Ethno-Political Mobilisation and its Impact on Minorities:

A Case Study of Gorkhas in Assam

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By

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled **"Ethno-Political Mobilisation and its Impact on Minorities: A Case Study of Gorkhas in Assam"** submitted to Sikkim University in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** is my original work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University.

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"Ethno-Political Mobilisation and its Impact on Minorities:

A Case Study of Gorkhas in Assam"

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Countersigned by the Supervisor

For my **Aama**, **Baaba**, **Muma** and Entire family members.
Also scores of victims of the ethnic violence in
Assam and entire North East India...

CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

...and there are those who give and know not pain in giving, nor do they seek joy, nor give with mindfulness of virtue; they give as in yonder valley the myrtle breathes its fragrance into space...

With this enlightening passage from Khalil Gibran, with profound belief, Doctoral research program of mine has been a pleasant fragrance for me and it shall remain as a pleasant memory for eternity. It is a touchy moment writing this acknowledgement here. I am going to miss this moment as one of the best stages of my life, both as a student and as a scholar. During past few years, as a research scholar, it was a great opportunity to witness several happenings. It has been memorable and beautiful time that I have spent during execution of this work. Efforts paid to complete this research, commune the love, affection, help, guidance and encouragement of a number of people and institutions. Their benevolent contributions deserve to be recalled.

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- **Tikendra Kumar Chhetry**

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

	Abbreviations
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UN	United Nations
AAGSP	All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad
AAGSU	All Assam Gorkha Students Union
AAMSU	All Assam Moran Students Union
AANLA	Assam Adivasi National Liberation Army
AANSU	All Assam Nepali Students' Union
AASAA	All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam
AASU	All Assam Students Union
AATU	All Assam Tribal Union
ABNBSS	Akhil Bharat Nepali Bhasa Sangharsha Samiti
ABSS	Ana Bodo Suraksha Samittee
ABSU	All Bodo Students' Union
ACMA	Adivasi Cobra Militants of Assam
AFSPA	Arms Force Special Power Act, 1968s
AGA	Assam Graziers Association
AGP	Assam Gana Parishad
AGS	Assam Gorkha Sammelan
AHURA	Association of Human Rights Activists
AIGL (APC)	All India Gorkha League (Assam Provincial Committee)
ALA	Assam Legislative Assembly
ALCS	All Assam Chutiya Sanmilan
ANSP	Assam Nepali Sahitya Parishad
ANSS	Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha
APCC	Assam Provincial Congress Committee
APGL	Assam Provincial Gorkha League
APSC	Assam Public Service Commission
ASS	Asom Sahitya Sabha
ASS	Assam Sahitya Sabha
ATASU	All Tai-Ahom Students' Union

BAC	Bodo Autonomous Council
BeLT	Bengali Tiger Force
BGNBSS	Brihatar Guwahati Nepali Bhasa Manyata Sangharsa Samitee
BLTF	Bodo Liberation Tiger Force
BMF	Birsa Munda Force
BPAC	Bodo People's Action Committee
BPF	Bodoland Progressive Front
BPPF	Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front
BrSF	Boro Security Force
BSS	Bodo Sahitya Sabha
BTAD	Bodoland Territorial Area District
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
CBF	Confidence Building Floor
CCBM	Coordination Committee for Bodoland Movement
CEM	Chief Executive Member
CEPR	Council of Europe Parliamentary Recommendation
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
Cr.PC	Code of Criminal Procedure
CRPF	Central Reserve Police Force
DDD	Determination, Detection and Deportation
DGSU	Darrang Gorkha Students Union
DoNER	Development of North East Region
GAC	Gorkha Autonomous Council
GACDC	Gorkha Autonomous Council Demand Committee
GBBM	Gorkha Bharati Bichar Mancha
GDC	Gorkha Development Council
GDNS	Gorkha Dukha Nivaran Sammittee
HRF	Human Rights Feature
HROA	Human Rights Organization of Assam
HSP	Hamro Sayapatri Pariwar
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ILO	International Labour Organization
IM (DT)	Illegal Migrants (Determination Tribunals)
JSP	Jharkhand Sangram Parishad

KFR	Kaziranga Forest Reserve
KLO	Kamatapur Liberation Army
LC	League Covenant
LEP	Look East Policy
LW	Lutheran World
MIL	Major Indian Language
MJS	Matak Juva Sammion
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MULTA	Minority United Liberation Tigers of Assam
N.C Hills	North Cachar Hills
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Boroland
NE	North East
NEFA	North Eastern Frontier Agency
NESO	North East Students' Organization
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NJSP	Nepali Jana Sangram Parishad
NNC	Naga National Council
NRC	National Registration of Citizens
NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagas
NSCN–(IM)	National Socialist Council of Nagas (Issac Muivah faction)
NSK	Nagorik Sewa Kendra
OBC	Other Backward Classes
OKDISCD	Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Chance and Development
p.	Page
pp.	Pages
PTCA	Plain Tribal Council of Assam
RAP	Restricted Area Permit
SJSS	Sanmillit Janagoshthiya Sangram Sammittee
SPCDC	Special Protected Caste demand Committee
ST	Schedule Tribe
SULFA	(Surrendered) United Liberation Front of Assam
TADA	Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act
TGA	Tezpur Graziers' Association
TGSU	Tezpur Gorkha Students' Union
TV	Television

ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UP	Uttar Pradesh
UPSC	Union Public Service Commission
URMCA	United Reservation Movement Council of Assam

Glossary of Meanings

Glossary		Meaning
Aagsur Juktipurno Dristibhangi	:	logical observation of AAGSU
Aal	:	A ditch in the forest
Aanp	:	Mango
Asom	:	Assam
Asomot Nepali	:	Nepalis of Assam
Assam ma Gorkhaliharuko Aagman rh Awdaan	:	History of arrival and contribution of Gorkhas in Assam
Assam ma Nepalibhasi: Ek drisyawlokan	:	Nepali Speakers in Assam: An observation
Assam ma Nepaliharuko Aitihashik Prishtabhumi	:	A historical Background of Nepalis in Assam
Assameli Itihaas ko Pannaharuma Gorkha	:	Gorkhas in pages of the history of Assam
Badadasain	:	A festival of Gorkhas celebrated during the autumn
Bandh	:	The strike
Bangal	:	A local term referred to Bengali-Muslim
Bari	:	Land
Baro	:	Twelve
Bathan	:	A bunch of cows
Bayer	:	Plum
Bharat chhodo	:	Quit India
Bhitta	:	A wall
Bhuyan	:	Land lord during Ahom regime, presently a surname among Assamese
Bidhan Sabha	:	The Legislative assembly
Bohiragoto	:	Outsider
Bohiragotor Prashnot Duakhar	:	Few words on 'foreigners'
Busty	:	Human settlement
Chador-mekhela	:	Ethnic attire Assamese women
Chapari	:	Small island of Brahmaputra river
Chaubandi gunyo-choli	:	Ethnic attire Gorkha women

Chowries	:	Yak
Dainik	:	Daily
Danda	:	Small hill
Dangi	:	A habitat
Darrang-Rajbongsawali	:	The royal genealogy of Darrang
Deb Raja	:	theocratic king
Dhan	:	Paddy
Dokhowna	:	A traditional attire of Bodo women
Dolley	:	Rounded
Dooars	:	Door or entrance (corrupted form of word duars)
Eri	:	Silk worm
Goatimyan	:	Cattle farming people
Gorakhsah	:	Tending or protection of cattle
Gorkha Hakol Assomot Khilonjia Kiyo	:	Why Gorkhas are indigenous
Gorkha Ne Nepali: Ek Bishlesan,	:	Gorkha or Nepali: An assessment
Goth	:	Cattle farm, specially meant for shed of goat, cow and buffalo inside the deep forest areas
Grazier	:	Cattle rearer
Gumsiyeko Gorkhali Aawaz	:	Boiled Voice of Gorkhas
Jagrat	:	Alert
Jati Samasya Ra Nepali Jati	:	Ethnic issues and Nepali ethnic groups
Jhoda	:	A stream
Kaila	:	The fourth male child
Khaskura	:	A language historically spoken by Khas tribe (presently known as Nepali language
Khola	:	The river
Khukuri	:	A traditional knife of Gorkhas
Khuti	:	Cattle farm, specially the milk production site
Khutiwala	:	Owner of cattle farm, specially of the sheds of goat, cow and buffalo inside the deep forest areas
Koches	:	A tribe presently known as Rajbongshi
Lal panda	:	Priest in Kamakhya temple who wears red costume
Lal-Mohar Panda	:	Priest in red colour dress
Magical drink	:	Tea
Maila	:	The second male child

Mau	:	Mother
Mawkhola	:	The river flows from the mountain of Bhutan into the midst of Chirang district of Assam
Meches	:	A tribe presently known as Bodo
Mrithyu Bahini	:	Death squad
Mul kirat	:	Original "kirata"
Nagorik	:	Citizen
Nagorikor Patot: Asomor Bohiragot Samoshya	:	In the pages of citizenship: Assam's 'foreigner' issue
Nake	:	Nose
Nepali panda	:	Nepali priests
Nepalibhasha Andolanma Assam	:	Assam in Nepali Language movement
Paschim Assam ma hami: Hijo, Aaj rh Bholi	:	West Assam and us: yesterday, today and tomorrow
Pata	:	Jute
Patta	:	A land allotment paper
Raithane Gorkha	:	Indigenous Gorkhas
Rani	:	The queen
Rathanay Mudda Mathan	:	Indigenous issue introspection
Sanaysi Sena	:	Army in hermitage dress
Sepoys	:	Soldiers
Shanti Sena	:	Peace force
swadhin Axom	:	Independent Assam
Swayam Sewak Dal	:	A volunteers' group
Tapashya	:	Devotion
Teka	:	A straight stick of wood or branch/stem of tree
Tez dim tel nidio	:	We would pour our blood but not the oil
Tihar Utkhab Aaru Gorkha Sampraday	:	Diwali festival and Gorkha community
Tihar	:	A festival of Gorkhas celebrated *badadasain* during the autumn
Vita	:	A plot of land

Executive Summary

Conflicts related to sense of belongingness, ethnicity and identity politics and, the binary of self and other have been a major problem across globe since the beginning of the second half of twentieth century. With time, these conflicts have become localized and shaped into intra-state politics. Such intra-state conflict(s) are mostly in guise of majority-minority conflict (based on religion culture and language). Ethnic division and Ethno-Political mobilisations creating division among different groups are some of problematic aspects of the conflicts that the modern states face globally. Words like 'ethnic group', 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic conflict' Ethno-Political mobilisation have become quite common terms in the academia, politics as well as in the day to day life nowadays. Since late 1960s, ethnic conflicts have caught attraction of scholars focusing on ethnic mobilisation, ethnic sentiment and other conflicts and it remains a central focus for the research in the 1990s to till date. In this regard India is not exceptional.

Proper representation of majority and minority communities, the very essence of human civilization, justice and the essence of democracy do not lie only in protecting the interests of majority groups but also protecting the interest of minority too. No other country can match the vastness and diversity of country like India, with multi-ethnic society, civic nationalism, stable democracy and its distinctiveness. But the very fact of such distinctiveness lies in minorities of the Indian diversity based on religion, culture, language and region. Off late, several issues and movements have emerged and are on frontline as one may analyze. The reason behind this may be due to the sense of deprivation and alienation of minority groups or communities in relation to dominant groups.

India, in its post-colonial nation building has been witnessing a number of ethno-identity based mobilizations and violent conflicts. The Dravidian movement, the Khalistan confrontation, *Swadhin Axom* movement, Naga secessionism, the Mizo unrest, the Gorkhaland demerger unrest, the separate Bodoland movement are some of examples of the internal ethnic conflicts. Particularly, the North-east region has been reported with conflicts and violence, and these have been pre-dominantly ethnic

in nature. Ethno-Political mobilisations for secession of Nagaland led by National Socialist Council of Nagas (NSCN), the Independence State of Assam led by United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the Kamatapur and Kangleipak revival movements, the movement for separate state for Bodos, Garos, Tripuris have time and again shown peaceful as well as violent manifestations. The ethnic autonomy movements, Schedule Tribe (ST) status movements also manifest huge mobilisations that are ethnic in nature. The inter ethnic conflicts like Dimasa-Hmar riots, Naga-Kuki conflict, Paite-Hmar conflict, Gorkha-Khasi conflict, the Bodo-Santal conflict, the Bodo-Rajbongshi Conflict and the Bodo-Bengali Muslim conflicts have resulted in economic and psychological damage and misery.

When ethnic groups are in conflict through Ethno-Political mobilisation, ethnic competition or ethnic contestations, many other small or minority ethnic communities belonging to the same multi-ethnic space may remain silent or free from self assertive contestation. Such minority communities do not remain untouched and unaffected during the contestations when conflicts are aggravated by assertive ethnic groups. Problems of such minority ethnic communities often remain outside the circle of state programmes and policies when it tries to address the problem of major contesting ethnic parties. Even in scholarly circles, their problems are rarely represented. Hence, in this background, this study tries to put light on conditions and problems of such ethnic minorities. This study tries to understand the positions of such minority groups during conflicts. It also tries to explore the role that they can play during conflict situations. In this study a particular focus is drawn on Ethno-Political mobilisations in North East India, especially in Assam taking the case of Gorkha ethnic community of Udalguri and Sonitpur district of Assam.

This study is an attempt not only to put focus on the discourses and issues of ethnic minority groups, but also to understand the condition and situation that is being faced by smaller minority groups from like Gorkhas in Assam in the multi-ethnic contestation and conflicting space. Overall the study tries to highlight or bring the issues, problems and conditions of ethnic minorities on the light. The study also looks deep into the position of such minority groups during the conflicts to explore their role during conflicts and mobilisations in the North East India, with special reference to the case of Gorkha ethnic community of Udalguri and Sonitpur district of Assam.

This study was conducted with following objectives: (1) to examine various theories of ethnicity and Ethno-Political mobilization. (2) to trace out the origin and evolution of history of Gorkhas in Assam. (3) to analyse various dimensions of Ethno-Political mobilization and conflict in post colonial India, particularly in Assam. (4) to understand the determinants of Ethno-Political mobilization of Gorkhas in Assam and, (5) to assess the impact of Ethno-Political mobilisations, ethnic contestation and conflict on Gorkhas of Assam.

Following research methodology Udalguri and Sonitpur district of Assam were selected as the area of study where visible size of Gorkha population exists. Both qualitative and quantitative data was collected using structured, semi structured and unstructured interview schedule which included both open as well as close ended questions. Random purposive samples, snowball sampling as well as expert sampling were used in obtaining the primary data. Primarily total sample size was 300 hundred but only total 280 samples could be taken into account since rest 20 sample were excluded due to lack of necessary information sought in the research. Out of total 280 samples, 20 (ten from each district) were the key informants comprising the local leaders of the community, of various political parties, activists and social workers.

The work has been divided into following six chapters dealing with various aspects of the current research. The introductory chapter outlines the nature of the study, rationale, scope and objectives of the study. The inherent gaps in existing literature over ethnic mobilisation, ethnic conflicts and identity, the existentiality of ethnic minority groups in Assam, particularly in Udalguri and Sonitpur were examined. Chapter two lays the theoretical framework on ethnic groups, ethnicity, and ethnic conflicts and a preliminary exposition of condition of ethnic minority group(s). The complex relationship between Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts has been thoroughly explicated in this chapter. Chapter three puts light on the history of the Gorkhas in Assam to connect the historical background of the community and the area of the study. Chapter four undertakes the study on politics, policies and problems associated with the Ethno-Political mobilisation of Gorkhas in Assam in relation to the various sub-nationalistic or the ethnic contestations in Assam. Chapter five deals with the positions and the role of Gorkha community during various conflicts those took place in the area of study. It deals with analysis and interpretation of the field

survey conducted for the study. This chapter discusses the findings of the study. Chapter six, the final chapter establishes the concluding summary of this work.

For conceptual framework, **Chapter 1**, the introductory chapter includes the definition of various terms related to minority groups which have been discussed with the help of various resources, approaches, techniques and definitions laid down by various scholars. The patterns of the relationship between majority-minority depend on a number of the variables, including the nature and criteria for the consideration of Minority groups have been discussed. Light on Ethnic minority Groups and Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts and, relative approaches are also discussed in this chapter. Focus on origin and Identity Formation of Gorkhas of Assam with demographic Study has been made in this chapter. As an introductory chapter, this chapter outlines the nature of the study, rationale, scope and objectives of the intended study. The inherent gaps in existing literature over ethnic mobilisation, ethnic conflicts and identity existentiality of ethnic minority groups in Assam, particularly in Udalguri and Sonitpur attempted to examine in this chapter.

Chapter 2 titled "Ethno-Political mobilization and conflict: A theoretical Framework", of the work mostly highlights the process of nation building and ethnicity, which in turn led to the ethnic identity movement. Attempts have been made to discuss *ethnie*, ethnicity, Nationalism (Civic nationalism/Ethno-Nationalism) and Ethno-Political mobilisation. Problems of minorities particularly the ethnic minorities have been discussed in various contexts in different countries. Ethnic identity politics, mobilization based on polarization of society etc. was the real problem that took birth after the world wars in the form of intra-state conflicts. The questions like how ethno mobilisation take place, it's origin and evolution are also discussed in detail in this chapter.

Ethno Identity mobilization is perceived as threat over the socio-political and economic status of other previously privileged community. It may lead to competitions, conflicts and identity polarization between two or more ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society and occurs in a group when it perceives or identifies as being marginalized or deprived in the society. And lead the emergence of a number of political mobilisations holding demonstrations mainly for identity whereas identity is seen as the source of issues regarding Ethno-Political Mobilisation and conflicts.

Regarding such mobilisation various approaches are used like the Economic approach, psychological approach, power approach and sociological approach. These are the most common approaches which provide vibrant theoretical explanation about conflicts that correspond to ethnic mobilisation. Frances Stewart' has identified core inequalities as primary cause of such conflicts. Conflicts in this North East region of India has its extraction from the issues of dispossession of the identities of various tribes and lack of trust between the so called periphery (North East) and the core (So called mainland India). North East India has shattered dreams with long history of Ethno Political Mobilizations and has different paradigms since independence. Most of the contesting ethnic groups have man power and armed groups to protect their respective community interest related to Ethno-Political Mobilisations in region and particularly in Assam. Gorkha community is found to be sandwiched between such Ethno-Political Mobilisations, Ethnic conflicts in state. Issues related to it has also been attempted to address in this chapter.

Chapter 3 titled "Historical overview of Gorkhas in Assam: Identity Formation and Existence" mainly describes about existence of Gorkhas and formation of Gorkha identity in Assam from the historical view point. History of ancient Assam that was known as Kamrupa attests Grokha relation to Assam. The historical narratives establish that ancient kingdom Pragjyotishpura extended including Gorkhas' ancestral homes with a homogenously stretched territorial administration and congenial mobility of people in the past. The Kamrupa kingdom as ancient history of Assam confirms relation between Gorkhas and the region. Gorkhas ancestors served as priests in Kamakhya temple as *Lal Panda* (Red priest). *Bhuyan* community members in Assamese society were from the Nepali origin (presently known as Gorkha). These *Bhuyan*s were known as *Baro-Bhuyan* (twelve chiefs all together), ruled independently like zamindars as mentioned in the Persian language. Term *Rayi* is used by Metha Tophries(non-Angami Methama clan) historically in order to commemorate the name of their original great grandfather who was called Rai, a dominant clan among Gorkhas. Similarly the history of royal families of Manipur attests the deep history of Gorkhas with present North East region. This chapter focuses on the early history of Gorkhas relations with the North East part of India.

History locates Gorkhas in the Koch Kingdom and *dooars*, the borderland of kingdom of Bhutan. The *Dooars* were created mainly for the supply of food items and other materials that were not available in the high hills. History of the region also reads about British Colonial Policy of buffer Region and their relationship with the Gorkhas the signing of the Anglo-Bhutanese Treaty on 25th April 1774. The narration of Gorkha Genesis Guru Gorakhnath of eight century has also been highlighted along with the history of Gorkhas, Gorkha Kingdom in relationship to Assam.

The Anglo-Gorkha war which resulted in signing of "Treaty of Segowlee (*sic*) between Gorkha or Nepal king and British East India Company in December 2, 1815 and also the "Titalia Treaty" which was signed in 1817 between British East India Company and Sikkim helped Sikkim to regain some areas that it had lost to Gorkha kingdom or Nepal during the period of 1980 to 1793. This chapter also highlights the Annexation of Assam *Dooars* in 1828 and reorganization of it as British rights in the *Dooars*. Colonial policy and Gorkha in Assam Riffles with the recognition of Khukri as inseparable part of colonial soldiers as well as the recruitment of soldier from Nepal in 1887 and their economic status or sources related to tea plantation is also mentioned. The Colonial Policies and Nationalist turn of Gorkhas in various movements for independence where Chabilal Upadhyaya took the leadership of the Nepali speaking community and formation of *Swayam Sewak Dal* and participation in the Non-Co-operation Movement as well as in Civil Disobedience Movement and also the recruitment of Gorkha soldiers in INA is also the centric part of this chapter. There were also discourses which made Nepali speakers to adopt Assamese as their mother tongue to protect culture and society of Assam from the defective British colonial governmentality. The formation of Assam Provincial committee of All India Gorkha League (AIGL) which was formed in 1944 at Tezpur as a divergent to colonial plan of 1946, reflects Gorkhas' association with Assam and solidarity to the people of state. This chapter tries to jolt down about the History of Gorkha and their association with the Assam and other areas of North East India. In the concluding section, the chapter pours light on how the history of Gorkhas in the region has been marginalized.

Chapter 4 titled "Ethno-Political Mobilizations and Gorkhas in Assam" put lights on various ethnic sub-national movements in Assam and position of the

Gorkhas. North East region of India, particularly Assam is witness to numbers of Ethno-Political mobilizations and many times victim of violent manifestations. Noticeable aspects of contemporary socio-political reality of North East is safeguarding and maintaining the protection of "ethnic identity" of different ethnic groups. In this relation, language is the central and cultural foundation of regional nationalism or sub-nationalisms.

Certain policies of Indian Government have been perceived threat to Assamese nationalism and manifested in various agitations, particularly in Assam Movement led by All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). As byproduct of Assam Movement, Bodoland Movement surfaced, demanding separate state for the Bodo dominated area of Assam. Sub-nationalistic contestation(s) between Assamese nationalism and the Bodo homeland assertion resulted episodic violence affecting the life of people. In finding the solution of Bodoland movement, Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC) was created within the territory of Assam. Most of the Gorkha population was merged into the BAC. Community was listed in Other Backward Caste (OBC) in Assam. But at the same time the conflicts in the regions led to the death of many people belonging to Gorkha community. The community has been constantly labeled as 'illegal migrants' and 'foreigners'. Transaction of land between Gorkhas and other tribal community was suddenly restricted.

As the result of ethnic standoff and sub-national contestations the region witnessed the ethnic militarization. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) emerged demanding sovereign Assam (*swadhin Axom*) and Boroland respectively. Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) appeared as an underground outfit refueling the demand of separate Bodoland state within Indian federal union while the Adivasi Cobra Militants of Assam (ACMA) were protesting certain policies of Bodoland movement. Underground outfits like Minority United Liberation Tiger of Assam (MULTA), the Bengali Liberation Tiger Force (BeLT) also came into existence. Such ethnic militancy found to affect the ethic-life word of the Gorkhas along with other affected communities.

The **chapter 5** titled "Impact of Ethno-Political mobilization on Gorkhas in Assam: Field Narratives and Analysis" contains major findings of the field survey.

Attempts has been made to scale the experiences and perception of the people based on the data collected through interviews/schedules. For the same, data have been collected using variables like sex, age, education, religion, occupation, income; place of residence, linguistic composition and so on. Attempt have been made to understand locate out if any changes brought by the ethnic conflicts in the social, economic, cultural life of Gorkhas as well as demographic changes in the area of research. The role of the governmental, non-governmental agencies toward the community and the role of Gorkha community during the conflicts in pacifying the conflicts at the individual or organizational level also analyzed. Variables are further divided in analyzing the socio-economic, political, cultural conditions and the context of sample population with an endeavor to understand the role of conflicts in shaping the political, cultural, economic, demographic positions of Gorkha community. It may not be easy to derive generalizations from a small study like the present one. Despite its obvious limitations, one may still venture to list some findings as follows.

Gorkhas in Assam is a minority community in the state in the centre of many minorities. It can be said that there are hierarchical minority layers in the state. The linguistic Assamese community is a minority community in larger Indian context. Assamese nationalist leaders, in certain instances perceived agendas of national building as homogenization. The solving of the problems of the Assamese nationalist leaders found to generate fear among Bodo nationalist leaders causing manifestation of grievances in both peaceful and violent manner. The address to Bodo issue could not solve the problem but appeared as inefficient policy engagement. The non-Bodo ethnic organizations started to accuse Bodo leaders of dominating over other ethnic communities. The race of strengthening the militia outfits in each of the ethnic groups caused large scale extortion, ransom and murders. Desire of heroism among youths of certain communities is found to cause the ethnic militarization and conflicts in the region. The result of ethnic militancy was clearly visible in few cases of victimhood of the Gorkha community. Gorkha minority in such situations was forced to be divided into various opposing poles of conflicting parties in multiethnic contestation space. Both the districts in research were not only under the shadow of interethnic antagonism and scuffle but also under the distress of intra-ethnic contentions. Ideological differences between the Bodo organizations caused conflict both in latent

and manifest state continuously. Similarly, the penetrating issue of secret killing also is found to affect the Gorkhas inhibited in Sonitpur district.

The traditional and the prime means of livelihood of Gorkha community is found to be severely suffered because of existing conflicts and ethnic militarization causing the out-migration of youths from the community towards urban areas. The problem of militancy and ethnic conflicts has led to the internal displacement as well as steady migration of the community from the districts. Migration and displacement affected the socio-cultural institutions of the community. Many villages these districts have been fully vacated by the Gorkhas where the community was a dominant populace once few years before.

The recurring Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts have brought the ethnic pricing in the space of contestation and conflict. Ethnic pricing affected the socio-economic sphere of minority community like Gorkhas. Ethnic preference in buying and selling of commodities in markets often causes the misery in business run by minority community although in some cases such minorities can get advantages as they are the choice of both conflicting parties.

Gorkhas and history of the community is found to be marginalized in the space of contestation and conflict. The community members are often termed as 'outsiders' as well as 'foreigners'. Issues of Gorkha community members are found rarely in focus of governmental, civil society, humanitarian and scholarly attention. Impacts of ethnic conflicts in these districts (particularly in Udalguri) as well as other parts of the state have usually led to their helplessness and humiliation. Successive governments try to find short-term solutions of the perpetual problems. State is often found to skip from the problems bringing short-term policy instead of engaging in finding the way for long term pacification and conflict transformation. The Gorkha community members are not only found to remain at the receiving end of victimhood of conflicts and misery, but in some cases, they are found to play crucial role in placating the hostile conflicts situations. The community members are found to have play role as a third party as well as a mediator to pacify the conflict(s).

Educated youths from the community are growing conscious and realizing the socio-economic, political, cultural and other status of community. There have been

organizational movements for socio-economic and political security for the community. Various organizations have been organizing mass rallies, demonstrations and submitting memorandums to the centre and state governments as well as local autonomous bodies seeking security of life and property from time to time. It is observed from this study that the afflicted situation created by recurrent ethnic contestation(s) and conflict is leading the Ethno-Political mobilization of Gorkhas in Assam.

Finally, **Chapter 6**, the concluding chapter, highlights the major themes dealt in the thesis by drafting a short summary of entire work. The thesis concludes by the recognizing the ambivalence of the Ethno-Political movements throughout the globe and particular their rise from second half of twentieth century. Based on ethnicity, various groups engage in collective action for their respective interests through the process of Ethno-Political mobilisation and such when mobilisation results in contestation between group, it affects the entire geo-political space in which it occurs. By such mobilisations and contestations, often turning violent, between various ethnic groups, the Gorkhas of Assam have also been suffered the consequences without being part of such conflicts directly. Apart from making precise points about the substance of the work discussed in the main chapters, the conclusion includes some suggestions for policy use and need of further research in the said field.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Major challenges the states in global context pre-dominantly witnessing, since the beginning of the second half of twentieth century are intra-state conflicts. Such intra-state conflicts are mostly in the guise of majority-minority conflict based on religion, culture, language and ethnicity. Most of the peaceful as well as disastrous conflicts the modern state faces globally are in the form of ethnic division and Ethno-Political mobilisations.

It is a visible fact under the present context that modern states are made up of a number of minority groups. India is also a multi-ethnic society like many countries; its diversity is unmatched in the world in terms of its distinctiveness and extent. Distinctiveness of India's diversity lies in the fact that there are numerous groups which are minority in nature. Such minorities are based on religion, culture, language and region. In this backdrop, time and again, it is noticeable that some minority groups raise issues pertaining to the sense of deprivation and alienation in relation to majority groups. In this context, even the majority communities sometimes float similar sense of insecurity and raise similar issues and concerns. Apparently, worries of minorities in the form of religion, culture, langage, culture of so forth are found to cause discomfort to majority. Consequently, the discourse regarding the issues of rights to minorities attracts enthusiastic importance.

It is a persisting fact of history excavated by historians or social scientists that the Westphalia Treaty of 1648[1] inspired the materialization of some nations into a geo-political invention called nation-states. With the emergence of nation states, the

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[1] The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 ended the Thirty Years" War, a complex struggle that began in 1618 as a religious conflict within the Holy Roman Empire between the ruling Catholic Hapsburg dynasty and their Protestant subjects in Bohemia. Over the next three decades, the war evolved through a series of phases into a wider political conflict, pitting the Austrian and Spanish branches of the Hapsburgs together with their allies among the Catholic German princes against Denmark, Sweden, France and their allies among the Protestant German princes. During the exhausting conflict, much of central Europe was devastated. At least 500,000 troops had died in combat and civilian casualties were even greater, especially in Germany where most of the fighting occurred. Some writers estimate the loss of life at almost one quarter of Germany's population, with others numbering such losses as constituting as much as two thirds. (Raymond, 2005) cited in (Vaughan, 2011).

imaginary socio-political lines started to be drawn on the geographical surface. The Westphalian Nation-state modernity and the discourse of nationalism empower the larger groups in term of religion, language, and culture to dominate over the group of inhabitants of the same geo-space having different religion language and culture and having smaller numerical strength. Mobility and relations between people started to get fragmented in different socio-political and cultural sets as well as different sovereign political territories. On the one hand the pre-existing relations of people became dependable on the relation and national policy of such sovereign units. On the other hand the essence of ruling by the larger group created the space to feel the sense of insecurity among the sets of people with different religion, language and culture in nature of minorities. It also became a source of the sense of discrimination among the constitutional citizens in the form of majority and minority relation and mostly related to the issue pertaining to lingo-cultural or ethnic identity.

Words like 'ethnic group', 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic conflict' have become quite a common term in the English language, and they keep cropping up in the press, in television news, in political programmes and in casual conversations (Eriksen, 1993: 1). There has been an explosion in the growth of scholarly publications on ethnicity and nationalism, particularly in the fields of political science, history, sociology and social anthropology. Ethnic mobilization and conflict have been the main preoccupations since late 1960s and it remains a central focus for the research in the 1990s until today. Since the intra state conflicts started in the form of ethnic conflicts, a good number of studies have been done in this field. For the understanding of cases of Ethno-Political mobilization and conflicts the issues of Alban and Serbs of Kosovo, Hutu-Tutsi of Rwanda, Tamils vs. Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, Asian origins in Uganda, the east Timorist of Indonesia may be brought into light.

India, in its post-colonial epoch has been witnessing number of ethno-identity based mobilizations and violent conflicts. The Dravidian movement, the Khalistan confrontation, *swadhin Axom* movement, Naga secessionism, the Mizo unrest, the Gorkhaland demerger unrest, the separate Bodoland movement are some examples of such internal ethnic issues. Predominantly the North East[2] region is reported with

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[2] The region termed recently as 'North-East' after independence as the part of country which was first evolved as the idea of NEFA by British colonists after they colonized the Brahmaputra valley and Indo-Myanmar frontier comprises, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram and finally Sikkim, the

conflicts and violence, often ethnic in nature. Ethno-Political mobilizations for secession of Nagaland led by National Socialist Council of Nagas (NSCN), the Independence State of Assam led by United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the Kamatapur and Kangleipak revival movements, the movement for separate state for Bodos, Garos, Tripuris are time and again reported in regards of peaceful as well as violent manifestations. The ethnic autonomy movements, Schedule Tribe (ST) status movements also are manifested with huge mobilizations. The inter ethnic conflicts like Dimasa-Hmar riots, Naga-Kuki conflict, Paite-Hmar conflict, Gorkha-Khasi conflict, the Bodo-Santal conflict, the Bodo-Rajbongshi Conflict and the Bodo-Bengali Muslim conflicts resulted in economic and psychological damage and misery.

When ethnic groups are in conflict through Ethno-Political mobilization, ethnic competition or ethnic contestations, many other small or minority ethnic communities belonging to the same multi-ethnic space may remain silent or free from self assertive contestation. Such minority communities cannot be untouched and unaffected during the problem of contestations and conflicts are aggravated by assertive ethnic groups. Once Ethno-contestation begins, it may affect all the communities of the contestating space, especially, the small or minority ethnic communities in the area of conflict are affected directly and indirectly. During formulation of policies as agendas to cast off and in bringing normalcy, state has always hurled the attention towards directly representing ethnic parties of conflicts. Problems of minority ethnic community which are not direct parties in conflicts often are kept outside the circle of state programmes and policies. Even in scholarly circles, problems of such minorities are rarely represented. Hence in this background, this study tries to put light on conditions and problems of such ethnic minorities. This study tries to understand the positions of such minority groups during conflicts. It also tries to explore the role that such minorities can play during conflicting situations taking place between other than them and their political mobilisations in North East India, especially in Assam taking the case of Gorkha ethnic community of Udalguri and Sonitpur district of Assam.

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eastern Himalaya and Brahmaputra valley of Indo-Myanmar frontier for single a ecological unit, socio-economic identity as well as for administrative convenience in Independence India (Simray, 2004).

It is pertinent to mention that the discourse on minority issue appears with the complicated questions of concepts, logic, laws and facts and India is not free from this phenomenon. This discourse has been always at the socio-political visibility in India. Since the sun-set days of colonial administration and the dawn of Independence, India has witnessed huge socio-political mobility, conflicts and violence. As a result, even after almost seventy years of Independence of the country, this phenomenon demands and justifies (re)enquiry in spite of the fact that a large numbers of research and policy suggestive works have been done. This study is an attempt not only to put focus on the discourse of ethnic minority issue, but also dominantly on the understanding of the conditions and situations being faced by smaller minority groups like Gorkhas in Assam in multi-ethnic contestation and conflicting space.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

This section includes the definitions and various terms related to minority groups which have been discussed with the help of various resources, approaches, techniques and definitions laid down by various scholars. The patterns of the relationship between majority-minority depend on a number of the variables, including the nature and criteria for the consideration of Minority groups have been discussed in this section. Light on Ethnic minority groups and Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts and, relative approaches are also discussed in this section. Focus on origin and identity formation of Gorkha minority of Assam with demographic Study has also been made.

1.1.1. Minority: Definition

There is no dearth of definition of the term "minority" or "minorities" but its universal uniformity. There is visibly that abundance of literature on minority or minority rights, but the problem is, there is no any universally accepted, legally binding and academically agreed definition for the term (Capotorti, 1991: 5). It is a debated and discussed issue in International and domestic politics in absence of uniformity in defining it. The debate on minority has still been ongoing and pending, the term or the concept of minority is taken as inherently vague and imprecise without having proposed definition which could be able to provide for the innumerable minority groups that could possibly exist (Rehman, 2000: 14). Not only has the term

minority lacked the definition, proper legal and academic unanimity but also a large number of the states are very restrictive in this regards. Most of the states are very cautious that large trenches of population do not fall within this definition. The diverse contexts of different groups claiming minority status also make it challenging to formulate a solution of universal application (Ramaga, 1992:112) causing the impreciseness of the term.

Internationally too, the starting point in relation to the concept minority could not be established. The extant of international instruments do not include definitions of minority. An exception is Art. 1 Convention on Ensuring the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities of the → *Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)* which takes up requirements of a separate identity and the wish to hold on to that identity, a numerical minority position and also the traditional *nationality* requirement. However this definition has received little attention[3].

In this regard, the International law is found to be in problem to provide any proper and convincing instruction in defining the term minority (Rehman, 2000: 14). Many states and also potential minorities groups themselves obstruct the process of defining scope of the term minority (Smith, 2009).

However, despite these constraints, there have been constant efforts made at various forums by national and International lawyers, institutions and academicians in developing proper and convincible definition. Although the unanimously accepted definition of the term is yet to emerge out, approaches made so far as factors define the term may be taken into consideration.

The derivative words of the "minority" are *minor* and word *minorite*. The Latin word *minor* goes for lesser, smaller, reduced and diminished. The French word *minorite* connotes a condition of defeat (Coontz, 1986: 155). Glazer and Moynihan define minority as "group of society characterized by distinct sense of difference owing to culture and descent, forms of social life which are capable of renewing and transforming themselves" (Massey, 2002: 15). In reference to International Covenant

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[3] Henrard, Kristin, "Minorities, International Protection", in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, retrieved from www.mpepil.com, accessed on 12/03/2014

on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)[4], Francesco Capotorti (1991) defines minority as,

> "A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members -being nationals of the State - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language" (Capotorti, 1991: 98).

Council of Europe Parliamentary Recommendation (CEPR) 1201 (1993)[5] defines "Minority":

A group of persons in a State who:

(a) resides on the territory of that State and are citizens thereof;

(b) maintains longstanding, firm and lasting ties with that State;

(c) displays distinctive ethnic, cultural, religion or linguistic characteristics;

(d) is sufficiently representative, although smaller in number than the rest of the population of that State or of a region of the state;

(e) are motivated by a concern to preserve together that which constitutes their common identity, including their culture, their tradition, their religion or their language.

