initially there was no problem of land as such but when the availability of land became scarce due to increase in population, their hunger for land brought them in to conflict with the tribal people and other indigenous people of Assam (Barooah, 1979).

The state of Assam in general and the Kokrajhar district in particular populated by different communities has been experiencing ethnic conflict for quite some time (Goswami, 2001). One of such issue is the conflict-induced displacement in the Kokrajhar district of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). This is one of the major problems of the study area to be focused upon. The arson-affected families of Kokrajhar district have not been given the status of refugee, as they have not crossed an international border. As long as displaced people are from within a country's boundary, it is the problem of the state government concerned and it is extremely difficult for the state to handle the situation of such internally displaced persons (IDPs). According to the United Nations guiding principle, one has to cross the internationally recognized border to get the status of refugee. However, the displaced people in Kokrajhar district have not crossed the
international border and they are confined within the territory of the state. Hence the status of refugees has not been accorded to the displaced people in the Kokrajhar district. Thus, the displaced people are deprived of the facilities received by the refugees globally.

The present level of assistance for the protection of the IDPs appears to be insufficient. The critical issue for IDPs is that unlike that of refugees, there is as yet no clear-cut international mandate for protection and assisting IDPs. In many situations, IDPs find themselves living precariously among already poor and deprived local populations as the declaration of Hague on the future of refugee and migration policy points out (Anon, 2002). The impact of such type of displacement not only affects the psychology of the people but also the socio-educational and economic condition of the people.

The displaced people have been living in temporary relief camps since 1996. After the conflict that erupted in 1996, many displaced people returned to their original villages in 1997. However, after staying for sometime in the village, major conflicts between the two communities such as Santal and the Bodos again erupted in 1998, which led to the displacement of many people from their original habitats. The affected families of 1993 riot belonging to Muslim community are currently living in the temporary relief camps along the National Highway near Rakhalbubi under Bongaigaon district. There are altogether 3658 families or about 18000 people currently living in the said relief camp (Deputy
Another significant issue of the area is the movement for separate state by the Bodos. When this group of people realized that they had been deprived in many respects such as political, economic, social etc. they started articulating their grievances in the form of a political movement, demanding greater autonomy which led to a conflict between the state and the non-state agencies. During the course of the movement, many lost their precious lives and thousand got displaced from their original habitats.

The study area has seen many ups and downs during the last century. The Bodos had been demanding separate administrative setup since 1968. The first being the demand for Union Territory raised by the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) that was to comprise the Bodo and Mishing dominated areas all along the northern bank of the mighty Brahmaputra. This demand for creation of separate entity for the tribals of Assam remained the major issue of the Bodo political movement throughout the 1970s. The movement turned violent from time to time, which invited police action. In the late 1970s, the PTCA witnessed dissensions due to the clash of self-interest among the leaders. Thus in 1980, the PTCA got split and formed a party called PTCA (Progressive) in 1983. Seeing this All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) made an effort to unite the PTCA again in a convention held on 19th April 1984 but failed. Events now took a new turn, as the secessionist insurgent group, the Boro Security Force (BrSF)
appeared on the scene demanding an independent state for the Bodos as opposed to the demand for Union Territory by United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front (UTNLF) and ABSU combine (Pegu, 2004). The Boro Security Force was constituted on 3rd October, 1986 in a village called Odla Khasibari under the then Darrang district now Udalguri with Ranjan Daimari as the Chairman of the outfit. The aim of the organization was to "liberate the Bodoland with armed struggle for distinct identity and civilization of the Bodos" (Datta, 1992).

The ABSU formally launched the movement for separate state in 1987 followed by the formation of Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC) in 1988 to secure the support and participation of all sections of Bodo society irrespective of their political affiliation. The ABSU-BPAC received the support of virtually every member of the Bodo community in the state. The movement continued for six years and came to an end with the signing of the Bodo Accord on 20th February 1993. It is to be noted that the militancy had started among the Bodos long before the ABSU movement for separate state in 1987 got underway. The BSF came in to being because of the perception that the moderate political and social leaders were ineffective in realizing the Bodo cause. The BSF was banned on 23rd November 1992 by the central government. The ABSU had also a militant wing called the Bodo Volunteer Force (BVF) during its movement period, which was disbanded following the signing of the Bodo Accord in
1993. The BrSF was renamed as the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) in 1996 and the disbanded BVF resurrected itself in 1996 and renamed itself as the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) with the revival of Bodoland movement.

The government of India and the state of Assam initiated series of talks with the BLT from the month of March 2000 onwards. The talks came to an end with the signing of historic Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) between the government of India, Assam and the BLT on 10th February 2003 for the creation of self-governing body to be called BTC under the amended sixth schedule of the Indian constitution (Pegu, 2004).

The creation of Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) failed miserably to fulfill the aspiration of the Bodos and the ABSU in its 28th annual conference in 1996 disowned the Bodo Accord and revived its demand for separate state. The year 1996 was a distressing one because of a spurt of fratricidal clashes between the BLT and the NDFB cadres, and the riots between the Bodos and the Santals across the whole of Kokrajhar district and a part of the Bongaigaon district. The conflict between the communities erupted thrice the first of this occurred in 1993 between the Bodos and the settler migrants, followed by the Santal-Bodo conflict in 1996 and 1998 respectively.