In 1985, the Sub-Commission submitted to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) a text on the definition of 'minority' prepared by Jules Deschenes. The definition was, however, not accepted by the Commission. According to this definition, minority (Khan and Rehman, 2009) is,

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[4] In regards to the protection of rights to minorities, article 27 of ICCPR that was Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 states, "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language." Retrieved from URL link: http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx on 04/05/2016

[5] Parliamentary Assembly (1993), *Additional protocol on the rights of minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights*, Retrieved from URL: http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=15235&lang=en# on 04/05/2016

"a group of citizens of a state, consisting of a numerical minority and in a non-dominant position in that state, endowed with ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics which differ from those of the majority of the population, having a sense of solidarity with one another, motivated, if not implicitly, by a collective will to survive and whose aim is to achieve equality with the majority in fact and in law."[6]

1.1.1.1. Variables of Majority-Minority Relationship

The patterns of the relationship between majority-minority depend on a number of the variables ranging from individual motive like aggression, co-operation etc. societal variables. Gordon has divided these patterns into three categories viz.., a. bio-social development b. interaction process variables and c. societal variables. He divides the societal variables into a number of classes viz., i. demographic size of phenomena such as the absolute size of the majority and minority groups, their relative sizes, their comparative rates of natural increase, territorial dispersion and concentration of minority groups by region, rural-urban residence etc. ii. Secondly, it consists the value consensus and dissensus between the majority and minority groups and specifies the particular areas where such consensus or dissensus exists; iii. Cultural differences between the majority and minorities; iv. The nature of ideologies about racial, ethnic and religious groups present in a general population and concerns as to the degree of equalitarianism and humanitarianism present in the ideological system and also the degree and type of assimilation or pluralism desired; v. the distribution of power between majority and minority groups, vi. the degree of access to societal rewards available to the minority ethnic group. vii. the political nature of the society with regard to the democratic-totalitarian scale or dimension (Gordon, 1975: 120-124).

1.1.1.2. Nature and Criteria for the Consideration of Minority Groups

Though there is a shortfall regarding the types of minority, yet some variation appears in nature of minority groups.

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[6] Jules Deschenes, "Proposal concerning a definition of the term minority", UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1985/31/Corr.1 (14 May 1985), para.181s

a. Minority by will and minority by force: According to J. A. Laponce the minority group which desires assimilation with majority but barred is, a minority by force and on other hand, a minority that refuses assimilation with majority is, a minority by will ((Laponce, 1960: 12-13). A minority by will consists of a group of persons, predominantly of common descent, who think of themselves as possessing a distinct cultural identity (which includes religion and language differences) and who desire to transmit this to succeeding generation (Whitley, 2000: 4).

b. National Minority: A minority is designed as a 'national minority' if it shares its cultural identity with a larger community that forms a national majority elsewhere. Will Kymlicka defines national minority as 'groups who formed functioning societies on their historical homeland prior to being incorporated into a larger state (Kymlicka cited in Khan and Rahman, 2012). Asbjorn Eide writes that national Minority in a European context always means a group rooted in the territory of a state, whose ethno-cultural features are markedly different room the rest of a state. In relation to the European regional instruments, some states also argue that 'national minorities' only comprise groups composed of citizens of the state (Aide cited in Khan and Rahman, 2012).

c. Old and New Minorities: According to this classification, 'old minorities' consists of Minorities historically settled in a state. They are also described as 'historical', 'autochthonous' or traditional' minorities. On other hand, 'new minorities' consists of the of the migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and their descendents, with a common cultural, ethnic and linguistic background, who are living on a more than merely transitional basis in a country other than of their origin. Since European standards only recognizes national minorities- who are mostly 'old minorities', new minorities are not recognized as minorities in the classical, conventional sense (Peers and Windischer cited in Khan and Rahman, 2012: 13).

d. Kin-minorities and kin-state: The term 'kin minority' refers to a minority group residing in a state but has strong identity link to the majority population of a neighboring state. Such neighboring states are termed as kin-states. The term 'kin-minorities and 'kin-states' usually attract attention of the international community when kin-states pursue policies and extend protection

for their 'kin-minorities'. Even though there is no internationally recognized "rights" or "obligation" of a state to protect its kin-minorities in other countries, there has been a detectable trend of states adopting policies, enacting legislation, engaging in international and bilateral instruments in the pursuit of what they perceive as a legitimate interest in the well-being of their kin abroad (Sabanadze, 2006: 245 and Khan and Rahman, 2012). Consequently, kin-minorities, unlike minorities without a kin-state, are in a twofold minority status. They are treated as minorities by the home state and in parallel though with different repercussions by the kin-state (Schopflin, 2003: 69 in Khan and Rahman, 2012).

e. Minorities and indigenous people: Like 'minority', the term 'indigenous people' also lacking an internationally accepted legal definition. Russel Lawrence Barsh (1987) writes that the term 'indigenous' was originally used in League Covenant to distinguish colonized people from their colonizers. Beginning with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 107 (1957), it assumed a somewhat different meaning, referring to the 'less advanced' or unassimilated elements of an aboriginal population within the borders of an independent state (Barsh in Khan and Rahman, 2012).

According to Jose R. Martinez Cobo, "Indigenous communities, peoples and nationals are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as people, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system" (Cob cited in Khan and Rahman, 2012). Yousef T. Jabareen adds that this definition is based on four criteria: first, priority in time; second, voluntary perpetuation of cultural uniqueness; third, self-identification as indigenous; and fourth, the experience of subjugation, marginalization, dispossession, exclusion, and discrimination by the dominant population in society" (Jabareen cited in Khan and Rahman, 2012).

1.1.1.3. Ethnic Minority in Nation-state

The ethnically divided societies witness the majority-minority bifurcation. The plural societies are divided into a number of majority and minority groups in the line of language, race, ethnicity, religion, caste etc (Chklader, 1987). In nation-states ethnic conflict is the result of identity crisis but in plural societies ethnic conflict is the result of socio-economic, inequalities, prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, in plural societies social and economic policies of states can ignore minorities only at their own peril (Massey, 2002). But the modern liberal-democratic-nation-state theory puts utmost emphasis on individualistic rights. The group rights are often overshadowed under the mask of liberal-individualistic rights. These rights help nation-states stay away from the concerns of minority rights in broad ways, (a) it maintains majority group rights in the framework of nation-state. (b) Minority rights discarded with the ghost of individual rights. Will Kymlicka put stress to maintain minority rights in different emporium than the human rights. Kymlicka argues that minority rights cannot be subsumed under the category of human rights. Theory of rights present in modern constitutionalism is individualistically construed (Kymlicka, 1989). The uniform laws, which nation-state prefers to operate in may not be minority friendly. In this regards, the framework of multiculturalism is congenial to a multi-ethnic space the space where collectivity and difference both, in relation to egalitarian command, to be kept in mind. Since multiculturalism embodies the politics of collective goals as well as politics of difference, every law of the land need not to be followed by all cultural groups. The demand for strictly uniform set of laws may unfairly impose great burdens on some groups.

1.1.2. Ethnic Minority Groups and Ethnic Conflict

There have been considerable numbers of schools grown up in defining the ethnic groups and ethnicity, the concepts are drown differently by different schools to bring out a definable meaning to it but, there is no universally accepted definition and understanding to it for which the debate is still in progress in the contemporary political and academic arena. It is a loaded term like many other concepts in social science is loaded with meanings. The term 'ethnicity' state Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan, who point to the fact that word's earliest dictionary appearance, is in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1972 (Eriksen: 1993, 3). 'Ethnicity' is a term first used

by David Reisman in 1953, but the concept itself is not new 'nor was the phenomenon new or unorganized previously, it was merely labeled differently" (Subba: 1992, 17). The term 'ethnic however, is much older. It is derived from the Greek word *ethnos* (which in turn derived from the word *ethnicos*) which originally meant heathen or pagan. It was used in this sense in English from the mid-fourteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century, when it gradually began to refer to 'racial' characteristics. In united states 'ethnics' came to be used around the second world war as a polite term referring to Jew, Italians, Irish and other people considered inferior to the dominant group of largely British descent. Eriksen says that none of the founding fathers of sociology and social anthropology-with partial exception of Max Weber-granted much attention to 'ethnicity'.

But, since 1960s, ethnic groups and ethnicity have become household words in Anglophone social anthropology, although as Ronald Cohen has remarked, few of those who use the term bother to define them. Eriksen finds that ethnicity has something to do with the classification of people and group relationships. He adds, in everyday language the word ethnicity still has a ring of 'minority issues' and 'race relations'. But in social anthropology it refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others as being culturally distinctive. Although it is true that that 'the discourse concerning ethnicity tends to concern itself with sub-national units or minorities of some kind or another', majority and dominant peoples are no less 'ethnic' than minority (Erikson, 1993: 3).

Though the term 'ethnic' or 'ethnicity' is being used frequently in the field of social science since 1960s, it has to achieve universally accepted definition. There are differences of opinion among the social scientists as regards its meaning. Anthony D. Smith defines ethnic group as a named human population, with a myth of a common ancestry, shared memories, and cultural elements; a link with a historic territory or homeland; and a measure of solidarity (Golay, 2004). According to Paul R. Brass, 'any group of people dissimilar from other people in terms of objective cultural criteria and containing within its membership, either in principle or in practice, the elements for a complete division of labour and for reproduction forms an ethnic category. The objective cultural markers may be a language or dialect, distinctive dress or diet or customs, religion or race' (Brass, 1999: 19). E. Hunter and Phillip

Whitten used the term to refer to "any group of people within a larger cultural unit who identifies themselves as a distinct entity, separate from the rest of that culture" (cited in Datta, 1990: 27). This distinctiveness of identity may originate from separate language, culture, traditions and social customs. Today, most of the social scientists use the term to mean "a social group which consciously shares some aspects of a common culture and is defined primarily by descent" (Datta, 1990: 36). Like race, ethnicity also involves the element of descent. But while race is not culture based, the ethnic group is based on cultural entity.

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity (Vos, 1975: 16). It creates internal cohesion and differentiates from other groups (Brass cited in Golay, 2004). To V.B Punekar, 'Ethnicity refers to the sense of people hood or we feeling shared by members of the group; the group whose members share this feeling is an ethnic group' (Kar and Sharma, 1990). It also involves 'the claims and demands for recognition and status as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups' (Brass cited in Golay, 1999).

To Max Weber ethnic groups are "those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration" (Cited in Guibernau and Rex, 1997: 18-19). But for Weber the ethnic group can be formed through different elements so race and physical similarities that can be perceived as common trait were only one among the different elements of ethnic group formation (Guibernau and Rex, 1997:19) also cited in (Sherpa, 2016).

Encyclopedia of Nationalism defines ethnic group as a collectivity within a larger society which has a real or imagined common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, a cultural focus upon one or more of the following: area of origin, language, religion, nationality, kinship patterns, physical appearances such as skin colour (Leoussi, 2001 and Golay, 2004). From the above definition of an ethnic group, ethnicity can be defined as an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have a minimum of regular interaction. It is also defined as phenomenon of an ethnic group coming to self-awareness that enables it to affirm its identity and pursue its interests. Thus, ethnicity is the summation of its impulses and motivation

for power and recognition, the driving force in the emergence of ethnic movements (Phadnis, 1990: 16 and Golay, 2004).

In discussing 'Ethnicity and nationality' Thomas Spira finds five propositions which inform the nature of ethnicity: (1) It always originates in specific historical circumstances that are simultaneously structural and cultural. (2) It describes a set of relations and a mode of consciousness. (3) Its meaning and salience vary for different social groupings according to their positions in the social order. Yet, as a firm consciousness it is only one among many, produced as particular historical structures impinge themselves on human experience and condition social action. (4) It has its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar grouping into a single political economy. (5) It is the product of specific historical processes, but it tends to assume the natural appearance of an autonomous force-inasmuch as it is a concept capable of determining the course of social life, where it becomes an identified item in the collective consciousness of a society. Ethnicity may be perpetuated by factors that differ from those that caused its emergence, and may have a direct and independent impact of the context in which it arose (Spira, 2002: 249).

1.1.2.1. Approaches in Understanding the Ethnicity

There have a number of approaches been emerged like Perennial, Primordial, constructivist-instrumental in understanding ethnicity and nationalism. Where, this phenomenon of universal importance may be viewed from three broad approaches dominantly- Primordial, Instrumental or Modernist and Constructivist of Situationalist (Golay, 2004).

From primordial's point of view, ethnicity is a 'natural' and 'given' phenomenon. Every individual carries with him some 'attachments derived from his place of birth, kinship relationship, religion, language and social practices which are natural for him, spiritual in nature and that provide a basis for an easy affinity with other people from the same background' (Brass cited in Golay, 2004). Such feelings of attachment are the core of ethnicity. The basic postulate of the primordialist approach is that there is an objective basis in the membership of the ethnic group through common descent, which the members share. Consanguinity within the members of a group which is more or less endogamous historical-cultural community

is the basis of ethnicity. They further argue that primary blood ties lead to overriding emotional attachment and allegiances. Ethnicity is ascribed; it is, given, and as such transcends individual orientation and personal circumstances. It is a property of the group and everyone is born into a group. These blood ties thus, explain the strength of the ethnic attachment in the modern world and emotions tied to them (Leoussi, 2001: 71). Some these postulates can be traced in the writings of Edward Shils, Steven Krosby, and Clifford Geertz (Golay, 2004).

From instrumental of Mordernist point of view, ethnic identity is socially constructed and the product of human choices and actions. It is the 'creation of elites who draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of the groups they wish to represent in order to protect their well being or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for their groups as well as for themselves' (Brass cited in Golay, 2004). Thus, the two approaches emphasize different factors as responsible for the formation and persistence of ethnicity and ethnic identity movement. The primordial approach emphasizes on mobilization of the groups in defense of their established beliefs and faiths based on their customs and traditions, while instrumentalists believe ethnicity as the creation of elites for their socio-political interests.

Instrumentalism is a doctrine that ideas can primarily be explained by their uses for their beneficiaries rather than by their accurate representation of truth or reality. Instrumentalism, thus understood, stands opposed to primordialism. The modernist or the instrumentalist portrays ethnicity as part of the modernisaton process. Claims to ethnicity in their view are products of political myths, created and manipulated by cultural elites in pursuit of advantages and power. They treat ethnicity as a remnant of the pre-industrial order gradually declining in significance as the modern state and national integration advance, and the assimilation of ethnic minorities occurs. Modernity will, according to the modernist, erode ethnicity as a principle (Leoussi, 2001: 71). The writings of scholars like Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm. Tom Nairn, Karl Deutsch, Paul R. Brass, etc, have been influenced by these ideas (Golay, 2004).

The constructivist approach stand opposed to both the primordialist and the instrumentalist in many way. The constructivist criticize both the approaches for their

over emphasis on the properties of groups, nation and society. Instead, the constructivist or situationalist puts emphasis upon the ways in which people socially construct their ethnicity in a situational way. For the constructivist what really matters is that people define themselves as culturally distinct from others. Shared descent is secondary and may be manufactured or invented. Fictive kinship, invented blood ties may serve their purpose as well as real ties (Leoussi cited in Golay, 2004). The inter-ethnic relation within the Nepali community comes somewhat close to this formulation. Some of the constructivist theories will be discussed in the following pages. Scholars like Federik Barth and Donald Horowitz and Dipankar Gupta loosely fits into this category (Golay, 2004).

1.1.2.2. Ethno-Political Mobilisation

Ethno-Political mobilization may be defined as a process by which members of a group collectively organize around an ascriptive identity (for example, language, religion, customs, origin) or interests to achieve collective goals. Collective goals may encompass increased participation in the bureaucracy, enhanced political representation, socio-economic power and privileges, cultural rights or control over a piece of territory (Saikia, 2011). It is a process or outcome of a social movement by a particular ethnic group and it possibly happens when members of such group commonly share a feeling of marginalization or victimization in a given society (Tilly, 1978). It is as a process that occurs before protest activities erupt and a social movement taking place (Torrow, 1983). In this regards, the language plays an important role in the construction of identity by negotiating the transition it allowed or prevented can be carried forward. He adds that it developed through a collective circulation and response towards particular discourse within which identity takes its shape (Thadathil, 2008: 158). Perhaps the formation of ethno nationalism may vary from one region to other and from one socio-cultural values but the very essences of it remain the same in all the places and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak call this essence 're-memoration' of the feeling of one-ness, feeling of collective identities based on historical narratives, cultural homogeneity and geographical space (Spivak, 2007: 2-20).

1.1.3. Gorkha: Origin and Identity Formation

The term 'Gorkha' is representing Nepali linguistic community of India in general and Assam in particular. However, different arguments on "Gorkha" exist. In many cases Gorkha word is used synonymously to Nepali. Moreover, the word *pahari* has also been used to refer Gorkha. Pronunciation gap exists between the word Gorkhas and Gurkhas, Nepalis and Nepalese, nevertheless, the words are used synonymously. Bimal Khawas referring T. B. Subba says that 'Nepalese' is basically used to represent people of Nepal or citizens of Nepal while 'Nepali' is used to denote Nepali population of 'Indian national' (Khawas cited in Sherpa, 2016: 3). Indeed, this illustration has been made by T. B. Subba (1992). However both looks identical and used to speak almost same language with few dialectical variant and have similar kind of names (Khawas cited Sherpa, 2016).

A.C. Sinha (cited in Sherpa, 2016) writes that the 'Gorkha' or 'Gurkha' word was used by the Britishers while recruiting the Nepali speaking people in the British Indian Army. Similarly, Bidhan Golay (2009) argues that 'Gurkha' or 'Gorkha' was a British discovery of race on basis of their physical and emotional strength. He explains the nomenclature 'Gorkha' is as "martialising" of Nepali speaking race. These colonial perceptions of the Gorkhas as a "martial race" still today continue to occupy a powerful place in the public imagination. However, history of 'Gorkhas' that was originated from *go-rakshak*[7] (cow protecting or cow rearing community) illustrates different story (details in chapter 3 in this work).

The development of 'Gorkha' and 'Nepali' identity has many disputed theories and arguments. However both the nomenclature Nepali or Gorkha represents the Nepali speaking population. The Nepali speaking population of India particularly in Assam has its own kind of socio-cultural orientation (Sherpa, 2016). Nepali speaking population of India forms the Gorkha ethnicity in India in general and Assam in particular. The presence of Gorkha does not remain within specific geographical region rather their presence is visible in almost every part of the country.

[7] Chris Bellamy in this book *The Gurkhas* (2011) brings into the notice that the name comes from the eight-century warrior saint, Guru Goraksanath or Gorakhnath. As Bellamy finds, his name was comes from the *gorakhsah*, which means tending or protection of cattle- *goraksa* in the language of the community (Belami, 2011). C. S. Thapa writes that Gorkhapur and Gorakhnath Temple in Northern India lends testimony to the term Gorkha being used for a particular class or clan that resided in or around the city of Gorkha which extended its conquest into the eastern and western direction (Thapa, 2013: 24).

In the Assam they form a minority group. Akin to Darjeeling, Terai and Dooars of state of West Bengal of India, the proposed Gorkhaland region (Sherpa, 2016), the ethnic identity of Gorkhas in Assam is formed on the basis of historical memories, common culture, common solidarity and same medium of communication.

Gorkhas including of Assam belong to both Khas and Mongoloid groups (Bhandari, 2017). Chettris, Bahuns, Kamis, Damais, Sarkee, Majhis, Gaines communities (Khas race) as well as Limbus (Subba), Gurungs, Magars, Newars, Rais, Tamang, Bhutia, Thami, Bhujel, Yakha-Dewan, Lepcha and Sherpa (mongoloid race) fall under the Gorkha ethnic group. Sharing the same kinds of cultural life-world and settlement, economic practices, and historical transformations, all these Khas as well as Mongoloid communities together form the Gorkha ethnicity or a collectively larger umbrella Gorkha identity.[8] In binding all these communities together, Nepali language as medium of communication played crucial role. In context of the region where Gorkhaland movement has been regularly in operation since decades, Atish Dasgupta discusses that the Nepali language known as *Khaskura* became the main bond of forming ethnic identity (Dasgupta cited in Sherpa, 2016). Communities which speak Tibeto-Burman dialects also used *Khaskura* as their second language (Pradhan, 1982: 23). The Bhutia and Lepcha communities also used *Khaskura* as lingua-franca in spite of having their own religion and linguistic identity. These people share same kind of experience because of that they not only build sense of same vocabulary but they also slowly developed the sense of belongingness to same ethnic group (Sherpa, 2016). Therefore, it is said that the Gorkha ethnic identity in present context is the result of assimilation of endogamous groups who were practicing different cultural trait with different dialects prior to their assimilation.

Bhaskar Dahal, the ex-president and present the advisor of All Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU), the pioneering organization of the community also says that "Gorkha" and "Nepali" are the ethnic and linguistic identity of the community respectively. He adds that the term "Gorkha" is referred to the "Nepali" speaking community in Assam and other parts of the country. Particularly in Assam, the words "Gorkha" and "Nepali" are used interchangeably (Dahal, 2007). Hence in this work,

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[8] The formation of Gorkha identity also has its base in language. Nepali language remains as a symbol of their socio-cultural distinctiveness. Nepali language is apparent in manifestation and operationalization either to represent collective Gorkha ethnic identity or to demarcate cultural 'other' outside their collective identity.

the terms Gorkha, Nepali or Nepali speaker are interchangeably used although the terms Gorkha and Gorkha community are in use dominantly in the work.

1.1.3.1. Minority defined under Indian Constitution and the demography of Gorkha Minority in Assam

Like global scenario in defining the minority, India is also not free from the dearth of clear cut definition of minority. It goes to show that even several decades of the working of the Indian constitution the term minority has not been defined satisfactorily. It is a curious constitutional fact that the term minority has not been defined in the constitution (Massey, 2002: 48). The expression "minorities" has been employed at only four places in the constitution of country. The headnote of Article 29 of the constitution uses the word "minorities'. Then the term "minorities or minority" has been expressed in the headnote of article 30 and in its clauses (1) and (2). From the constitutional narratives on minority, as I. P. Massey writes, it is understandable that India is a multi-ethnic space, a society having different kinds of minorities. These minorities are based on religion, language, culture, race and socio-economic considerations (Massey, 2002: 50). A plan reading of Article 30 (1) of Indian constitution shows that the right contained therein can be claimed only by a minority. One thing is certain that the term minority must be defined against the backdrop of Article 30 (1) itself. If so defined, two elements become clear (Massey, 2002: 46):

1. Minority must be religious or linguistic.
2. It must be numerically less than 50 percent.

However, while the first element is clear, second element poses a question like 50 percent of what? Is it 50 percent of the entire population of India or 50 percent of the population of the state or 50 percent of the population of the municipality jurisdiction or any part thereof? The Supreme Court, the Apex Court of the country has answered the question by holding that "less than 50 percent" must be determined in relation to the jurisdictional reach of a particular legislation which is sought to be hold responsible, namely, that if it is a state legislation then the minorities will have to be determined in relation to the population of that state and if it is a central legislation then it must be determined with reference to the population of the whole country. The

Court rejected the "Unit or Region Test" in order to define a minority (Massey, 2002: 46).

Minority group referred to in Article 30 of the Indian constitution must be a minority based on either religion or language; need not be both. Identification of a minority group based on religion is not an easy task because the term "religion" is itself a complex expression. Religion is a system of belief and worship which may be based on the concept of one God and one book or many Gods and Goddesses and many books or there may not be a concept of God at all or it may be belief in some principle, value or norm (Massey, 2002:49).

However, it does pose any serious problem in identifying a minority based on language. For the purposes of Article 30(1) a community may constitute a minority based on language, even though it may not have a separate script; it would be enough if they have a separate spoken language (Massey, 2002: 48-49). In relation to linguistic minority in India, it is dominantly referred that there is a language in every state which is spoken as mother tongue by majority. People who do not speak that language as mother tongue but other fall under the category of linguistic minority. However, persons whose language is official language of the state that they live do not fall in this category although, they are numerically minority. There are different kinds of linguistic minority in the country like (a) linguistic minority, (b) linguistic minority with tribal affiliation and, (c) linguistic minority with religious affiliation. Similarly under the purview of Article 30 of the constitution, linguistic minorities are the people whose mother tongue is not one of the official languages of the state they live; or people whose mother tongue is one of the official language of the state other than the state they are presently living.

In this milieu, Gorkha community of Assam appears to be fitted into the category of minority in the state. The population of community is much lesser than 50 percent of total population of the state. Nepali, the mother tongue of the community is not any of the official languages of the state. The mother tongue of the community was brought under purview of Assam linguistic minority development boards of Assam in 1996 (Nirola, 2006: 21). Similarly, a council named Gorkha Development Council (GDC) was constituted as per the guideline of Govt. of Assam WPT&BC

deptt. No. TAD/BC/450/08 dated 07/01/2011 for socio-cultural and economic as well as other development of Gorkha minority of the state.

Gorkhas, the poly-ethnic community is a mix of linguistic Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman of Caucasoid and Mongoloid races respectively (Subba, 2003: 57) professing the Hindu way of religious life. There are also a number of Buddhists and Christians. In studying the occupational culture of the Gorkhas in Assam, the anthropologist T. B. Subba categorizes professions of Gorkhas in the region into uniformed servicemen (army, paramilitary, and police servicemen and their family members), dairymen, cultivators and wage-labourers (Subba, 2012). The cultivators of the community are engaged in growing paddy, jute, vegetables and selling milk. For the production of milk, every household has either cowshed in the courtyard or *bathan* (cattle farm, specially meant for dairy), locally known as *goth* or *Khutiwala* in forest areas. A section of the community in the district engages as wage labourers who earn their daily livelihood working in various construction sites or mining and quarrying areas. Only, 10% of the community is engaged in government services like teachers, policemen, army, paramilitary forces, peon, driver, etc[9]. Apart from this, a small section is running small scale business like shops, vegetable vendors, tea stalls etc.

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[9] Informant: Madhab Chhetry (from Chirang), the vice-president of All Assam Gorkha Students' Union, a pioneering organization from the community in Assam, interviewed on 11/04/13

India's national Census report 2001 shows that the Nepali speaking population in the state comprises 2.30 per cent of the total population of the state.

Table 1.1: Decadal Population Size of Gorkhas in Assam (1951-2001)

Year	No. of Population in Assam	Percentage
1951	1,01,338	1.26
1961	2,15,213	1.98
1971	3,49,116	2.38
1981[@]	------	-----
1991	4,32,519	1.93
2001*	5,64,790	2.30

@ The 1981 Census was not conducted in Assam

*Thakuri, Rathna (2012), *Assam ma Nepalibhasi: Ek drisyawlokan* (Nepali Speakers in Assam: An analysis), Bongaigaon Assam, Town art press

Source: Nath, Lopita (2006), "Nepalis in Assam: A question of Identity", in Bimal, J Deb (ed.), *Ethnic Issues: Secularism and Conflict Resolution in North East India*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, pp.126-133.

However, the leaders of AAGSU, the Assam Gorkha Sammelan (AGS) and the Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha (ANSS) have other opinion. They say that the total population of Gorkhas (Nepali speakers) in Assam is near about thirty lakh which makes 10 per cent of the total population in the state[10]. Defending their arguments, the leaders of AAGSU, AGS and ANSS say that so far no census could find the correct population size of the Gorkhas in the state. According to argement put forwarded by the the leaders of the community, the Gorkhas, the Nepali speaking population is scattered in all the districts in the state. In some districts like Tezpur, Darrang, Baska, Sonitpur, Karbi Anglong, Chirang, Golaghat, N.C Hills, Odalguri, Demaji, North Lakshimpur, and Tinsukia, the population of Nepali speakers is clearly visible. But in other districts of the state, the population of the community is comparatively lower than the above districts. In the districts where the community has less population, they

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[10] For detail, see The Telegraph, Calcutta, India, dated July 14 , 2012

generally speak and communicate in local languages. Majority of the Gorkhas in these districts are comfortable with locally spoken languages and in doing so most of the people have forgotten their mother tongue (Thakuri, 2012).

The above mentioned organizations are of the opinion that historically there has been a trend among the Gorkhas in the state to adopt Assamese as their language. They send their children to Assamese schools, they speak Assamese and consider Assamese as their official language as well as the medium of interaction. Hence, the language proficiency of the Nepalis makes them invisible in the census reports (Niroula, 2006).

1.2. Survey of Literature

Studies related to conflicts with ethnicity, ethno-nationalism, Ethno-Political mobilisation and ethnic competition has gathered worldwide momentum. Theoretical statements have been advanced to explain the same. Among the available literature related to Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts, some of the important books and article have been thematically reviewed and presented below in three broad sections.

1.2.1. Ethnic Mobilisation, Contestation and Conflict: Theoretical Perspective

Brown, Michael E. (2001) "Ethnicity and Violence", in Montserrat Guibernau et.al (ed.) *The Ethnicity Reader*, brings an argument that conflict associated to ethnic mobilisation is a dispute about important political, social, cultural or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (1993), in his book *Ethnicity and Nationalism* writes that the problem of ethnicity and the ethnic ridden conflicting societies are divided into the demarcation of cultural boundary of contesting groups. According to him total thirty-five of the thirty-seven major armed conflicts in the world in 1991 were internal conflict and those could be plausibly described as ethnic conflicts.

Spira, Thomas (2002), in his article "Ethnicity and Nationality: The twin matrices of nationalism", in Daniel Conversi (eds.), *Ethno-nationalism in the contemporary world: Walker Connor and the study of nationalism*, spells out five propositions which inform the nature of ethnicity for ethnic mobilization like It

specific historical circumstances, a set of relations and a mode of consciousness, different social groupings according to their positions in the social order, asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar grouping into a single political economy; and product of specific historical processes, which tends to assume the natural appearance of an autonomous force in as much as it is a concept capable of determining the course of social life, where it becomes an identified item in the collective consciousness of a society.

Smith, Anthony D. (2008), in his book *The Cultural Foundations of Nations Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic*, explains that ethnic group as a named human population with a myth of a common ancestry, shared memories, and cultural elements; a link with a historic territory or homeland; and a measure of solidarity. Smith (1986), also in his *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* writes ethnicity as a distinct community recognized group members based on a shared belief of historical memories, myth, common descent, culture, common solidarity and specific territory or 'homeland'.

Brass, Paul R. (1999), in his book *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, discusses that an ethnic group is any group of people dissimilar from other people in terms of objective cultural criteria and containing within its membership. According to him mobilization of ethnicity involves the claims and demands for recognition and status as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups'. Datta, Birendranath (1990), in his article in "Ethnicity, Nationalism and Sub-Nationalism, with Special Reference to North-East India" in D. Pakem (eds.), *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India,* shares similar view that the distinctiveness of identity in regard of ethnicity and its mobilisation may originate from separate language, culture, traditions and social customs.

Uchendu, Victor (1975), "The Dilemma of Ethnicity and Political Primacy in Black Africa" in Gorge de. Vos and Lola Romanucci-Ross (eds.), *Ethnic Identity Cultural Continuities and Change*, explains that the ethnicity and Ethnic politics is a demand for ethnic identity within the multi-ethnic state systems.

Thadathil, George (2008) in article "Relevance of Language study for culture and identity" finds that language plays an important role in the construction of

identity by negotiating the transition it allowed or prevented can be carried forward. He also mentions that it developed through a collective circulation and response towards particular discourse within which identity takes its shape.

Patnaik, S. M. (2007), in his article "Reconstructing Cultural Identity" in R. K. Bhadra and Mita Bhadra (eds.), *Ethnicity, Movement and Social Structure, Contested Cultural Identity*, addresses that, it is a process differ one ethnic group from another differentiating their history, cultural background, and current situation. According to him it is evident when some ethnic groups or social minorities find themselves as oppressed, marginalized and feel that their uniqueness and distinctiveness are being made vulnerable by the dominance of a majority group. Similarly the book adds that the demand of ethnic minorities is, respect or recognition as a different group with separate political arrangement, more economic, educational or job facilities on the basis of their distinct lingo-cultural identities.

Imchen, C. Lima (2007), in his article "Democracy, Indigenous Social and Political Movements" in R. K. Bhadra and Mita Bhadra (eds.), *Ethnicity, Movement and Social Structure, Contested Cultural Identity*, portrays that the ethnic politics is a phenomenon that arose out of the shared experiences of injustice, marginalization and deprivation of certain sections of the society.

Tilly, Charles, (1978), "From Mobilisation to Revolution", in *Annual review of Sociology*, vol. 9, brings an explanation that the Ethno-Political mobilization is a process or outcome of a social movement by a particular ethnic group and it possibly happens when members of such group commonly share a feeling of marginalization or victimization in a given society. In this regard, Torrow, Sidney (1983), in his article "Struggling to reform: Social Movements and Policy Change during cycles of Protest" in *Annual Review of Sociology*, writes that, it is as a process that occurs before protest activities erupt and a social movement takes place.

Beck, E.M and Stewart E. Tolnay (1993), in article "Analysing Historical Count Data on ethnic competition", in *Historical Method*, vol. 28, No, 3, explain that, most of the studies on competition theory focus on majority group mobilization in response to minority gains. Majority group members mobilize when their position is threatened by competition from minority group members. According to article, this

will also be the case for minority group members. That is, minority groups will be more likely to mobilize when they face increased competition from the majority and/ or other groups in society. The ethno-mobilisation and competition theory suggests that the majority group will attack the minority group when the minority group improves its position. Thus, gains in the minority group position may lead to increased conflict. The theory also predicts that the minority group, like the majority group, will also mobilize it loses its position relative to other groups. As analytically and theoretically distinct categories, the possibility of interconnection between types of competition must be kept in mind.

Timsina, Suman Raj (1992) discusses that the sense of similarities and uniqueness develops as the result of membership in a specific group based on socio-cultural features such as race, language, religion, history and geographical location.

Pramanik, Ramchandra (2014) in his article "Politics of Identity and Fragmentation of National Character: A Study of Three Regional Movement in west Bengal" in *The International Journal of Humanities & Social Studies* writes that the ethnic identity politics is based on tribalism, ethnicity, and gender, racial or sexual attachments.

1.2.2. Experiences from Assam

The issues like ethnicity, ethno-nationalism, Ethno-Political mobilisation, ethnic/sub-national contestations etc have become most widely debated issues in the contemporary political and academic discourses in North East India particularly in the Assam in post colonial context.

Bara, Lily (1980), in his article "Assam: turn for worse", *Economic and political weekly*, Vol. 15, No 9, observes that the discursive agenda of national building become a source of sub-national and ethnic contestation in several part of India. According to him after the Independence of the country, when the national leaders started the nation-building process under the umbrella framework to cultivate the 'India-ness' through the national integration agendas became a matter of grave concern of self-determination at various levels in various parts of the country.

Weiner, Myron (cited in Sherpa 2016) in this context mentions that there always exist the problem of negotiating the "segmented" identities and the "pan-Indian" nationalism within the diverse Indian socio-cultural mosaic.

Datta, Brijendranath (1990), in his article "Ethnicity, Nationalism and Sub-Nationalism, With Special Reference to North-East India" in D. Pakem (ed). *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India*, finds that failure of Indian state to respect the Assamese culture and identity caused the emergence of Assamese ethno-mobilisation and conflict.

Goswami, Sandhya (1997), *Language Politics in Assam* brings observation that a result of fear and anxiety of Assamese population who sees the changing demographic scenario in the state as a threat to their culture and language caused the assertion and agitation during 1960s, 70slater stage in Assam. The book brings argument that fear in the mind of Assamese people that one day they may lose their distinctive identity and culture was root cause of the agitation. The formulation of the wrong policies by the government had further complicated the situation.

Fernandez, Walter (2007), in his paper "Land at the root of conflicts in the North-East during seminar on *Conflict Situations and Peace Initiatives in North-East India*, argues the problem of ethnic identity in North East is rooted in fear of resource alienation.

Guha, Amalendu (1979), "Great nationalism, Little nationalism and problems of integration: A tentative view" in *Economic and Political weekly*, 14 (7&8), writes that the sub-national mobilization in the name of Assam movement was against the resource exploited by the India, a movement by the oppressed class of Assam, a movement led by Assamese middle class to harvest their interest.

Hussain, Monirul (1995), in his book *The Assam Movement: Class, Ideology and Identity* explains that Assam agitation erupted during 1979-85 known as was more of an outcome of identity crisis of the Assamese people rather than an anti foreigner campaign. He says that Bangla-speaking Muslim and Nepali people who were alleged as 'foreingers' not only contribute to the enhancement of the economy of Assam but also to the development of the Socio-Cultural life never posing a threat to

Assamese identity in reality. He mentions that "The Assomiyas are facing identity crisis" and "Assamiya language is in danger"- are basically the slogans of the Assamiya ruling classes and hence to Assamese sub-national assertion in name of Assam movement. He adds the issue of Assamese identity tried to address through Assam Accord (1985) became a source or reference for Bodoland Movement.

Roy, Ajoy (1995), in his book *The Boro Imbroglio* argues that the decline in the socio-cultural and economic alienation of the Bodos in the 20th century has set the background for Bodoland movement. The Chauvinistic policies as well as the discriminatory administrative policy of dominant section of the society of Assam have only precipitated the crisis among the Bodo.

Pagu, Jadav (2004), *Reclaming Identity: A discourse on Bodo History,* finds that economic backwardness and protect ethnic identity from the linguistic threat posed by the Assam Official Language policy caused the Bodo-ethnic mobilization and it turned to be Bodoland Movement.

Nirola, Chalani (2006), *Gumsiyeko Gorkhali Aawaz*, discusses that the growing aspiration of Bodoization emerged as a bone of contention between Non-bodos ethnic groups like Adivasi, Bengali-speaking Muslim and Rajbongshis and the Bodo which led the manifestation through massive violence and mass destruction of property and life. But, ethnic groups other those who have the potential to manifest their grievance most often linger outside the mainstream scenario.

1.2.3. Impact of Contestations on Gorkhas of Assam

Thakuri, Rathna (2012), *Assam ma Nepalibhasi: Ek drisyawlokan*, explores the history of Nepali speaker known Gorkhas in Assam. According to the Book, Gorkhas were the part of 'Kirata' zenith of Kamrupa, and witnessed the transformation from 'Kiratas' to Hinduization. A section as the Upholders of the Hinduization remained in the valley and a large section moved westward and merged with society of Koshi bank of present eastern Nepal, the erstwhile Kirata kindom's northern part with identities of Khas, Gurung, Magar, Sunuar, Limboo, Rai etc. It is viewed that Limboos were the original branch of 'Kirata' recorded as '*mul kirat*'.

Bhandari, Purushottam (2003), "Evolution and Growth of the Nepali in North East India", in A. C. Sinha and T. B. Subba, (eds.) *The Nepalis in North East India*, and Devi, Nira, "History of Settlement in Assam", in T. B. Subba, et. al (eds.) *Indian Nepalis*, discuss the history of Gorkhas of Assam in various transformative period in Assam History. According to articles during the Ahom rule in the first half of 16th Society of Assam divided into Shaktivization and Vaisnaviation, the two transformative crusades of two Hindu offshoots. Gorkha population was sandwiched in between of both the group. This community had been part of both the Saktivite and Vaisnavite sects. In later days, they remained as the part of Assamese Society.

Upadhaya, Tek Narayan and Roma Adhikari, (2009), "Contribution of Nepalis of North East India to the Development of Nepali Literature" T. B. Subba, A. C. Sinha, G. S. Nepal and D. R. Nepal (eds.) *Indian Nepalis*, tries to explore the history of Gorkha in Assam during colonial rule. The article says that during the Anglo-Burmese war the British east India Company recruited the Gorkhas soldiers to fight against Burmese and the valiant challenge of Gorkhas uprooted cementing the Burmese colony in Assam cementing the Yandaboo treaty in 1826 and finally, Assam entered into the Colonial valley of British India (see detail in appendix II).

Ghosh, Kaushik (1999), "A Market for Aborginality: Primitivism and race Classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India" in Gautam Bhadra and Gyan Prakash (eds.) *Subaltern Studies* examines that how Gorkhas were used as labour tool in flourishing the agro industry in colonial Assam. It is narrated in the article that Gorkhas were allotted land to establish village to flourish the *dhan* (paddy). The discovery of *'Magical drink (*tea*)* tempted to settle Gorkhas in capital making through tea and cattle industry. Similarly, Hussain, Imdad (2007), "Soldiers and Setllers: The Recruitment of Gorkhas", in T. B. Subba and A.C. Sinha (eds.) *The Nepalis of North East India*, A community in search of India Identity India, explores that how the Gorkha community was deprived or exploited in regard of all basic requirements.

Bhandari, Purushottam (1996), in his book *Freedom Movement and Role of Indian Nepalese* tries to focus on anti-colonial uprising led by Gorkhas in Assam. It basically discusses about the causes and method of the uprising against colonial regime and in favour of Indian nationalism.

Chhetry D.B. and Bhawani Prasad Sharma, in an online article *Protected Classes vis-à-vis Nepalese in Tribal belts and Blocks* try to explore issue of marginalization of the Gorkha community in post colonial Assam. The basic of focus of article is how the community has been the community discarded from the constitutionally granted rights. The article states that Gorkhas of Assam were promised to protect as "Graziers and cultivators" under the Land and Revenue Regulation Act (ALRRA), 1886 by the colonial administration (see detail in appendix III). After India's independence, it was constitutionally guaranteed that the Gorkhas would be protected as a "Protected Class" along with tribal communities in the Tribal Belts and Blocks in the state since December 5, 1947. But when the national policies were resisted by the Assamese people, the Gorkhas of the state were labeled as 'outsiders', 'foreigners' as well as 'anti-nationals' in the state. Gorkhas of the Tribal belts and Blocks were considered as obstacles to the all round development in the tribal Belts and Blocks and they were excluded from the status of "Protected Class" in 1969.

Upadhyaya, Bishnulal (1978), in his article "Bohiragotor Prashnot Duakhar", (eds.) in Ranajit *Sabhapandit, Nagorikor Patot: Asomor Bohiragot Samoshya*, puts forward that how the governmental stood against the interest of community. According to him the official notice No. PLA/763/74/22, dated February 23, 1977 of Political 'A' Department, Government of Assam circulated instruction to avoid the employment of Nepali speakers in the government, semi-government and non-government institutions, employment in private hotels, domestic works etc.

Chhetry Jr, Harka Bahadur (2000), *Crisis identity of Indigenous Nepalis of Assam: A Retrospective Study* portrays the impact of Assamese-Bodo contestation on Gorkha community in the Brahmaputra valley of the state. The article cites the example that until the emergence of the Bodoland movement, the Gorkhas were never called as 'foreigners' or 'outsiders' in the Bodo dominated areas. There was no evidence in the history of conflict between Gorkha and Bodo community as well as other communities in the belts/blocks and other parts of the state. The Bodoland Movement was started as the reference movement of the Assam movement and it aggravated the situation of Gorkhas in the centre of contestation between Assamese and Bodo nationalism. Gorkhas were declared as 'anti-nationals' in the proposed

Bodoland since 1993. Bhandari, Purushottam (2003), "Evolution and Growth of the Nepali in North East India", in A. C. Sinha and T. B. Subba, (eds.), *The Nepalis in North East India*, addresses similar condition those faced by the community. He writes, with the demand of Bodoland, Bodo dominated area got polarized between Assamese, Rajbongshi, Bengali (both Hindu and Muslim) since the 1986. On such polarized contestation(s) and conflict(s), the problems of tortures, murders, lootings and forceful eviction went unabated. During the Bodoland movement, Bodo leaders did not have a clear stand toward the Gorkhas in Bodo dominated area. Some Bodo leaders declared Gorkhas as 'outsiders' 'foreigners' and 'anti-nationals' whereas some other sections of Bodo political and cultural organizations considered Gorkhas or the Nepali speakers as their "brethrens" demanding the all-round development of community.

Haldar, Chiranjib (2007), in his online article "The Nepali influx in North-East", in *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* writes that the Gorkhas have been vulnerable target of assertions of various ethnic groups fighting over scarcely available resources often leading to loss of home, hearth and livelihood in the North East.

Nath, Lopita (2005), "Migrants in flight: Conflict induced internal displacement of Nepalis in North-East India" *Peace and Democracy in South Asia* vol (1), No 1 observes that the Nepali speakers/Gorkhas living in Assam particularly in Bodo dominated areas for generations peacefully and maintaining a submerged identity got caught in the crossfire in various ethnic contestations. Similarly, the article Nag, Sajal (2007), "Fe-isation of the Nepalis of North East India" in A. C. Sinha and T. B. Subba (eds.) *The Nepalis of North East India, A community in search of India Identity India,* addresses the problem that how Nepali speakers/Gorkhas the part and parcel of the history and society of the state are seen as 'rejected people' and 'historyless people' in drawing the history of 'our' and 'other'.

Datta, Prabhat (1991) in his article published in *Indian Journal of Political Science* writes that the Gorkhas do not get enough opportunity to flourish; they feel politically, socially and economically deprived because of their 'identity crisis' which rise due to 'confusion' regarding their nationality.

The problem of Gorkhas in Assam vividly appears in the critical juncture of the state particularly in the space of reccuring Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts associated it. The community was got caught in the crossfire in various ethnic contestations. In existing literatures, the problem visible is, small and minority groups other then the direct ethnic parties in contestation and conflicts such groups often remain outside the circle of state programmes and policies when it approaches to address the problem of major contesting ethnic parties. Hence, this study, in light of Gorkha community which shares 2.30 per cent (Socio-economic census 2001) of total population in Assam attempts to understand the conditions and problems, their positions, possible roles which they can play on conflicting situations taken place between other than them. This study will analyse the background and relative issues associated in political mobilization of Gorkhas of Assam on the backdrop of recurring ethnic conflicts.

1.3. Rationale and Scope of Study

The feeling of insecurity to linguistic Assamese society could be seen during Assamese sub-nationalist movements of 1960s and 1979-85. The issues related to assertion of Assamese sub-nationalist were initiated to address in 1985 signing the Assam accord but it cultivated a fear of the hegemony of Assamese culture and identity among different ethnic groups. The accord became a bone of contention especially between Assamese and Bodo sub-nationalism when bodo nationalist leaders perceived the accord as a source of 'Assamization' to the indigenous bodo culture. In such a situation, the incompetent non-asserting ethnic group remained merely as buffering entity. During Assamese nationalist movements indigenous Gorkhas of Assam were labeled as 'outsiders' and 'foreigners', who were protected as "graziers-cultivators along with schedule tribe communities under Assam Land and Revenue Regulation act, 1886.

When the Assam accord was signed, it was expected to be a source of relief but it was short lived. The Bodoland movement further aggravated the Gorkhas position leaving them outside the discourse of popular indigenous population in north bank of Brahmaputra valley. Till 1980s Gorkhas were protected as 'cattle graziers' (ALRRA, 1886) along with schedule tribes in the areas known as 'Tribal Blocks'. But again in 1993, the bodo leaders considered Gorkhas as illegal foreigners' as well as

anti-national and the story of torture, extortion, burning of Gorkha settlements began (Nath 2003). Moving ahead, frequent conflicts between Bodo and Adivasi, Bodo and Rajbongshi, Bodo and Muslim as well as Bodo militia groups against Indian army/paramilitary leave them facing a serious problem of violence and displacement (Refugee Watch 2009).

In this context, Udalguri and Sonitpur districts are found to be the most affected. In every episode of ethnic contestations and violence like Assam movement, Bodoland movement since 1986 till date, Bodo-Bangla speaking Muslim conflict in 1993, Bodo-Santal conflicts in 1996, 1998 and Bodo-Bangla speaking Muslim conflicts in 2008, 2012, it had been worst affected. This community was never the part of direct violence but, often conflict between major ethnic groups of the area, brought them into a critical situation (Refugee watch, 2009).

In this backdrop, Gorkha population in the state has received a political mobilisation sharing the feelings of insecurity to the existence. The pioneering organizations like AAGSU, AGS and ANSS have been raising the issues of ethnic Gorkha community in the state. There have been demand to scrap Indo-Nepal friendship treaty of 1950, demands for the rights under "special protected class", provision of Nepali language class in educational institutions from primary to University level across the state. Recently the demand for Gorkha Autonomous Council has been raised. But such issues concerned to community are rarely addressed both in policy mechanism of state as well as in scholarly discourse so far.

It was also found that in scholarly debates on ethnicity, Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts, scholars are always troubled by the questions like "what is an ethnic group?", "when is an Ethno-Political mobilisation?", "how an ethnic conflict takes place?" and "which are conflicting ethnic parties?" In a situation of contestations and the conflicts among competent or potential ethnic groups, many other small or minorities groups like national common minorities, ethno-cultural minorities and the minorities in regard of aboriginal groups in same multi-ethnic space may remain silent but not untouched and unaffected. Most of the time scholars are found to pay attention and focus on the major ethnic parties or the major conflicting ethnic parties. They failed to address the issues and problems those are faced by other small communities or minorities directly and indirectly in the space of

conflict. Hence, an attempt is made here to understand Gorkhas, the ethno-cultural and linguistic minority in the centre of a multi polar contestation(s) between 'Indian nationalism', 'Assamese nationalism', 'Bodo nationalism' and other ethnic groups i.e., Santhal, Bengali (Both Hindu and Muslim) in Assam, particularly in Odalguri and Sonitpur districts.

This study on Gorkhas, the Ethno-cultural minority in a situation of multi-ethnic contestations in Udalguri and Sonitpur districts of the state may help to highlight the problem faced by Gorkhas as 'ethnic minority. This study may help policy maker(s) of the state to formulate comprehensive policies in heterogeneous demographic or multi-ethnic space to avoid conflict and to sustain peace, which is an urgent need in the state like India particularly in its North Eastern region. During the course of the study, it focuses on the following research questions along with objectives.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine various theories of ethnicity and Ethno-Political mobilisation
2. To trace out the origin and evolution of history of Gorkhas in Assam
3. To analyse various dimensions of Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflict in post colonial India, particularly in Assam
4. To understand the determinants of Ethno-Political mobilisation of Gorkhas in Assam
5. To assess the impact of Ethno-Political mobilisation, ethnic contestation and conflict on Gorkhas of Assam

1.5. Research Questions

1. What is the nature of Ethno-Political mobilisation of ethnic minorities?
2. What is the historical background of Gorkhas in Assam?
3. What are the dimensions of Ethno-Political mobilisation in Assam?
4. What are the implications of frequent occurring of Ethno-Political conflicts on Gorkhas in Assam?
5. Why is the political mobilization of Gorkhas in the state?

1.6. Hypothesis

- ▪ The recurrent ethnic contestations and conflicts appear to afflict the Gorkhas in Assam.

1.7. Research Methodology

Udalguri and Sonitpur district of Assam were selected as the area of study where visible size of Gorkha population exists. According to the census of 2011, the total population of Udalguri is 8, 32, 769 where Gorkha population is about one lakh, one ninth of total population of district. Similarly the total population of Sonitpur district is 19, 25 975. Gorkha population constitutes a size of three lakh fifty thousand, nearly one-fifth of the district's total population.

Sonitpur district is considered for the largest and highest concentration of Gorkha, the Nepali speaking population in Assam. Udalguri district is adjoining district to Sonitpur. It is one of the four districts with highest population of Gorkha community under Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). Existing literature shows that Gorkha population in these two region has been frequently affected during various ethnic conflicts in the region those took place between the groups other than Gorkha and afflicted situation has created a feeling of victimization, marginalization or other ways of discrimination among the community. Alongside it, it is evident that these two districts have received constant Ethno-Political mobilization of community demanding various constitutional safeguard measures to protect community. Hence the districts are selected as the area of study.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using structured, semi structured and unstructured interview schedule which incorporates both open as well as close ended questions. Random purposive sample and snowball sampling as well as expert sampling were used in obtaining the primary data. Primarily the total sample size was 300 hundred but only total 280 samples could be taken into account since rest 20 sample remained incomplete due to lack of necessary information sought in the research. Out of the total 280 samples, 20 (ten from each district) were the key informants comprising the leaders from the community in the political parties, social workers, pressure groups such as AAGSU, AGS, and Nepali Sahitya Sabha (NSS) as well as leaders and intellectuals from the communities. All the respondents were

originally hailing from Udalguri villages/town namely, Dimakuchi, Rauta, Suklai, Bholatar, Golmagaon, Kalikhola, Bhimajuli, Nunaikhuti, Udalguri, Bakainay-dara of Udalguri district and Panibhandar, Majhgaon, Bihali, Gambiri, Gorkhachawk, Dekiajuli, Namjuli Santipur, Singri, Nepalipara of Sonitpur district.

Apart from the data collected from the respondents, secondary sources from archives and published data which included historical writings, vernacular writings, organizational souvenirs, audio-visual records were also consulted. Interviews were conducted in Nepali, Assamese, Bodo, Bangla and English in accordance with the language of preference of the respondents. All the respondents were made aware of the purpose of the interview and their permission were sought before recording the interviews. During the research, caution was taken to reduce the subjectivity and biasness.

1.8. Limitations

On many occasions the respondents hesitated to express their views freely as they had to be convinced that the interviewer would treat the information provided confidentially. Considering the sensitivity of the region and the issue, in many cases, the interviewer had to take time to convince the respondents, taking them into confidence regarding the fact that the identity of the respondents would remain confidential.

Suspecting the nature of the work and the identity, the interviewer was quite often interrogated by security personnel to enquire if the interviewer was an informant to extremist groups in the region. Similarly, the interviewer was also often met and interrogated as well as checked by cadres of extremist groups. Cadres of extremist groups suspected the interviewer to be an agent or informer to security forces and warned to leave the area of research. In such situations, interviewer had to clarify his nature of work. Despite that, the interviewer encountered frequent interruptions. In some cases, the interviewer had to expedite the process of information gathering in order to avoid interruptions and unwanted situations.

1.9. Chapterisation

This work is divided into following six chapters dealing with various aspects of the research work. As an introductory chapter, the first chapter outlines the nature of the study, rationale, scope and objectives of the intended study. The inherent gaps in existing literature over ethnic mobilisation, ethnic conflicts and identity existentiality of ethnic minority groups in Assam, particularly in Udalguri and Sonitpur attempted to examine in this chapter. Chapter two lays the theoretical orientation on ethnic groups, ethnicity, and ethnic conflicts and a preliminary exposition of ethnic minority group(s). It tries to contextualize how the idea of "ethnic minority" is conceptualized in the study. An understanding in relation between ethnic mobilisation and conflicts is built in this chapter. Chapter three puts light on the history of the Gorkhas in Assam to connect the historical background of the community and the area of the study. This chapter also highlights the demographic profile of Gorkhas in Assam. Chapter four, undertakes the study on politics, policies and problems associated with the Ethno-Political mobilisation of Gorkhas in Assam in relation to the various sub-nationalistic or the ethnic contestations in Assam. Chapter five tries to understand the position and the role of community during various conflicts those took place in the area of study in this work. This chapter focuses on the profile and perceptions of the respondents. It deals with analysis and interpretation of the field survey carried for the study. The chapter attempts to establish an understanding on issues related to ethnic conflicts and its role in Ethno-Political mobilisation of ethnic minorities on the basis of collected data and information from the field. This chapter discusses the findings of the study. Chapter six, the final chapter establishes the concluding summary of this work.

CHAPTER 2

ETHNO-POLITICAL MOBILISATION AND CONFLICT:

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first half of the twentieth century witnessed devastating conflicts and wars, including the two World Wars. Conflicts between major competing states brought untold misery and devastation to human civilization. The end of the Second World War heralded the beginning of a new kind of war known as Cold War. However, the end of the World Wars especially the early post Second World War period saw rapid emergence of new independent nations, breaking the shackles of colonialism and became the new members in the comity of nations. These newly independent states started to engage in the nation building process generating a new unified identity of "nationalism".

The process of nation-building and the emerging structural changes vehemently generated an 'exclusivist nationality' undermining the ethnic and linguistic composition within the territorial boundaries of the States. In doing so, states could not escape from the ambit of conflict. Ethno-Political movements emerged as the driving force of intra-state conflicts. Ethnicity which represents ethnic identity and conflict has become one of the most burning issues of concern throughout the contemporary world. Attempts are being made by states to resolve the ethnic crisis by granting some safeguards and autonomies to the dissent groups. But such moves of the government have failed to arrest the spur of ethnicity. Rather, it is growing very rapidly with each passing day. States with multi-cultural societies like India, Bangladesh, Australia, Canada, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka Germany, United States of America (USA) and former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) are so much affected by the problem of ethnicity that the process of national integration and socio-economic development are jeopardized in those societies.

The recurrent hostilities in Northern Ireland, Chad and Lebanon, secessionist warfare in Burma, Bangladesh, the Sudan, Nigeria, Iraq, and the Philippines; the army

killings in Uganda and Syria and the mass-civilian killings in India-Pakistan, Burundi and Indonesia; Sikh terrorism, Basque terrorism, Corsican terrorism, Palestinian terrorism; the expulsion of Chinese from Vietnam, Arakanese Muslims from Burma, of Asian from Uganda, of Beninese from the Ivory Coast and Gabon; ethnic riots in India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Zaire, Guyana, and a score of other countries—these comprise only the most violent evidence of ethnic hostility. Armed forces are frequently factionalized along ethnic lines. Separatist referenda in Quebec and the Swiss Jura, a painful division of Belgium into zones for Flemings and Walloons, the protests of Berbers in Algeria and of Croats in Yugoslavia all serve to mark the potent political force of ethnicity in the politics of both developing and industrialized state.

Similarly, since independence, India has been witnessing number of internal violence. The movements like Dravidian movement of 1950s for greater Dravinad, the Sikh secessionist movement of 1980s for Khalistan, the ULFA secessionist movement since late 1970s for independence Axom, Naga secessionist movement, the Mizo movement, the Gorkhaland movement, the Bodoland movement are only a few examples of the large list of the internal conflicts in the country.

Particularly in the North Eastern part of the country, the conflict and violence have become very common items in day to day news menu, and such news items of conflict and violence are dominantly ethnic in nature. For more than 70 years, situation of this region is a matter of great concern in political front. One of the reasons for such concern is the growing assertion of various ethnic groups and its impact on the politics of the region. In this region, different ethnic groups have been struggling either for special constitutional safeguard or for the creation of special separate political entities on the basis of their lingo-cultural identities. With the passage of time the number of disgruntled groups asserting for such rights has gone up. Some of such groups could achieve their objective like Interim government for Naga hill in 1960 and formal declaration of Nagaland in 1963, status of autonomous state within Assam to Meghalaya and up gradation as full-fledged state in 1972, declaration of Mizoram as Union Territory (UT) within Assam which was promoted as full-fledged state in 1986, promotion of Tripura and Manipur as fully fledged state.

Still, varieties of ethno-based political violence exist in the region, i.e., ethnic line secessionist movements and violence like Nagaland by National Socialist Council

of Nagas (NSCN) in Nagaland and adjoining areas of Assam, the independence State of Assam by United liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) in Assam, movement for revival of historic old state of Kamatapur for Koch-Ranjbongshis in Assam and West Bengal, the Kangleipak in Manipur, the separate state movement for ethnic identity for Bodos in Assam, for Gorkhas in West Bengal, Garos in Meghalaya, the six schedule autonomy movement by of Rabha-Hasong in Assam, the movement for the status of Schedule Tribe (ST) by Adivasi-Santhal (ex-tea gardeners) community and Rajbongshi in Assam and the Autonomous Council movement for Gorkhas in Assam. Apart from these movements between state and ethnic groups, there are several ethnic conflicts have been taking place in the region like Naga-Kuki conflict in Manipur, Paite-Kuki conflict in Manipur, Gorkha-Khasi conflict in Meghalaya, the Dimasa-Hmar conflict, the Bodo-Santhal conflict, the Bodo-Rajbongshi Conflict and the Bodo-Bengali Muslim conflict Assam.

In above backdrop, this chapter deals with concepts nation-state, ethnic group and ethnicity and the issue of minority differently. The chapter tries finds the relation of Nation-state with the issue of ethnic minorities. The chapter also deals with the certain cases those emerged as the product of hegemonic Ethno-nation-state. This paper tries to explore the dynamics of several Ethno-Political/sub-nationalists movements with prime focus to India North East region in relation to various resources displacement and identity and culture as well as the response of response of state.

2.1. Ethnic Minority: Between *Ethnie* to Nation-state

It is noticeable that, most often conflict in large or small states which are containers of multi-ethnic or plural national groups (nations more than one dominant nation) and the heterogeneous societies (heterogeneous in sense of ethnicity, nation, religion, caste etc), in one or other way found to be the struggle for independence, group autonomy, share in distribution of resources, recognition for socio-economic and political purposes. Similarly the conflicts for the space and adjustment in power structure, vengeance for misdeeds in history, claim over resources. History is not found much comfortable when it comes to the treatment of weaker national group within multinational state: from attempts of assimilation by force or social policies to social engineering, oppression and ethnic cleansing, the states have tried all these

methods to homogenize the population, so that empirically there is enough evidence to assume that the best protection against the erosion of one's culture and resources is to share decisions with like-minded people, thus keeping them within one's own state (Harris, 2009: 38).

2.1.1. *Ethnie* and Nation

There has always been a confusion regarding if *ethnie* and nations are similar terms. Though the opinion ambiguity regarding the terminological difference between *ethnie* and nation persists, most often both the terms considered with nearer definitions though not similar. Ardent Primordialist like Antony D. Smith in regard of emergence of the political ideas during French revolution brings close relation between *ethnie* and nation when he mentions that Nations are not modern but the continuation of the earlier form of cultural identity is *ethnie* (Smith, 1986: 21-31). He defines, "an *ethnie* is a named human population with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures having an association with a specific territory and sense of solidarity" (Smith, 1986: 32 and Smith, 1988: 191) and Smith argues that modernity created the structural conditions in which nationalism could become an ideology of modern nations built around ancient *ethnie* core (Smith cited in Malesevic, 2004: 565 and Harris, 2009: 49). Modern nationalism the senses of nations cannot be observed without conceding that the most called-for resource in the struggle for historical justice is rooted in old ethno-histories (Harris, 2009: 49). Mann (2001) writes that ethnicity is defined to a social bond based on the belonging to an ethnic group which defines itself or defined by others as sharing common descent and culture. The nation is similar group, defining itself sharing a common culture and history and which also possesses or claims to possess its own homeland and the exercise of the political rights therein (Mann, cited in Harris, 2009).

Referring Smith, Harris argues,

"Ethno-histories, with their arsenal of ethnic symbols (flags, hymns monuments, costumes, iconic landscape) play an important role in the modernization of 'nation-to-be' for political action including violence that could not be justified on any other ground… Two ideas emerge from this all-too-brief account of Smith's theory of the Nation: (1) implicitly, the interpretation of the

story is unique to each group and, by implication, must be defined in relation to other groups (which in a less theoretical analysis is a standard reading of ethnic nationalism); and (2) there is a linearity- an *ethnie* evolves into a nation… There is no nation without sense of *ethnie* and that nation maybe modern but their cores go a long back" (Harris, 2009:49).

Now the question arise is how an *ethnie* get transformed to nation or a *ethnie* becomes a nation? As Harris finds, Smith in his work *Nationalism and Modernism* suggests three routes.

"First route, there is bureaucratic incorporation of loose *ethnies* into a territorial nation. This is largely a story of the competition between various monarch and their successful composition of middle classes, aristocracy and clergy together with their wealth, in order to wage wars to maintain the territories, which becomes territorialized and politicized national cultures that latter were developed downwards to 'the people'. The result has been a formation of territorial state in Western Europe, often labeled as having formed through 'civic nationalism' because territorial, not ethnic, aims dominated the aspirations of these bureaucratic states which, centuries later, forged 'the nation'. Nevertheless, the ethnic core is strongly present in the civic nations such as France, Spain, Britain etc. The second route, *ethnie* are transformed nationhood emerging as an ethnic nation. In Eastern Europe, the Middle and Far East and parts of Africa, the intelligentsia re-appropriated ethno-histories of 'the people' and edited them usable ethno-histories that could inspire the national struggle in the face of hostile empires and later serve as the authentic foundation of national identity. The nationhood, thus rationalized on the basis of language, myths and symbols, is logically ethnic in its conception. The third route is the formation of nation from immigrants of a number of *ethnies*: examples include Canada, the United States, Australia and other settlers' societies. A point of interest here is that, while nationalism of these new nations celebrates the new territory, the national narrative tends to exclude the native *ethnies* and eulogise the pioneering spirit of the new and selected ones" (Harris, 2009).

Smith argues that nation has ethnically deterministic interpretation in it's origin (1) modern nations must be furnish with an ethnic myth-whether it be virtual or real is less relevant; (2) nations are inevitable- if the essence of the people is ethnic

then the dominant ethnicity should have a privileged position within its nation states; (3) attempts at creating a modern collective identity without ethno-history are futile (Smith referred in Harris, 2009: 52).

However, the Smiths arguments are encountered by the arguments raised by the Modernists' school of Nation, Nationalism and Ethnicity. Smith argues that, if nations are creation of modernity and nationalism is an ideology rooted to modernity, it is half of the story in which other, ethnic half, remains important because 'the nation is, if not politically then historically, embedded in antiquity. The move from a simple traditional ethnic community to modern omnipotent dynamic social and political organization is historically predetermined by the existence of *ethnie*. *Ethnies* are linked directly to nations (Smith cited in Harris, 2009: 51). Argument of Modernists like Earnest Gellner's reflects that the nations are not the culmination of *ethnie* (Harris, 2009: 53). For Gellner, Nationalism is not the product of the awakening of nations to self consciousness. Nationalism invents nations where they do not exist (Gellner, 1964: 168 and Hall, 1998) on the ground that there would be an element of fabrication in the process primarily because the elite in all cases construct social reality in term of "cultural artifacts" and expressed through imagination which undoubtedly includes ethnic distinctiveness (Gellner referred in Deb, 2006:1).

Benedict Anderson considered a Nation as an imagined community. In his book, *Imagined Communities*, Anderson is found to accelerate his argument in regards of a nation as:

"A nation is an imagined political community… Nation is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never known most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each life the image of their communion… The nation is imagined as limited because even largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion of living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself conterminous with mankind. Most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet. It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which enlightenment and revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-

ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm… Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2006: 6-7).

2.2. Ethnicity and Nationalism (Civic Nationalism/Ethno-Nationalism)

Nationalism as Smith defines "is an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential 'Nation'" (Smith, 1983: 171). For Gellner nationalism is "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political end and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner, 1987: 1). He says that Nationalism is a sentiment as well as a movement. Nationalist sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment (Gellner, 1983: 1). Gellner finds nationalism depends in "state" and "nation". The state, according to Gellner, is a modern institution, one, which constitutes a highly distinctive and elaborate social division of labour. It comes at a particular stage of history. As far as nation is concerned, he says it is not an inherent attribute of humanity. It has come to appear as such in the post agrarian industrial society. He thus sees "nationalism as a product of industrial society". It is a principle of organisation of human groups into large, centrally educated, culturally homogenous units. Nationalism does not have roots in human nature but in certain kind of now pervasive social order. It is the external manifestation of a deep adjustment in the relationship between the polity and the culture (Gellner, 2001: 66). Gellner also writes about nationalism that it "invents nations where they do not exist" .

Louse L Snyder defines nationalism as "a condition of mind, feeling, or sentiment of a group of people living in a well-defined geographic area, speaking a common language, possessing a literature in which their aspiration are expressed, attached to common traditions and customs, venerating their own heroes and, in some cases having the same religion" (Snyder, 1982: XV). It is an ideology consisting of values, symbols, norms and expectations, living in a social collectivity (group) and based on belief in a common descent and as a consequence a common destiny, strong enough to desire to maintain, strengthen or create a formally and legally organized

society (Plank, 1975: 9). It is the supreme loyalty of the overwhelming majority of the people upon the nation-state, either existing or desired (Kohn, 1968: 63). According to Jonathan Spencer nationalism is like anthropology itself, the mode of cultural consciousness. He also furthers his argument in this regard that each of nationalisms based upon the assumption that people are naturally divisible into different kinds- known as nations- and ideally each kind should have responsibility for its own governance (Spencer, 1990: 283).

Nationalism is the powerful force in modern political world. Nationalism presupposes political independence; it tries to achieve its basic aims of self-determination. Nation, Nationality and Nationalism are cognate (related/similar), concepts which inherently related to one another. The country like India is multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-religious (Daliel, 1996: 49). For Bimal J. Deb nation provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world through the prism of collective personality and its distinctive culture. At the same time popular mobilization is ignited and set in motion by the driving force of nationalism. Deb finds that, over the years it has been rather evident that the crystallization of national identity on ethnic lines eventually fosters collective identity often decisively and in a manner of inconceivable by either religion or class. The fact therefore, remains ethnic national identity is relatively more meaningful and promising than other identities more because it fulfills the test of stability (Deb, 2006: 1). According R. J Johnston (1988), in today's world, nationalism has to situate itself in relation to the state which occupies a bounded territory and enjoys political sovereignty. Nationalistic claims for autonomy, self-determination and territorial reorganization (often known as sub-mini or neo-nationalisms) have to contend with the power structure vested in the state which they seeks to challenge and undermine. The powerful state mobilizes its power structure to neutralize or suppress such separatist/autonomist nationalisms by using force as well as by highlighting and exaggerating the inherent heterogeneity of the latter's constituents. The command structure of the state repeatedly refutes the separatist/autonomist nationalisms' claim for territorial, social and political unity by pointing out to them that such unity never existed or had ceased to exist (cited in Sharma, 1996: 85).

2.3. Ethnicity and Democracy

The very etymological essence of the term ethnicity refers of the collectivity or the group identity. One hand it differ a group from other at the same time in-group cohesion is made strong hence its very essence tends to deny individual class identification. An ethnic group seeks all the progress of all groups members together or entire group itself as individual. S. Saberwal writes that ethnicity is an alternative form of social organization which denies individuals' identification to class. When ethnic groups use identity for improving the status of groups in economic conditions, educational opportunities and in the field of civil rights, ethnic groups actually are acting as political groups, because such groups seek the well being of group members as individuals (Saberwal, 2001). Whereas, as Saberwal writes, the democratic ideal is tied to the idea of the individual, the free-standing individual, one who is assumed to have acquired to capacity to make whatever decisions and choices face her/his without needing such crutches of authority as the family elders, sacred texts, or a great leader (Saberwal cited in Karna, 2007: 53).

Karna argues that group identification of individuals in ethnic terms restricts individuals' choices, as it is neither based on reason not knowledge but on the divine guidance of religion, race and caste. The limitation placed on action of individual in nothing but a complete closure of social space other than ascriptive ones (Karna, 2007: 53). For this nature of ethnic groups, in one or other way, the role of democracy cannot be denied. One hand democracy promotes the free-standing and free individual choices and on the other, the spirit of majority in term of groups instigates groups' existence, group formation may vary from ideology, cultural affiliation, ethnic cohesion (may be in primordial or instrumental/constructivist sense or sometimes the synthesis of both) etc. On this backdrop, the ethnicity is found to be politicised. Rothschild argues that the politicization of ethnicity has become crucial principle of political legitimisation and de-legitimization of systems, states, regimes and governments and at the same time it has also become an effective instrument for pressing mundane interests in society's competition for power, status and wealth (Rothschild, 1981: 2).

Democracy serves for the majority rule; the numerically stronger and populous groups gain political power by mobilizing themselves on ethnic line. Having control

over the politico-administrative instrumentalities they may use it for distributing the scare resources in favour of the people of its own group. Thus in a given political unit the majority tends to monopolize political and economic power and push the minority from the center of power to the periphery. As Chaklader mentions Milton J. Esman in his centre-periphery model suggest that the majority group 'dominates the centre of political system, their resources and apparatus of state power, and exercise hegemonic control over other groups at the periphery of the system (cited in Chaklader, 1987: 11).

Democracy, particularly the liberal democracy tends to smell the sense of philosophy of inclusion. The theoretical sense of government by all tends to back-up idea of inclusion but, objective of the rule of majority is to create lacuna to generate the space of exclusion.

Charles Taylor argues,

"…What makes democracy inclusive is that, it is the government of *all*, the people; what makes for exclusion is that it is the *government* of all the people. The exclusion is a by-product of something else: the need, in self-governing societies, of a high degree of cohesion. Democratic states need something like a common identity.

We can see why as soon as we ponder what involved in self-government, what is implied in the basic mode of legitimation of these states, that they are founded on popular sovereignty. Now for the people to be sovereign, it needs to form an entity and have a personality. The revolutions which ushered in regimes of popular sovereignty transferred the ruling power from a king onto a 'nation' or a 'people'. In the process, they invent a new kind of collective agency. These terms existed before, but the thing they now indicate, this new kind of agency, was something unprecedented, at least in the immediate context of early modern Europe. Thus the notion of 'people' could certainly be applied to the ensemble of subjects of the kingdom, or to the non-elite strata of society, but prior to the turn-over it had not indicated an entity which could decide and act together, to whom one could attribute to a *will* (Taylor, 2008: 138-39). Taylor holds questions in this theme of popular sovereignty or Liberal-Democracy: Why does this new kind of entity need

a strong form of cohesion? Is not this notion of popular sovereignty simply that majority will, more or less restrained by the respect of liberty and rights?"

Similar other questions arise here are: *Government* of People but, whose *government* of people? Whose government to be obeyed by people as 'government of people'? Which 'nation' is referred to the notion of 'people' and its 'will' is 'will' of 'people? The immediate possible answer may be rule of majority or the major and influentially dominant group. As it has been mentioned above already, Democracy appears for majority rule; existentially and numerically stronger groups gain political power by mobilizing themselves on ethnic groups (may be in primordial or instrumental/modernist-constructed form). The group in power or numerical majority may control and instrumentalise the institutions in liberal democratic nation-state for the people of own group or group in power. In such situation, minority may have few options: a. Counter the group in power. b. Accept monopoly of group in power over political and economic power being pushed to periphery from power centre. c. Get assimilated into the group in power being homogenized in hegemonic policy of group in power. The group which cannot or do not assimilate self and counter the hegemony and monopoly may face the extreme exclusion and cleansing. Taylor adds, "So there is a need for common identity. How does this generate exclusion? ...The most tragic of these circumstances is also the most obvious, where a group which cannot be assimilated to the reigning cohesion is brutally extruded; what we have come today to call 'ethnic cleansing'" (Taylor, 2008: 147).

2.4. Ethnicity and Nation-state

In imagining a nation or in a hegemonic structure of nation-state, the heterogeneous minority history falls in the margin of dominant nation discourse or, is frequently hacked into slices in history making laboratory. M.S.S Pandian writes nations are narrativized as 'authenitc' and 'legitimate' through specific modes of history writing (Pandian, 2008: 286). Citing Anderson Pandian adds that, 'if nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical', the nations to be which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past…' and 'that image of antiquity' is 'central to the subjective idea of the nation' (Anderson cited in Pandian, 2008: 286).

Pandian Argues,

"…Narrativization of nation constitutes the national subjects as inheritors of a common past, an inheritance of which foregrounds their sameness and inscribes them as homogenous national subjects. This sameness of the national subjects in the narratives of the nation is often marked by privileging a single subject position (in case of India, the upper-caste Hindu male) as the essence of national. This character of the national implicitly inferiorizes other subject positions within the nation-space; and when these subject positions enunciated in opposition to what is privileged, they are delegitimized, at varying degrees, as the Other of the Nation" (Pandian, 2008: 287).

2.5. Ethno-Political Mobilisation: Origin and Evolution

One of the major challenges that the world had witnessed during and after the second half of last century has been the ethnic identity politics, polarization of society with various assets and conflicts associated with it. Since the problem of identity appeared on the surface politics, there is hardly any region in the world that did not come across such situation. Most of the violent conflicts across the world today are increasingly based on identity polarizations. Wars between the states are rarely seen nowadays but civil wars with identity dimensions have been very common in many parts of the globe. The upsurge and intensity of such identity strife has turned into a major threat to national stability and security in several parts of the world. The states with multiple identities community are generally more prone to this problem due to identity polarization resulting either from lack of tolerance about cultural diversity, inequality in the distribution of available resources, social benefits and opportunities between distinct ethnic groups or political exclusion of the some ethnic groups from the framework of state.

Ethnicity, ethnic identity Politics has become one of the most widely debated issues in the contemporary political and academic discourses. It is a phenomenon that arose out of the shared experiences of injustice and marginalization of certain sections of the society. It occurs when some ethnic groups or social minorities find themselves as oppressed, marginalized and feel that their uniqueness and distinctiveness are being made vulnerable to the dominance of majority group (Barth quoted in Chhetry, 2015:

216). Ethno-Political mobilization or the ethnic identity politics demands are not made for inclusion of marginalized groups or minorities within the fold of majority group on the basis of their common attributes nor does it demand for equal share and respect in spite of the differences (Barnet, 1976 cited in Sherpa, 2016). Rather, what they demand is respect or recognition as a different group with separate political arrangement, more economic, educational or job facilities on the basis of their distinct lingo-cultural identities. Sense of identity and its mobilisation occurs in a group when it perceives or identifies that it is being marginalized or deprived in the society (Vos, 1975). When such identity mobilisation is perceived as threat over the socio-political and economic status of other previously privileged community, it may lead to competition, conflict and identity polarization between two or more ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society (Vos, 1975).

Most of the violent conflicts around the world are nowadays increasingly based on ethnic divisions. What are ethnic conflicts? When and why do ethnic conflicts break out? Ethnic conflict refers to violent confrontation between groups of people who do not belong to the same ethnic groups within a multi ethnic state. Low tolerance for cultural diversity, inequality in distribution of available resources, social benefits and opportunities between distinct ethnic groups and political exclusion of some ethnic groups from the framework of the state are some of the fundamental reasons which precipitates ethnic violence (Chakma, 2013: 6).

The dissolution of the USSR led to the emergence of a number of new states and this development in its wake virtually reopened debate about the ethnic components of national identity along with the right of self determination. However the guiding principles as enunciated by the former United Nations (UN) Secretary-general Boutros Ghali in Agenda for peace have been by and large found to be acceptable to the members of world community (Ghali cited in Deb, 2006). It was held that if every ethnic, religious or linguistic group claimed statehood, there would be no limit to fragmentation and peace, security and economic wellbeing for all will become ever more difficult to achieve. In his perception, all rival claims of sovereignty and self-determination could be resolved through respect for human rights particularly the rights of minorities on the one hand and democratization on the other (Deb, 2006: 3). The withering process of traditional colonialism and imperialism, end

of cold war, dissolution of USSR and the loosening of authoritarian shackles have given a space for the emergence of a number of political mobilizations holding demonstrations mainly for identity.