During this movement for separate state, many Bodo youths got displaced from their habitats and the youth who have been displaced have
not yet been rehabilitated completely. One of the clauses of the accord says that the state government would provide full support to relief and rehabilitation of the members of BLT who would surrender with arms in this process in accordance with the existing policy of the state. Although the process of rehabilitation was started by the Government but with slow pace. Advertisement in connection with the appointment of the cadres belonging to the BLT were published and accordingly 1724 members of the outfit applied (Pratidin 2005). Out of 1724, five hundred and fifteen belonged to Kokrajhar district alone. As per the report published in the daily Pratidin (2009) about 835 ex-BLT cadres were employed in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the government had recently accorded approval for the appointment of 400 ex-BLT cadres in the Special Police Officer (SPO). On the other hand many youths belonging to the NDFB are still struggling to achieve their goal of independent Bodoland. Most of the youths remained displaced till today, as the authorities were not able to redress their problems and grievances. The NDFB signed a ceasefire agreement with the government of India in the year 2005 to discuss their issues. After the signing of the ceasefire agreement with the government of India, not a single round of discussion is held till date on the issue of NDFB, which has created lot of problem in the society. So the youths will remain displaced as long as their issues are alive.

Another significant issue is the fact that many Bodos became
“Saraniyas” and discarded their original identity. They adopted titles like Das, Deka, Choudhury, Hazarika etc and became non-Bodos for all practical purposes. Saraniya simply means going through a certain ceremony. However, out of a ceremony a separate tribe was made to be born. This way many Bodos got displaced reducing the total population of the community (Brahma, 2001). This was done by the Bodos to achieve a perceived sense of a higher social status. It is a fact that the Hindus looked down upon all Bodos who held on to their traditional system of life and religion. There were even cases of conversion of Bodos to Islam in Panbari area of Dhubri district (Pegu, 2004). Although there are many religion being practiced among the Bodos, they have not discarded their culture and traditions. However those who converted via Sarania or to Islam, lost their tradition, culture and community status.

1.2 Significance of the study:

The significance of the study is that the conflict between communities around the world has been going on unabated and often governments are not in a position to come out with clear-cut policies to solve such crisis situations. In the past not given adequate importance and the government considered it only as a law and order problem. Of late the subject has found a place in academic circles and is being discussed, although whether this will translate to more attention and concrete action is another matter altogether. With many IDPs still living in relief camps the
crisis for them continues and this study will focus on certain aspects of the plight of this vulnerable section of society.

1.3 Objectives:

The following set of objectives in relation to the study area have been laid down:

(i) to understand and analyze the causes and processes of displacement of various communities
(ii) to study the impact of displacement on the socio-educational and economic development of the displaced population?
(iii) to critically examine the process of rehabilitation and the rehabilitation package being given to the displaced persons and
(iv) to determine whether community wise variations in the effects of displacement, and rehabilitation exist.

Throughout the study displacement refers to conflict induced displacement and not to other forms/agents inducing displacement such as anthropogenic (developmental) or natural factors.

1.4 The Study Area:

The study area comes under the newly created Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), which was created on 10th February 2003 with a little modification of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution. In the newly created BTC, three new districts were added to the state of Assam. There are four districts in the BTC such as Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska and
Out of this Kokrajhar happens to be the largest district in terms of population and area and is the headquarters of the BTC.

The creation of BTC is also the best compromise formula for those who support and for those who oppose the demand for a separate state for the Bodos (Pegu, 2004:99). Prior to the creation of the BTC an arrangement in the name and style of Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) was in existence, with 3068 villages. Under the framework of BTC the number of villages in the present arrangement has been increased to 3082. For the present study Kokrajahr district located in the western most part of Assam has been taken up. Some areas of the neighbouring Dhubri district were
included in the Kokrajhar district on the one hand, while on the other hand the district had to lose some areas to the newly created district of Chirang.

At present there are three sub-divisions in the district namely-Kokrajhar, Gossaigaon and Porbatjhoar.

Kokrajhar district is located in the western most part of Assam and lies roughly between 89°46' to 90°38' East longitudes and between 26°19' to 26°54' north latitude. (Figure: 1.2) The district is bounded on the north by the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, by Dhubri district on the south, Chirang a newly created district of the BTC and Bongaigaon district in the east and the Indian state of West Bengal to the west. The total population of Kokrajhar district according to the 2001 Census is 9, 30,404 with a density of 294 persons per sq. km. The district has a total area of 3169.22 sq.km and a total population of about 8,20,000 on transfer of some areas under newly created Chirang district in 2003 (Deputy Commissioner, Kokrajhar, 2008). There are altogether six developmental blocks in the Kokrajhar district, of which three are in Gossaigaon sub-division and three are in Kokrajhar sub-division. The total number of Gaon Panchayats (GPs) in the district is 88. Out of these 32 GPs lies in Gossaigaon sub-division and the rest lie in the Kokrajhar sub-division.
1.4.1. Physiography: A part of the Brahmaputra Valley, the Kokrajhar district is a homogeneous geographical area, a larger portion of which consists of a level plain land. The slope of the land rises greatly towards the north. The northern foothills comprise the sub-Himalayan ranges mainly composed of Tertiary sandstones. The narrow zone with elevation ranging between 150-600m is relatively wider on the western part and tappers eastward in Sonitpur and Lakhimpur districts (Bhagabati, et al. 2002). The northern portion of the district is known as Eastern duars and is a sparsely populated area. The sediments brought by various tributaries of the river Brahmaputra form the plains in the southern part. The northern part is dry as the sub soil water percolates down because of its geographical formation, while the southern part is wet with sub soil water at higher level. This area
is mostly covered by tall grass and dense forests. Rice, mustard seeds and other crops are cultivated.