2.5.1. Issue of Identity as Source of Ethno-Political Mobilisation and Conflicts

Ethno-Political mobilisation that roots in identity politics refers to violent confrontation between groups of people who do not belong to the same identity groups within a multi-ethnic state. Lack of tolerance about cultural diversity, inequality in distribution of available resources, social benefits and opportunities between distinct ethnic groups and political exclusion of some ethnic groups from the policy framework of state are some of the fundamental reasons that triggers violence (Abhilas, 2013: 60). Ethnic Identity is the manifestation of group sentiments and emotions to preserve separate identity based on their traditions and customs. From instrumental (acting as a means of achieving something) viewpoint, ethnicity is the creation of elites in order to protect their well being or existence or to gain political and economic advantages for their groups as well as for themselves (Brass, 1999: 15). Primordial's, on the other hand, believe that ethnicity is a natural and given phenomenon. According to them, every individual carries with him some 'attachments derived from his place of birth, kinship relationship, religion, language and social practices which are natural for him, spiritual in nature and that provide a basis for an easy affinity with other people from the same background' (Brass, 1999: 69 in Thatal, 2015).

2.5.2. Perspective in Understanding Ethno-Political Mobilisation for Identity

There are several approaches which explain the causes of ethnic mobilisation conflicts. But, Economic approach, psychological approach, power approach and sociological approach are the most common approaches which provide vivid theoretical explanation about conflicts those coincide to identity mobilisation.

Economic perspective explains ethnic conflicts in term of competing economic interests such as job, business opportunities within the same market among different ethnic groups. As it is already discussed above, the most relevant examples are Fiji and Kenya, where Indian traders control a segment of the economy and the

resources to which the indigenous Fijians and Kenyans demand for greater access. When the indigenous Fijians and Kenyan Africans came to power in Fiji and Kenya, they pursued economic and political policies which were aimed at reducing the influence of the Indian community from their national economy (Thatal, 2015).

According to psychological perspective, as advocated by Donald Horowitz, ethnic tension between different groups generates from group comparison. During group comparison, members of an ethnic group evaluate their relative abilities with the members of another ethnic group and the ways of distribution of available resources, social benefits and opportunities between different ethnic groups. During such comparison, when the members of an ethnic groups see that they are not adequately represented within the system at par with similar other ethnic groups, they develop suspicion towards the advantaged groups and such feeling of deprivation instigate them to argue for equal access to the social goods and other benefits as enjoyed by others (Horowitz, 1985). This also explains ethnic conflicts in term of 'ethno-centrism'[11] a 'group closure'. These are commonly practiced by ethnic groups in extreme case of ethnic nationalism. Ethnocentrism and group closure sharpen divisions between one group and another leading to fierce conflicts between competing groups (Chakma, 2013).

Power plays the key role in furthering and determination of interests, as argued by the proponents of power approach. In an ethnically divided society, different ethnic groups maintain different claims of legitimacy. When such competing claims of legitimacy come into clash, it yields the dynamic of ethnic politics. Ethnic politics erupt into violent ethnic confrontation, when such politics are characterized by arguments and counter arguments about who represents most and how (Chakma, 2013: 34). Sociological perspective explains ethnic conflicts in terms of 'ethnocentrism[12]' and 'group closure'[13]. These are commonly practiced by ethnic groups in extreme case of ethnic nationalism. Ethnocentrism and group closure

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[11] Ethnocentrism refers to suspicion of outsiders and evaluation of others' culture in term of one's culture (Chakma, 2013).

[12] Ethnocentrism refers to suspicion of 'outsiders' and evaluation of others' culture in term of one's own culture.

[13] Group closure refers to a process where groups maintain ethnic boundaries separating themselves from others (Chakma, 2013).

sharpen divisions between one group and another leading to fierce conflicts between the competing groups (Chakma, 2013).

Figure 2.1: Perspectives in Understanding Ethnic Mobilisation and Conflicts
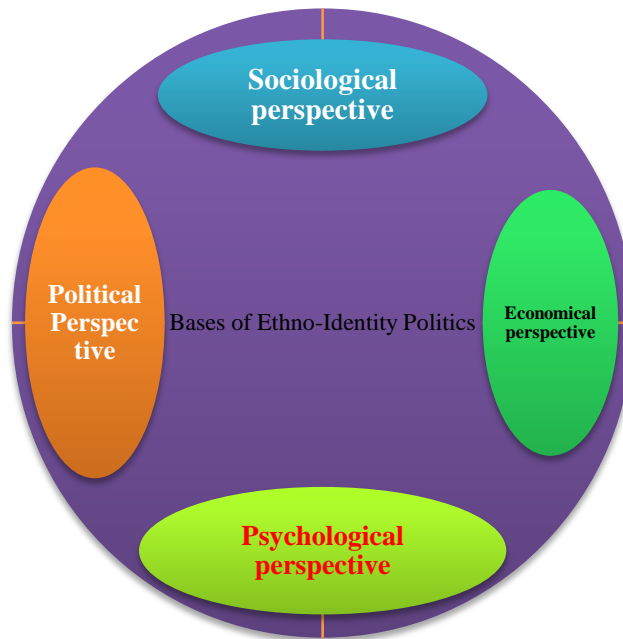
Source: Thatal, Naina (2015), *Dynamics of identity politics: A case study of old settlers in Sikkim*, an unpublished dissertation submitted for partial fulfillment of requirement for awards of degree of Master of Philosophy at the department of peace and conflict studies, Sikkim University.

Ethno-Political mobilisation and Identity politics through the lens of economic perspective gives an in-depth study to the various economy related identities and ethnic conflicts in the world. If economy is concerned, then the competition arises or scarcity of resources which directly leads to conflict among groups and individuals in society (Cunningham, 2012 in Thatal, 2015). The struggle for acquiring citizenship on the basis of economic interest led to devastating consequences in state, for instance, the political economies of colonial countries under British or Dutch rule in West Africa, East Africa, the Caribbean, Indonesia. In these societies certain ethnic groups occupies special economic and social place as merchants and traders (Lebanese and Syrians in West Africa, Indians in Uganda, Chinese in Malaya and Indonesia, Indians in Fiji) (Tambiah, 1989 cited in Thatal, 2015). Marshall (1988) argues that

"preservation of economic inequalities has been made more difficult by the enrichment of the status of citizenship" (Isin and Wood, 1999 cited in Thatal, 2015). Economic competition is a measure of change in the level of economic discrimination for a group relative to other groups (Wilkes and Okamoto, 2002 cited in Thatal, 2015).

Most of the studies of competition theory focus on majority group mobilization in response to minority gains. Majority group members mobilize when their position is threatened by competition from minority group members. It expected that this will also be the case for minority group members. That is, minority groups will be more likely to mobilize when they face increased competition from the majority and/ or other groups in society. This competition manifests itself in the form of economic, political and cultural losses relative to other groups as well as in the processes such as urbanization that increase competition between groups. The protest and rebellion are forms of mobilisation by minority group. The relationship with communal conflict is more complicated. As stated previously, communal conflict indicates that the group was either attacked or attacked others in given year, it does not specify which role the minority plays. Competition theory suggests that the majority group will attack the minority group when the minority group improves its position. Thus, gains in the minority group position may lead to increased conflict. However, competition theory also predicts that the minority group, like the majority group, will also mobilize. For this reason, the effect of competition may be non-linear with respect to communal conflict. Ethnic competition theory explains variation in ethnic mobilisation relating to intergroup struggles over scarce resources. However, the tendency to capture such relationships at the aggregate level, through macro-level proxies of intergroup competition, offers little insight into the processes through which ethnic grievances mobilize into contentious action (Cunningham cited in Thatal, 2015).

Competitive dynamics are most striking when they result in sustained mobilisation and protracted conflict (Olzak, 1992:102), ethnic competition explanations offer little insight into the processes through which ethnic grievances translate into mobilized contention, a longstanding concern of social movement theorists (McAdam, 1999: 56; Tarrow, 1998). As a result, competition models are

unable to tease out the direct versus indirect effects of competition—i.e., whether associated conflicts are initiated by individuals who are themselves in direct competition for resources, or alternately whether they emerge in a more diffuse manner in areas marked by a generalized competitive climate. They also fail to explain how the presence of ethnic conflict is shaped by the social and spatial organization of associations, which mediate the coalescence of grievances within communities and thus serve as crucial mobilisation venues (Cunningham and Phillips 2007 cited in Thatal, 2015).

By looking at how resources and status might be conferred within associations and thereby impact the grievance-formation process, analysts can bridge between macro-level claims that competitive arrangements (as captured through aggregate population compositions) spur the mobilisation of group conflict, and micro-accounts of the ways in which "threats" come to be perceived and encoded as inter-group prejudice. The meso-level approach here seeks to account for the historically, materially, and socially contingent manner in which threats are attributed and acted upon, while taking seriously the power of social environments to enable and constrain individuals' beliefs and actions. Horowitz (1985:30-35 cited in Thatal, 2015) has underscored an important distinction that affects the nature and dynamics of ethnic conflict, namely whether the groups in question are ranked (in some sort of hierarchy or stratified scheme informed by asymmetrical valuations) or unranked or parallel groups divided by vertical cleavages. However, by far the most salient category for a comparative study is the countries containing by and large unranked ethnic groups, such as Malays and Chinese in Malaysia; Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka; East Indians and Creoles in Guyana; Ibo, Hausa, Fulani and Yoruba in Nigeria; Christian Filipino and Moro in the Philippines; and the Thais and Muslims in Thailand.

2.5.3. Frances Stewart's observation of inequalities on Ethnic Conflicts

Frances Stewart argues that most studies on the link between inequalities and conflict regarding distribution of income across the whole population of countries, which she calls 'vertical inequalities' But she finds that inequalities between different groups matter a lot more: "When cultural differences coincide with economic and political differences between groups, this can cause deep resentment that may lead to violent struggles."A clear example of this is the economic and political inequalities

54

between Hutu and Tutsi groups in Burundi, which led to an intense civil war. The violence in Kenya after the 2007 elections was also fed by inequalities between regions and ethnic groups. Frances Stewart looks not only at economic inequalities between groups, but also inequalities in social, political and cultural dimensions (Stewart, 1995: 220 cited in Thatal, 2015). The inequalities in society looked into by Frances Stewart were often found to cause the ethnic mobilisation and conflicts.

Figure 2.2: Frances Stewart's Observation of Inequalities
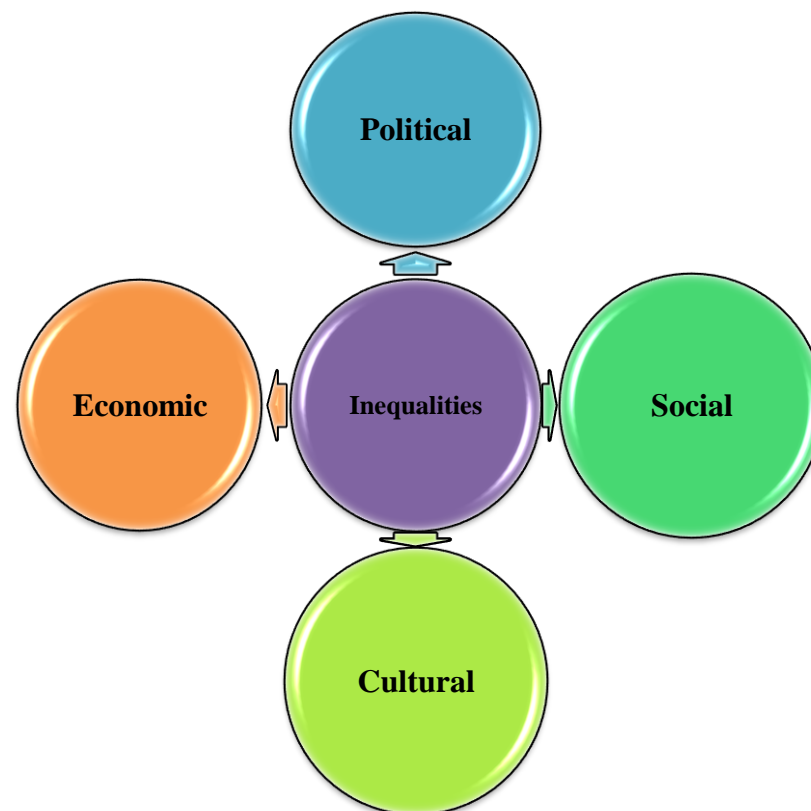
Source: Self compiled by scholar on the basis of the idea depicted from Thatal, Naina (2015), *Dynamics of identity politics: A case study of old settlers in Sikkim*, an unpublished dissertation submitted for partial fulfillment of requirement for awards of degree of Master of Philosophy at the department of peace and conflict studies, Sikkim University.

- Economic inequalities include access to and ownership of financial, human, natural resource-based and social assets. They also include inequalities in income levels and employment opportunities.

- Social inequalities include access to services like education, healthcare, housing, etc.

- Political inequalities include the distribution of political opportunities and power among groups, such as control over local, regional and national institutions of governance, the army and the police. They also include inequalities in people's capabilities to participate politically and express their needs.

- Cultural inequalities include disparities in the recognition and standing of the language, religion, customs, norms and practices of different groups

In this regards, Economic or political inequalities have the potential to be such an issue, but it is much easier to organize people around it when they are already part of a group and inequalities can be interpreted as a consequence of conscious discrimination against this group (Stewart, 2008 cited in Thatal, 2015).

2.6. Ethno-Political Mobilisation in India: Experiences from North East

India's North East demands an entirely sharp investigation to understand the perspectives of the Ethno-Political mobilisations and conflicting situation in the region. There are different agents and stakeholders whose interests need to be addressed. Conflicts this region has its extraction in the issues of dispossession of the identities of hundreds of tribes and sub-tribes, trepidation about their culture and ethnic practices being trodden by outsider and also by all pervasive socio-economic backwardness. Nearly 70 years has gone by India has been independent, but sense of alienation among the North Easterners has remained unchanged. There is lack of trust between the so called periphery (North East) and the core (So called mainland India) in one hand and among various heterogeneous ethnic and linguistic groups in other, make inroads for continuous conflict, which is often intellectually termed as a state of 'Durable Disorder'. Conflict in India's North East has its historical connotations, where politics of integration has evidently cut through the aspirations of the people. Nationalistic assertion with top down approach has created apprehension in the minds of the natives of North East, making them to try and securitize the respective sphere of influence by each and every group of ethnic minorities vis a vis the Indian state and other competitive ethnic groups (Nath, 2014).

The conflict ridden politics of the region has not had sufficient space in the so called mainstream politics of the Indian state. Geographic isolation of the land has been shown as a major constraint to justify the inefficiency of the repeatedly elected governments at the centre who failed to have positive integration. However, much condemnable is the fact that the region is more often viewed as a zone of exception' and is systematically branded as an 'excluded area'. Unfortunately, the exclusion has continued for decades and popular voices and aspirations are left unheard reducing people's faith on the democratic process to the lowest point where political pessimism is making fast inroads in the multi-ethnic societies of Northn East. As a result, new ethnic groups have come up with respective political goals, never hesitant to use violence to achieve the desired objectives which perpetuate the violent Ethno-Political mobilisation (Nath, 2014). In this backdrop, it can be said that the region is one of the parts in India where several conflicts can be found related to identity conflict. Ethno-Identity and autonomy have been a major reason behind the peaceful as well as violent mobilisation of various communities (Sadangi, 2008: 15).

2.6.1. Ethno-Political Mobilisations and its different Paradigms in North East India

North East India represents many shattered dreams of history owing to the long standing and untransformed political conflicts. Often described as 'conflict zone', North Eastern states have taken head on with the centre and its politics of integration (Nath, 2014). But, in course of time its multi-ethnic societies have clashed, while securitizing respective interests and aspirations. Conflict in India's North East resumed along with the Indian independence in 1947, when the Nagas demanded for separate homeland and called the proposed homeland as 'Nagalim' cutting across the boundaries of Assam, Arunachal, Mizoram and a significant portion of Manipur, a fifth portion in Myanmar. "It was the Naga National Council (NNC) who for the first time in history of North East put forward the demand for independence. However, centre was willing only to provide with limited autonomy. The movement for independence passes on along with the expanded aspirations of the Nagas. In 1959, the Naga People's Convention adopted a resolution for the formation of a separate state" (Singh, 2010) came into being in 1974 but the pro freedom fraction continued its struggle under the leadership of A Z Phizo. Phizo latter formed the NSCN in 1980,

only to split in two fractions National Socialist Council of Nagas- Issac Muivah (NSCN–IM) and Socialist Council of Nagas-Khaplang faction (NSCN-K). It was NSCN-IM which was capable of establishing itself to be the centre of Naga politics. Both these fractions entered into cease-fire agreement with the government of India in the year 1997 and in 2001 respectively. The Naga demand for 'Nagalim', however, still remains short of reality loaded with additional complexities. The Naga conflict as such demonstrated certain specific trends- the first line of conflict is between the Indian state and the dominant Naga groups and the second and more devastating conflict is among various Naga fractions. Yet another line of conflict is perceived between ethnic Naga tribes and other contesting tribes of North East, generated by the demand of greater Nagaland, i.e. the 'Nagalim'.

The initial reaction to the conflict has been to treat it as a case of non implementation of rules, that is, as a law and order problem. This helped the rebels tap the discontent that emerged from the alleged human rights abuses by the security forces. The dissatisfaction on the ground was compounded by the inability of the successive governments to meet the growing aspirations of its people (Singh, 2010: 4).

The situation is even more vulnerable in Manipur; one of the most disturbed state of Indian Union. Like Nagaland, Manipur has also witnessed demands for independence and violence has taken place between the security forces and the armed insurgents. Here as well, Conflicts have operated on different levels and among different parties, basically between the state and Manipuri insurgents and other level of conflict is among the numerous tribal fractions within Manipur. Gone are the days of monarchy, Manipur is now India's one of the two most militarised zones, witness of frequent fratricidal clashes among different tribes and between tribes and the state security forces. Conflict in Manipur has historical roots, which challenge its merger with the Indian Union. The circumstances leading to the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union remains an intensely debatable issue. The grievances against the merger along with the delay in conferring statehood alienated the Manipuris, and laid the foundation for the emergence of a separatist movement (Nath and Mir, 2015).

The state's population composition is itself a bigger challenge. It has a significant population of the Naga, Kuki, Manipuri Maitees, Hmar, among others. The

state is cut across by the proposed greater Nagaland; i.e. Nagalim as four districts of Manipur Tamenglong, Senapati, Ukhruland and Chandel, features within the proposed Nagaland. The Kuki tribe also demands a separate Kuki space in administration from within Manipur. Besides Kuki tribes also tend to contend for its control over the border trade in the Moreh-Tamu sector in Manipur. The major issues which bring Manipur into conflict are- the way in which it was integrated with the Indian Union it undermined the independent nature of the state raising identity crisis within the state and its people. The second most vital irritant in the politics of Manipur is the imposition of Arms Force Special Power Act (AFSPA-1958) in the state in the year 1980 (Nath and Mir, 2015).

Imposition of the AFSPA has converted the state into one of the most militarized regions in India and perhaps in the world limiting citizens' fundamental rights by an iron cage of the state armed forces. The demand of Nagalim has made inter-ethnic confrontation between the Manipuri and the Nagas quite on the cards. Demand for extended Nagaland has created apprehension in the minds of the Manipuri people that Nagas are trying to destroy their state.

The crucial aspect in the politics of North East India is that, here is tremendous lack of 'solidarity' among the states. Inter-ethnic rivalry has led to violent manifestation and fratricidal clashes have become feature of the politics in the state. Thus, dual securitization is done by various ethnic groups in Manipur. The first instance of securitization is against the centre and its armed forces which are over powered, in fact, brutalized by the imposition of the AFSPA. And the second, multi facet securitization has taken place against the Nagas and the Kukis, and all contesting ethnic Manipuri armed groups, having significant man power and armed groups to protect respective community interest.

This form of double securitization took place in Assam as well. Politics in Assam also has a history of conflicts. After two language movements in 1960 (movement for Assamese as official language) and in 1972 (movement for Assamese as medium instruction in higher education), Assam again witnessed a massive mass mobilization in 1979 to 1985 till the signing of the Assam accord. Such mobilizations were actually outcome of the long term popular grievances against the state. On 7th July 1979, the ULFA was formed for an independent Assam. Thousands of people

lost their lives and Assamese nationalism started prevailing upon the Indian nationalism. But the results of political unrest in Assam had different consequences, as too much concern for Assamese identity alienated the smaller nationalities from the dominant Assamese culture (Nath and Mir, 2015).

Movement for separate Bodoland emerged with unprecedented violence in the 1990s, killing hundreds of people by extremist groups like Bodo Liberation Tigers Force (BLTF) and National Democratic Force of Boroland (NDFB). The Bodo Movement for independence then again alienated the Adivasis in Assam, the Muslims and other smaller ethnic groups getting them securitize respective identity and culture. So, in the case of Assam, conflict has two different dimensions, firstly, Assamese identity countering the Indian identity and secondly, it is the assertion of Assamese identity that actually threatens the smaller identities within Assam and violence starts among various sub-regional groups viz-a-vis the Assamese chauvinism. Ethnic solidarity thereby becomes a big concern in Assam like some other states of India's North East.

2.6.2. Conflicts in India's North East: The Underlying Pattern

A brief look at the three most conflict ridden states of India's North East, namely Nagaland, Manipur and Assam, suggests some observable pattern. Here, conflict is the upshot of contestation and securitization of nationalities on a descending order. This order of conflict can be presented in the following ways.

At the uppermost level, it is the Indian state and the Indian nationalism which with its politics of integration, sometimes overlooks the regional aspirations of the people of North East and introduces an integrationist development discourse which is alien to the people of the concerned region, creating identity consciousness and consequent securitization using Violence. Post-independent period imposition of Hindi as official language within the territorial limits of the Indian Union, has for example, been viewed as an instance of attempt of becoming a cultural hegemony within the country. This tendency is responded with mobilization in terms of regional language. Language movement in Assam (though it was against the dominance of Bengali language) and in southern part of India denounces such attempt creating cultural hegemony in the periphery. Ban on Bollywood movies in Manipur in the year

2000 is another example of apprehension driven response to omnipotence. On the economic sphere, maintaining status-quo of geographical isolation of North East has proved fatal to the intentions of the Indian union. North East India seems to be an undeclared buffer between India and China, hardly allowed the Indian government to invest on infrastructure and skill development. Poor transport has fuelled the sentiments of alienation among the people of the region. For decades now, the region has been kept as periphery in Indian politics and political isolation has transcended the limits and alienated North Eastern people in their own country.

The 2014 killing of Nido Tania, a student from Arunachal Pradesh in Delhi, is a manifestation of the sentiments of absence of togetherness among the people of the same country hailing from two different regions. Economic orientation of the centre concerning North East is viewed as exploitative by the native people. There are obvious reasons for that too. Till after nearly seventy years of independence North East remains India's most unconnected region. In terms of development of infrastructure, majority of the provinces in North East are categorized as lowly developed[14]. There is very little focus on skill development and capacity building programmes. It took the Indian state about fifty five years to introduce an independent ministry targeting the development of this troubled borderland and what it then introduced remained a fund transmitting body, i.e. the Development of North East Region (DoNER) ministry (Nath, 2014). Lack of representation to the union parliament, coupled with absence of clear and visionary programme for faster development of the region, has kept the alienation process sentient and vigorous. In the name of region specific vision what the centre has for its North East is an under-implemented and therefore, an under-performed Look East Policy (LEP). In spite of having 98% international border, formal border trade in the region is very limited. In fact borders are troubled zones for North East owing to informal trade and anti-state insurgent operations. So, within the nation, a politically overwrought space is created which hardly identify itself with the majoritarian politics and gets apprehended even at the upright intentions of the centre as there exist near permanent 'no confidence motion' between the two entities.

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[14] For detailed reference please see 12th Finance Commission report,(cited in Wasbir Hussain's article "Assam and North East: Breaking the Logjam" in J K Das edited Volume Agenda for Assam and the North East" the article is also available in www.cdpsindia.org

Assertion of Indian nationalism with its integrationist politics at the top level, leads the dominant culture of the respective states to securitize its own sphere of influence in terms of its culture and more precisely on issues of identity. The Assamese nationalism, for example is a reaction against the so called colonizing tendencies of the Indian state in early 1950s and onwards. However, such reactions have added a third dimension to the conflicts in these states. Assertion of dominant regional nationalism has created consternation among other sub-regional smaller nationalities, procreating another sequence of disagreement, making space for conflict; often fratricidal in temperament. Assertion of Assamese nationalism in Assam, for example has fashioned trepidation among the Bodos (among many others) in Assam regarding the protection of their identity in the face of growing Assamese chauvinism. This resulted in formation of ethnic Bodo institutions and they worked hard to create Bodo identity entirely different from the ethnic Assamese identity. Along with these, armed militant groups NDFB, BLT also came up demanding a sovereign Bodoland to be carved out of Assam and outside the Indian union and Bodo Autonomy within the Indian Union respectively. A fourth dimension is added to the entire structure of conflict when ethnic securitization of Bodos created apprehension among the smaller and less powerful nationalities within the Bodo dominated areas (Nath and Mir, 2015).

Keeping in view the complex construction of conflict in India's North East, it is essential that some mechanisms are developed to address these complex conflicts and the answer to it must be found somewhere in the politics of development, but with an altogether different approach (Nath and Mir, 2015).

The structure of the above mentioned spiral of conflict can be better understood in the subsequent comportment.

Figure 2.3: Conflict Chain in India's North East

Conflict Chain in India's North East

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Assertion of Integrationist discourse
Indian state

↓

Apprehension driven chauvinistic assertion
of dominant regional ethnic groups

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Assertion of sub-regional sentiments and
violent securitization of Identity

↓

Assertion of extreme peripheral ethnic
space left apprehended within the sub-region
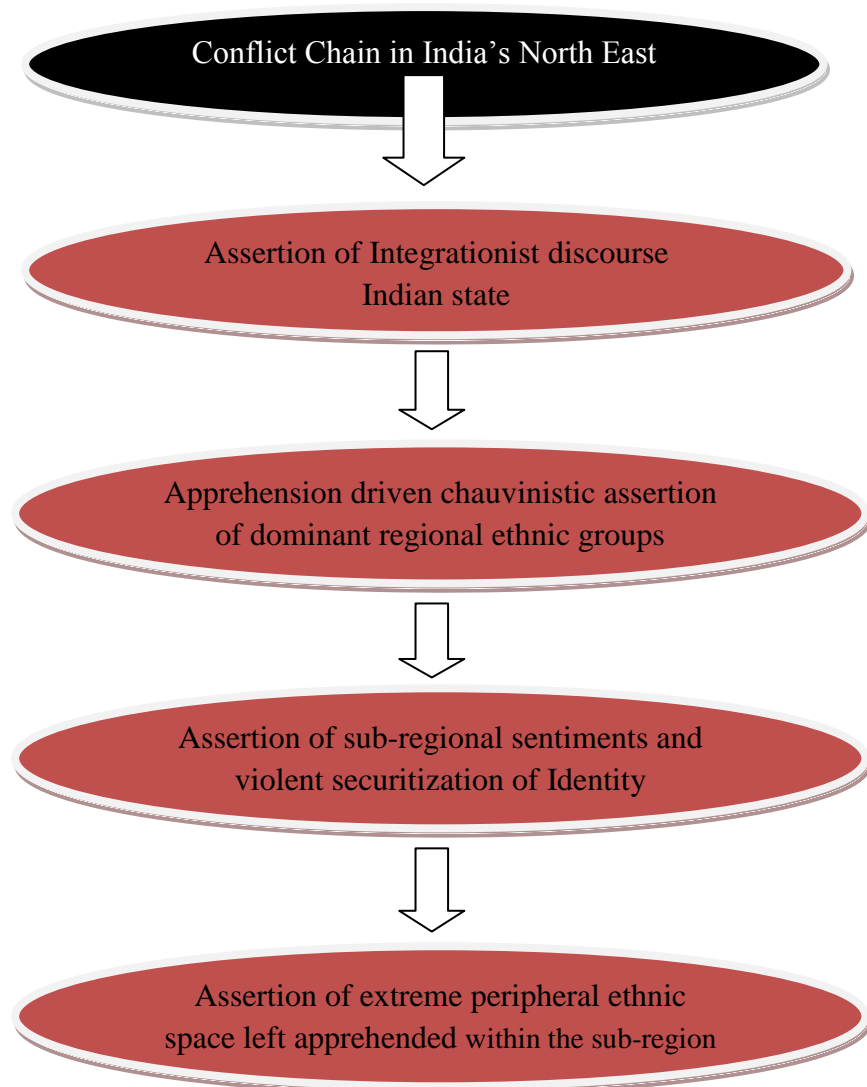
Source: Self compiled by scholar on the basis of depicted from Nath, Debashis (2014), *Socio-economic development of North East India and Beyond: A study of the Look-East Policy*, an unpublished dissertation submitted for partial fulfillment of requirement for awards of degree of Master of Philosophy at the department of peace and conflict studies, Sikkim University.

To understand the concept of Ethno-Political mobilisation in India's North East, it is essential to segregate the demands of communities on the bases of

inequality. The three aspects of inequality among the communities are socio-cultural, political and economical (Thatal, 2015).

Socio-culture inequality: The social and cultural inequality focuses on the two main components of identity conflict such as language and religion. The main problem arises with the official language issue, the demand for the linguistic reorganization and the status of minority languages within reorganized states (Oinam, 2003: 204). According to Sandhya Goswami, the result of fear and anxiety of Assamese population who sees the changing demographic scenario in the state as a threat to their culture and language caused the assertion and agitation during 1960s and 70s in Assam. The brings argument that fear in the mind of Assamese people that one day they may lose their distinctive identity and culture was root cause of the agitation (Goswami, 1997: 51).

There was huge mobility and agitation for the protection of Assamese language and culture during 60s and 70s of the last century. The Assamese nationalist leaders demanded the restoration of Assamese language in place of existing Bengali language in educational institutions and other governmental institutions. The agitations were successful in regularizing the Assamese language as medium of instruction in all governmental education institutions starting right from the primary level to University (Deb, 2006:12).

Similarly the Assamese language became as an official language in all governmental institutions in place of Bengali the former official language. The new language policy of the state government dug a deeper root of contestation in the entire North Eastern region (Brass, 2013: 204). The socio-inequality arose when the non-Assamese communities felt that the Assam government was imposing Assamese language on them. There were opposition and protest riots throughout the state. Leaders of major tribal communities wanted to get separated from Assam. The non-Assamese tribal groups perceived language a policy of Assamese government as a threat to distinct tribal identity in the region. Assam agitation erupted during 1979-85 was more of an outcome of identity crisis of the Assamese people rather than an anti foreigner campaign (Nath, 2007: 89-90).

He says that Bangla-speaking Muslim and Nepali people who were alleged as 'foreingers' not only contribute to the enhancement of the economy of Assam but also to the development of the Socio-Cultural life never posing a threat to Assamese identity in reality. He mentions that "The Assomiyas are facing identity crisis" and "Assamiya language is in danger"- are basically the slogans of the Assamiya ruling classes and hence to Assamese sub-national assertion in name of Assam movement (Hussain, 1995:86).

Political inequality: Demand for separate state *Kamatapur* with revival of historic old state of *Kamatapur* to preserve Koch-Ranjbongshi identity, agitation by Garos in Meghalaya for separate Garoland are separatist movements in India which is as an example of manifestation of feelings of identity crisis or feelings of insecurity towards group identity (Chakma, 2013: 56). The more assertive tribes who consistently rebelled against their incorporation within the new Indian nation-state such as the Nagas and Mizos ultimately succeeded in attaining status of 'statehood' and greater autonomy. They also succeeded in changing their minority status to that of a majority status in respective hilly states. Even after the formation of Nagaland, however, the Naga movement had not died, as A.Z Phizo, who had originally given the call for a 'long Naga struggle' (Chakma, 2013).

The movement for six schedule autonomy like Rabha-Hasong, the movement for the status of Schedule Tribe (ST) by Adivasi-Santhal (ex-tea gardeners) community, Rajbongshi and the Autonomous Council movement for Gorkhas are in approach in Assam. Apart from the ones mentioned above, several ethnic conflicts have been taking place between Naga and Kuki in Manipur, Paite-Hmar in Manipur, Nepali (Gorkha)-Khasi in Meghalaya, the Hmar-Dimasa, Bodo-Santhal conflict, Bodo and Rajbongshi and, Bodo-Bengali Muslim in different intervals of time (Chhetry, 2013 cited in Thatal, 2015).

Economic Inequality: The marginalization of the Gorkha community took place in post colonial Assam. The community has been discarded from the constitutionally granted rights. The Gorkhas of Assam were promised to protect as "Graziers and cultivators" under the Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886 by the colonial administration. After India's independence, it was constitutionally guaranteed that the Gorkhas would be protected as a "Protected Class" along with tribal

communities in the Tribal Belts and Blocks in the state since December 5, 1947. But when the national policies were resisted by the Assamese people, the Gorkhas of the state were labeled as 'outsiders', 'foreigners' as well as 'anti-nationals' in the state. Gorkhas of the Tribal belts and Blocks were considered as obstacles to the all round development in the tribal Belts and Blocks and they were excluded from the status of "Protected Class" in 1969 (Sharma and Bhawani, 2001:10). Gorkhas have been vulnerable target of assertions of various ethnic groups fighting over scarcely available resources often leading to loss of home, hearth and livelihood in the North East. It can be observed that the Gorkhas living in Assam particularly in Bodo dominated areas for generations peacefully and maintaining a submerged identity got caught in the crossfire in various ethnic contestations (Chhetry, 2014: cited Thatal: 2015).

Figure 2.4: **Approaches to Study Ethno-Identity and Ethno-Political Mobilisation in India's North East**
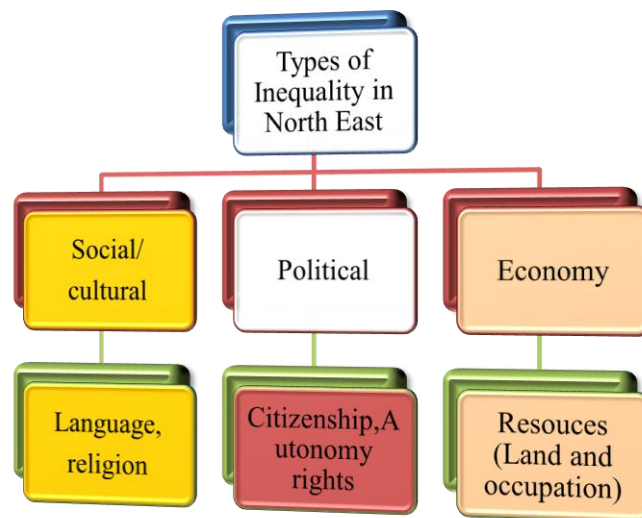
Source: Thatal, Naina (2015), *Dynamics of identity politics: A case study of old settlers in Sikkim*, an unpublished dissertation submitted for partial fulfillment of requirement for awards of degree of Master of Philosophy at the department of peace and conflict studies, Sikkim University.

From above discussion, it can be summarized that the conflicts and movements based on feelings of insecurity of identity have been increasing throughout the world and its force is more in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies, particularly in societies like India. In finding an explanation to such situation, it may

be said that, in the process of the evolution of the history, a composite culture with diverse ethnic and linguistic groups may be formed. But the failure in amicability to address grievances of disgruntled groups in such composite culture is found to lead the identity diversification and decline in uniformity as well as homogeneity. The feelings of insecurity to identity and diversification through identity mobilization may collapse uniformity of compositeness of a society and for which, the urge of modernity as well as the chauvinistic attitudes of the host and dominant sections of the society can be held responsible. Similarly the reverse trend that develops among elites in a distinct group found to instrumentalize the identity apparatuses constructing the identity mobilization, to materialize their desired socio-economic and political goals. Distinct ethnic and tribal groups rediscovered their original identity through several movements in peaceful as well as violent in nature.

The case of Assam is not exceptional in this context. The Assamese society in general has witnessed politics in various forms over a period of time and has shaped the present political environment in Assam. Such politics has brought discernible changes in the composition of the socio-political structure of the society through violent as well as peaceful means. The Gorkha community of the valley has always been on the centre of those politics and confrontations. The implications of local and regional politics on Gorkha community have been a considerable issue. Having several of ethnic minority communities, especially after the independence of country, the state has witnessed ethnic conflicts between ethnic groups. When the nation building in post colonial India began, the state faced challenges from various sub-nationalistic forces in Assam. During those ethnic movement and conflicts the Gorkha community has not been the primary party to direct violence, but the impacts of conflicts were never less than the direct cotestations those have been directly entangled. The miseries Gorkhas have borne were lightly taken or judged, since the Gorkha community remained as an ethnic buffer entity. The proceeding Chapters will elaborate the conditions and position of this community during conflicts in detail.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF GORKHAS IN ASSAM: EVOLUTION AND EXISTENCE

Human history at no point of time was permanent and stable. Human mobility, their social-political and economic activities had been creating the history of different geographical space differently in different points of the time. From the time of inception, man moved from one place to another in search of food, shelter and better livelihood for survival. Their movements have shaped the social, political, economic, geographical and all other histories of a region. With the emergence of the nation state system, imaginary political lines started to be drawn on the geographical surface in the name of national border, fragmenting the geographical surface into various nation states. Similarly, the writing of history emerged with the emergence of nation state. In writing or drawing the history of a country or a region, history of some regions got marginalised. Greater emphasis in writing the history of a greater region caused such marginalization of small region. Willem Van Schendel says that these regions, places disappeared into the fold of map…regions which are victim of cartographic surgery….routinely sliced into pieces by the maker of regional map (Schendel quoted in Mishra, 2011: 5).

In this respect, it will be useful to mention that present Assam is one such region which became a victim of "cartographic surgery" in history. Though, it has been confined as the fragmented geographical units as a part of sovereign state, its 'geographical', 'historical', 'cultural', 'social' and 'economic' sphere since time immemorial cannot be overlooked. From the mythological narratives to modern history, it shares historical relation with Bhutan, Tibet, Nepal and the entire north-eastern valley of India. It had witnessed the mobility of people from one end to the other for which the existing social relations, cultural exchanges (pilgrimages, festivities, fairs, etc.) and trade and commerce, the matrimonial relations between the

royal courts, the war and hostilities between local territorial heads has shaped its history.

This chapter looks into the negotiations as well as the confrontations between various geo-strategic forces during the pre-colonial, colonial administration and post colonial geo-politics that how the Gorkha identity took its shapes livingly attaining the present identity during the corresponding periods.

3.1. Gorkhas of Assam in the Mythological and Early History of the Region

As mentioned above, it is difficult to locate an independent history of present Assam prior to its existence as Ahom kingdom which was started to consolidate in 1228 A.D. Though the present territorial boundary of India owes to the colonial legacy, its geographical history can be traced back to Vedas and mythological writings (GBBM[15] 2012). It is said that in ancient times, there was a greater territory called 'Jambu Dwipa' including the territories of undivided India and Nepal. In the Vedic age, mentions may be found of the tribes like Kirata-who inhabited in the kingdom of greater Himalaya including entire Brahmaputra valley of present Assam.

The Aryan people who went to the Himalaya for *Tapashya* for the realization of life and self and for greater development of the human kind became the inhabitants of the mighty Himalaya. The noted linguist, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee in his "Linguistic Survey of India" says that the Tibeto Burman speaking Mongoloids with yellow complexion came to be known among the Vedic Aryan as Kiratas, whose presence is attested through literary evidence of about 1000 BC. There are suggestions that the Sino-Tibetan known as the 'Kiratas' belong to the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. According to him, Ahom, Khamti, Aka, Dafla, Miri, and the sub-ethnic communities from the greater ethnic Gorkha community like Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Magar are Kiratas of the region (cited in Bhandari, 1996: 1-2).

Om Prakash Basnet writes that there was nothing like present India in the ancient history. It was scattered into many number of small kingdom and principalities and similar the case with Nepal too. Since the Vedic age and expansion of Hinduism and days of Gautama Buddha, the region had been homogenously

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[15] Gorkha Bharati Bichar Mancha (cited in Bhandari, 2017).

celebrating the relation with the interconnected influence of religion, philosophy, socio-cultural lifestyle (Basnet, 2017: 85). Prior to 13th century and right before arrival of Ahoms in 1228 A.D and consolidation of Assam, the larger part of present Assam was known as Pragjyotishpur and later Kamrupa. Historian Kanaklal Baruah (1966) mentions, "It seems therefore, that Pragjyotisha included in the ancient times the modern district of Purnea in Bihar and extended on the North-West as far as *Koshi*. It reflects that the Pragjyotishpur had incorporated the Koshi River of present Nepal (Basnet, 2017b). The kingdom extended up to the river in West Bengal and included parts of Nepal and Bhutan (Baruah, 1985) before modern political boundaries were imagined.

Ramayana, Mahabarata, Kalika Puranas, Haribangsa, Yoginitrantra and many other mythological writings as well as ancient writing portray the relation of present North Eastern part of India and Nepal in the form of extended Prajyotishpur, approving the historical connection of Gorkhas with Assam. P. L. Paul in his *Early History of Bengal* (quoted in Basnet, 2017a) mentions, "It is stated in the Ramayana that the Amurtaraja, the founder of Pragjyotisha performed his austerities on the bank of the Kausika, which indicates that its western limit extended as far as the river Kosi. On the basis of these references, Pargiter concluded that at the time of the great Mahabharata war, the kingdom of Pragjyotisha included the greater part of modern Assam, and together with Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihar, Rangpur, Bogra, Mymensing, Dacca, Tippera, part of Pabna and probably a part of eastern Nepal. It appears from the Buddhist records and the Greek accounts of the 14th century B.C., that the southern boundary of Pragjyotisha was the Lohita Sagara, the western boundary was the river Kousika, and the northern boundary was the Bhutan hills and part of Nepal. From the accounts of Hsuan Tsang, it has been surmised that the kingdom of Kamarupa of his description included a portion of Bihar, a portion of Northern and Eastern Bengal, and nearly the whole of Assam Valley. Some portion of Bengal was under Kamrupa from the time of Bhaskara Varman who ruled in the first half of the 6th century A.D. to the time of Harshadeva (c.725-750A.D). According to the most of the Puranas, the Kingdom of Kamarupa extended up to the river Karatoya in the west. The eastern limit of the kingdom, however, cannot be definitely ascertained. According to the Kalika Purana, when Naraka was ruling in Pragjyotisha, his friend

Bana was ruling in Sonitpur, identified with the modern town of Tezpur (Assam Gazetteer page 106 quoted in Basnet, 2016a).

Prafulla Medhi writes that during the sixth centry, a large part of eastern part of present Nepal was under Kamprupa kingdom and hence the decedant of Gorkhas remained as subject of Kamrupa. They, as subject of Kamrupa kingdom, entered interior region of it and settled permanently adopting local language, culture and social life-style (Medhi quoted in Basnet, 2017a). Chinese traveler Hsuan Tsang in his travelogue mentions that king Kumar Bhaskar Varman, the decedent of Asura king Narakasur. Om Prakash Basnet adds that Narakasura was a ancestor of present Gorkha descendent and hence Bhaskar, resulted relation of ancestor of Gorkhas with the Kamrupa and present Assam (Basnet, 2017b).

Referring Nidhanpur inscription of King Kumar Bhaskera Varma (according to Kamrupa administration) Prof. S. M Ali narrates that Bhuti and Mahabhuti Varman had donated the land to 205 Brahmins on the Koshika (Ali, 1981) presently known river Koshi. Kanaklal Barua adds that the Kamrupa kingdom was extended up to northern bank of Koshi encluding the Morang district of present Nepal after the Maruya dynasty but before Guptas (Barua quoted in Basnet, 2017a). The Morang presently popular as Barahtirtha was the birth place of greater king Narkasura. It attests that Grokha relation to Assam that even Kamrupa rulers control larger part of present Nepal as the land of their ancestors. Narakasura ruled in Pragjyotish kingdom somewhere beyond Kosi (Sarma, 1981 quoted in Basnet, 2016b). These historical narratives establish that ancient kingdom Pragjyotishpura extended including Gorkhas' ancestral homes with a homogenously stretched territorial administration and congenial mobility of people in the past (Thakuri, 2012).

Historian Shyam Raj Jaisi and Purrushottam Bhandari discusses similar version of the history that the history of Assam can be traced back to the greater Kamrupa kingdom and ancient history of Assam which attested a glorious relation between Gorkhas and the region as a collective part of the greater Kamrupa kingdom. Kamrupa was the old name of present Assam; it had a territory comprising large parts of present Nepal and Bhutan. Yogini Tantra describes Kamrupa in the following way: "From the mountain Kancana in Nepal up to the confluence of the Brahmaputra from Karotoya to Dikkarasini the northern limit in the mouth Kanya, in the west the

Karatoya, in the east the Diksu. There were matrimonial and familial relationships between the Kamrupa kingdom the Nepali kingdom during the age of Kamrupa kingdom. According to Purushottam Bhandari, Harsha-Varmadeva, the king of Kamrupa married away his daughter Rajyamati in marriage to Jayadeva, the then king of Nepal. Another version centered on this history says that there were many other (other than royal) relationship between the families and individuals of the Gorkha and other community of the region. Shyam Raj Jaishi says that there is a tradition still current in Nepal. Machindranatha and Minanatha were two different persons, though at one time or other, both were in Kamprupa. It is said that there was a long continued drought in Nepal which led to famine. In a dream, the king of the country was instructed to invite Machindranatha who was then in Kamrupa. Taking the instruction of the dream, the king of Nepal invited Machindranatha to Nepal. The drought ended. Machindranath is still looked upon in Nepal as saint by both Saktas and Buddhist.[16]

Om Prakash Basnet writes that as king of Kamrupa that included large portion of territory of present Nepal, Naraksura brought and emplyed Brahmin families of those region as priests in Kamakhya temple. With the consolidation of Nepal those region fell under Nepal's administration and later such Brahmins had to take permision of king of Nepal. Receiving red-stamped permission in name of lalmohar pandas they had been serving as brahmins/pandas. Sukalal Panda was the first among the *Lal-Mohar Panda*[17], (Red priest) (Basnet, 2017a). Lopita Nath stated that the early pandas in the temple of Kamakhya were Nepali priests said to have been established there by king Narakasura for daily prayers. They called themselves 'Lal Mohari Puzari (Nath, 2006: 123). Still decendants of those pands are popularly known lalmohar pandas (Basnet, 2015). According to Tika Bhattarai, some ruler of ancient and medieval Assam during their reign, brought several families of the priests and encouraged them to settle permanently in Assam providing them revenue free land. Among those families, the family of Bhaskar Acharya was assigned to serve as priest in Kamakhya temple. Bhattarai mentions that most of these families who were encouraged to settle permanently had served in the Kamakhya temple. They were

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[16] Shyam jaishi, *Assam ma Nepaliharuko Aitihashik Prishtabhumi* (A historical Background of Nepalis in Assam) quoted in (Bhandari 1996: 4).

[17] According to tradition of the Kamakhya temple in Brahmaputra bank in Guwahati, the priest of the temple use to wear the red costume coinciding with the belief of shaktipeeth (the religious place where devotees prayer for the power and strength), and because of their costume, they were/are called Lal Panda (the red priest).

known as *Lal-Mohar Panda*, some of these families are still known as *Nepali Pandas* and many have forgotten their language and have assimilated with local Assamese culture and society.[18]

3.2. Locating Gorkhas of Assam in Medieval History of the Region

Another dominant kingdom in ancient Assam after the great Kamrupa kindom was Koch Kamatapur kingdom. According to Arup Jyoti Das, when the kingdom of Kamrupa was invaded and established Afghan colony by Afghan king Tughril Khan Malik Yuzbeg, the capital of the kingdom was transferred from Kamrup Nagar (North Guwahati) to Koch Behar leading the existence of Koch Kingdom. Arup Jyoti Das adds that Sandhya Rai established the Koch kingdom (Kamatapur kingdom) in the 13th century comprising parts of North Bengal and Western Assam. He referring N. N Acharya's book, *A brief History of Assam* he quotes that the kingdom included present Dhuburi, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Nalbari, Barpeta and Kamrup district of Assam, besides portions of northern Bengal and present Mymensingh in Bangladesh (Das, 2009: 38-39).

It is pertinent to mention here that the word 'Koch' is a term of some indistinctness. Edward Gait in his book *A history of Assam* says that the word 'Koch' is a term of some ambiguity. There is not any clear demarcation between the tribes called 'Mech' and 'Koch'. Both words are alternatively used to refer to two different tribes where the former is dominantly recognized as 'Bodo' in Assam and Bengal; the latter has been recognized as Rajbongshi presently (emphasis added). Bryan Hudson and Colonel Dalton had found classified the 'Koch' with the Bodo and the Dhimal of present Nepal (quoted in Gait, 2008: 47). In this respect, Risley (quoted in Gait, 2008: 47-48) discovers a Nepali (Gorkha) connection in origination of the word this word. Risley in his given creation of Limbu[19] legend in the *Tribes and Castes of Bengal*

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[18] This is a section translated from Tika Bhattarai's *Assam ma Gorkhaliharuko Aagman rh Awdaan* (History of arrival and contribution of Gorkhas in Assam). For details, see (Bhattarai 2011)

[19] Limbu is part of the Gorkha community. They are found predominantly in Koshi River Bank of present Nepal, northern Bengal and Sikkim. In ancient Assam, ancestors of the of 'Kirata' zenith of Kamrupa witnessed the transformation from 'Kiratas' to Hinduization. A section as the upholders of the Hinduization remained in the valley and a large section moved westward and merged with society of Koshi bank of present eastern Nepal, the erstwhile Kirata kingdom's northern part with the identities of Khas, Gurung, Magar, Sunuar, Limboo, Rai etc. It is said that the Limboos were the original branch of 'Kirata' recorded as '*mul kirat*' (original kirata). For detail see Sanjay Barbora (2005) and Gauhati University (2003), *Ancient history of Assam*, Study Materials, History (paper-ii, Group-A-I,) Post Graduate correspondence school, Guwahati, Gauhati university

narrates, one of the two progenitors of the human race settled in the Kachar country, which is the name given by people of Nepal to the tract at the foot hills between the Brahmaputra (in present Assam) and Koshi (in present eastern Nepal) river, and there became the father of the Koch, Mech and Dhimal tribes.

Koch kingdom was ruled by different rulers of different dynasties from the period of mid 13th century to 15th century. The kingdom had to face an attack in mid 15th century by Sultan Barbak which was resisted by the Chakradhwaj Singh[20]. But the attack by Bengal ruler Hussain Shah could not be resisted by Nilambar, son of Chkradhwaj Singh during the last decade in 1498 AD (Atreya Chhetri, 2007: 33). Hussain Shah destroyed the capital of the kingdom and established an Afghan colony. Even as this kingdom was getting consolidated since 1250 A.D. (Chhetri Atreya, 2007: 33), the petty states of Bhuyan, had started the consolidation of number of petty states between Koch kingdom in the west and Chutiyas and Kacharis in the east. In reference to Bhuyan, Harka Bahadur Chhetry Atreya finds that the Bhuyans were land lords of Nepali origin (Chhetry Atreya, 2007). In another version of this history, it is said that the community known as *Bhuyan* in Assamese society were from the Nepali origin (presently known as Gorkha), when they were establishing petty state in medieval Assam since 1326 A.D.[21]

These *Bhuyan*s were known as *Baro-Bhuyan* (twelve chiefs all together), ruled independently like zamindars as mentioned in the Persian language. The chiefs at the time of Muslim invasion united themselves and fought decisively and defeated the rival (Atreya Chhetry, 2007: 33). An historical account by Arup Jyoti Das reflects that those Bhuyans not only fought against rivals to protect their respective territories in time of need they turned to be good ally to the Koch kingdom. Das says, the Bhuyans

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[20] Arup Jyoti Das, "History of Kamatapur", [Online Web], accessed on April 7, 2013, URL: http://www.kamatapur.com/node/4

[21] Tika Bhattarai in his article *Assam ma Gorkhali Haruko Aagman rh Awdaan* says that the statement was made by Jogdanand Goswami, the head of *Mayamara Satrah*, one of the oldest spiritual and religious institution of Assamese *Bhasnavite* (who followed and worship lord Bishnu, a Hindu deity). Goswami is suppose to have made a statement during the fourth triennial conference of *Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha* (highest literary institution of Gorkhas in Assam) held in March 2011 at Tingrai Charali, Dibrugarh, that the community who are known as *Bhuyan* in Assam are/were the descendants of Giri sub-community of Gorkhas. Brothers of king Harishingh Giri of Bhaktapur kingdom, a district of present Nepal they entered Assam via Koach Behar (*sic*) kingdom in 1326 A. D. Soon after they entered in Assam, they started to consolidate themselves as landlords and established petty states or feudal states named Tezpur, Lakshimpur, Dholpur, Narayanpur etc. Later, they assimilated into socio-cultural environment of Assam, known as *Bhuyan* the landlord in Assamese term. For detail, see (Bhattarai, 2011: 48).

(Land Lords) united under the proficient leadership of Bishwa Singha[22], an ambitious Koch youth from present Kokrajhar district of Assam overthrew the Afghan colony from Kamatapur. Bishwa Singha established the Koch Dynasty in Kamatapur in the early 16th Century and brought political stability in the Kamrup Kamata region (Das: www.kamatapur.com)[23].

After demolition the Hussain Shah's Afghan colony, Bishwa Singha tried to maintain his relation with the neighbouring state. He entered a matrimonial relation with the Malla king of Nepal. He married Ratnakanti, the daughter of Malla king of Nepal (Bhattarai, 2011: 48). The kingdom under his leadership was considerably extended. After a long struggle, he subdued the Bhuyans of Ouguri, Luki, Karnapur, Phulguri, Binji and other places of Assam. Harka Bahadur Chhetry says that even the Bhutanese history says that the lower part of Bhutan was once under the great Koch kingdom (Atreya Chhetry, 2007: 34). After his death, his sons Malla Dev, Sukladhwaj and Nar Singh claimed right over the throne. In absence of his elder brother Nar Singh ascended the throne and he refused to leave the throne for his eldest brother, Malla Dev (it is believed that he was named Malla Dev by his mother who was a daughter of Malla king of Nepal[24]). It is said that a war of succession broke out between the two brothers, causing Nar Singh to flee to Morang (presently a district in Nepal) and later to Bhutan where he tried to established himself as king (Gait, 2008: 50). On the other

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[22] Although Arup Jyoti Das writes that Bishwa Singh was a Koach king, yet it is not clear whether Bishwa Singh belonged to the Koch or the Mech tribe. ch' that Bishwa singha belonged. As Dr. Harka Bahadur Chhery writes, according to the History of *Darrang Ranjbonsawali* (the book on Darrang royal genealogy), one Haria Mandal was the early ancestor of the Koch royal family. It is said that Hariya Mandal was resident of villages of Chiknagram, in the Khungtaghat pargana of the Goalpara district. He was the recognized head of twelve leading families of *Meches* or *Koches* living in the pargana. It is said that he married two sisters named Hira and Jira, daughter of one Hajo by name, by whom he had two sons viz. Bisu, the son of Hira, and Sisu, the son of Jira. They were born some years before the conquest of Kamata by the Muslim under Hussain Shah in 1498 A. D. Here, it is not clear whether Biswa Singh was son of Haria as Bisu or not. For detail See (Atreya Chhetri, 2007: 30-34)

[23] Arup Jyoti Das, "The history of Kamatapur" [Online Web] accessed on May 13, 2013, URL: http://www.kamatapur.com/node/4

[24] Interview: On April 17, 2013 at his residence, an old teacher from Batabari village of Chirang as a respondent says that Malla Dev was named by his mother Ratnakanti, daughter of king of Malla Dynasty of present Nepal. After he ascended the throne, he assumed the name Nar Narayan instead of Malla Dev. He further adds that apart from the Malla ruler, Koch kingdom had a congenial relation with other principalities of which fall in the eastern part of present Nepal. People of one kingdom could settle in another. There are today a number of people known as Morangia in western Assam and northern Bengal, who came from the Morang kingdom, district in eastern Nepal. Edward Gait also substantiates his argument that in old book Nar Narayan is written as Malla Narayan. Similarly, substantial reference to the other argument of above respondent is found in his book. It is said that when Nar shingh ascended to power of Koch kingdom in absence of his elder brother Malla Dev and Sukladhwaj, he was asked to leave the throne on arrival of elder brothers. He refused the bid, it caused an attack on him by Malla Dev and Sukladhwaj. His fled into Morang after his defeat. On the Raja of that country refusing to give him up, his brothers defeated him. Gait also mentions that there are still in old Koch kingdom some people called Morangia who have a tradition that they made over to Nar Narayan by the Raja of the Morang country (Gait, 2008: 51-52).

hand, the death of Bisha Shingh was seen as an occasion by *Bhuyan* to revive their petty state lost during his reign. A *Bhuyan* petty chief conspired against Nar Narayan in collaboration with Ahom King[25] Suklenmung. The alliance of Bhuyan and Ahom king failed to overcome the Koch king under the Sukladhwaj and consequently Koch kingdom gradually ascended to the north bank of the Brahmaputra.

However, the split of Koch kingdom in 1581 eased the way for Mughal imperial design towards the region (Zau and Kumar, 2011: 146). In 1615, the Muslim rule formally landed in the region when Parikshit, the Koch of Hajo was defeated by Mughal emperor Jahaghir and extended his territory up to the Barnadi, the northern Bank of the Brahmaputra. Though historical evidences are available about Mughals and their territory annexation of the Koch kingdom and their extension up to north bank of Brahmaputra, mention is found only of the Southern part of the then Goalpara. There is no clear evidence about their rule on the northern part of undivided Goalpara which comprises of the present Kokrajhar and Chirang of BTC.[26]

A clan traditional history among a section of Naga portrays Gorkha-Naga connection before 400 years. Hari Prasad Gorkha Rai, an eminent multi-lingual litterateur on Kohima, Nagaland, through light in this regards. He writes,

"Long ago young men of Chinechama village were going to their field. On their way they found three Nepali boys loitering in the jungle. They were so hungry that they had tied their belly with Nepali cloth. The young men of Chiechama took pity on them and brought them to the village, gave them shelter to live and food to eat. But, two of these boys died of cholera but the third one survived. His name as given out by him or the survivor was RAI. He was adopted by one of the village elders. He was married with one of the most beautiful girls of the village. In course of time they became one of the Angamis. But since originally their great grandfather had come from outside, they (the descendants of Rai) are called Metha Tophries. The meaning is non-Angami Methama clan. That is the reason while till this day one of the male child of this clan is named as *RAYI*, in order to

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[25] The Ahom kingdom was existed from the eastern end of Koch kingdom. According to Gait's narrative, a petty Bhuyan chief conspired, it is said, against Nar Narayan and on direction, field to Suklenmung, who gave him shelter and made an unsuccessful attack on the Koch King. See (Gait 2008: 50-62)

[26] Translated by this author from the draft resolution of prepared after a joint executive meeting of Goalpara, Dhubri and Kokrajhar district committee of congress held in April 27, 1968 at Dhubri congress house, Dhubri

commemorate the name of their original great grandfather" (Gorkha Rai quoted in Bhandari, 1996: 10).

Similarly the history of royal families of Manipur attests the deep history of Gorkhas with present North East region. This history shows that Gorkha connection of Manipur was since tenth century A.D. Bogiram Bhandari mentions about this history that some Gorkha youths reached the then Manipur in search of suitable place for their profession of cattle rearing in tenth century A.D. One of those Gorkha youths married with Khumbi, a girl of *Meetei* clan (a ruling clan of Manipur those days). Familial relation of Gorkha youth with girl of Myang Haikong Nidol community of Manipur resulted the newer generation and descendents. These Gorkha youths established their *Goth* or *khuti* (cattle farm) in Manipur started to live there with their families. With the passing phase of time, they started to be known as *goatimyan* (cattle farming people). Their descendents were also known with same term. Bhandari mentions that there is a community still known as *goatimyan* in Manipur. Bhnadari also writes about matrimonial relation of Manipur king with Gorkha that a king of Manipur married with a Gorkha girl and in request of queen, king permitted to settle certain Gorkha families in the state (Bhandari, 2013).

3.2.1. In the Borderland between Koch Kingdom and Bhutan

When the Koch kingdom was passing through a drastic partition and transformation, the consolidation of Bhutan began under the leadership of Shbdrung Nawang Namgyel[27]. In keeping with the assigned destiny, Namgyel soon established his authority over western Bhutan when it was a mere agglomeration of numerous petty kingdoms under Dharma Raja or Dev Rajas.[28] He initiated an expansionist policy, unified the country as a theocracy, and ultimately became the supreme head of

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[27] He was a famous Tibetan Lama belong to the Drukpa sect, entered Bhutan having been forced out by his rivals. For details, (AHURA, 1993: 1-2)

[28] Theocratic heads in Bhutan also known as dharmadeva they belong to Lama Community. Hutt mentions that most of the historical sources agree that friendly relations were established between Bhutan (conflated with the figure of Shabdrung and called Devadharma or Dharmadeva in pre-modern Nepalese source) and the kingdom of Gorkha during the time of Ram Shah, who reigned the Gorkha during the first half of the seventeenth century. He adds that two popular historical traditions are current in which Lamas summoned from Bhutan played an instrumental role in bringing about the birth of a successor to a king of Gorkha. In first, Ram Shah asked the 'King of Bhutan' to send a Lama to perform rite for the peace in his family and for the birth of a son. These rites were successful and Ram Shah became father of three sons, including his successor Damber Shah. It made a ceremonial respect for the Dev Raja of Nepal. Gorkha kings assigned his subjects to protect not only during their visit in Nepal, send to Bhutan for same purpose (Hutt, 2003: 27-28).

the country. He initiated a friendship treaty with the king of Gorkha state (presently a district in central Nepal) in 1624 A.D requesting King Ram Shah of Gorkha (1606-1633), to dispatch some families among his subjects from the Gorkha kingdom.[29] Ram Shah responded to the request and sent several Gorkha families under the leadership of Bishnu Thapa to 'protect and enrich the Bhutanese territory'. That chunk of the population was prepared to settle in Southern part of the state to fill up a shortage of manpower on the area as the ruling community of the state always preferred to stay in high altitude rather than in the southern hot areas adjoining the then Koch kingdom (AHURA, 1993: 14).

Similarly, in 1640, during the reign of king Shiva Singh Mall of Kathmandu, people were recruited to work in the "Dzongs" and monasteries of Bhutan. Apart from encouraging the Gorkha settlement in the state, he started the expansion of the state toward the southern border with the help of those Gorkhas challenging the occupation of Koch kingdom which was put together by Koch king Biswa Shingh and Nar Singh. He started to occupy the areas adjoining southern part of the foothills of Bhutan and gave the charge to maintain the revenue as well as protection to the Gorkhas. In course of time, the successor of Namgyel also promoted the settlement of more Gorkhas in the southern part of the country and continued the expansion of the state in the plain lowland areas of southern end of the country. With the strength of growing Gorkha population, Bhutan attacked Koch kingdom in 1772 keeping the king and his brother in confinement. In the opinion of D.S. Bomjan, the victory of Bhutan over Koch Kingdom is certainly due to the combined strength of the army that constituted of Nepali (Gorkha) and Bhutanese subjects (Bomjan, 2008).

Bomjan narrates another story about the Gorkha settlement in *Dooars*[30], the Northern border of Koch kingdom that historian Kashitize Vedaalanker stated as that

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[29] Shabdrung Nawang Namgyel wanted a chunk of population who could settle both in cold and hot areas keeping in view to settle population in southern part of the country as a inter mediatory between hill and plain areas of country and to protect specially the southern areas (AHURA, 1993: 1-3)

[30] *Dooar* is corrupted form to English from Sanskrit world *Duar* which means *door or entrance*. For the administrative comfort and import and accessibility of necessary goods its southern borders, Bhutan in its initial days made some entrance or *duar* in its southern regions joining to plain areas. These duars later were known as *dooars*. In the southern border, Bhutan had total 18 dooars. After annexation by British colonial adminstration, 11 of these dooars fell in northern part of west Bengal and rest 7 remained with Assam (detail deiscussed below in later section) (Rimal, 1974). Bogiram Bhandari writes that Sikkim comprised some areas of dooars and all Terrai areas including present Siliguri and Jalpaiguri of West Bengal till 1640s. The word "Sikkim" owes its origin to a sub-tribe within larger Gorkha community word *Su-khim* meaing "happy home" as well as "new home" (Bhandari, 2017). Quoting from the book *Sikkim Saga* of B. S. Das, Purushottam Bhandari also writes, "before 1706 a large

Sanaysi Sena (means army in hermitage dress), and some termed it as Bairagi Sena, was constituted and formed following the famous battle of Plassey in 1757 between Bengal Nawab and British East India Company. According to Kashitize Vedaalanker, the damages inflicted to the East India Company by the Sanasi Seena (*sic*) have also found mention in Bankim Chandra Chattopaddhya's novels *Anandamath* and *Devi Choudhrani*. The same Sanaysi Seena led by Bir Syamsingh Basnet had reached till Dinajpur, Rangpur and Rajshayee in 1776 and on their return in 1782 from Rangpur they had reached *Dooars* and the Koch kingdom (Bomjan, 2008). The contestation over the space between Koch king, British East India Company and Bhutan over *Dooars* areas encouraged Bhutan to settle those soldiers in Bhutan to protect the *Dooars* region as the part of Bhutanese territory.

Bhutan with the help of settled Gorkha population had been maintaining its southern plain tract dividing it into several units called *Dooars*. And these *Dooars* were part of Shadrung's rule. He divided Bhutan for administrative purpose into Western, Eastern and *Dooars* provinces. In those days, southern Bhutan was known as the *Dooars*. It was administered by Subhas, a Gurkha ethnic group, who were invariably appointed by Deb Raja himself (AHURA, 1993: 16). These *Dooars* were created mainly for the supply of food items and other materials that were not available in the high hills. People from plains and the hills used barter system to exchange woolens, gold-dust, salt, musk, horses, *chowries* (yaks) and silk with article such as food, oil, dried fish and coarse cotton cloth, *eri* (silk worm) cocoons, etc. Since all Indo-Bhutan trade passed through the *Dooars*, they became the most valuable territories of Bhutan. It is mentioned that there were eighteen *Dooars* including seven in Assam and eleven in present Indian state of West Bengal. (Wary, 2012: 46).

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part of Siliguri, Darjeeling, Kurseong, Kalimpong, Dooars was under the occupation of Sikkim". He adds that in the year 1706, Bhutan waged the war against Sikkim and defeated the latter. As a result of this, Kalimpong and Dooars came under the occupation of Bhutan (Bhandari, 1996: 14). From 1780 to 1793, Sikkim was under reign of Tenzing Namgyal, and his sovereignty most of Sikkim being appropriated by Gorkha Kingdom or Nepal. Gorkha army invaded Sikkim 1788. With it, larger part of Sikkim's control was occupied by Gorkha kingdom or Nepal (Bhandari, 2013). Gorkha ruler continued their expantionlist policy till 1814 which was condemned by British East India Company. The Company administrators declared war against Gorkha kingdom, as a result, Gorkha rulers started to lose the annexed areas. Though the Gorkha soldiers were having upper hand over British East India Company during first and second Aglo-Gorkha scuffle, the third and final Anglo-Gorkha war caused loss of larger parts of Gorkhas control to British East India Company. As a result of war, Treaty of Segowlee was signed between Gorkha or Nepal king and British East India Company in December 2, 1815. With this treaty Gorkha kingdom lost all control it had over some *dooars*, Darjeeling, Siliguri along with Dehradun, Kumaon, Kandla and Garhwal (Bhandari, 2017).

The Bhutanese kingdom ruled these territories through local officials appointed by the *Deb Raja* on the recommendation of the *Dzongpons* in charge of these *Dooars* were attached. Hardworking Tribes of the region were paid to the *Dzongpongs*, who lived in forts of the lower range of hills, revenue in kind-rice, cloth, betel-nut, cotton, butter and ghee. The rule of the Bhutanese kingdom was firm and absolute (Wary, 2012: 47). It is mentioned in the history that the members some sub-tribe of Gorkha community were appoited for the suppervision and tax collection at these dooars areas by *Deb Raja* on the recommendation of the *Dzongpons* and these families of such Gorkha sub-tribes inhabited with cordial ethnic relation the Mech, koch-Kachari tribes of the region (Basnet, 2017a).

This point can be substantiated that they were the original inhabitants of the region and even it was ruled by the progenitors of these tribes prior to consolidation of the region into the Bhutanese Kingdom. People from these tribes were dominantly visible in this area. There is a general consensus that along with the people of Meche or Koch tribe, Gorkha community had been part of the greater *Dooars* region of Assam.[31]

3.2.2. British Colonial Policy of Buffer Region and Gorkhas

The Bhutanese-Gorkha expedition on conquer of Koch kingdom (in Koch Behar) in 1772 was lived short. Bhutan was forced to restore back the kingdom to the king of Cooch Behar by releasing the king and his brother at the intervention of the British East India Company (Bomjan, 2008). In 1773, during the rule of Dharmendra Narayan, Koch Kingdom came under the rule of the British East India Company by virtue of a treaty. The East India Company agreed to drive away the Bhutiyas from the Kingdom. Thus Kamrup Koch Kingdom became a princely state of British India (Das: www.kamatapur.com).

The existence and growing power of the Gorkha with the warfare strategy in the region was perceived as a threat by the Company administration. It designed a policy to consolidate Gorkha population for Company purpose in the region. After

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[31] Translated by this author from the draft of resolution of prepared after a joint executive meeting of Goalpara, Dhubri and Kokrajhar district committee of congress held in April 27, 1968 at Dhubri congress house, Dhubri

Warren Hastings assumed the position of Governor General of India, and following the adoption of the Regulating Act of 1773, the region came under the control of the British East India Company. It was during Company rule that the next phase of Gorkhas mobility at Bhutan began. Desirous of arresting the revival of Tibetan influence in Sikkim, the company government encouraged Gorkhas to move eastward to Sikkim, bordering areas of Bhutan. After the signing of the Anglo-Bhutanese Treaty on 25th April 1774, a portion of this flow of population from Nepal to Sikkim as encouraged by the British Company government in India were diverted to the neighbouring area in southern Bhutan and the *Dooars* areas (AHURA, 1993: 16).

However, the Company administration could not take the growing population into confidence and remained suspicious towards Gorkha. This can be substantiated from following lines:

"…We cannot afford to let the Chinese establish influence in Bhutan. Bhutan rolls down on the south in low hills and shades away over a mere geographical line to the *Dooars*. However, it is fast becoming a Nepali state. Already three-fourths of the populations of the region are Nepalese and Gurkhas who are multiplying fast are steaming over into the vacant places in the area. For obvious reason, it is real importance to keep the Gurkhas of area under the control of Company rule[32]…" (quoted in AHURA, 1993).

3.2.3. Gorkhas, Gorkha Kingdom and Assam

Gorkhas are often considered as the people those who were concentrated in the erstwhile Gorkha principality and presently Gorkha district of Nepal. The origin of the word "Gorkha" often brought to connect with this region only. But the pages of history unbox the root of word "Gorkha" beyond that. As mentioned in previous chapter (chapter I), Chris Bellamy in this book *the Gurkhas* (2011) brings into the notice that the name comes from the eight-century warrior saint, Guru Goraksanath or Gorakhnath. As Bellamy finds, his name comes from the *gorakhsah*, which means tending or protection of cattle- *goraksa* in the language of the community. C. S. Thapa writes that Gorkhapur and Gorakhnath Temple in Northern India lends

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[32] It is difficult to place the reliable date, since it is not mentioned in the source, but the statement itself gives an hint that it was prior of Anglo-Gorkha war of 1814

testimony to the term Gorkha being used for a particular class or clan that resided in or around the city of Gorkha which extended its conquest into the eastern and western direction (Thapa, 2013: 24).

The expansionist attack of Alla-uddin Khilji, the then Sultan of Delhi in 1303 caused flee of this community along with the Rajput Khatriyas of Chitaud towards the Himalayan ranges. Shyamraj Jaisi brings into notice that with the attack of Alla-uddin Khilji, the hapless self-determination loving people started to spread and search the shelter in Himalayan region. With it, they reached the Nuwakot, Lamjung, Kaski. Within the short period of time, they spread larger areas of the region and consolidated necessary power in Gorkha principality by 1559. With the growing power they deposed king Khadga (Jaisi in Chhetry, 1996).

In 1742, Prithvi Narayan became the most powerful Gorkha king. He marched with his Gorkha consolidation policy and brought many small principalities into the domain of Gurkha kingdom. With the marching and success over the Malla king of Kathmandu valley in 1742 (Jaisi in Chhetry, 1996), his Gurkha expansion known to turned into greater Nepal. Historian Assad Hussain writes that Prithvi Narayan became the king of Gorkha in 1742. Narayan was ruler with ambition to enlarge his kingdom, set out his army to conquer the other kingdoms of the area. Unable to develop any unity of opposition, the petty chiefs and Rajas succumbed to Narayan in quick succession (quoted in Chhetry, 1996). He brought together all *Chaubisi* and *Baisi* principalities exiting those and consolidated Gorkha, the Nepal Kingdom before his death. In his mission he conquered Kathmandu, Patan, Bhatgaon, Makwanpur and Kirat Desa (Thapa, 2013).

The expansion of Gorkha kingdom did not stop even after the death of Prithvi Narayan Shah. In 1779-80, his successor attacked Sikkim. From 1780 to 1793, Sikkim was under reign of Tenzing Namgyal, and his sovereignty most of Sikkim being appropriated by Gorkha Kingdom or Nepal. Gorkha army invaded Sikkim 1788. With it, larger part of Sikkim's control was occupied by Gorkha kingdom or Nepal (Bhandari, 2017). Gorkha armies entered Sikkim and occupied the Darjeeling hills some and its plain adjoining areas with the bank of Teesta River and some connected areas of Bhutan *dooars* (Bhandari, 2017). State of Gorkha, by 1810 had expanded to include, the entire modern day of Nepal, Garhwal and Kumaon of present

Uttarakhand and Sikkim of India (Thapa, 2013). Till the date of 1814, the Gorkhas maintained their expansionist policy towards northern areas of east India (Bhandari, 2013).

Purushottam Bhandari quoting S. K. Bhuyan narrates that prince Brajanath Gohain of Ahom kingdom, son of Bijoy Barmura Gohain and Grandson of Ratneswar Tipamin Gohain, a claimant to the throne of Assam requested to the British colonial administration of India to help him to be king of state. Failure to receive the aid from the company masters Brajanath sought same help from other front. He met Rung Bahadur, the then Gorkha king. King Rung Bahadur promised Bajranath to carry out his design towards destiny. After the pact between two, king Rung Bahadur obtained the order of the emperor of China directing the Bhutias to permit the armies of Rung Bahadur to proceed through their country to Assam. Meanwhile the sudden death of Rung Bahadur and Anglo-Gurkha hostilities of 1814 ended the scheme of Brajanath (Bhandari, 1996: 5).

Referring the book "An Account of the Kingdom of and the Territories Annexed this Dominion By the house of Gorkhas" written by Francis Buchanan Hamilton, Bhawani Prasad Sharma writes that Gorkhas were ruling the territory up to present Goalpara (the undivided old Goalpara) district of Assam. He mentions that the Gorkha kingdom was comprising larger part of the then Sikkim, Damsangadi and Dalimhat fort of Bhutan, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, some parts of present Koachbehar and some part of old Goalpara in its eastern end (Sharma, 2016).

The expansionist policy of Gorkhas was condemned strongly by British East India Company. The Company administrators declared war against Gorkha kingdom, as a resultant, Gorkha rulers started to lose the annexed areas. Though the Gorkha soldiers were upper handed over British East India Company during first and second Aglo-Gurkha scuffle, the third and final Anglo-Gorkha war caused lost of larger parts of Gorkhas control to British East India Company. As a result of war, "Treaty of Segowlee (*sic*) was signed between Gorkha or Nepal king and British East India Company in December 2, 1815. With this treaty Gorkha kingdom lost territory like Dehradun, Kumaon, Kandla, Simla and Garhwal Terrai Land. It had also surrendered the earlier conquered land of all its control over, Darjeeling, Kurseong, Siliguri and some *dooars* those stretched up to the Goalpara district of Assam (Bhandari, 2017 and

Bhandari, 1996). Similarly, a treaty known as "Titalia Treaty" was signed in 1817 between British East India Company and Sikkim. As per the provision of this treaty, in the form of token of gift for supporting Company administrator during Anglo-Gurkha war, Sikkim was entitled to get some areas it lost to Gorkha kingdom or Nepal during the period of 1980 to 1793. As the result of it, through said Titalia Treaty Sikkim got Kurseong, Darjeeling[33] and some of its adjoining areas.