1.4.2. Drainage: The principal rivers of the district are Sankosh, Hel, Saralbhanga, and Champamati. The river Sankosh happens to be the natural boundary in some parts on the Assam and Bengal border. Some parts of this river are located in Bengal. The river Sankosh gets bifurcated at the place called Dynamari where a bandh (Dyke) has been constructed to protect the plain areas to the south of the foothills of Bhutan. The river has its origin in the foothills of Bhutan and flows through the Ripu Reserved Forest (RF) from north to south.

Another river of the district is the Hel, which is known as Longa in its upper course. This particular river flows through the Kachugaon RF and it changes its name in the lower reaches, where it is known as Gangia. The river Saralbhanga flows through the Chirang RF and is known as Gaurang in its lower reaches. Most rivers originate in the foothills of Bhutan. The river Saralbhanga enters the plains near Haltugaon. Above Kokrajhar, the Saumukha and Dekadamra rivers meet the Gaurang near Patgaon (Barooah, 1979).

Another important river of the district is the river Champamati that happens to be the natural boundary of Kokrajhar district in eastern part of the newly created Kokrajhar district of the BTC.
1.4.3. Climate: The climate of the district has features that are intermediate between the North-Bengal plain and the Assam valley. The district is situated in a humid sub-tropical climate. The average temperature that normally prevails in the area lies between 30°c to 33°c during the summer season and 6°c to 12°c during winter season. Heavy monsoon rains normally begins from mid June and continues up to September (Pinky, 2004). The average annual rainfall of Gossaigaon and Kokrajhar are 3927.50 mm and 2895.40 mm respectively.

Table 1.1. Average annual rainfall of some of the important places of lower Brahmaputra Valley Zone of Assam is shown in mm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Average annual rainfall (mm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gossaigaon</td>
<td>3927.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kokrajhar</td>
<td>2895.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>2267.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>2809.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bilasipara</td>
<td>2880.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bijni</td>
<td>3161.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>North Salmara</td>
<td>4001.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sorbhog</td>
<td>3264.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Barpeta</td>
<td>2242.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pathsala</td>
<td>2780.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nalbari</td>
<td>2257.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rangia</td>
<td>1938.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Guwahati</td>
<td>1841.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Status report (Lower Brahmaputra Valley Zone) RARS, AAU.
1.4.4. Soil: The soil throughout the district is composed of sand and clay in varying proportions ranging from pure sand in riverbed to soft clay in different parts. The northern part of the district along the foothills of Bhutan is Terai soils. Just below the terai soil belt, some patches of old alluvium soil occurs in the district. (Bhagabati, et al, 2002)

**Figure: 1.3**
**Map of Soil types of Assam**

1.4.5. Forests: Forest is one of the most prominent resources of Kokrajhar district. According to the State Forest Report, 2001 of the Forest Survey of India, Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, the district Kokrajhar has a forest cover of 1364 sq.km. that is about 43.04 percent of the total geographical area. (District Profile, Kokrajhar District, 2008). The forest cover of the district is divided in to two divisions such as Kachugaon and Haltugaon division. But after the formation of BTC,
some parts of Guma division have also been included in the Kokrajhar district. Among these divisions, Kachugaon division has a greater area under forest cover i.e. 82,412.55 hectares (Statistical handbook of Assam, 2004). Records show that about 55% of the total geographical area of the district is under reserved forest but the actual position has dwindled now to some extent due to relentless felling of trees by unscrupulous elements and encroachment of reserved forest. Northern part of Kokrajhar district was thickly covered with valuable trees such as Sal, Gamari, Sissoo, Titachop etc. and various medicinal plants like Amlokhi, Hortoki (Silika) etc. Once the Haltugaon and Kachugaon forests were famous for the top quality of Sal trees and for various medicinal plants in Asia.

Chakrasila wild life sanctuary is located in the district. It is the home of the rare primate, the Golden langur.

The study area has witnessed conflict between the Bodos and the Santals during the 1990s, which displaced more than 3 lakhs of population from their habitats forcing them to stay in the temporary relief camps for more than a decade, which made them impoverished.

1.4.6. The population base in Kokrajhar:

The Bodos:

There was a time when Northeast India currently comprising eight states including Sikkim formed a single political and administrative unit. The beauty of Northeast lies in the fact that it nurtured and housed a multi
racial and multi-linguistic population with different cultural and historical backgrounds. This far-flung enchanting corner of India possesses unmatched natural beauty and a composite culture of different tribes. 

Assam’s population is comprised of various tribes and communities that lived together since time immemorial. The Bodos are one of the major plains tribe of Assam. They belong to the Tibeto-Burman stock of family and migrated to the Brahmaputra valley in the pre-Christian era from western China and Tibet. Their original home being somewhere between the upper headwater of the Yangtse River and the Howangho. According to Rev. S. Endle, “the Bodos are the original autochthones of Assam (Endle, 1975) and are described as the earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley” (Gait, 2008).