3.3. Post Anglo-Gorkha War and Gorkhas of Assam

East India Company came into confrontation with the Gorkha state of Nepal. Though it could not succeed initially, it emerged victorious and concluded the Treaty of Segowlee (*sic*) in 1815 (detail in appendix I). Taking the advantage of Burmese invasion in Assam during (1821-24), the company entered into Brahmaputra valley (Assam) with a bunch of Gorkha soldiers who were recruited through the Treaty of Segowlee (1815). The Burmese were pushed back by British East India Company cementing the Yandaboo Treaty between the Company administration and Burmese ruler in 1826 (detail in appendix II). With this Treaty, Assam was brought into the colonial valley of British East India Company (Upadhaya and Adhikari, 2009: 249). The triumphant concert of Gurkhas (*sic*) in Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826) opened the door to recruit Gorkhas in all the branches of imperial forces and their settlement in the North Eastern region (Bhandari, 1996: 9). Apart from soldiers, Gorkhas were allotted land to set up village to grow *dhan* (paddy). Further, with the discovery of '*Magical drink*'[34], British colonial administrators encouraged Gorkhas to settle during 1830s (Ghosh, 1999: 31).

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[33] But from Siliguri to Falakatta areas decided to be kept under the possession of the Company (Bhandari, 1996). J. Upadhyaya in his book *Jati Samasya Ra Nepali Jati* writes that, at that Juncture, Tsugphud Namgyal was the king of Sikkim and Chandoz Bolek was his Minister. In 1826, the king assassinated all the members of minister, Bolek, family and minster due to some personal rivalry. The king was from Bhutia family and minister was from Lepcha community. The Lepcha community fled Nepal. By that time, Gorkha were very powerful in Gorkha Kingdom, Nepal. The king of Sikkim was frightened that Lepcha would attack his kingdom with the help of Gorkhas, so he requested the British East India Company to help. Company was ready to provide assistance to the king in lieu it demanded Darjeeling from the king showing the purpose of land for sanatorium. The king too obliged to give Darjeeling to the East India Company. In this regards, a "Deed of Grant" was executed between Company and king of Sikkim in February 1, 1835 casing the transfer of Darjeeling to Company administration (Upadhyaya quoted in Bhandari, 1996). As per the condition of "Deed of Grant" British East India Company agreed to Rs. 3000/- per annum tribute to Sikkim. The Company paid annual tribute of Rs. 3000/- from 1841 to 1846. The amount of tribute was raised to Rs. 6000/- per annum in 1846. In 1850, the British sent military expedition against Sikkim, because the king's Dewan (prime minister) arrested Dr. Campbell and Dr. Hooker, though both of them took the initial permission of Government and the king of Sikkim. This expedition resulted the stoppage of the payment of tribute to Sikkim (Bhandari, 1996).

[34] The '*Magical drink*' referred to Tea

3.3.1. Annexation of Assam *Dooars* and Gorkhas

Triumph after Anglo-Burmese War and the integration of Assam into the greater Indian colony, the annexation policy toward the areas adjoining Assam and its neighbouring countries continued. Colonial administration began to annex the Dooars in 1828 and, in 1838 Captain R.B. Pemberton led a mission to the Bhutanese winter capital of Punakha. Here he presented a memorandum to Deb Raja which was designed primarily to recognize British rights in the *Dooars*. Referring to Amar Kaur Jasbir Singh, Hutt says that the treaty was rejected outright because the Ponlops of Tongsa and Paro, who controlled the Assam and Bengal *Dooars* respectively, were extremely unwilling to relinquish their remunerative privileges'. By 1841, all the Assam *Dooars* were annexed by the British (Hutt, 2006). These seven dooars of Assam fell under the undivided Gaolpara, Kamrup and Darang where present Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baska Udalguri and Sonitpur district of Assam also fall. *Dooars* in Assam are Boree Goomah, Kalling, Shurkolla, Baska, Chirang, Chapkahama and Bijni.

Defeating Bhutan, colonial adminsrator in 1864, compel Bhutan to trasfer certain souther parts of Bhutan to colonial control. With an annual payment 25,000 by colonial government of India, certain parts of Bhutan and KochBehar went under the colonial control. The treaty of Sinchula was signed between British colonial administrators and Bhutan government in 1865, with it, all 18 dooars of Bhutan directly came under the Birtish colonial adminstration of India.   The annexation brought all the population of those *Dooars* into the company administered West Bengal and Assam. With it the Gorkhas of such *Dooars* also became the part of the population of Assam and West Bengal under Company the administration (Rimal, 1974: 15). It is important to mention that greater Goalpara is divided by the mighty river Brahmapura into its two banks. The southern bank already existed as Goalpara under permanent settlement policy of East India Company since 1793 after the annexation of Goalpara district in 1765. The northern bank was still unknown to it. Company administration added the northern bank as part of Goalpara in 1864 after the capture of Assam *Dooars* in 1841.

It was because of this reason that the southern part of greater Goalpara was known as Pargana and northern as *Dooars*[35]. The northern part of the district although came under the administration of the Company and later British crown in India, the supervision of it rested under various Koch/Mech feudal lords who were scattered after greater Koch kingdom suffered several partitions during its last days.

The entire Gorkha population of the region fell under the colonial administration as a greater part of the region under the company. Apart from the families who had been living in Assam prior to the arrival of colonial rule, the Gorkhas who became part of Assam after the merger of *Dooars*, and also the families of the soldiers who entered Assam during various expeditions as part of the colonial band of soldiers were encouraged to settle in various parts of Assam. With the entire chunk of the Gorkhas of colonial Assam, the Gorkhas of Goalpara were brought within the purview of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 (ALRRA) by recognizing them as Graziers and cultivators. The Graziers and cultivators were allotted forest land for the cultivation and rearing of cattle. And gradually this became their permanent profession and came to be known as professional Graziers and cultivators.[36]

Right from revenue from cattle farming to the world wars, Gorkhas of Assam had a great role in British India. A band of total two lakh Gorkha soldiers fought in First World War on behalf of British India and lost twenty thousand lives. Similarly, forty five thousand soldiers lost their lives in Second World War. It could not be found the exact numbers of Gorkhas soldiers from Assam, though several Gorkha families are found in Assam including old Goalpara that whose family ancestors were among those soldiers (Bhattarai, 2011: 49). Later the community came to the awareness of the colonial strategy that they were merely instrumentalised as 'Martial Coolie'[37], 'Grazier coolie'[38] and 'plantation coolie'. Other than stories of valour,

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[35] Translated by this author from the draft of resolution of prepared after a joint executive meeting of Goalpara, Dhubri and Kokrajhar district committee of congress held in April 27, 1968 at Dhubri congress house, Dhubri

[36] See D.B. Chhetry and Bhabani Prasad Sharma, "Protected Classes vis-à-vis Nepalese in tribal belts and Blocks" [Online Web], Accessed on December 12, 2012, URL:http://assamesenepali.com/article/engarticles_assam_history31/protected_classes_vis.htm

[37] 'Martial coolie' is used here to refer the Gorkha people who were used by British colonial administration as Soldier to appropriate the colonial interest in North-East. The term 'Martial coolie' is used by Bishnu Sastri in his article *AAGSU ko Drishti rh Assameli Gorkhali.* See, (Sastri, 2000).

ability and loyalty in colonial writings, the genuine welfares like health, education and local identification are rarely discussed (Hussain, 2003: 93). The steeping tax and acquisition of land of local Gorkhas for the imported migrants (migrants brought from the East Bengal by colonial administration) by colonial administration prepared the way for the protest and gradually the Gorkhas of the valley started anti-colonial agitation since 1920 in entire Brahmaputra valley.

3.3.2. Colonial policy and Gorkha in Assam

When the British heard about the martial skills[39] of the Gorkha community through their triumphant concert during the Anglo-Burmese war[40] in the Brahmaputra valley, it was soon realized that the suitability of Gorkhas as 'hardy' and 'loyal soldiers' and started a strategy to govern entire valley. The company could annex Assam and found remarkable bunch of Gorkhas to employ them as soldiers. *The History of Assam Rifles* of L.W. Shakespear cited in Tejimala Gurung discusses that Capt. J. Butler, a political assistant of the company made a change in recruiting Gorkhas, Cacharies and Shans, as 'better man' for hills and jungles. Tejimala Gurung quoting from Shakespear explains that the important role of Gorkhas in Assam Rifles was recognized as early as 1865, when "Kookerie" (*sic*) was substituted for the sword, which had impeded their progress through the jungles (Gurung, 2003: 175). It made the Kukuri the inseparable part of the colonial soldiers in North East India, and it was understandable that when colonial administers recognized the Kukuri for the soldier in the remote hill in Brahmaputra valley; they even enshrined the symbol of

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[38] 'The Grazier Coolie' refers to Gorkha people who were allotted Gorkha land to establish village to grow the paddy and rear the cattle in the forest areas. Grazier coolie is a term used by Bishnu Sastri. See, ibid, p64.

[39] As mentioned in previous chapter, Bidhan Golay writes that the 'Gurkha' identity as a 'martial race' is largely the 'discovery' of the ethnographical knowledge of the British colonial state in India. He adds that this discovery marks off the colonial state's shift in its emphasis from the brutal modes of conquest to cultural technologies of rule. For more detail, see, (Golay, 2009: 76).

[40] During the Ahom rule in the first half of 16th century, the society in Assam was divided into Shaktivist and Vaisnavist, the transformative crusades of two Hindu offshoots. The Gorkha population was sandwiched between the two opposing groups. This community had been part of both the Saktivite (Bhandari, 2003: 107) and Vaisnavite sects (Devi, 2009: 249). In later days, they remained as the part of Assamese Society (Sharma, 2006: 2). The crusade between these two led to dramatic transformation in Assam. The deteriorating social-economic condition drove the nails for decline of Ahom kingdom (Choudhury 2004: 140). The enthusiastic Burmese took advantage and invaded Assam in the second and early third decade of nineteenth century. The desperate Ahom king accorded an invitation to British East India Company to curb the invasion in 1822. The company entered with a bunch of Gorkhas soldiers who were recruited through the treaty of Sugowlee (1815) after valiant challenge of Gorkhas in Anglo-Gorkha war 1814. The Burmese were uprooted cementing the Yandaboo treaty in 1826 and finally, Assam entered into the colonial valley of British India (Upadhaya & Adhikari 2009: 249). The triumphant concert of Gurkhas in Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826) opened the door to recruit Gorkhas in all the branches of Colonial forces and their permanent settlement in North Eastern region (Bhandari 1996: 9).

Khukuri as an insignia on the cap of soldiers (Bhattarai, 2011: 49). In the year 1865, the colonial administration through the annexation of Bengal dooars and the signing of Sinchula Treaty with Bhutan received crucial geographical tracts which had a considerable size of Gorkha population. By 1880, Gorkha soldiers in the valley were predominantly from the Darjeeling district of West Bengal (Baskota, 1944: 30).

Tejimala Gurung says that the leasehold annexation of Darjeeling in 1835 and protectorate control over Sikkim, the incorporation of large part of the then Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar district of west Bengal and northern bank of Brahmaputra in western Assam through the annexation of the whole of Dooars from Bhutan gave a confidence to administrators that it could access an affordable size of Gorkhas soldiers from the valley itself without the recruitment of Gorkha soldiers from Nepal for the purpose of Brahmaputra valley. It started to discourage and to some extent prohibited (Gurung, 2003: 175-178) the recruitment of soldier from Nepal in 1887 and encouraged the Gorkhas of the Darjeeling and Dooars to serve the cause of the British Empire in the valley. By 1888, the Gorkha soldiers in valley consisted 88.69% and 93.42% respectively, in 43rd and 44th Light infantry comprising Gorkhas, Assamese Jhariwas, Assamese Muhammadans, Assamese Christian, Hindustani Hindus and Muhammadans, Punjabi Muhammandans, Kabulis and Rajputs.

3.3.3. Colonial Economy and Gorkhas

The British colonial power encouraged migration of the Gorkhas in Assam with a view to exploit the land and forest for economic purposes. The discovery of *'Magical drink'* (Tea) was reason enough to import and settle Gorkhas in the fashion of coolie along with the tribal community of Chottanagpur since or during 1830s (Ghosh, 1999: 31). By the thirties of the nineteenth century long with the annexation of Brahmaputra valley, the colonial masters had realized the usefulness of Gorkhas in furthering the colonial interest. With introduction of tea industry, colonial masters started to search labourers for the plantation and nurturing of tea and started to permit the settlement of such labourers in tea estate and its adjoining areas. This promoted some Gorkha settlement in Assam (Bhandari, 2017).

As Imdad Hussain states that one of the virtues early recognized in the Gorkhas was their capacity for colonization (Hussain, 2003: 70). After recognition of

virtue of martiality, the colonial master had begun to employ the Gorkhas in agriculture for economic purpose through agro-industry. From the report of Captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant Robert Pemberton cited in Imdad Hussain's article, the colonial interest in land use for agro-economy through Gorkhas is understandable. The report reads "*…an increase to our cultivation and villages is beyond all doubt of the greatest importance to the present as well as future prosperity of this barren province, and might be accomplished by admitting monied speculating foreigners to hold lands on a long lease and encouraging Gurkhas and Manipuries and others who may feel inclined to colonize for the inhabitants are by no means prolific…*"

Imdad Hussain (2003) observes that this suggestion was not made randomly. Citing the report of FSC 15 October 1832: No 114, by Captain Francis Jenkins and Lieutenant Robert Pemberton, he adds that it was with this very end in view that David Scott had some years earlier authorized Captain Neufville to grant to Gorkhas who had brought their families with them land at the very moderate rate of eight annas per *pura*[41] annually. The Gorkhas readily availed this offer and the magistrate who provided them the land later reported that "there was an extensive village of Goorkhas (*sic*) established with flourishing *Dhan* (Paddy) on a spot which previously was a jungle. Although Gorkhas some section of Gorkhas engaged as tea planters and paddy growers, mostly they attached with cattle farming in Assam during colonial age. Engaging in cattle farming, they started to grow production of milk, ghee and other products related to cattle farming. Primarily, Gorkha graziers settled in the grazing reserves in *Chapari* (small island of Brahmaputra river) areas. At the same time forest areas of Kaziranga became hub of graziers. Gorkha population floated cattle firming related production in Brahmaputra valley as their profession of cows and buffaloes rearing since 1860 onwards. Seeing the expertise of Gorkhas in cattle farming and its related production, colonial masters started to allocate forest areas for Gorkhas as Professional Grazing Reserve, reserve villages, forest reserve. Burachapari of Tezpur along surrounding of Kaziranga forest was declared Professional Grazing Reserves in 1881. In 1886, the colonial administrators passed the bill of Assam land and revenue regulation Act, in which, Gorkhas in guise Nepali speakers declared as Graziers-cultivator community (Silwal, 1986).

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[41] The term *pura* is used as a unit of land measurement in Assam. The term was popular in medieval Assam. For details see (Gogoai 2002: 103)

Tejimala Gurung writes that, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the colonial government encouraged migration of Gorkhas from Sikkim, Darjeeling, Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri of West Bengal, the erstwhile Bengal Dooar of Bhutan and the joining of Bhutan's Assam Dooars. Migration from Nepal (though by then, the recruitment of Gorkhas from Nepal was discouraged or somehow prohibited, migration from Nepal for other purpose was unrestricted) led to the growth of a sizeable Gorkha population in the forest areas. By this time, the Gorkha cadres in colonial army also started to retire and settle in the nearby areas of their cantonments. During the last decade of the same century, according to census 1901 cited by Tejimala Gurung, Assam had a population of 20,193 Nepali speakers (Gurung, 2003: 177). This Gorkha population was highly engaged in the cultivation and predominantly in cattle rearing due to their traditional attachment with this profession. Henry Cotton, the chief Commissioner of Assam, noted in 1898 that many of the retired Gorkha sepoys who settled down in Assam, preferred cattle grazing to cultivation. Citing the *Progress Report of Forest Administration in Province of Assam, 1892-1893*, in this regard, Tejimala Gurung says that in the un-classed forests, the *ryots* were allowed unlimited grazing land free of payment for their plough and domestic cattle. However, Nepalis who reared cattle for dairy purpose were charged for grazing privileges, excluding the Gorkhas of rest of the colonial India, absolutely from the Gorkhas who migrated from Nepal and who obtained a ready and lucrative rate for the dairy produce in the numerous tea gardens of the province (Gurung, 2003: 172-183). In the year 1892-93, 13,025 buffalos and 1162 cows paid grazing fees amounting Rs. 6772 (Bhandari, 1996: 101-103).

The colonial administration started to notice the increasing number of cattle in grazing forest area and speculated the possible revenue from those cattle. Especially when the Nepali speaking graziers started to migrate to Assam from Jalpaiguri and its adjoining areas of West Bengal due to the rise in grazing fee on cattle[42], the administration of Assam came with a new regulation for the professional graziers as effective from July 1, 1917. As per the new regulation, annually Rs. 3 was fixed per buffalo and 6 annas for other horned cattle.[43] By the time the regulation came to

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[42]Telimala Gurung writes, "*Report on the Administration of Assam 1912-13* indicated that when the colonial administration in Bengal rose in the rate of graziers' fee in Jalpaiguri and its adjoining areas in West Bengal, large numbers of professional Nepali graziers were migrated to Assam from those areas." See, (Gurung, 2003: 172-183)

[43] *Report on the Administration of Assam 191916-17*, p-24 cited in (Gurung, 2003: 172-183)

effect, there were already 42,000 and 86,325 buffaloes in 1915 and 1920 respectively (Gurung, 2003: 178). The regulation came equally effective on all the Nepali speakers of the valley irrespective of whether they were from Nepal or from any part of colonial India. Tejimala Gurung mentions that such grazing fee was unpopular with the graziers. In return for assistance in forest fire protection, reserved forests in the region were left open partly for grazing of cattle owned by Nepali speakers. She gives an instance that in Goalpara division (where the present Chirang district was included), 105sq. metres of reserved forests were left open for grazing in return for assistance in fire protection.[44]

Apart from the tea, paddy and cattle agro-economy, Gorkhas were engaged in industrial economy during colonial administration which contributed their settlements in the region. When colonial administrators found oil and coal in the Assam, they employed a large number of workers from different region of country in these sectors. The presence Gorkhas as workers was encouraged by the company administrators. With the discovery of oil field in Digboi[45], large number of Gorkha workers were employed to deforest and dig the location as workers from other communities denied to enter the dense forest. The Gorkha villages like Itavatti, Rastapati, Nalapatti, Mulibari, Topabasti, Agreement-line, Gorufatak etc., eased the colonial masters to employ workers in established oil refinery in *Digboy*. When other communities left the areas surrounding to preset *Digboy*, Gorkha youths of these villages were employed in colonial army. In 1923, refinery administration found shortage of worker hence Jit Bahadur Pradhan was assigned to recruit workers from Gorkha populated areas of West Bengal and Nepal (Bhandari, 2017).

3.3.4. Colonial Policies and Nationalist Turn of Gorkhas

Soon after tax was levied on grazing areas and cattle, the educated sections from the community could realize the attitude of the rulers toward them. D.B. Chhetry's argues that the British adopted a policy of encouraging Gorkhas

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[44] *Progress Report of Forest Administration in the province of Assam,* 1883-1884, p-9 cited in (Gurung, 2003: 172-183).

[45] The *Digboi* oil refinery of Assam is the first oil refinery of Asia. The *Digboi* is changed from of the word "Dig boy". While the digging work of refinery was in progress, the colonial officials were ordering to workers shouting "dig boys, dig boys, dig boys", the innocent workers did not understand the meaning of the words and they considered it as the name of place (Bhandari, 2017).

particularly in the foot hills which could serve two purposes- one, the ex-soldiers could act as a 'Buffer' between the British administration and restive tribal chiefs and, two, it could provide more dependable source and channel for fresh recruitment of Gorkha soldiers without depending on the Gorkhas of Nepal (Chhetry, 2009: 353).

When the Gorkhas started to take an anti-colonial turn by participating in the process of 'Indianization', the colonial administration conspired to evict graziers from the settled region since 1904 (Bhandari, 1996: 42). The colonial administration started to burn down Gorkha settlements in Darrang, Goalpara, and other areas in Brahmaputra valley. For instance, in 1920, foresters burnt the households of graziers of Kaziranga as an action against disobedience to a notice to vacate the forest within 24 hours (Nag, 2003: 189).

The realization of the colonial rule by the emerging youth from the community led to anti-colonial feeling and started to raise the voice with the anti-colonial agitation in the valley, especially with the "Assam Association" which had already started the anti-colonial movement in the valley. The Assam Association, which had changed its name and virtually turned into a Congress platform in its Tezpur Session, had special and last meeting at Jorhat with Chabilal Upadhyaya in Chair in April, 1921. Besides condemning the recent eviction of Nepali graziers from the Kaziranga Forest Reserves and police atrocities on them, the meeting also discussed the Non-Co-operation programme and organizational matters. Bhandari cites the *Krishna Sharma Diary* that Chabilal Upadhyaya took the leadership of the Nepali speaking community in the Non-Co-operation Movement in Assam (quoted in Bhandari, 1996: 54). He was imprisoned in 1921 in Tezpur jail on the pretext of formation *Swayam Sewak Dal* (a vlunteers' group) in Tezpur Towan hall under his chairmanship. His elder brother, Hari Prasad Udadhyaya was also arrested and imprisoned in Tezpur for a period of 3 months (Bhandari, 2007: 110).

Dalbir Singh Lohar was imprisoned during the Civil Disobedience Movement in Dibrugarh for a period of three months 1931. Similarly, Bir bahadur Chhetry of Rangajuli Barpeta was arrested by the colonial police in same year. Anantala Sharma was sentenced accusing him for his try to list local Gorkha soldiers in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan was discharged from his job of apprentice Motor Mechanic and Fitter because of his involvement in Digboi strike

(1939). He was externed not only from Digboi but from the Assam province too (Bhandari, 2007: 110). The involvement in Quit India Movement caused imprisonment of Chabilal Upadhyaya, Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan, Dalbir Singh Lohar, Hari Prasad Uadhyaya, Narapati Uadhyaya, Kumud Chadra Sharma, Kashinath Luitel, Homenath Guragain and many others with rigorous punishment in different jails. More than three thousand Gorkhas were recruited in *Shanti Sena* (peace force) and *Mrithyu Bahini* (death squad) from different places in the state (Bhandari, 2007: 110).

The role of Gorkhas from the North East region in India National Army (INA) was well noticeable. Nar Bahadur Gurung, Krishna Bahadur Chhetry, Sabitri, Indrani, Mohan Singh Chhetry, Suman Thapa were among those who were in frontline of the INA. Large number of the Gorkhas of INA martyred in Burma, the present Myanmar. Among them Mohan Singh, Gian bahadur Lama, Manilal Gurung, Bhim Singh Thapa (captain), Kumraj Thapa, Mahan Singh Thapa, Ram Bahadur Thapa, Kul Bahadur, Dhan Bahadur, Damar Bahadur, Gopal Singh Sahi etc were registered noticeably. It is estimated that fifteen thousand Gorkha joined in INA in Singapore from the region in 1942 (Bhandari, 2007). Similarly Royal Indian Naval Mutiny of 1946 was also not free from the involvement of Gorkhas. Chandra Kumar Sharma from Maligaon, Guwahati found to play leading role in the regards. Tuttu Thapa, the prominent communist leader of Assam took actively a leading role in formation of Assam Railway and Trading Company Labour Union at Margherita, Assam in 1946. He was terminated from his job on the ground of mobilization of lobourers against the coal mine owners of the British company (Bhandari, 2007).

With regard to the assertion and politics of community in Assam, Sajal Nag says that Chabilal Upadhyaya was the first President of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) and therefore, wielded a lot of power and prestige in Assam. He says that as a result of Chabilal's effort, the Tezpur Graziers' Association came into existence in 1933 with the objective of (i) protection and preservation of grazing land lands in Assam; (ii) Stop cultivation in professional grazing reserves; (iii) Prevention of immigrants; (iv) Protection of forests of Assam for the survival of Nepali speaking community in Assam; (v) Involvement of domiciled Nepalis in Assam in the freedom movement of India; and (vi) Preservation of social integration between the Assamese

and Nepali communities (Nag, 2003: 190). Bhandari says that on the appeal of Mahatma Gandhi during the Non-Co-operation Movement, Ramlal Upadhyaya, Hari Prasad Upadhaya, Tikaram Upadhaya, Brihaspati Upadhaya, Chabilal Upadhyaya[46] had played prominent role from the Nepali speaking community along with Bogiram Saikia, Mulan Chandra Sarma, Puwal Chandra Bora, Pandit Dandiram Das, Vijoy Sharma, Ram Prasad Agrawalla, Jwala Prasad Agrawalla, Nabin Chandra Bhattacharjee from other community from the valley appealed people to abandon foreign goods and start wearing handmade garments and clothes.

The Graziers Association was actively involved in the National liberation movement opposing all the colonial policies in Assam. It was a pioneering organization from the Gorkha community of Assam. Sajal Nag says that besides the protection of the interest of graziers vis-à-vis the colonial government, the Association faced a major challenge from the aggressive encroachment of grazing land by Bengali Muslim immigrants from Mymensing. According to him, Prasad Singh Subba took charge of the leadership of the Association. The Association had to face competition from Bengali Muslim immigrants which was often physical rather than a bureaucratic procedure. During 1939-42 the confrontation between the two communities became violent. Similarly, around the same time, the Nepali graziers had to confront another problem when names of large numbers of domicile Gorkha were removed from the voters list. The Association under the initiative of Prasad Singh Subba protested against the move and demanded re-inclusion of the names under the political situation in Assam during 1940s to avoid any possible eviction and deportation which deletion of names implied (Nag, 2003: 190). He adds that the Association also submitted several memorandums against the "Grow more Food" scheme of Muslim league Ministry in Assam led by Sir Sadullah, as it actually meant "Grow more Muslims" (Nag, 1990: 97). The move was even wryly commented on by

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[46] Two books *Karmabir Chabilal Upadhyaya Jyo ko Karma Moi Jeevan Ko Roop-Rekha* and *The Bishnulal Upadhyaya, Chabilal Upadhyaya* (in Assamese) cited in Bhandari, explains that Chabilal Upadhyaya had attended the meeting at Tezpur polo ground organized on occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's visit in August 1921 as a part of Non-Co-operation Movement. After adjourning the meeting, the District police superintendent took Chabilal to Hazarpar Park in his own car and made lucrative offers to him. Police officer said: your country is Nepal. That country is independent. Do not oppose the Government. I will pay you Rs. 500/- per month, I will return your seized gun." Upadhyaya a born patriot of Assam, boldly replied: "I am born in Assam and shall die in Assam, Nepal may be an independent country, but I have not seen Nepal. Assam is my motherland. I cannot leave the Congress". At that juncture, Gandhiji was resting in Parmananda Agrawalla's house. When these words reached the ears of Gandhiji, he praised Chabilal in his two valuable words- 'Achchha Kiya' (well done) (Bhandari, 1996: 54).

Viceroy Wavell himself with the same phrase (Gohain, 1985: 49). By this scheme Saadullah government opened up all land to the immigrants from Mymensing which threatened the Nepali speaking community too.

3.3.5. Sub-national Affinity to Anti-colonial 'Assamese Nationalism'

The numerical strength and fortitude of the Nepali speakers toward the Assamese society were soon realized by the Assamese leaders and advocates of Assamese nationalism in colonial Assam. The Assamese nationalist leaders started to foresee the role of Nepali speaking community for the future of Assam. Sajal Nag writes that being threatened by the increasing number of the Muslims in Assam and the fear of being included in Pakistan, the Assamese intelligentsia ran a campaign before the census of 1941 to declare the Hindu population as Assamese to the enumerators (Nag, 2003: 190-191). Purushottam Bhandari translates and cites a leaflet in his article "1941's Population Census of Assam & afterwards", the leaflet through which Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, a pioneering Assamese nationalist leader appealed to Nepali speakers to enumerate Assamese as their mother tongue. The leaflet announces his appeal as:

"Dear workers and Nepali Brothers! You always observe it that Assamese have never revolted against you. Rather they have embraced you in their bosom considering you are their own…therefore, in this census, you please enumerate your language as Assamese language, your religion as religion of Assamese and your community as Assamese community by the enumerators and assimilate yourselves with the greater interest of Assamese, and thereby you enjoy all the political, economic and national rights as Assamese enjoy…" (Bhandari, 1996: 102) [Translation in original].

Purushottam Bhandari writes that Chhabilal Upadhaya, Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan, Dalbir Singh Lohar and other leaders requested their community to write "Assamese" as their mother tongue. The requests were positively responded. Nepali speakers wrote "Assamese" as their mother tongue during the population census of 1941. And hence, a large section of Nepali speaking community became "Assamese Nepali" and Assamese as their mother tongue (Bhandari, 1996: 102). Seeing the move

of Gorkhas against the policy of "Grow more food"[47] and their support to Assamese mother tongue during the census of 1941, the Saahdullah ministry of the state led serious evictions of Gorkha settlements in the state. Referring to the third volume of *The Political History of Assam,* Purushottam Bhandari says that facing the eviction and forcible encroachment by the immigrants mostly from Mymensingh district of Bengal, Gorkhas along with the indigenous tribal communities of the state perceived a serious threat to their existence. Dambar Singh Gurung, the then president of the AIGL came for a tour of the affected areas and discussed the issue with Gopinath Borodoloi, the Congress leader from the state in February 1944. Further Gopinath Borodoloi led a Gorkha Graziers delegation to Saadullah, the prime minister of the state. The Governor of the state gave a specific reference to the problem in the Assam assembly in November, 1944 and suggested the government to adopt measures to stop cultivation in the professional grazing reserves serving notice to the encroachers to vacate grazing land for Gorkhas and other tribal communities. However, the government failed to implement the suggestions of the Governor (Bhandari, 1996: 74).

After the problem of population census of the 1941, another major problem encountered by the Assamese nationalist leaders was the proposal of Cabinet Mission 1946. Through the proposal of Cabinet Mission, the colonial government wanted to club Assam with the Muslim majority province of Bengal. To counter the proposal, the Assamese leaders tried to impress the national leaders as well as tried to mobilize all sections of people in Assam against the move. The Nepalis stood by the side of the Assamese leaders and the whole community (Nag, 1990: 152-153). The Assam Provincial committee of All India Gorkha League (AIGL)[48] which was formed in 1944 at Tezpur at the initiative of Prasad Singh Subba opposed the colonial plan of 1946 associating with the sentiment of Assamese and showed solidarity to the people

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[47] Sir Saadullah led Muslim League ministry adopted a policy called 'Grow more Food' in Assam during early 1940s. By this policy the Saahdullah ministry opened up all the land to immigrants from Mymensingh district of the then East Pakistan which threatened the settlements of Nepali speaking community in the state. The Nepali community saw it as 'Grow more Muslim' agenda of the government of the state and submitted several memorandums against this policy of the government. For details see, (Nag 1990: 97), also (Nag, 2003).

[48] The central Organization of All India Gorkha League was formed in 1925 under the leadership of Thakur Chandan Singh and Hem Samsher Rana Singh as founder president and secretary respectively. But it became in slowly. Later, a group of Gorkha intelligentsia from Darjeeling was planning to establish a strong organization of Gorkhas so that it could fight easily for the social, political, and economic rights on the Gorkhas in India. So, under the leadership of Damber Singh Gurung, the AIGL came to its existence again in Darjeeling on May, 1943. For more detail, see please, (Bhandari, 1996: 63-64).

of Assam (Bhandari, 1996: 68). In the second conference of AIGL which was held in Assam in 1946. Damber Singh Gurung the central president of AIGL gave a written assurance in support of Congress. According to Purushottam Bhandari, it was believed that Gorkha League had decided to remain under Congress umbrella in *Bidhan Sabha* (the Legislative assembly) and it would assimilate in the Congress (Bhandari, 1996: 68-70).

In the same year, Gopinath Borodoloi sent two Congressmen, Vijoy Chandra Bhagawati and Mahendra Mohan Choudhury to meet Mahatma Gandhi to avoid Assam's inclusion into the Muslim majority Bengal. Gandhi replied that Assam's quietness would finish it. Only Assam can do what it wants (Bhandari, 1996: 72). Meanwhile, Muhammad Ali Jinnah brought the two nation theory, advocating inclusion of Assam into the proposed Pakistan. Assam stood at critical juncture. Chhabilal Upadhyaya was selected the president of the central body of the AIGL in its 4th central conference held at Tezpur of Assam in April, 1947. Under the leadership of Chhabilal, the Gorkha League severely denounced the inclusion of Assam into the Eastern part of proposed Pakistan under the "two nation theory". In the conference, Chhabilal declared "Jinnah would not be allowed to decide the future of Assam. The AIGL opposes Jinnah's plan of Pakistan and inclusion of Assam. And to avoid it, if necessary, thirty lakh kukuris would be used to save the motherland" (Lamsal, 2008).

In its annual conference held at Guwahati in 1947, the Provincial Gorkha League of Assam passed the following resolution, "…the Provincial Gorkha League representing the Gorkhas of Assam who are the children of the soil while supporting the Assam Assembly's mandate to the Constituent Assembly members from Assam not to go into section 'C' pledges itself to fight to the last to preserve the integrity of Assam and the right of her children to frame their own constitution…".[49] In the same session, the Assam provincial Gorkha League demanded the minority status for the Nepali speakers in Assam (Nath, 2003: 216).

In this chapter, attempt has been made to give a broad idea about the ways the Gorkha community became part of the larger society of Assam. It is easier to

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[49] The part of the resolution is quoted from Rudraman Thapa's article "Nepalis in the Assamese Nation-Building Process: A Socio-Political Study", in the *proceedings of the North East India Political Science Association*, Fourth Conference, Shillong 1995, pp. 77-82, cited in (Nag, 2003: 192)

comprehend the factors behind presence of Gorkhas in the present Assam. In categorizing these factors, Sajal Nag identifies four key factors viz. (i) trans-frontier migration; (ii) economic expansion; (iii) displacement due to political and economic reasons; and (iv) marriage links led to the existence of Nepali speakers in the State (Nag, 2003: 185). But throughout the history of the region and the relation of Gorkha in the region help us to identify other factors that could be added in the categorization already made by Sajal Nag as sources. Apart from the four sources identified by Nag, *politically shifting nature*[50] of the region and the "colonial the policy of frontierization and cartography" played a decisive role in mapping the existence of Gorkhas in the entire region. Moreover, the post colonial contestations and the emergence of sub-nationalism in the state have shaped a great deal the politics and it's repercussions on the various communities including Gorkhas living in the state.

In trying to understand such repercussions and the impact of ethno-nationalism or what Sanjib Baruah says the "Contesting Sub-nationalism" (Baruah, 1999: 173) on Gorkhas/Nepali speakers, Sajal Nag says that they are suffering from the *fe-ization*[51] in the history of North East India. The ignorance of the Nepalis as an equal partner in the history of the region has a lot to do with historiographical issues. With the emergence of the nationalist historiography in India, the trend was to write 'our' history rather than just history. 'Our' history involved pride in locality and region, and actions were seen as comparative achievements and ethnic prejudices excluded the others from this history. Thus, Nepalis are often seen as 'rejected people', 'excluded people' and 'historyless people'. He adds, although Nepalis were part and parcel of

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[50] There was no permanent political command or unified political boundary of the region. The region had witnessed the periodical shift of the sovereignty over it. The conflict between various rulers of the region led the often shifting of boundary between the kingdoms. The history of Kamrupa kingdom, the Koch kingdom and power rivalry within this kingdom, the emergence of Bhutan, the Bhutan-Sikkim conflict, Sikkim-Nepal conflicts, the Bhutan-Nepal relation and the Bhutan's vision toward the plain tracts on the southern boundary gives an idea of how the boundaries were shifted. The shift of the boundary not only caused the migration of the people but the *territorial migration* into new dominion. The migration obviously causes the mobility of people. But such mobility cannot be termed as the 'migration' of the people. *Boundary shift* or *territorial shift* leads mobility of two types of the political population, one, the mobility of the population of conquered (sometimes, the conquered population may vacate the old settlement in fear of ill treatment by new conqueror into save areas. But in most of the cases, such population merges with the socio-political status of conqueror population until they feel ability and need of assertion against the conqueror) territory over conqueror territory as well as the population of conqueror territory over conquered territory. Specially, as Bonjan says in regard of growth of the population of Nepali speakers in the Dooar area of Bhutan after Nepal's annexation of a great portion of Sikkim in 1788, it is natural that the lands won by way of war were to be kept with discernible population belonging to the victorious nationals; otherwise the victory may not bear any significance and meaning. For more detail, please see, (Bomjan, 2008: 156-159).

[51] *Fei* as Jean Chesneaux defines; there was a quant tradition in Confucian China of terming the rebels as *fei* by which a person was declared to be a non-person. By *fei-isation* there was a denial of his role in history. For details see, Jean Chesneaux (1968), *Pasts and* Futures, London, p 19 quoted in (Nag, 2003: 192)

the collective past of the region, they hardly find any space or mention in the history of the region. There is growing literature on the history and society of the region. But there is hardly any work except H.K. Barpujari's, *Comprehensive History of Assam* series and Amlendu Guha's *Planter Raj to Swaraj* where Nepalis, the Gorkhas find mention. But in these works too they are not dealt as 'people' but a 'migrants'. The difference between 'people' and 'migrants' is immense. While 'people' are dealt as embodiment of emotions, hopes and aspiration, 'migrants' on the other hand are dealt as 'things' whose movements and actions are just recorded and not seen as struggle and aspirations (Nag, 2003: 185).

CHAPTER 4

ETHNO-POLITICAL MOBILISATIONS AND GORKHAS IN ASSAM

Assam is the land of diverse ethnic minority communities. The state has been a vital example of the cultural pluralism and diversity. With the existence of different customs, traditions, cultures, language etc., the state has been the castle of numerous ethnic groups and tribes. The communities in the state has grievance that the state has been economically ill-planned which gives scope of regional imbalance and backwardness in all sphere of life. Various indigenous, ethno-cultural and linguistic minorities groups in the region have been manifesting grievances and dissatisfaction time and again. There have been number of Ethno-Political mobilizations through both peaceful and violent means demanding cultural, political and socio-economic autonomy.

The politics in India's North Eastern region have been shaped by the Ethno-Political mobilizations of various minority ethnic groups for safeguarding and maintaining their ethnic distinctiveness. The assertions and the movements of various tribal and ethno-cultural minority groups to protect of their "ethnic identity" are most significant aspects of the contemporary socio-political reality of the region. The assertions and the agitations led by the ethnic minorities in the region for autonomy on basis of the ethnicity have changed the socio-political significance within the centralized state-structure. Movements for ethno-autonomy and self determination have become a strong force through which the different tribal groups try to fulfill the ethnic aspirations, protection of ancestral land resources or ethnic homeland as well to create political space within the existing polity in order to safeguard and maintain ethno self distinctiveness. Ethnic issues have been observed as central to the process of demand for autonomy in the region. The demand is either for greater political autonomy under Six Schedule of the constitution of India or separate statehood within the Indian Union or to extend to secession for India (Pukan cited in Das, 2014).

The violent Ethno-Political mobilization for exclusive homeland is posing a serious challenge to the multicultural socio-political landscape of the state. The root of these demands can be traced to the colonial cartographic surgery which was driven by the colonial strategic imperatives and had fixed particular ethnic identities with definite territories. The flawed policy has divisiveness with disastrous consequences for the region and its people. Apart from the colonial administrative flaws, ethno-nationalist leadership also engaged in a violent space-centric politics that is often informed by an overarching rhetoric of self-identity. In a historically multi-ethnic landscape, the emerging principle of recognizing an identity only on basis of its linkage with particular territorial space is not only divisive but also is divested for the group reality. This failure to articulate and prepare proper policy has been multiplying the episodes of violent conflicts in the region (Sharma, 2012 cited in Das, 2014). Particularly Assam has been a constant victim since the early days of Independence of the country. This chapter seeks to look into the point at all possible levels that how the Gorkha community has been afflicted in the centre of frequently occurring upheavals and conflict situations in region.

4.1. Gorkhas between the 'Indian Nation Building Process' and 'Assamese Identity Assertion' Tussle

Pan Indian Nationalism and regionalism or sub-nationalism in the sense of noted scholar sanjib Baruah (1999), are contemporaries. Language has been important marker which formed the cultural foundation of regional nationalism or sub-nationalisms. However, despite running together of parallel nationalisms, during the anti-colonial freedom movement 'regionalism gave way to national patriotism… to which Assamese nationalism readily responded… continued until the attainment of power transfer on August 15, 1947. However, soon after tensions started gripping between Assamese sub-nationalism and India pan nationalism. Strained relations between these two 'isms' cannot be exclusively specified and restricted to the post colonial epoch but started germinating in the decades preceding that. Contestations surfaced not just over issues of power relations, immigration policies or cabinet mission plan but also it was about valuation on the spectrum of modernity and post modernity based on the politics of linguistic identity (Sarma, 2013).

After the Independence of the country, when the national leaders started the nation-building process under the umbrella framework to cultivate the 'Indian-ness' through the national integration agendas of centralized federal (quasi federal in nature) administrative system having single national language, single citizenship, central involvement in the state administrative system, one national anthem, single constitution, and single national flag, it became a matter of grave concern of self-determination at various levels in various parts of the country.[52] The formula of unified India with a strong central government, with its involvement in the local affairs of federal units became a matter of concern. Especially in Assam, it was seen as a homogenizing trend of the dominant 'one state, one nation' attitude of India nation and its nationalist leaders.[53] The cultural and ethnic identity emerged as a great concern among locally emerging middle class leaders who argued that the Indian state had failed to respect the Assamese culture and identity.

A threat to Assamese culture and identity was perceived and it was manifested through various agitations during 60s, 70s and 80s of the last century. Active agitations began in the 1960s and 1970s with the language issue[54], and later, it

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[52] Thus unlike the conflicts that have characterize Indian states, barring Kashmir, self-determination at various levels, rather than religion or caste, has been the main factor in the ethnic conflicts that have plagued this part of the country. The movement in Assam differs very significantly from the secessionist movements in Nagaland with respect to the fact that historically the greater part of Naga inhabited territory had never been brought under British administrative control and thus the Nagas; by virtue of their being relatively untouched by the freedom movement ; consider themselves to be culturally and psychologically different from Indians ; resulting in them asserting that since they were never a part of India, they should be given the choice to decide their future status. The same is not true for the state of Assam which has had centuries of socio-cultural links with the rest of the sub-continent and whose involvement in the freedom struggle has been of no small measure. Please see at (Fernandes, 1999: 3579-3582), (Bara, 1980: 453) and Anonymous, "The Assam Movement" [Online Web] accessed on April, 12, 2013, URL: http://www.scribd.com/doc/44517067/ThE-Assam-Movement.

[53] See ibid and Brijendranath Datta (1990), "Ethnicity, Nationalism and Sub-Nationalism, With Special Reference to North-East India" in D. Pakem (ed). *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India,* New Delhi: Omsons Publications, p 3, Quoted in Fernandez, Walter (2008), "Conflicts and Search for Peace with Justice in North East India: An Introduction" in Walter Fernandes (eds.) *Search for Peace with Justice: Issues around Conflicts in North East India*, Guwahati, North Eastern Social Research Centre, pp. 1-17.

[54] Sandhya Goswami in her Book *Language Politics in Assam,* Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1997, describes. The language movement which occurred in Assam during 1960 was for establishing Assamese as an official language in Assam, while movement of 1972 was for establishing Assamese as a medium of instruction in all educational institutions of the state. Migration of Bengali population in the pre-independence as well as post-independence era has become a matter of anxiety to the Assamese population of Assam. The development of tea industry and demand for jobs created by it has been instrumental behind large scale migration from East Bengal. This process of migration has created the problem of land scarcity and land alienation. The problem of land alienation occurred because most of the people in Assam particularly the tribal people were ignorant about the land holding (land record) system and incapable of competing with the Bengali (*sic*) migrants in agricultural activities. Besides, as migrants were better trained, the white collar jobs of the state like teachers, advocates, doctors, engineers etc were also going to their share. This created fear in the mind of Assamese people that one day they may lose their distinctive identity and culture. Political leaders have exploited the situation and manipulated the sentiments of the people to give the feeling of attack over Assamese language and culture. The formulation of the wrong policies by the government in the days to come had further complicated the situation. Widespread protest from the tribals and the Bengali speaking people of Barak Valley were heard during the period of language movement. Sixty sevens

emerged with multiple issues during the time of Assam movement (1979-85). Throughout the movement, the policy of Indian government was challenged as it was perceived as a threat to Assamese nationalism by Assamese nationalist leaders. The agitations that took place for the Assamese culture and identity during 60s, 70s and 80s of the last century had not left Gorkhas or the Nepali speakers living in Assam untouched.

4.1.1. Othered as 'Foreigners'

The anti-foreigner campaign that was directed towards immigrant Bengalis so far, was now directed towards Nepalis speakers in Assam. The community was equated with the East Pakistani migrants and made target of the anti-foreigners policy and agendas of the agitators as well as the state machinery in Assam. Even much before the agitation of Assam movement (1979-1985), the Gorkhas were projected as a threat. The community who were given protection under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886[55] as "graziers" by colonial administration, and later as "protected class", adding chapter-X in the erstwhile colonial law through an amendment act in 1947, was now excluded from the list of protected class categories through a notification on 27th June, 1969 by the Assam government. The Gorkhas of the state were kept outside the purview of "Protected Class" whose protection was insured by the state of Assam since just after the independence of the country. No satisfactory clarifications were given with regard to the new notification by the government of Assam except issuing the notifications vide No RSD/86/64/101 dated 16th November, 1971. Harka Bahadur Chhetry Jr., the ex-president of All Assam Gorkha Students' Union says that it is an act of injustice committed by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Mahendra Mohan Chaudhury against Nepali speakers of the state without any logical and evidential justification to the reason behind the move except the argument that the Nepalis were becoming one of the obstacles in the all round development of Scheduled Tribes and Schedule castes residing in those Belts and Blocks (Chhetry Jr., 2000). There is no evidence in history of confrontation or conflict of the Gorkha community with people of the tribal belts/blocks and other part of the

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people lost their lives and the language movement of Assam became a source of permanent rift between the Assamese and Bengali speaking inhabitants of the state. Cited in (Brahma, 2012)

[55] The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation act, 1886 in (Niroula, 2006)

state. And it is a fact that some misplaced conflict of the apprehensions had been created by certain sections through a baseless and motivated propaganda that the Nepalis would soon overwhelm the Belts/Blocks, marginalizing the indigenous population. Behind those statements, there was nothing that was substantial other than portraying the Indo-Nepal Friendship and Peace Treaty 1950[56] as the root of the problem.

Harka Bahadur Chhetry Jr. says that when the question of illegal infiltrators and threats to indigenous local people of North East was raised, the Gorkhas were excluded from the regional as well as 'National mainstream' and has been subjected to sinister campaign like labeling Nepalis as foreign National in the light of Indo-Nepal Friendship and Peace Treaty 1950. Though Article VI[57] and VII[58] of the Treaty ensures equal rights and privileges for nationals of India and Nepal in both the countries, the open border between them, reinforces the belief among the agitators of the movement that the all Gorkhas living in Assam are Nepalese from Nepal (Chhetry Jr., 2000: 52). The Treaty created a myth of double homeland of Nepali speakers i.e., India and Nepal. As Chiranjib Haldar says this myth of a double homeland has rendered the Gorkha vulnerable target of ethnic group assertions fighting over scarcely available resources often leading to loss of home, hearth and livelihood. Like other internally displaced populations - such as the Reangs moving from Mizoram to Tripura, and the Kukis and Nagas in Manipur and Nagaland respectively - the Nepalis have experienced a spillover impact of the treaty of 1950 in north-east (Haldar, 2007).

The anti-Gorkha feeling in the state was seen during the Assam Movement. As soon as the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) was implemented in Assam in July 30, 1976[59] under the "Foreigners Act, of 1946" it became mandatory for each Gorkha of the state to produce documents regarding the Indian Citizenship while returning after

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[56] Indo-Nepal Peace and friendship Treaty, signed at Kathmandu on 31 July 1950 in (Chhetry Jr., 2000) also see the detail in appendix IV.

[57] This article reads, "…each Govt. (India and Nepal) undertakes in token of neighbourly relationship between India and Nepal, to give to the Nationals of the other in its territory national treatment with regard to participation on industrial and economic development of such territory and to the grant of concessions and contracts relating to such development…" See, ibid

[58] This article reads, "…the Govts. Of India and Nepal, agree to grant as a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territory of other the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movements and other privilege of a similar nature…" See ibid

[59] Translated and quoted by this auther from (Chhetry Sr., 2000: 2).

their visit to other parts of the country. Srirampur, Boxirhat, and other check Gates, entrance gates to the Assam as well as in other public places like railway stations, bus stations and elsewhere in Assam, Nepali speakers were subjected of police harassment in the form of looting, extortion, mental and physical torture and humiliation, irrespective of the indigenous Gorkhas travelling across the country or the Gorkha pilgrimage from abroad [Translation mine] (Neopane, 2000: 20-27).

Explaining the situation Harka Bahadur Chhetry Sr. says that in the years preceding the movement, Nepali populated villages were enlisted for eviction, registered lands of the Nepali speakers were kept under suspect, the agitators circulated a notice of *Bharat Chhodo* (quit India) against several Nepali speaking families including the families of freedom fighters of the country [Translation mine] (Chhetry Sr., 2000 2, 3 and see also detail in appendix VIII). Similarly Harka Bahadur Chhetry Jr. says that the IM (DT) act i.e., Illegal Migrants (Determination Tribunals) were introduced in 1983 for detection and deportation of foreign nationals had created a third category of Nepali speakers in Assam. Three 'Ds[60]' became a tool of harassment for the Gorkhas of Assam. Harka Bahadur Chhetry Jr. says that in the name of detection and deportation names of hundreds of thousands of bona fide citizens were removed indiscriminately from the electoral rolls. The documents that were required to be produced in the government office by Nepali speakers to protect their name in voters' lists or for re-inclusion after they were removed from the voters' list proving them as citizens of India were not easy to get. Documents such as a birth certificate showing that the person in question was born in India, a citizenship certificate, inclusion of person's name in the National Register of Citizens (NRC) compiled in 1951, or the voters' list earlier of 1971 were demanded. Apart from these, other documents like land records and courts judgments were also supplementary evidences of citizenship (Chhetry Jr., 2000).

Harka Bahadur Chhetry Jr. says that evidences and documents sought were irrational and complicated can be proved by the resentment expressed by Gulam Osmani, a well-known social as well as political leader from the United Minority Front cited in an article in a magazine named *Now*. Osmani in the article says, "… *I*

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[60] Three 'Ds' stands for the Determination, Detection and Deportation of the illegal Migrants.

myself cannot produce my Birth certificate. I doubt if Hiteswar Saikia[61] and Prafulla Kumar Mahanta[62] have their birth certificate…but common people, poor seldom have any documents to prove that they are citizens…" Chhetry Jr. says that Osmani's statement was absolutely right in his assessment of the conditions of Nepali speakers in the state (Chhetry Jr. 2000, 45-51). Lopita Nath in an article based on her field study, revealed the reaction of government toward the community. It highlights how the individuals from the community had to appear before the hearing called by the government officials. Gorkha persons had to appear before enquiries with their entire documents to prove their domicile. In her study, the respondents found the situation an utter harassment saying s/he had to appear for hearing to prove the domicile as many as thirteen times even on the day of festivals (Nath, 2006: 132). The statement made by Anup Chetia, the former official of ULFA and the chief convenor of Indigenious concerence (*Khilongia moncho Assam*) created a huge controversy in Assam. Mr. Chetia, in a public plateform had denounced indigeneity of Gorkhas along with the tea-tribe community of the state. Prem Tamang, the president of AAGSU, countering the arugment of Mr. Chetia, says that it was utter neglect to the deeper history of the community as well as a tendency of deprive the bona fide rights of Gorkhas in Assam.

The government of India had clarified its position on the Nepalis (Gorkhas) early in February 1984 that those in possessions of the Restricted Area Permit would not come within the definition of 'illegal migrants' and stood protected (Haldar, 2007). The Assam movement ended with the signing of an accord with the government of India on August 15, 1985. The leaders of the movement gave up agitation politics and became involved in mainstream politics of Assam. The Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) transformed itself into a political party. It returned with an overwhelming public mandate in the assembly election of 1986, opening the way for the AGP to form the government with ministerial post to the erstwhile leaders of the 'anti-foreigners' movement.

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[61] He was the Chief Minister during the Assam movement up to 1985. In the elections held in 1990, he was re-elected for the second time.

[62] He was the top leader during Assam Movement. He was elected as Chief Minister of Assam just after signing of Assam Accord of 1985. In 1996, he was reelected for same post for the second time.

4.2. (De)position During Assamese vs. Bodo identity Assertion Deadlock

Apart from the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) led 'vague' issue of the 'outsider' or 'foreigners', Gorkha Community on northern bank of Brahmaputra valley have been squeezed in the sub-nationalistic contestation(s) between Assamese nationalism and the Bodo homeland assertion (Nath, 2007: 215). The leaders from the Bodo tribal community perceived a threat to the economy, and their socio-cultural status due to the Bangladeshi migration and had demanded the creation of the *Udayachal*, a Union Territory under the banner of Plain Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) in 1967. Apart from the problem of the rapid migration from Bangladesh in the Tribal belt and block areas, the Assamese language movements of 1960s and 1970s as well as the Assam movement that broke out in 1979 and subsequently the policy of the government of Assam became a matter of concern for the leaders.

4.2.1. 'Election Entanglement 1979' and Gorkhas

The PTCA supported the parliamentary election of 1979 in Assam. The election was the immediate cause of Assam movement that was boycotted by the Assamese leaders. But along with the Bengali (both Muslim and Hindu) community of the state, the PTCA supported the election who had advocated the creation of *Udayachal* as an autonomous territorial body for the preservation of Bodo culture and society in the Bodo populated regions of the state. Such a move was seen by the Bodos as way of resisting the policy of 'Assamisation' by the government. For the Bodo tribal community of the Brahmaputra valley the idea of 'Assamisation' could be sensed when the Assamese-dominated government adopted Assamese as the official language and the medium of instruction in educational institutions from school up to University level following the movement led by All Assam Students' Union (AASU).[63]

Similarly, the preference of Assamese people over others in state administrative services, appointment of Assamese teachers in almost all the

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[63]For more detail, please see Please see Anonymous, "The Assam Movement" [Online Web] accessed on April, 12, 2013, URL: http://www.scribd.com/doc/44517067/ThE-Assam-Movement and *Why Separate state of Bodoland (Demand and justifications)* by All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) (1987), H.Q. Kokrajhar

educational institutions on the ground of being 'son of soil' created a feeling of marginalization among Bodos (ABSU, 1987). The supremacy of Assamese culture and identity was realized when rioters of Assam movement demanded that Assamese be made the sole medium of instruction in schools and colleges. The Assamese cultural hegemony and feeling of marginalization among Bodos prepared a sharp dichotomization between two sub-national groups in the state. Differences and the confrontation between two groups could be seen when the PTCA supported the election which was opposed by AASU and AAGSP. The pro-poll supporters of PTCA and anti-poll supporters of AASU and AAGSP took the form of physical violence when on 14 February 1979, Boro tribals attacked Assamese villages at Gohpur in Darrang district and Assamese attacks on Boro villages (ABSU, 1987 and Niroula, 2006).

4.3. Gorkhas in Medias' Mirrors during Sub-national Contestations

During the contestations and conflicts between Assamese and Bodo sub-nationalism the Nepali speakers were in a dilemma. Bhasker Dahal, former president of the AAGSU says that the Gorkha population was caught between the Assamese and Bodos. Gorkhas who were in the Assamese dominated area had to accept Assamese as their mother tongue and participated in the anti-poll agitations. Gorkha youths were to take active part in Assam movement. There were many Gorkha youths lost their lives as Assam movement activists. In big list in this regards, Baijanti Devi of Chandmari Tezpur, Dhan Bahadur Chhetry of Bako-Kamrup, Kul Bahadur Chhetry of Silapathar, Padma Bahadur Chhetry of Sisigang Lakshimpur, Kshirod Bahadur Tamang of Salmara Goalpara and Bhim Bhadur Tamang of Aamguri Lakshimpur are few names (Bhandar, 2017). Dahal says that the Gorkhas who were in the Bodo dominated area in the Brahmaputra valley stood with the pro-poll supporters of the PTCA and was caught in the cross fire. However, everything remained invisible due to 'the Assamese mainstream' media's critical role during the movement.[64] He says that the mainstream media rarely reported the trials and tribulations of other communities whom they called 'non-Assamese' and it was extremely unkind in the case of Gorkhas. Instead of reporting the effects of sub-national contestations and conflicts on Gorkhas in the state, the media sources engaged in showing the growth of

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[64] This transpired in a personal interview

Gorkha population and its negative implication to the Assamese society in future. Such media sources were sensitizing the presence the Gorkhas and their growth in population without any logical assessment during or even before the 'anti-foreigners' agitations in the state. For instance, *Dainik Asom* an Assamese daily published a report on August 4, 1978 about the Gorkhas which might have provoked the Assamese nationalist agitators to turn against Nepali speaking population. The reporter reads:

> *"...the Nepali speaking population is rapidly increasing, but they are not visible since they are living in dense forests. They are entering in the forests; they start cultivation after settlement in these villages. It have caused a severe deforestation. They do not cut trees in the front to avoid being seen from outside. Looking from the outside, it looks like dense forests, but if one enters inside the forests, thousands of Nepalis can be seen in these villages engaged in agricultural activities. Their presence is rarely acknowledged by the Assamese nationalist people since these Nepalese live the remote villages in forests..."*[65] [Translation mine].

Similarly, another Assamese magazine *Nagorik* (the Citizen) had published a report on Gorkhas, dated August 17, 1978, which reads,

> *"...Bangladeshis started their settlements on the banks of rivers, the char areas after they enter Assam. They settle in villages, construct roads, their villages are growing one after another and they are caught in the eyes of local indigenous people. But Nepalis are coming from the Nepal, they enter into the dense forests of the state, hence, their presence is clearly not visible. Indigenous people of Assam feel threatened both politically and culturally due to the presence of Bangladeshis. Threats from the Nepali community are rarely perceived because they live in Hindu life style. But threats from the Nepali are no less than that of the Bangladeshis; it merits a deep thought..."*[66] [Translation mine].

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[65] Abstracted and Translated by this author from *Dainik Asom*, Assamese local daily, Guwahati, dated August 4, 1978, cited in (Upadhyaya, 1978).S

[66] Abstracted and Translated by this author from *Nagorik*, an Assamese magazine, Guwahati, dated August 17, 1978, cited in (Upadhyaya, Bishnulal 1978).

It was evident from the census reports of 1961 and 1971 that the Gorkha population increased in the state. The population of Nepali speaker's was only 1.98 percent during the census of 1961. But the census report of 1971 shows that it has increased up to 2.38 percent (Nath, 2006: 128) of the total population of the State. The argument made by the Assamese leaders during the various movements was that due to the open border policy between India and Nepal, the Nepali speakers are finding safe haven to migrate into Assam. But factors other than migration from Nepal have to be given equal considerations that may have contributed to the showing of growth in the population of Nepali speakers. Given the situation of the Gorkhas in the state during the period between 1961 to 1971, it is not much difficult to find out several factors within the Nepali speakers of state which might have contributed to the growth rate other than migration from Nepal (it is discussed below in the section 4.9 in this chapter in detail).

In a situation of a bitter contestation, the election of 1979 could not be completed in 16 out of the 126 constituencies of the state assembly, and 7 of 14 parliamentary constituencies. In the rest of the constituencies the voter turnout as just above 50 percent in pre-dominantly Bengali speaking constituencies and as high as 70 percent in several Boro populated constituencies. But in the Assamese-populated constituencies the turnout was low. In some 25 constituencies less than 5 percent of the electorate voted and in another 20 constituencies the turnout was between 5 and 20 percent. Though Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party won (90 out of 108 declared seats), it soon witnessed the resignation of the government and re-election in the year 1983. The new government under Hiteswar Saikia saw radical militarization of Assamese nationalism with the emergence of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) with a call for Independent Assam. The issue of 'foreigner' was the key issue with people believing that the Assamese identity was really at stake due to large scale migration from Bangladesh or the erstwhile East Pakistan.[67] The Gorkha community who were equated with the migrants or the refugees of Bangladesh started to live in constant fear.

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[67] Anonymous, "The Assam Movement" [Online Web] accessed on April, 12, 2013, URL: http://www.scribd.com/doc/44517067/ThE-Assam-Movement

4.4. Assam Accord and Gorkhas in Doubled Disorder

The five year long Assam movement and agitation came to an end with an Accord between Government of India and the AASU in 1985. The Accord could bring a long relief. It soon became a bone of severe contestation between Assamese and Bodo nationalism. The territory, culture and the identity of Tribal people emerged as a grave concern. Hiren Gohain (1985: 174-175) says that by 1960 the tribal and other suppressed groups had it enough. There were grass root stirs among tribal people and even Ahoms for separate state. Such mass agitations were brutally suppressed by the Assamese- dominated government with the tactical blessings of the local press. But the wheel now had turned a full circle. Hiren Gohain in his book *Assam: A burning Question*, says that the Bodo and other tribal areas were totally neglected. Although tribal loyalty to India had been won by Assamese leaders in 1947 with the promise of a tribal belt this was progressively reversed in the fifties when large chunks of that belt were cynically allotted to refugees from East Pakistan and later Muslim immigrants (Gohain, 1985: 174). The community found 2 lakh 13 thousand and 40 bighas land of tribal belts and blocks areas assigned to be protected under the tenth chapter of the Assam Land and revenue Regulation Act, 1886 under the threat of illegal encroachers (ABSU, 1987).

The Bodo community who had been suffering from the acquisition of land in the Bodo-dominated areas now began to feel the threat of 'Assamisation' of their culture and land. The Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) formed by the erstwhile leaders of Assam Movement just after the signing of Assam accord, came in power with an overwhelming public mandate in 1986. However, its failure (Nath, 2003: 218) to recognize the compact Assamese identity and impact of their policy on the indigenous and foreigners alike contributed to the process of ethnicization of the Assamese and alienation of the Bodos. Lopita Nath says that the Bodo student leaders accused Assamese leaders of 'anti-tribal' prejudices, labeling the AGP government as 'narrow ethnic Assamese' which could not claim to represent Assam as a whole (Nath, 2003: 218).

The second wave of Bodo movement started with the full mass support reacting against the policies of the AGP government and the Assamese 'chauvinistic' attitude. The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) came with 92 points Charter of

demands for the separate state of Bodoland in 1987. The first demand for the creation of separate "autonomous region" for the plain Tribal People of Assam was raised by the Plain Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) submitting a memorandum to the President of India which was gradually upgraded to the demand for Union Territory with the name *Udayachal* on January 7, 1973 (ABSU, 1987). Now, *Udayachal* is renamed as *Bodoland.* Sanjib Baruah says that, in the choice of English word "land" over the Sanskritic *Udayachal* a part of separatist movement in North East, there is a general assertion of the non-Indic aspects of their cultural identity (Baruah, 1999: 187).

ABSU in its' 92 point charter submitted along with the memorandum to the President and the Prime Minister of India described the historical background, reasons, legitimacy, feasibility, geographic, ethnic, linguistic, political factors associated with the demand of the Bodoland in 1987 (ABSU, 1987). The Charter of demands had borne the testimony of how the Bodos and other plain Tribal were suffering from wants, discrimination, injustices, insecurity and torture. Sanjib Baruah analyses that there are remarkable similarities between the Assam movement and the Bodo movement in terms of the techniques of political mobilization. And like the Assam movement, Bodo campaign show the power of cultural and historical symbols and of societal networks in being able to mobilize large numbers of people behind a political demand (Baruah, 1999: 187).

The Clause 6 of the Assam Accord provided safeguards to protect the cultural identity of the Assamese people. This clause became an immediate point of contestation for the Bodo leaders. They feared that the clause might be used as excuse to impose Assamese language and culture on the Bodos (Nath, 2007: 217). When the new generation believed that their demands for greater public recognition of Bodo language and culture and for greater economic and educational opportunities for Bodos can be met by a separate state (Baruah, 1999: 188), the movement received fillip and impetus. ABSU and Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC) launched the agitation demanding "Bodoland" with a slogan of "Divide Assam fifty-fifty". *Bandhs* bomb blasts, destruction of public buildings, railway tracts, bridges, disruption of communication lines became the characteristic feature of the movement.

The Gorkhas were saddled in this critical juncture of contestation between two sub-nationalist forces. On the other hand, the exclusion of Gorkhas from the regional as well as national mainstream, subjugating them as "Foreign Nationals" had gone unabated. Governments had instructed all concerned authority/officers-in-charge to serve summons to every Nepali speakers irrespective of their bona fides. Harka Bahadur Chhetry Jr. says that no measures were taken by governments to have necessary measures to seriously separate these two categories of Nepali speakers in order to protect the bona fide Nepali speakers from unnecessary harassments in the state (Chhetry Jr., 2000: 49). The political status of the Nepali speakers continued to remain unresolved even after the Assam Accord.

Although Government of India had cleared its position regarding the Nepali speakers in the state by saying that the provisions of the Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty 1950 would not come within the purview of the cutoff date of March 25, 1971, and the IM (DT) Act, 1983 amended in 1985 prepared as a part of the accord to detect or deport foreigners who entered after March 25, 1971 would not be applicable to both categories of Nepali speakers i.e. indigenous Nepali speakers and Nepali speakers entering from Nepal with or without any valid paper (Dasgupta, 2003: 244), three "Ds" continued to be an instrument of constant harassment of indigenous Gorkha of the state.

The eviction of Gorkhas from their villages started on October 30, 1980[68] after the exclusion of the community from the Tribal belt and block areas in 1969 continued even in post Accord days. In fact, the Gorkhas who had been living prior to 1969 were also not spared.[69] The official notice no. PLA/763/74/22, dated 23/2/77 of Political 'A' Department government of Assam, circulated to avoid the employment of Nepali nationals in government, semi-government and non-government institutions, employment in private hotels, domestic work was made effective. It had a negative impact on the dairy-men and graziers which were the traditional professions of the Gorkha community since the colonial days in the state. Besides such a notification meant effective denial of government jobs for educated Nepali youths as

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[68] See, D. B. Chhetry and Bhawani Prasad Sharma, *Protected Classes vis-à-vis Nepalese in Tribal belts and Blocks* at http://assamesenepali.com/article/engarticles_assam_history31/protected_classes_vis.htm   retrieved on 12/12/12.

[69] Ibid

their job applications were either rejected or not called for interview (Upadhyaya, 1978: 89-93).

On other hand, the intensity of the Bodoland agitation soon added new miseries on the Gorkhas in the Brahmaputra valley, especially on Gorkhas living in Bodo dominated areas. The statement of Chief Minister P.K. Mahanta "we will shed every drop of blood to prevent fragmentation of Assam" was denounced through mass participation in the agitation (Barpujari, 1998: 96). The violence was followed by prolonged bandhs, destruction of public properties, blowing of railway tracks and bridges. Placards were inscribed against the pan-Assamese chauvinistic attitude. State authorities clamped down section 144 Cr.PC to prevent public meetings and organization. In Kokrajhar and Udalguri, majority of houses remained empty at night. Not only young, but women and children had to take shelter in nearby jungles in fear of raiding police parties (Barpujari, 1998: 96). During the course of the agitation, the Gorkhas were affected due to certain phonotypical similarities and common village settlement. Gorkhas were mistaken with Bodos; Gorkha youths were detained under TADA (prevention) Act 1937. Houses were raided at night and women as well as children were harassed.

The Boro Security Force (BrSF) emerged as an extremist outfit in a small village of Darrang district in October 1986 under the leadership of Rajen Daimary (*sic*) (Barpujari, 1998: 96). It took the path of mass violence blowing a passenger bus near Kajalgaon in the present Chirang district leaving 7 dead and 33 wounded. The incident took lives of two Gorkha youths which was the beginning of the death of Gorkhas in Bodoland violence.[70] Ethnic militarization with the emergence of the BrSF sparked extortion, kidnapping for ransom, wounding, and the like (Nath, 2003: 218) and the Gorkhas, were given warning to vacate the villages. Though the mainstream media was still reluctant to carry the stories of misery of the Gorkha, few of them started to cover the changing demography of the community in the region. The census report of 1991 acknowledges the massive decrease in the numbers of Nepali speaker in the State (Baruah, 1999: 64).

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[70] Informant: Bhattarai, Krishna, Prasad. President, Assam Gorkha Sanmelan, Sungava Anchalik Committee, Chirang Assam, interviewed on 05/12/12

4.5. Gorkhas in Perplexed BAC

On Feb 20, 1993, an Accord was signed between the ABSU, Government of Assam and Government of India with an agreement for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) covering 5,186 sq km. (see detail in appendix VI) on the northern bank of Brahmaputra valley. The Gorkhas, 10% of the total population of the valley became part of BAC. Mr. Sanman Chhetry from the Gorkha community was nominated as one of the non-Bodo representative in the BAC assembly. Welcoming the Bodo Accord, the Gorkhas of the area hoped fervently for the peaceful co-existence. However the relief was short-lived.

On March 7, 1993 (ABSU, 2001: 120), a difference of opinion emerged between S. K. Bwisumuthiary, the then Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the BAC, ABSU and Chief Minister of state over the issue of the finalization of BAC boundary. The Interim CEM, and ABSU made demands to the government of India and Assam against the exclusion of 10km distance between the Bodo and Gorkha dominated area and the Indo-Bhutan borderline in the BAC, as a strategy directed to uproot the supporters of Bodoland from their dominion in name the of International border and National security. Bwisumuthiary resigned from the post of Interim CEM when Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia demarcated the boundary of BAC excluding 515 villages having less than two per cent of Bodo population. The Chief Minister tried to avoid the Council crisis by appointing Mr. Premsing Brahma as the CEM, and challenged the Bodo organizations to prove majority in the areas through an election which were demanded to include within the BAC. On reaction to it, Bodo leaders accused the government of having a hidden agenda to prove Bodos as minority through dispatching land *pattas* (land allotment paper)[71] to the migrants and outsiders in the

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[71] Bodo leaders had some historical experinces which could substaintiate to their grievances in this issue. Sanjib Baruah writes that the Assam movement's major theme of "indigenous peoples" protesting the presence of 'foreigners' also touched a chord among the Bodos, though not quite in the way the leaders of the Assam movement may had intended (Baruah 1999: 187-188). There was not much difference between the grievance of the leaders of Bodoland movement and Assamese leaders of Assam movement. Baruah cites an expert committee report investigating the Bodo question found "in the manner of Assamese organizations and individuals talked of colonization from Delhi," leaders or Bodo and "plain tribal" organizations spoke of colonization by the "Assamese chauvinists." By citing these lines does the author not intend to underestimate the problem of the plain tribals in the Brahmaputra valley. Rather, there is no denial that large tracts of tribal belts and block area were largely affected by the encroachment by people other than tribals over a period of time. In this regard, Borodoi reports cited by Sanjib Baruah says that the "tribal" blocks were part of land system of Assam, but the record of the illegal transfer of the land from "tribals" to "non-tribals" is abysmal (Baruah, 1999: 190).

According to Baruah, large "tribal" areas have been "detribalised" for public purposes. Indeed even Dispur, capital city of Assam stands on the once "tribal" Block. The picture of what was once an area with Bodo and other tribal

area. Leaders of the movement accused the government that it was busy distributing *land pattas* to flood the area with immigrants and outsiders thereby reducing the Bodos into minority (Barpujari, 1998: 98).

The Gorkhas were labeled as the 'foreigners' and 'outsiders' along with Bengali-Muslim in the BAC. In 1993, a leader of the Bodo community in consultation with other Bodo leaders published a booklet titled "On predicament with Foreigners" (a special issue addressing Nepali on September 1993 from Odalguri). In this booklet the leaders remark in very harsh terms saying that the "Bodos consider the Nepalis as foreigners inhabiting in India." The All Assam Nepali Students' Union (AANSU) and Nepali Jana Sangram Parishad (NJSP) countered the contentions of booklet by circulating a booklet titled "Nepalis in India are genuine citizens" in November 1993 (Nath, 2003: 221). Meanwhile, the governments of India and Assam declared Nepali speaking population of Assam in the list of Other Backward Caste (OBC)[72] in 1993. AANSU and NJSP, pioneering organizations from the community tried to draw the attention of the government to protect their life and properties as well as the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the people of the region. These two organizations jointly led a silent rally protesting the attacks and killings of Gorkha dominated villages of Maradhahsiri, Kukhurakata and Amjuli. The problems of tortures, murders, lootings and forceful eviction continued unabated. In the same year, a gang of miscreants set fire on the house of Saila Rai, an 82 year old ex-seviceman of Amjuli and burnt four people alive blaming them of being the illegal migrants from Nepal. People from the Gorkha community were forbidden to buy or sell their land. The transaction of land between Nepali speakers and tribals was declared illegal unless Nepali speaker wanting to sell his/her registered land produced his/her land acquisition certificate of 1948 or before (Nath, 2007: 222-223).

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villages stand now occupied by the wealthy middle-and upper class apartments, many of them owned by ethnic Assamese families. This makes a visually powerful case for Bodo land being taken over by ethnic Assamese (Baruah 1999: 190). These issues of detribalization of tribal land has become a point of discord between Government of Assam and the Bodo leaders over a period and has affected Gorkhas as well as other communities who have been constitutionally enlisted as "Protected Classes" for the protection of their socio-economic interest along with tribal communities (both hills and plain tribes) on all the tribal belts and Bock areas since the Assam Revenue and land regulation Act implemented in 1886. Without giving notice to the fact of historic existence, some Bodo leaders equated the Gorkha population with alleged Bangladeshi encroachers, and it caused a huge silent victimization on indigenous Gorkhas in the region.

[72] Vide 12011/68/93-BCC(C)dt10/09/1993 and12011/21/95-BCC dt15/05/1995

The deadlock over the boundary of BAC and the controversial issue of the transfer of the tribal land *patta* to 'illegal foreigners' slowly turned into a massive ethnic conflict in the western part of the northern bank of Brahmaputra valley. In July 1994, an ethnic riot erupted between Bodo and Bangla speaking Muslims resulting in the death of over hundred (officially 68) and internal displacement of 70,000 people (Barpujari, 1998: 96-98). It affected number of Gorkha families as they had common or neighboring villages either on Bodos or Bangla speaking Muslim dominated area. Mr. Jagat Bhujel[73], a 60 years old resident of Dalle-Aahal village from the affected area says that the violence started when a suspected Nepali woman dressed in traditional Bodo attire was found dead in *Mawkhola.*[74]

In month of May 1996, a fresh ethnic riot broke out between Bodo and Santal community following the discovery of the death bodies of three *Dokhowna*[75] dressed girls near an Adivasi (an umbrella term to identify Santal, Oraon and Munda communities) dominated village in Kokrajhar district. Later two of those three girls were identified as Nepali girls (OKDISCD[76], 2008: 14), who died after a suspicious brutal gang rape in a 'line hotel' before their bodies were thrown under a culvert. It led to the displacement of 42,214 (OKDISCD, 2008: 15) families of total 2, 50,000, individuals from the Bodo, Santhal and Gorkha community (Nath, 2007: 220).

The dispute could not be settled. The ABSU declared the failure of the BAC and launched fresh agitation for separate state of "Bodoland" with peaceful democratic agendas in its 28th annual conference on 5th Sep 1996 (ABSU, 2001: 103). In the same year, the Bodoland Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) emerged as an underground outfit. They indulged in bombing, extortion, destruction of railway tracts and other unlawful activities (Chakladar cited in Chhetry, 2015). It "derecognized" the BAC calling it a "stooge of Dispur" (Baruah, 1999: 192). The Bodoland issue by now had undergone severe fragmentation within the Bodos. The ABSU and the underground BLTF stood for separate Bodoland state within Indian federal union. The National Democratic Front on Bodoland (NDFB) formed by a faction of erstwhile

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[73] Name is changed on the request of the informant.

[74] The river Aie flows from the mountain of Bhutan into the midst of Chirang district is called "Mawkhola" in Nepali term.

[75] Dokhowna is a traditional attire of Bodo women

[76] Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati

BrSF in 1994 pursued secessionist movement for independent Boroland (*sic*) carved out from the Indian union. The growing difference between the Bodo organizations led to a fratricidal conflict from 1996, causing the murder of number of prominent Bodo figures including Swmbla Basumatary, the then president of ABSU, Bineswar Brahma, the then President of Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1996 (Benarjee, 2010).

4.6. Gorkhas in Space of Polarized Ethnic Militancy

The fratricidal conflict within the Bodos continued unabated. Similarly the ethnic militarization soon got polarized in the proposed Bodoland area. Like Bodo leaders identified the Assamese nationalism as colonizers in Dispur, some non-Bodo ethnic organizations started to accuse Bodo leaders of colonization or 'Bodoisation' over other ethnic communities. Protesting the policies of Bodoland movement, the Adivasi Cobra Militants of Assam (ACMA) and Birsa Munda emerged as the extremist outfit from the Adivasi community in demand of the Schedule Tribe (ST) status and autonomy for the Adivasi community. The Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO) began to demand for a creation of separate Kamatapur state carving the eastern part of north Bengal and proposed Bodoland area in western Assam in the subsequent years. The Minority United Liberation Tiger of Assam (MULTA), an extremist outfit sought its strength in proposed Bodoland area in the name of protection of Bangla speaking-Muslim. Similarly, the Bengali Liberation Tiger Force (BeLT) militant outfit also prepared the ground justifying their policy against the marginalization of Bengali Hindu community in the same area. The race of strengthening the militia outfits in each of the ethnic groups i.e., Bodo, Adivasi, Rajbongshi, Bengali-Hindu and Bangla speaking-Muslims caused large scale extortion, ransom and murders (Niroula, 2006).