The Kacharis are similar to the people called ‘Mech’ in Goalpara and North-Bengal. This group of people do not want them to be called ‘Mech’ because the word is most probably a corruption of the Sanskrit word ‘Mlecha’ (Brahma, 2006). In the Brahmaputra valley they are called Bodos. The noted historian Sir E.A. Gait was of the opinion that the Kacharis are very closely allied to the people called Koch and also as far as language is concerned to the Chutiyas, Lalungs and the Morans of the Brahmaputra valley and the Garos and the Tripuris of Meghalaya and Tripura respectively. Considering the wide distribution and the patchy spatial extent over which the Boro language is spoken is a mismatch probably attributable
to their long isolation from their kith and kin over the centuries.

According to C.A. Soppit, the Kacharis originally inhabited the hills and slopes to the north of Brahmaputra valley and gradually extended through central Assam to the Mymensingh district. The headquarters of the king were established at Guwahati. This is indeed true because the area of occupation mentioned by Soppit has some relevance as the Boros are still found in these areas and the same group of people is still living in Sylhet district of present Bangladesh. But unfortunately their long isolation from their kith and kin from across the international border made them forget their own language. Thus it seems that at one time the major part of Assam and Northeast Bengal formed a great Bodo kingdom. Today they speak Bengali, which has been imposed, on them by the dominant class. However, a few elderly people among such scattered Bodo populations still speak Bodo language very clearly.

Bodos are the largest plain tribes of Assam with scattered population in various parts of the state. At present they are concentrated in the northern bank of the mighty Brahmaputra right up to the foothills along the northern boundary of Assam adjoining Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh (Roy, 1995). Today a majority of the Bodos is found in the district of Kokrajhar. According to the 2001 Census, the district has about 3,64,481 speakers of Bodo language, which constitutes about 39.17% of the total population of the district.
The socio-economic condition of the Bodos deteriorated over the decades and the grievances though articulated by the Bodo middle class, remained unattended by the state government. The grievances of the Bodos in particular and the tribals of the district in general led to seeds of dissent being sown; this along with the experience of the Assam movement was to lead to further relegation and actions of dissent and conflict germinating in the years to follow. Problems of land alienation, poverty, indebtedness, economic exploitation and cultural and political neglect became increasingly acute among the tribals.

About 90% of the Bodos live below the poverty line till today, while small groups of educated elite amongst them have cornered the crumbs of Assam’s miniscule cake. 98% of the Bodos live in remote villages, which are inaccessible from the main towns due to pathetic condition of the communication network, which clearly indicates that this group of people remained neglected for decades. It is true even today that the Bodos are agriculturists and they have not branched out to any profession except petty government jobs. Their market economy centers around a meager sale of vegetables, mustard seeds and jute. Most of the produce of the year is used for domestic consumption and they continue to practice barter within themselves (Sharma, 2007).

The Santals:

The Santals are an aboriginal tribe settled now mostly in the states of
Bihar, Bengal, Assam and Orissa and also scattered in other parts of India. They call themselves Hor Hopon, meaning child or children of human beings. Other communities call them Santal, Santhal, Saontar or Satar. In government records they are mostly found either as Santal or Santhal. Dr. Timothy Hembrom prefers for phonetic elegance the name spelled as Santal for this people who call themselves Hor Hopon.

The Santals are considered to be the largest homogenous scheduled tribe in India (Troisi, 1978) although others place them as the second largest tribe of India (Kochar, 1979) after the Gonds and Bhils. The Gonds and Bhils are larger, they are however very heterogeneous and are considered to be the constituents of a group of tribes designated by a common name (Hembrom, 1996). The Santals have been in India since time immemorial.

Ethnically the Santals, Mundas and Kharias belong to the same family of the Kolarian race (Roy, 1970). Linguistically the Santals are classed with the Munda family of language, a language of Austro-Asiatic group to whom Max Muller gave the name of Munda family of languages (Hembrom, 1996).

Presently the Santals are found scattered over Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in India and in a smaller number in Bangladesh and Nepal. The name Santal spelt in one way or the other is an English form adopted from Hindi, which corresponds with the form Saontar used by the Bengali-
speaking peoples. Both names are applied to the tribe by non-Santals and the Santals do not use them in speaking about themselves except as a concession to foreigners whom they prefer to call Saontar. Santals prefer to call themselves as ‘Hor’ which happens to be the most accepted term used for representing the community among the Santals (Kisku, 2000).

The origin of Santal is very difficult to trace. It is learnt that the Santals have been living in Rajmahal Hills and Chotanagpur plateau. As they mostly occupied the thickly forested hills and plateaus, the Santals remained isolated from other advanced communities. The non-tribals have not been able to penetrate deep into the Santal habitat in large scale. There are two main core areas where the Santals live- one lies in the Santal Pargnas of Bihar and the other in Mayurbhanj district of Orissa. As compared to the Bhils and Gonds, the Santals have a smaller territorial extent. As per 1981 census, they were enumerated in 60 districts in the three districts of Bihar, Orissa and west Bengal. The Santals are listed in the list of Scheduled Tribe in their original states whereas the demand for the inclusion of Santals in the S.T list in Assam has not unfortunately been conceded till date. Their presence in Assam is well known, although there are no data to show either their numerical strength or geographical spread (Ahmad, 1999).

When contacted some of the aged people of the area informed the researcher that there were two missionaries in the Santal pargnas of Bihar
working among the Santals Called Skrefsrud and Boersen, whose names are very much familiar with the local people living in the area during the pre-
1870s. Most of the Santals were the believers of Hinduism and they were dead against Christianity. The two missionaries who were working among the Santals could not spread Christianity due to stiff opposition from the local people and those who converted to Christianity were forced to reconvert to their original religion. Although the two missionaries Lars Olsen Skrefsrud from Norway and Hans Peter Boersen from Denmark were opposed by many in their activities they were successful in their missionary efforts and were able to convert many Santals into Christianity.

By the year 1870, the Santal Parganas of Bihar was over-populated compared to lands available for cultivation. Elderly respondents of the area opined that the soil of Santal pargnas was not suitable for agricultural purposes. Most of the Santal Parganas was covered by barren land. So, they were interested to move out of the Santal Parganas and settled down in other parts of the country where the soil was suitable for agricultural purposes. Hence, the Santals requested Skrefsrud, who was working among them during that time to look for such a place where they could migrate to in large numbers. At first instance, a proposal was made to take the Santals to the Northern part of South Australia. Mr. Francis Dutton, Agent General of the South Australian government in Great Britain was contacted. The proposal was almost accepted through the South Australian parliament and
W.H. Bunday, Minister of Justice and Education sent formal invitation to Skrefsrud. Finally the plan had to be cancelled at the intervention of the Vice-Roy of India and as a result, an arrangement had to be made within India. Skrefsrud did not give up the idea of a Santal colonization outside the district of Santal Parganas. Through Dr. Graham, Skrefsrud contacted the officials in Assam in 1880 and on behalf of the Santals, Skrefsrud made an agreement with the Assam Government for the settlement. Ultimately an area covering 30 square miles of land was secured near the place called Dingdinga, 30 miles north of Dhubri in the Kokrajhar district of the BTC, Assam. By the end of 1880, all arrangements were made for bringing the Santals from the Santal pargnas of Bihar (Olav, 1967).

But prior to the arrangement for bringing the Santals in the Mini Tea garden called Mornai Tea estate, Kokrajhar, Assam, the flow of tea garden communities to the tea gardens of Assam had already started. Before the arrival of the ‘black tribals’ as termed by Hussain (1993) in the Assam Movement, the Britishers had made several enquiries regarding the natural and other resources of Assam. Accordingly they prepared several reports after the detailed surveys of the area. Initially surveys were conducted for annexation of Assam into the British India followed by the exploitation of the region profitably. This was very much a part of the British colonial strategy in Assam.

Robert Bruce an agent of East India Company along with his brother
C.A. Bruce with the co-operation of the tribal chief “Singphougam” of the Singpho tribe in 1823 first discovered Assam tea. Tea was extensively used among the tribals in a more rudimentary form (Robinson 1841: 133). Tea was also used by the Assamese people too as a medicinal drink (Kurmi, 1983:7-8). Prior to the discovery of Assam tea, tea plants were found growing wild in the forest. When the tea plantation was started in Assam, there was a huge requirement of labour force. To meet the growing needs of labour force in the industry, labourers were imported from other parts of the country. Tea plantation was started in Assam just after the annexation of Assam and the Assamese had tremendous hatred towards the British during that time. Assamese people were reluctant to work as labourers in the plantation as it required very arduous labour at very low wages. With the Assamese people reluctant to work as labourers, the British had to look for alternative sources of labour. During that time some indigenous people like the Bodos were engaged, as labourer in the garden but that too could not fulfill the labour requirement in the garden. Therefore the requirement of the labour force could not be fulfilled within the state and the British planters had to look for other alternatives and this opened the gates for large scale migration of the so called ‘black tribals’ (Weiner, 1978) from outside Assam, particularly from the tribal areas of Jharkhand, namely Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa etc. (Weiner, 1978). They started migrating to Assam and North Bengal tea gardens in the later half of the 19th century after they had
been alienated from their traditional lands by non-tribals under the patronage of the colonial state. When they lost their traditional right to forest areas, which happened to be the source of their livelihood, it forced them to look for other alternatives. Became impoverished and dispossessed of their lands, the migration to the tea garden was the only alternative left for them to rebuild a new life. The tribals who migrated to the tea gardens of Assam were called Chah mazdoor samprodhayo (Tea labour community). In the beginning they were called ‘BongaT’ (Foreigners), coolie Bonga. They did not oppose anyone for such negative leveling, as they were not aware about it. Nowadays they strongly oppose such labeling (Kurmi, 1983:9-12). All these factors added to their miseries and impoverishment under the colonial state. Thus, the British colonialism provided first the conditions of ‘push’, which induced the tribals to move from their traditional homes and later on “pull” which attracted them to the tea gardens (Nath, 1988:1604). The black tribal also had hatred towards the British as the Assamese people did. But they had to compromise with the situation as they had become alienated and impoverished in their own land. Thus, displacement of the people was experienced during the colonial days itself (Hussain, 1993). In fact the misery plight of the indentured labourers to Assam’s tea gardens during the latter half of 19th century verged on the inhuman; and under very difficult circumstances starting from the journey to malaria infested Assam and harsh working conditions, mortality was
Historians have compared such conditions to being worse than slavery.

Before becoming tea garden labourer in Assam, they were poor peasants, wage earners and the common people in their state of origin. The Britishers brought them to Assam as tea garden labourers on contract basis. The Adivashis in general and the Santals in particular were brought to Assam for resettlement after the peasant’s revolt of 1855. The revolts by the Adivashis against the imposition of taxes led to the killing of two brothers Siddhu Murmu and Kanhu Murmu (brothers) and Birsa Munda by the British. Many peasants were evicted from their original habitats and became homeless in their own land. As a result they were brought to Assam especially in the western part of Assam in 1881. There are many Santal villages in the remote areas of Kokrajhar district even today. The fact is that they were brought to Assam either to work in the tea gardens and for their resettlement in the villages (Olav, 1967).

But the situation in Kokrajhar district of the BTC is totally different than the other parts of the state of Assam as the migration of the Santals into this area started from 1881 onwards only. A missionary Mr. Boersen arrived with the first batch of 42 families on 8th February, 1881. They came by train and steamer and first landed at Dhubri. Thereafter they marched on foot about 30 miles north of Dhubri and gathered under a huge tree near a market place called Dingdinga. After their arrival, another batch of 13
families arrived under the leadership of Hezekiah Das, a teacher at the Ebenizer Boys School, Dumka.

The families who landed at Dingdinga soon started cleaning the jungles of the area allotted to them and built some new huts in the area meant for them. So, the 55 families spread over five villages and a church was built at a place called Thakurpur, (located presently under Dingdinga Gaon Panchyat) meaning the village of God. It was the first church of the Santal mission in Assam. And the village Thakurpur remained the headquarters of the colony for some years.

After the building of this church, certain rules and regulations were framed to guide the new arrivals in the colony. Rules like no drinking, no brewing of liquor, no labour, buying and selling on Sundays etc. were in existence. During that time three ordained pastors – Siram Murmu, Surju Murmu and Pitho Soren were transferred from Bihar to the Santal Colony in Assam to look after the Christians in the colony. After the first batch of Santals who were brought here did not like the rules and regulations framed and started moving out of the allotted area. So many of them in course of time moved out of the colony, because they found the rules and regulations were too hard to follow and therefore settled outside the borders of the colony.

The Santal colony was established in 1881 and by 1888 there were some 600 inhabitants and an area of 1886 bighas of land had been
cultivated. By 1910 population of the colony increased to 4486 with a cultivated area of 12,280 bighas (Olav, 1967).

The migration of the Santals continued even after the independence of the country and it is assumed that the developmental processes, which were introduced since 1950, coupled with the state interventions in the tribal situation, have compelled the tribes to be on the move. The economies of the Santals in their place of origin have been changed to such an extent that they are no longer sustainable. This has certainly led to the inter-state migration. They have even migrated to those states where they have not been categorized under the scheduled tribe list (Ahmad, 1999).

The Santal Colony tribal block was created on 24th August, 1977 with 57,930 bighas of land. This is the place in western most Assam where a majority chunk of the Santal community lives today (Bordoloi, 1999).

The main occupation of the Santal is agriculture. Millet and maize are the staple crops of Santal and side-by-side they are also involved in lumbering, fishing and hunting. Most of them are found to be working in the tea garden called Mornai Tea Estate as labourous. On the whole their economic condition is deplorable as they still follow a primitive method of cultivation. Their standard of living is one of the lowest among the communities living around them.

From the economic point of view, the economic activities of the Santals in the western part of Assam can be divided into two categories-
one is the group who work in the tea garden and the other group who are agriculturists. The groups who are found in the tea garden earn their livings by working in the tea garden and the groups who do not work in the garden have to depend on agriculture, daily wage, domestic service etc. The number of service holders in the public and private sector is extremely limited as they lag far behind in the educational field.

Customarily the position of the Santal is hereditary and there is a formal selection of each elder member of every house of the Santal community. But this type of hereditary system does not exist in the tea gardens. In the tea gardens there are mazdoor unions in place of village councils, which regulate the activities of the Santals. Major issues are referred to this union and if the union fails to redress the issue, the tea garden authorities have to interfere in the matter.

Although the Santals have their own script Alchiki, they do not use it in Assam. They have adopted the Assamese script in Assam. They are recognized as other backward class (OBC). Kakati (1955) is of the opinion that the Santals of Assam do not wear their traditional dresses but in reality this is not so as they are found to be seen with their traditional dresses. The men folk wear a kind of cloth called pwnsi and the women folk wear pwnsi and parhar (saree)

The people are divided into many villages and selected their own Manjhis (Headman) and village council members which were constituted.
according to the Santal customary way. The headman is the leading man of
the village. No social and religious function is possible without the consent
of the headman. There is also a colony council with a pargana, which stands
above the village council. If any one is not satisfied with the functioning of
the village council he or she may approach the colony council for justice.

If we have a look at the religious aspect of the Santal life in the
western part of Assam, a majority of them are found to be the followers of
Christianity. However if Santals in Assam as a whole are considered, then
the majority would be Hindus.

From an educational point of view, the Santals are very backward
although some of them are well educated the majority remains illiterate. On
the whole Christian Santals have advanced marginally in education and in
other fields than the other Santals. Although their numerical strength in
Kokrajhar district is more than 90,000 according to the Census 2001, not a
single teacher belonging to the Santal community was found (Hussain
1993) in the oldest and largest university of Assam, a fact clearly indicative
of the backwardness of the community in the field of education (Hussain,
1993).

It may be stated here that the history of Santals in the western part
of Assam is a history of 125 years or so. After a lapse of over a century, the
Santals of the western part of Assam are still found to be far more backward
than other communities. To improve their present state of affairs they have
to switch over to modern methods of cultivation, as the community is totally dependent on agriculture; however low income and literacy levels have compounded their precarious existence and negligible opportunities outside agriculture have not aided their cause. From the cultural point of view, the Santals are free from intermingling with other community. So, they are able to keep their identity intact. By and large, the Santals are easy going and peace loving people.

1.4.7. **Roots of Conflict induced displacement:**

The major causes of conflict in the study area are mainly because of ethnic clashes and migrant population especially in the last two decades. Ethnic clashes and immigration of population from across the border and other parts of India are the most important contributors of displacement of population in the area. The recent Santal-Bodo conflict in the Kokrajhar district of Assam have displaced more than 3 lakhs of population belonging to the Adivasis, Bodos, Rabhas etc. forcing them to live in the relief camps for more than a decade.

The Bodos and Santals lived together as good neighbours for more than a century but the recent conflict has brought a feeling of hatred between the communities. One of the root causes of the conflict is the control over forest resources. In addition to this, the issue of control and access over land and forests has resulted in unprecedented hostilities between the dominant and non-dominant ethnic groups of the area. In an
already precarious situation, differences have crept up between the various agitating groups aggravating the situation even further (Goswami, et al. 2005). The Bodos enjoyed superiority as they are categorized as scheduled tribe population. Whenever there was tender for logs, only Bodos were allowed to tender. Although the Santals are the indigenous population of India, they are not given the status of scheduled tribe in Assam till date. So they were deprived from tendering as the tender was meant for the scheduled tribe population. So, jealousy started growing among the Santals.

Information gathered from various Bodo people of Gossaigaon subdivision further says that, the possible hidden reason may be banning entry into the forests in lower Assam by the NDFB – an insurgent group of the Bodos. Santals who were closely associated with the forests for their survival got frustrated at such activities of the NDFB. On the other hand, the Santals started suspecting that NDFB allows Bodos to enter the forests but they were also banned from entering the forests. This led to internal hatred towards NDFB and Bodos in general and started preparing for fighting against Bodos and it was well harnessed by other anti-social elements.

An informant of the study area, Mr A.S.Koch, Head Master of Kashiabari school was of the opinion that the third forces were believed to be behind the conflict between the Bodos and the Santals. According to him, Bodos and other indigenous people of the area considered the
immigrants as strangers and the immigrants were chased out by the local people once in the year 1950 as their number started increasing by leaps and bounds in the area. After the creation of Santal Colony Tribal block in the western part of Assam in 1977 (Bordoloi, 1999), the Santals too chased out the Muslims from the colony in the 1980s as they considered them as the intruders. However, the third forces instigated the Santals to act against the Bodos to divert the attention of their intrusion into the restricted areas. The militants too used to kill the people belonging to all the communities who went to the forest to cut trees. Killing of people by the militants were considered as a part of the Bodos to have full control on the forest. So, when the conflict erupted in 1996 and 1998 respectively, the two communities were busy fighting and on the other hand the third forces were exploiting the situation. They went on intruding into the restricted reserved lands. Now many people belonging to the minority communities are found to be settled in the colony.

Another social worker of the area Mr Moken Narzary was of the opinion that the root cause of the Santal-Bodo conflict was mainly due to political reason. The 28 Gossaigaon LAC was always under the control of the Adivasis for a pretty long time. But the winning of Bodo candidates from the LAC in 1996 assembly election made the Santal feel uneasy, which led to the conflict between the two communities.

The recovery of three dead bodies belonging to the Bodo girls near
Satyapur under Gossaigaon sub-division in the Kokrajhar district on 10\textsuperscript{th} May 1996 was only one of the immediate causes of the Santal-Bodo conflict. However who killed those three Bodo girls, why and how and where was not known. When the dead bodies were recovered and brought to Gossaigaon, thousands of Bodos gathered to see the dead bodies. In the gathering some of the Bodo youths got furious and started beating Santals in Gossaigaon town itself. Then in later few days, some villages belonging to both the communities were converted into ashes. The Bodo insurgent groups took this opportunity to show their patriotism towards Bodos and burnt down the Santal villages with more ease, power and killed many Santals and Oraons. In retaliation half prepared Santals fought back with bows and arrows, burnt some houses of the Bodo villages and killed few Bodos.

Another important issue was that it was not known who killed those three Bodo girls, which was believed to be the immediate cause of Santal-Bodo conflict. But as the dead bodies were recovered from the Santal dominated areas, it was taken into granted that the Santals killed them and there was no second thought in that moment. The killings of three girls were due to personal motives or conspiracy of some third party who knew about the germinating hatred of Santals towards Bodos. Proper investigation of the killing could really throw some light on the actual start of the ethnic clash between the Bodos and Santals.
Many Bodos informed this researcher in Gossaigaon sub-division and Udalguri district of the BTAD that economically and socially Bodos were the worst sufferer because Bodos were richer and had better social set up. They were of the opinion that one Bodo family's property would have been equivalent to the property of about ten Santal or ten Muslim families, though it may be a little exaggeration.

Another empirical prove Santals preparation for chasing the Bodos was given by one of the Police officials who had been working in the affected areas since its start says that Santals fought against Bodos with plenty of bows and arrows. He argues, if Santals were not prepared, from where did these thousands and thousands of bows and arrows suddenly came! Certainly not, they never keep even tens in a family. They keep only few for hunting birds and small animals. As of recently, after the completion of the parliamentary election-2009, when the situation turned volatile in the entire Kokrajhar district, it is alleged that the Santal leaders asked the Santals to prepare arrows 25 each in a family so as to fight with the Bodos. So the tendency is still there.

1.5. Research Questions:

The following research questions are put forward-

(a) How has conflict over scarce resources and minimal tangible results of development has led to forced displacement?

(b) Does inadequate compensation to displaces within a framework of social
and physical insecurity retard the process and pace of rehabilitation?

(c) Do community wise variations in displacement and rehabilitation of displaces occur?

1.6. Database and Methodology:

For the purpose of carrying out this research, it was important to clarify the time span concerning the process of integration. This study for the most part, examined the situation of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the relief camps of Kokrajhar district of Assam who arrived at the camps during the ethnic conflict of 1996 and 1998 respectively. Apart from this, the relief camps which were set up after the conflict of October, 2008 between the suspected Bangladeshi Muslim and the Indigenous people of Udalguri and Darrang have also been visited and data related to death and number of camps set up in Udalguri district have been collected. Due to the sensitive situation prevailing following the post – October, 2008 conflict, certain camps could not be visited during the time of my visit to the camps.

This research is based on three sources of data gathered from individuals, NGOs and the government sources. For the collection of data from the camps located in different areas, the camp in charges were contacted and interviewed. Data was collected by using a structured questionnaire. Observation notes written immediately after each interview served as an important additional source of information for the study.
Furthermore, a review of relevant literature and empirical research about the IDPs in different parts of the world provided a broader conceptual framework for this research.

For this study extensive fieldwork was carried out in the study area. Interviews with the village headmen, camp in charges, secretaries of the respective camps provided information about the causes of displacement, rehabilitation package, problems in distribution system of the ration provided by the government and deaths in the villages during the time of conflict. In depth interviews with the inmates of the camps provided information about the socio-economy and the displacement related data as well as concerning relative needs, concerns and expectation of inmates.

For the present study surveys have been carried out in the following camps of Kokrajhar district such as Sapkata, Sapkata (Encroacher), Matiajuri, Bashbari, Joymagaon, Bhadeyaguri, Mokrambil, Singibil, Satyapur, Hakma, Bajugaon, Panbari, Gurufela, Telipara and Bhaoraguri. When the survey was carried out during the year 2005 and 2006, the total number of relief camps in existence in the Kokrajhar district were (40) forty. Out of these, surveys were carried out in 15 relief camps. Most of the camps belonged to the Adivasi and only few camps were left out to be rehabilitated. Out of 15 camps surveyed in Kokrajhar district, two camps belonged to the Bodos and the rest belonged to the Adivasi. At the time of survey of the Adivasi camps, the researcher was accompanied by college
students, one of whom was a Santhal to inspire confidence among the camp inmates.

Fig.1.4.

Map of Gossaigaon Sub-division showing the location of relief camps

Some of the important research questions often asked to the camp inmates are (i) what are the main causes of conflict between the Santals and
the Bodos? (ii) How many times had the affected families shifted their camps from one place to other? (iii) Had any deaths occurred in the family during the last 10 years? (iv) How much compensation had been received in terms of money and how many times? (v) For how many days ration received in a month, and so on and so forth (Appendix-\textit{ijM}).

As far as the selection of household was concerned, random and systematic sampling was used. 100% surveys were carried out in the camps having less than 100 households and 10% household surveys have been carried out in the camps having more than 100 households respectively.

Suitable cartographic techniques were used for the presentation of data.

1.7. Chapterization

The following is the chapter organization:

Chapter I is the introductory chapter, which gives a brief account of the study highlighting the major aspects of the study. This chapter deals with statement of the problem, significance of the study, objectives, area of study, research questions and database and methodology. Apart from these, this chapter also deals with the roots of the conflict in the Kokrajhar district that led to the displacement of lakhs of population.

Chapter II deals with the review of pertinent literature.

Chapter III is the resource base and the inter community competition. It covers the historical background and the recent political history of the
Chapter IV deals with the conflict induced displacement in Assam since 1947 and brief discussion on the recent conflict among the dominant community of the district. Some findings of the chapter have been put forward.

Chapter V gives detail accounts of the impact of the conflict on the livelihood of the affected people, education of the children, women, agriculture and so on and so forth. It also narrates the impact of conflict on the business communities like the Biharis, Bengalis, Marwaris etc. of the study area. This chapter also covers the recent conflict that erupted between the indigenous communities and the Muslims of Udalguri and Darrang district in October 2008. The role of Non-Governmental Organisations in the management and services rendered to the IDPs in the relief camps have also been narrated in this chapter.

Chapter VI deals with the review of the government rehabilitation measures.

Finally Chapter VII deals with summary and conclusions, in which the extract of the entire study is summed up.

Besides these, Appendices and Bibliography are also included at the end.
References:


34. Thakur, G.C. Sharma (1990). 'Constraints of Tribal Development in the Plain Areas of Assam as reflected in few studies conducted by the Tribal Research Institute'. Assam (TRI) Assam, pp. 194-195.