In this space of polarized ethnic contestation, the Gorkhas emerged as a sandwiched community, caught in the cross fire. The result of ethnic militancy was clearly visible in few case of victimization of the Gorkha community. The NDFB, a faction of erstwhile BrSF, gunned down six Gorkhas along with one ethnic Assamese and one ethnic Bengali in Nikashi (Mussalpur), in a village 40 km north to the headquarter of Nalbari district (presently it falls in Baska district of the BTAD) in Assam on October 15, 1995. Sanjib Baruah refers to a report in *Assam Tribune*, a local English daily of Assam, dated October 16, 1995, that the killing were "viewed

as a kind of retaliation against non-Bodos settled in the BAC area (Baruah, 1999: 195). They had gunned down Dharani Rijal of Sonitpur, Tikaram Boral of Saralpara Kokrajhar, Rudra Chapagai from Patgaon Kokrajhar, Dhanpal Subba of Balijuri, Sonitpur in January, 1998, Hindi Bahadur Karki of Gohpur in May 1998[77] when they failed to pay ransom demanded by the outfit. Yagya Boral of Runikhata of present Chirang district (at the time of the incident the village was in Kokrajhar district), and Balmaya Upadhaya from Garubhasa of Chirang district (the village was under Bongaigaon district when she was mudered) lost their lives when they refused to pay the extortion price to the ACMA in 1997. Similarly, Dal Bahadur Karki from the village of Ougroong of present Chirang district (the village was in Bongaigaon district of Assam in the time of incident) was killed by the BeLT when he failed to pay extortion money that was demaded by the said organization in May 1997 [Translation mine], (Nepal, 2009: 9-11).

In the month of May, 1998, another episode of Bodo-Adivasi riot erupted. It caused the displacement of 2,19,108 people (OKDISCD, 2008: 15) including Gorkhas (Nath, 2007: 220) from villages of Kachugaon, Bajugaon, Alinagar, Simaltapu, Bunka, saralpara and Panchfaljhoda of Kokrajhar district and the Amteka (Betini), Patabari, Malivita, Koila-Moila, Garubhasa, Runikhata, Santipur and Deosri villages of present Chirang district.

In the year 1999, the BLTF declared a unilateral ceasefire waiting response from the central as well as state government over the issue of Bodoland. Till then, the ethnic communities of the proposed Bodoland area were sharply divided into two poles i.e., Pro-Bodoland and anti-Bodoland. In one hand, the AAGSU, stood with the ABSU led Co-ordination Committee for Bodoland Movement (CCBM) advocating immediate initiation from government for peace process with the cadres of BLTF and creation of Bodoland. On other hand, 13 non Bodo organizations under the banner of the Sanmilit Janagosthia Sangram Sammitte (SJSS, United Ethnic Coordination Committee) opposed all types of move towards creation of Bodoland. The divided opinion between CCBM and SJSS has grown up to manifest in physical violence in present Chirang, Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon. The minority Gorkhas of Bongaigaon

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[77] For details see, http://gorkhas.weebly.com

town and the interior villages in present Chirang remained constant targets for the activists of the SJSS from 1999 to 2003.[78]

4.7. Gorkhas in the Centre of the Intra-ethnic Conflicts

Apart from inter ethnic contestations, the differences between the Bodo organizations served in both latent and manifest conflict continuously. When the BLTF with uninterrupted support of CCBM placed the issue of separate state within the Indian sovereignty as it's' core agenda of talk to be held with central and state authorities, the NDFB considered an interference on the way of creation of sovereign Boroland. The proliferation of the issue tore the Bodo dominated areas. It caused fratricidal conflicts between supporters of the BLTF and the NDFB. The state administration clamped down army operation in Gorkha villages mixed alongside the Bodo villages. The Gorkhas of the BLTF dominated areas were targeted by the NDFB supporters and so by the BLTF and armies in the areas of NDFB supporters. For instance, on January 1, 2001, some cadres of 2nd Maratha regiment gunned down 5 Gorkha villagers of the village of Saralpara in Kokrajhar including the headman of the village accusing them of supporting NDFB.[79]

According to United Nations' High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) and Human Rights Feature (HRF) report March 16, 2001, (cited in Nath, 2005: 24) there were two lakh internally displaced people living in 78 relief camps in Kokrajhar district including the people from the Gorkha community. Due to thinly distributed population, the problems of Gorkhas are not addressed properly. Most often, displaced Gorkhas took shelter in the houses of other Gorkhas who were not in affected areas. It deprived them from governmental or humanitarian attention and accounts. For example, only in Patgaon of Kokrajhar, there were about 134 families from Gorkha community numbering 581 persons who were receiving relief in the form of rations, clothes, education, blankets etc from the Lutheran World till 2001. Government distributed some gratuitous relief to the camps at Telipara, and Saralpara where a considerable number of Gorkhas were housed (Nath, 2007: 224).

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[78] Imformant, Dal Bahadur Chhetry, interviewed at Chirang in 25/04/2013

[79] The Assam Tribune, Guwahati, Jan 06, 2001

4.8. The BTC Accord and the Aftermath

On Feb. 10, 2003, the BLTF, Government of Assam and the Government of India reached a consensus paving the way for peace in Bodo dominated areas. The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was created under the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution with jurisdiction over four new districts viz., Chirang, Baska, Odalguri and the district of Kokrajhar (see detail in appendix VII). But real and meaningful peace is still awaiting the Gorkhas along with other communities living the area. The problem of extremism is still an unsolved problem. Particularly, the Gorkha people living in the interior areas in the proposed Bodoland area in the western Assam felt that they have to live in constant fear. Since their settlements are in the interior parts of the region, their problem get less attention unless a big massacre takes place. The massacre of 8 Gorkhas along with 6 from other communities at Bhimajuli, a village in Odalguri district in 2009 when they failed to send the ransom amount fixed by the NDFB may be taken one as example of such problems.[80]

The Brahmaputra's Northern bank, specially the western end of it has been one of the epicenters of ethnic violence since the Assamese and Bodo nationalism as well as other ethnic contestations began. It witnessed the conflicts between competing ethnic groups during 1993-94, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2009 and 2012. And during those conflicts, the ethnic minority Gorkha community was ever the part of ache, agony and misery and stakeholders of sufferings along with conflicting parties. Moreover, fatal consequences encounter between the security forces and rebelling underground outfit groups over this is still a common occurrence in this region. The Gorkha community was never a part of direct violence but the recurring conflicts between major ethnic groups of the area have brought them into a critical situation (Nath, 2005). It is found in research that the problem of militancy and frequent ethnic conflicts have led to internal displacement and steady migration of 20 to 25 percent of total Gorkha population of the region to other areas or neighboring states.

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[80] Please see more in http://gorkhas.weebly.com

4.9. Myth of the Infiltration of Gorkhas

Gorkhas have been alleged and accused of being foreign infiltrators causing serious victimization during most of the waves of Ethno-Political mobilization and conflicts. Based on few radical forces induced voice and physical forces to dissert the existence of the Nepali speaking population from the state. It was evident from the census reports of 1961 and 1971 that the Gorkha population increased in the state. The population of Nepali speakers was only 1.98 percent during the census of 1961. But the census report of 1971 shows that it has increased up to 2.38 percent (Nath, 2006: 128) of the total population of the State. The protagonists of different ethnic agitations made arguments that the open border and free communication between India and Nepal facilitated by Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty 1950 contributed the influx of Gorkhas in Assam. It would be possible that few Nepali speakers entered into the soil of Assam in search of work and other means of livelihood as Indian communities freely migrated to Nepal. But leaders of various ethnic movement and even government failed to interpret and analyze the many crucial factors those contributed in telecasting of growth in the population of Nepali speakers. Ignoring such situational background, they remained blatant only with pre-conceived notion that Indo-Nepal free border movement only contributed in Gorkhas' population explosion in Assam. Given the situation of the Gorkhas in the state during the period, it is not much difficult to find out several factors within the Nepali speakers of state which might have contributed to showing of the growth rate other than migration from Nepal.

Firstly, Anand Singh Thapa, the chief editor of *Jagrat Nepali*, a Nepali magazine, and his two associates Bir Singh Bhandari and Narendra Singh Thapa had submitted a memorandum to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first president of Indian republic demanding the constitutional recognition of Nepali language under Eight Schedule of the constitution on January 18, 1956. But the controversial remark by B. G. Kher, the then chief of National Language Commission of India led to countrywide reaction among Nepali speakers.[81] The community started to raise the voice for immediate constitutional recognition of Nepali language mobilizing the people

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[81] B.G. Kher in his reply to memorandum of Anand Singh Thapa, Bir Singh Bhandari and Narendrashingh Thapa remarks that Nepali is a foreign language; hence it cannot be recognized as a language under the eight schedule of the constitution of country. For detail see, (Gurung, 2004: 1)

through organizations (Gurung, 2004: 1). Since the issue of language recognition became crucial, the organizations advocating the constitutional status for Nepali language, advised all the Nepali speakers to enumerate Nepali as mother tongue during the national census of 1971. Since a huge number of Nepali speakers were already living in Assam, the mass mobilization for recognition of Nepali language from Assam was natural. Now it was time to unite the people from the community in support of the countrywide campaign for the language recognition enumerating "Nepali" as their mother tongue in National census of 1971 without fail.

Secondly, the policy of the government of Assam towards Nepali speakers since 1969 contributed in the sharp mobilization of Nepali speaking community in the state. The Tezpur Gorkha Chhatra Sangha (Tezpur Gorkha Students' Union, TGSU) was formed in 1946, later Darang Gorkha Students' Union in 1952, the Assam Gorkha Sammelan (Assam Gorkha Conference, the erstwhile Assam provincial Gorkha league) formed in 1966 (Nath, 2007: 216), had no option other than uniting the Nepali speaking community in the state when Mahendra Mohan Choudhuri ministry of Assam excluded the community from the status of "Protected Class" in tribal belts and block area in 1969. The move of the government of Assam prepared the ground for the consolidation of the identity within the community. Two years later, when the national census was conducted in Assam, it was obvious for the Nepalis to identify "Nepali" as their mother tongue. Those Nepali speakers, who had enumerated "Assamese" as their mother tongue during the earlier census of 1941 and 1951, now enumerated "Nepali" as their mother tongue. So it was not the sudden increase of Nepali speaking community, rather, it was the decrease of the population of "Assamese" speakers in the Census report of 1971.

Thirdly, the active participation of Nepali speakers in the national freedom struggle, particularly, against the policy of Assam's inclusion in East Pakistan and the association with the Assamese nationalist leaders during the freedom struggle had led to the formation of political elites among Nepali speakers. The post independent political developments in the state, especially the Assamese language movement of 1960, gave these elites a space to think about their language and identity. Soon after independence, when the state politics got polarized on ethnic lines, the leaders from the Nepali speaking community felt their marginalization in the 'mainstream' politics

123

of the state. The marginalization may have led the leaders from the community to re-unite the community which was then much fragmented during the national freedom struggle in the state. Slowly they got involved in the consolidation of their own ethnic community, identifying their language and identity to carve a space in the 'mainstream' politics of the state. In proving the numerical strength of the community, the role of National census of 1971 was seen to be crucial.

But Assamese media as well as Assamese leaders overlooked the factors behind the growth of Gorkhas, the Nepali speaking population except harping on the idea of migration from Nepal. Even the victimiation of the community was not visible in media. The article, *The Assam Movement* highlights that the Assamese who died in violence were elevated to the status of martyr. But victims and the displaced people other than Assamese remained virtually 'invisible'. The victory of the emerging Assomiya nationalism was highlighted clearly in the Assomiya press.[82]

Kamal Raj Chetry, a Human Rights activist, in this connection, says that,

"Indian Gorkhas are citizens of India as per the Gazette notification of the government of India on issue of citizenship of Gorkhas of India. Indian Gorkhas are faced with a unique identity crisis with regard to their Indian citizenship because of the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950) that permits, on reciprocal basis, the nationals of one country in the territory of other, the same privileges in matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privilege of the similar nature. Therefore, the Nepali speaking Indian citizens are mistakenly identified as Nepali people from Nepal which led to several movements of India Gorkhas including for a clear recognition of their Indian identity and citizenship."

4.10. Cartography of (Sub)nationalism: A Problematic Episteme for Conflict and Gorkhas of Assam

Aijaz Ahmad reserves the term 'cultural nationalism' only for those practices that are opposed to the cultural offensives of colonialism and imperialism. However,

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[82] Anonymous, "The Assam Movement" [Online Web] accessed on April, 12, 2013, URL: http://www.scribd.com/doc/44517067/ThE-Assam-Movement

for ideologies which define national culture in term of primordialist notions of race and religion, he says 'cultural *differentialism*'. Aijaz Ahmad says, the term 'nationalism' presumes at least a formal equality among citizens who collectively constitute a nation, and *Cultural* nationalism would therefore presume that the citizens of the constituted nation-state *share* a common national at least in a broad sense (Ahmad, 2012: 44).

Since the advent of the epistemology of Nationalism, it has been receiving a diverse array of responses defying a collective consensus. There have been diverse views, experiences and perspectives on this episteme (Smith, 1993). It is interpreted as a functional, sociological phenomenon that unifies people, sustains the cohesion of national community, defines and clarifies collective values and generates loyalty to larger whole (Smith cited in Anastasiou, 2008). In contrast, others have seen and experienced nationalism as erosive of the human spirit. They have viewed nationalism as an intolerant and destructive historical force; a phenomenon and force; a phenomenon that deeply divides nations and societies; an approach to politics that fosters a culture of collective narcissism and exclusivist notions of belonging; an approach to national and international politics that is power-driven and self-serving, escalating conflicts precipitating both civil and international war; and as a worldview accommodating the use of force or violence as a premium instrument of national politics, tolerating the loss of human life as a legitimate necessity (Alter cited in Anastasiou, 2008).

After a close introspection to these two broad perspectives, also to consider two broad experiences, the later convinces more than the former one. Of course, the legitimacy of the episteme levied on the first experience of nationalism discussed in above paragraph cannot be denied but, the experiences those have been received throughout the itinerary of the discourse of Nationalism; the second observation appears as more inducible. The Cartographic units which are popularly called as sovereign nation states and confined within 'geo-political imaginary'; (Agnew, 1998) are still not in a convenient position to reduce myriad conflicts. The nationalism receives a valorized pride within geo-political imaginaries leaving so far, an irreducible scope to question like whose pride and whose nationalism is it.

Similarly, the 'territorial trap' (Agnew, 1998) of modern nation state overshadows the vision of nationalism's originators[83]. The cartography of modern nation-states that confines the pride of nationalism discursively brings anxiety questioning that who belong this pride of nationalism and who do not. Since, the cartography as Sankaran Krishna writes, is not mere technical mapping but social and political production of nationality itself. The anxiety here positions itself in the spaces between technical mapping and the difficulties of the production of nationality and in the resultant gaps and lags that exemplify the transformation to modern territoriality. These gaps and lags underline "cruelties, dangers, and violence in present that need to be addressed" (Connolly and Krishna cited in Sarma, 2015: 194). The process of scaling of territory into technical mapping contaminating the socio-political imagination textualized the human thought in the text of territoriality[84]. The textualisation of human thought process to territory, the socio-political cartography start to demarcate the trap of binary structure of territorial nationalism as *who we are vs. who we are not, ours vs. not ours*, *Belongingness vs. Non-belongingness*, *Insiders vs. Outsiders*, *Nationals vs. Foreigners* and so forth infinitely.

With the growth of these binaries, territorialized communities are imagined to exclude the second terms or the entity which kept on other sides of binaries by the first terms. Socio-political boundaries on Barthian sense are diametrically generated valorizing the former over later. The valorization of the first category as a positive and insecurity of negation by second category got institutionalised in the evolutionary process of the modern state (Sarma, 2013: 26). The 'Imagined community' (Anderson, 1991), which grows with the valorization of first term in binary structure construct a history with power knowledge nexus threatening the legitimate existence of other (entities who are kept on the other side of the slash in binaries) existing throughout different epoch of history. This interpretation causes an effect of forgetting the contiguities existing prior to the naturalized facts, and the history is lessened from "history of past", it becomes "history of present" (Sarma, 2013). The entities of negated history get excluded from the "history of present" being hanged on the

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[83] Particularly Johann Gottfried Herder, Giuseppe Mazzini, saw nationalism as a divinely ordained, historical force of liberation, destined to lead humanity to universal justice and global peace (Alter cited in Anastasiou, 2008).

[84] The territorial traps of nation state became 'an objective instrumentality for being a human being'. This was not just spatial enclosure but the freedom of Human thought itself territorialized, exploration beyond which was forbidden (Sarma, 2013).

opposite site of the binaries in nationalist cartography the product of newer 'imagined community'. In this connection, from above exploration, it could be drawn into notice that Gorkhas of Assam are sandwiched between psychological cartography of 'isms' i.e., Nationalism and countering sub-nationalisms being reduced to the other side of the slash in the above discoursed binary. Contestations between nationalism and sub-nationalisms resulted various Ethno-Political mobilizations, indeed, most often with violent manifestation where existence of Gorkhas in "history of past" juxtapose to 'bare existence' in the "history of present' in Agambenian sense of 'bare life'[85].

4.11. Gorkha Ethno-Political Mobilisations: Response from State and other Ethnic Organisations

The emergence of socio-political mobilization of Gorkhas goes back to 1921 when Assam Association ceased to function and, it turned into Congress platform in its Tezpur session. In this regards, historian Amlendu Guha in this book *Planter Raj to Swaraj* writes,

"The Assam Association, which had changed its name and had virtually turned into a Congress platform in its Tezpur session, had a special and its last meeting at Jorhat with Chabilal Upadhyaya in the chair in April, 1921. Besides, condemning the recent evictions of Nepali graziers from Kaziranga Forest Reserve (KFR) and police atrocities on them, meeting discussed the Non-co-operation programme and organizational matters" (Guha cited in Bhandari, 1996: 54).

A full organization for Nepali speaking Graziers was initiated in 1931. The idea of Graziers Association was put forwarded by advocate Gangadhar Upadhyaya. In 1931, he suggested Chhabilal Upadhyaya to resettle the Nepali graziers of Assam especially those who were evicted and found difficulties in the Kaziranga forest.[86] In

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[85] Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben in his *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* maintains an argument that expendable form of l

ife created out of Sovereign decision which determines that which form of life are worth of living is called 'bare life'. Bare life are excluded from the process of 'being a human being' equated with citizenship (Agamben, 1998).

[86] The Nepali speaking graziers initially settled in the grazing reserves i.e., in *Chapari* (small island of Brahmaputra river) areas. Burachapari of Tezpur was declared Professional Grazing Reserves in 1881 (Ghimire 1983 in Bhandari, 1996). As Purushottam Bhandari writes that it was stated that Nepali speakers of Brahmaputra valley started their profession of cows and buffaloes rearing since 1860 onwards. Majority of them settled in Kaziranga areas prior to 1890. The eviction issue of Kaziranga during the period of 1904-1921 caused great panic among these graziers. Majority of them were illiterate. They did not have any association for defend them in this regards (Bhandari, 1996).

this connection, Tezpur Graziers' Association (TGA) appeared into existence. Later on, this association was renamed as Assam Graziers Association (AGA). It was the oldest association of the community which was formed under the leadership of Chhabilal Upadhyaya at Singri in 1933 (Ghimire, 1983 cited in Bhandari, 1996). The main objective of this association were

a. Protection and preservation of graziers' land of Assam.
b. To stop cultivation in the professional grazing reserves.
c. Prevention of immigrants in Burachapari.
d. Protection of forests of Assam for the survival of graziers (majority of Nepali speaking) community.
e. Involvement of Nepali speakers of Assam in freedom movement.
f. Preservation of social integration between Assamese and Nepali speaking communities.

A youths' wing of this AGA formed the Tezpur Gorkha Chhatra Sangha (Tezpur Gorkha Students' Union, TGSU) in 1946. In post colonial space in Assam, TGSU spread throughout the then Darrang district of Assam and renamed as Darang Gorkha Students' Union (DGSU) in 1952. With the success of DGSU in addressing the certain issues and grievances of Gorkhas, the Nepali speaking community, a full-fledged state level committee named All Assam Nepali Students' Union (AANSU) was formed under the leadership of Harka Bahadur Chhetry in December 26, 1976 (Bhandari, 2017: 37).

The Gorkhas' distinct identity mobilization in India first originates with the in establishment of All India Gorkha League (AIGL) in 1925. Thakur Chandan Singh was in founding president and Maharaj Sama Sher was its founding general Secretary. The initial base of AIGL was Dehradun but under the stewardship Dambar Singh Gurung, Darjeeling emerged as the strong centre of it since 1943. With its foundation the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) emerged as pan Indian organization of Gorkhas to organize and united the Gorkhas spread across the country. The then province of Assam also could not remain untouched in the wave and the Assam APGL (Provincial Gorkha League) was formed in at Shillong, the capital of Assam in 1944. With the formation of AIGL, the elite of the community started to place the grievances and demand of the community in the necessary places. As a provincial committee of pan

Indian organization of community APGL marched on equal footing with AIGL raising the several issues those pertained to Gorkhas. In 1943-44 they placed it's for official recognition to Gorkha as a minority community was with sound voice support of APGL. The APGL extended its full-fledged backing and support to the demands of the AIGL and in its maiden annual conference held at Gauhati on 31 December 1946 and 1st January 1947, unanimously resolved:

"The millions of Gorkhas, through sharing common tradition with rest of the Indian nevertheless, have a language, culture and tradition of their own; thus, forming a distinct community in India. Hence, this session of the Assam provincial Gorkha league demands the constituent Assembly to recognize the Gorkhas Statutorily as a minority community of India."[87]

Submitting a memorandum to the Governor General of India in 1947, the AIGL demanded the integration of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal into Assam[88] with a slogan of 'Assam *Chalo*'[89] in support of APGL. Similarly the APGL was with full supportive voice with its parental body during the first wave of the movement in 1955 for constitutional recognition of Nepali language. With the transformation of AIGL into a fulltime political party in 1955 differences surfaced and APGL decided to detach from its parental body converted itself name to Assam Gorkha Sammelan (AGS) independently. The detachment of APGL with changing of name to AGS prepared an independent space for its activities as a pioneer organization of the community in respective state. With its status of an independent outfit body of Assam, AGS carried its activities to address the penetrating issues of community independently in Assam, in one hand, maintained the coalition and collaboration with various organizations of the community across country for joint venture to placed local and national issues of the community in national platform in other.

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[87] Resolution of the Assam provincial Gurkha League adopted in its first Annual Conference held at Gauhati on December 31, 1946 and January 1, 1947

[88] The elite of community, perhaps, thought that the integration of these territories into Assam might facilitate them to consolidate their numerical strength which would help them to be united and raised the demands. The Gorkha/Nepali elites, however, well conceived that they must increase the contour of organization in order to protect their interests in India (A. C. Bhuyan and S.P.De from "Asomiya" cited in Newar, 2013).

[89] From the letter of Shri Ganesh Subba, secretary of, the Communist Party of India (CPI) to the president, Gorkha League dated 9th May, 1946. It is to note that, ideologically, the AIGL was closer to Indian National Congress but shared common perception with the CPI as far as the Gorkha question concerned (Dhakhal, 2009).

The elite and leaders of community constantly raised voice and placed their demands. They realized that it was necessary to get the Nepalese recognized as a backward class in order to remove their socio-economic backwardness and elevate their overall status. They constantly backed the resolution/demand of Dalbirsingh Lohar, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Assam Legislative Assembly (ALA) for the inclusion of Gorkhas into the list of Other Backward Classes (OBC) in 1951 (Newar, 2013).

The resolution read: "In view of appalling illiteracy and poverty of the bulk of the people of Gorkha Community in Assam, this Assembly is of the opinion that the Government of Assam do move to the Government of India if necessary to recognize the said community as a backward."[90]

The Kaka Kalelkar headed Backward Class Commission was constituted in 1953 to examine the socio-economic status of various communities for the recommendation of backward communities. In view of this, Gorkha community leaders submitted a memorandum to the Commission for the inclusion of the community into the list of Other Backward Classes (OBC) of Assam. After considering the report of the Commission, the task of preparing the list of backward classes was entrusted in the hands of the respective state government. It is a matter of grave concern to the Gorkhas of Assam that they were not included in the list of backward classes, unfortunately by the Government of Assam till the middle of the sixties of the last century (Newar, 2013). However, a few sub-castes of the mentioned community were given the status of Other Backward Classes later[91]. The elites of the Gorkha community expressed their dissatisfaction over the willy-nilly stand of government, the way it handle the issue in inclusion of community in the list OBC. They considered it as insufficient for necessary all-round development, and started to demand inclusion of the community they belong into the list of Scheduled Tribes (ST) for equal footing of the community with the rest of citizens of the country. In this

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[90] Assam Legislative Assembly Debate, Vol.1, No.5, 3rd April, 1951, p. 1220

[91] The Nepali Castes viz .Thapa,Gurung, Lama, Mogor, Newar, Lohar, Domai, Gaine, Rai, Chetri, Limbu, Sarki i.e. cobbler were recognized as other backward class (Govt.of Assam personnel (B) Dept. Office Memorandum NO-A BP338/83/14dated 4/1/1984 in (Newar, 2013) also see detail in appendix V.

regards, a memorandum submitted by AGS to Government of India (GOI) on 24th July 7, 1968.[92]

Realizing the needs of certain constitutional safeguards to remove backwardness of community in State, similar issues have been regularly raised by AAGSU.. In consultation with AGS and Akhil Bharat Nepali Bhasa Sangharsha Samiti (ABNBSS), in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India on 24th July, 1980, the organization place urge upon the government to prepare a list to recognize various sub-ethnic groups of Gorkha community as Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes after consulting the various social organizations.[93] It is to add here that many other ethnic groups in the state were also raising various issues for the improvement of socio-economic status safeguarding of distinctive socio-cultural identities. Realizing a common political platform for the fight to safeguard the interest of depressed classes of the communities, the leaders of organizations such as the All Tai-Ahom Students' Union (ATASU), All Assam Tribal Union (AATU), All Assam Chutiya Sanmilan (ALCS) and Jharkhand Sangram Parishad (JSP) floated an organization named United Reservation Movement Council of Assam (URMCA) in 1986[94]. The AAGSU became a constituent organ of the URMCA since their demands got a place to find out a solution in the charter of demands of later (Newar, 2013).

The Gorkhas of Assam found to play a very crucial role in inclusion of their language Nepali in eighth schedule of Indian constitution (to add the First committee of ABNBSS). The spark of movement that started in Dehradun, U.P (presently in Uttarkhand) very sharply had blown the Gorkhas of Assam too. Demanding inclusion of Nepali language into the constitution, Anand singh Thapa Birshingh Bhandari and Narendra Shingha, editorial members of *Jagrata Gorkha*, a Nepali quarterly submitted a memorandum to the then president of India on January 18, 1956[95]. In this connection, the controversial comment made by B. G. Kher, the then chief of National Language Commission of India. It brought a feeling of humiliation and aggressive

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[92] Memorandum of the AGS submitted to the Government of India on July 24, 1968.

[93] The memorandum of the AANSU submitted to the Prime Minisster New Delhi on July 24, 1980

[94] A leaflet published by Amarjyoti Gogoi on behalf of the United Reservation Movement Council of Assam dated April 21 ,1986

[95] SOUVENIR published on occasion of the 6th Annual Conference of the All India Nepali Bhasa Samiti held at Nalbari on December 28, 1986, p. 36- 37.

reaction against the comment and reactions spread like wildfire over Gorkha dominated region in the country.[96] The constitutional status to Sindhi language in 1967 sideling the demand for similar status to Nepali/Gorkha language made the Nepali elite more aggrieved and assertive of their linguistic demand. In this backdrop, at Darjeeling, the AIGL adopted a resolution in 1959 demanding constitutional recognition of Nepali language (Newar, 2013) to place the same to competent authority. A wave of movement sparked the AGS in Assam. The AGS adopted a resolution on April 28, 1968 asserting the demands to include the language of Gorkhas in eighth schedule of the Constitution of the country for the protection and promotion cultural heritage and identity of community[97].

In a memorandum submitted to prime minister of India on January 20, 1972 at Shillong, quoting the opinion of eminent linguist like Suniti Kumar Chatterjee that Nepali is one of the fifteen major Indian languages, the AGS claimed that the Nepali the is mother- tongue of a sizeable of population in the country. The leaders of the organization, therefore, urged upon benign self prime minister of India to recognize their language as one of the major languages of India and include it in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India[98]. In the event of raising a common issue, the AGS as prepared to join hands with All India level organizations of the community (Newar, 2013).

Apart from the AGS, some civil societies too kept consistent raise of issue to public domain. The *Hamro Sayapatri Pariwar* (HSP) organised a seminar to unbox the significance of the constitutional status to Nepali language at Maligaon, Guwahati in 1971. The said seminar was overwhelmingly attended by many renowned scholars like Kshitish Medhi, the professor of department of Law, Gauhati University, Hiren Gohain, professor at the department of English Gauhati University, Biren Sharma, the deputy editor of Assam Tribune, Assam. The imitative of *Hamro Sayapatri Pariwar*

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[96] B.G. Kher in his reply to memorandum of Anand Singh Thapa, Bir Singh Bhandari and Narendrashingh Thapa remarks that Nepali is a foreign language; hence it cannot be recognized as a language under the eight schedule of the constitution of country (Gurung, 2004: 1). In this backdrop, at Darjeeling, the AIGL adopted a resolution in 1959 demanding constitutional recognition of Nepali language (Newar, 2013) to place the same to competent authority.

[97] The resolution adopted by the AAGSU in its Annual Conference held at Tirap in Dibrugarh District on 8th April, 1968

[98] The memorandum of the AGS submitted to the Prime Minister of India New Delhi on January 20, 1972 (also quoted in Newar, 2013).

promoted the formation of *Brihatar Guwahati Nepali Bhasa Manyata Sangharsa Samitee* (BGNBSS) after few month of the mentioned seminar was organized. After the float and operation of BGNBSS, the feeling of the deprivation and sensitivity of situation caused the formation of committee of ABNBSS in 1972 at Udalguri district of Assam to pressurize the linguistic demand with popularly larger mobilization.[99] The formation of the ABNBSS assumed greater significance in expanding linguistic movement of Gorkha community in India and Assam was not exceptional. Elites of community began to mobilize the movement in the territorial domain of Assam for the fulfillment of their linguistic demand. They considered the recognition of Nepali language as one of the fundamental criteria for establishing the community into a rightful place.

Meanwhile the remarks of two Prime Ministers those made over the demand of ABNBS turned out to be of discredit among the Gorkhas. It is to be mentioned here that Morarji Desai, in his commentary in 1979, remarked Nepali as foreign language when a delegation of Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Bhasa Samiti was tabling a demand to include Nepali language under eighth schedule of Indian constitution. The ABNBSS considered his response as discourteous when he added that the Gorkhas can be thrown into the Indian Ocean when delegation of organization was trying to draw his attention to the contribution of Gorkhas that, the Nepali speakers in country, particularly in protecting country as crucial custodian of defense sector of country (Chhetry, 2015).

Later on, the response of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi also considered as vague and insensitive outlook over Gorkhas in country while Ms. Gandhi tried to ignore the issue that pertained to demand of the ABNBSS. She rhetorically stated "vehicle is moving forward'. The leaders of ABNBSS and other Gorkha elites across the country decoded her rhetoric phrases as her reduction of the value of Gorkhas' contribution in building this nation (Chhetry, 2015). In such background, the Gorkha elite and mass in Assam along with the community counterparts in the country fallen into the mode of very aggressive agitations. The Gorkha elite in the Assam expressed a great deal of similarity of their mother tongue as an equally advanced and a rich one with other recognized languages. In continuance of demand the Gorkha elites in the

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[99] An ad-hoc body of ABNBS was formed in January 31, 1972 at Darjeeling.

state maintained the argument that, the language in discourse was introduced as an official language in Darjeeling district, a recognized Major Indian Language (MIL) in the universities in Calcutta, North Bengal (siliguri), Bhagalapur, Patna , Banaras, Gauhati and Dibrugarh. In same way, it was also referred that the Legislative Assemblies of West Bengal, Tripura and Sikkim which had passed resolutions in concerned matter. Taking these into account they gave persistence to their demand that that the Government of India might be sympathetic towards the fulfillment of their long standing linguistic demand (Bhandari, 2007 and Newar, 2013).

In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India on July 24, 1990, the AAGSU expressing likewise sentiment maintained.

"That the Nepali-Speaking people of India have a long standing grievance, viz non- fulfillment of their legitimate demand for the inclusion of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. After the last Lok-Sabha election, Indian Nepalese have entertained the hope that this just and legitimate demand of theirs would be fulfilled soon. We, therefore, urge upon the Government to take necessary steps towards the constitutional recognition of the Nepali language..."[100]

Apart from political and organizational demands and agitations, the Gorkhas maintained their endeavor to make the issue up to the reach of academia and intelligentsia in Assam. They got positive response from some section of intelligentsia in the state. In "Official Language Report" prepared well celebrated linguist Suniti Kumar Chatterjee supported the mentioned issue. In said report he urged:

"…Constitutional recognition to Nepali language would not hamper constitution rather it would be adding flavor in composite culture of country. The efforts and movement carried on by leaders of the community in parliament is adorable. We, urge upon your benign self to recognize Nepali language as one of the major languages of India and include it in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India..."[101] (Gurung, 2004).

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[100] The memorandum of the AANSU presented to the prime Minister of India, New Delhi on July 24, 1990, (quoted in Newar, 2013).

[101] Translation mine

In 1971, renowned scholars like Kshitish Medhi, the professor of department of Law, Gauhati University, Hiren Gohain, professor at the department of English Gauhati University, Biren Sharma, the deputy editor of Assam Tribune, Assam vehemently supported Gorkhas' demand for constitutional recognition of their language. Dinesh Goswami, the then Member of Parliament (MP) of Guwahati was one of the front liners among those 74 MPs who supported and signed the draft prepared by Marxist leader Ratanlal Brahmin.

In this regards, on February 8, 1979, the former Vice-Chancellor of Gauhati University, Deba Prasad Boruah supportively stated:

> "…the recognition and inclusion of Nepali language will not detriment the constitution rather it will add to the composite culture. Language is a legitimate demand and it is necessary for the sake of unity and integrity of the country. The recognition and inclusion of Nepali language into the Eighth schedule of the constitution will not detriment the constitution rather it will add the composite culture..."[102]

Tirtha Nath Sharma, the former President of the *Asom Sahitya Sabha* (ASS) expressed similar view considering the value of this language similar to any other recognized one. Lakhyadhar Brahma, former president of the *Bodo Sahitya Sabha* (BSS) also pleaded that the community had a fundamental right for their linguistic demand as the Sahitya Academy had duly recognized the same.[103]

Such memorable remarks of the Assamese intelligentsia obviously provided a great inspiration for the Nepali elite of Assam to further the cause of their linguistic demand. The Government of India in the long run realized the legitimacy and justification of linguistic demand of the Nepalese Community and therefore decided to incorporate Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. In this language movement the Gorkhas of Assam along with the Gorkha across the country participated with full strength and sweat and finally it ended in 1992 when Nepali language was incorporated into the constitution.

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[102] Assam Gurkha Sammelon Bulletin No.23,1979, p.8 and also in (Bhandari, 2007: 113)

[103] Assam Gurkha Sammelon Bulletin No.23,1979, p.8 quoted in (newar, 2013)

Similarly, community leaders from Gorkha in state are demanding repeal of Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty 1950. The AAGSU has been raising the issue of Indo-Nepal friendship and peace Treaty 1950 demanding that the Treaty must be repealed. In a rally organized at Dhubri district of the state in January 1996, the organization protested against not-fulfillment of the assurances made by the Union and state governments. In a memorandum submitted to union and state government it demanded the introduction of visa-passport system between India and Nepal, sealing the open border, permanent settlement to Gorkhas who were evicted, introduction of Nepali language in all educational institutions, membership of Nepalis in UPSC and APSC and their inclusion in Schedule Tribes (ST) status as the bona fide citizen of the land. Similarly, the issue of identity problem has been occupying an important space in the intelligentsia and politicians and non-political organizational circle.

The AANSU was renamed after 26 years suffixing the word 'Gorkha' in place of the word 'Nepali' in March 22, 2002. Bhaskar Dahal, the then president of the organization strongly defended the plea that the word 'Gorkha' subsumes the identity of the community in the state. He added that the community has been a victim of a sustained campaign to project Gorkhas as immigrants from Nepal. The government of India never paid heed to demands to repeal the treaty which has proved deceitful to Gorkha of the state. Keshab Chhetry, president of AAGSU in the BTC region says that it is the need of time. The Special Protected Caste Demand Committee (SPCDC) and Gorkha Autonomous Council Demand Committee (GACDC), the political parties headed by the leader from the community in collaboration of Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU) have been raising the demand of Gorkha Autonomous Council (GAC)[104] in the state (see the detail in appendix IX). In this regard, Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharya, the then adviser of AASU and the president of North East Students Organization (NESO) exerted pressure on the government of Assam and India that the demand for Gorkha Autonomous Council (GAC) carried by AAGSU is a legal and mandatory right of Gorkhas of Assam. Other organizations viz., All Assam Moran Students' Union (AAMSU), Human Rights Organization of Assam (HROA), Matak

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[104] The Telegraph, Calcutta, India, dated July 14 , 2012.See also Appendix-IX

Juva Sammion, and All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA), assured moral support for the demand of Gorkha Autonomous Council.[105]

The case of the National Registration of Citizens (NRC)[106] update process also found to harden the condition of Gorkhas in the state. The pioneer organizations from the community consider the update process as discriminatory. NRC update process started in Assam in the year of 2014-15 after thirty years of the famous Assam Accord in 1985 which was signed to conclude the Assam Movement[107]. The Accord was to build up a confidence among the leaders of displeased group regarding the safeguard of culture and existence. The Accord reiterated the issue of protection of socio-cultural and political rights of people of Assam from the influx and encroaching population. In this regards, issue of NRC gets float in political surface. On this backdrop the update of NRC started with an exercise in March 18, 2013[108]. With the progress of NRC updating, expression of anxiety among the common people could be seen. The direction to produce legacy Data[109] or any valid document which reads existence in Assam prior to 24th March 1971 made a bit irritating factor to mass. Majority of mass living in villages and other remote areas found difficulty to access internet to download the legacy data, despite the NSK paid its massive assistance. It was also very difficult to seek the documents which prove the existence of tribal

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[105] Translated and quoted by author from the Aamar Assam, a Assamese daily, Guwahati, dated December 24, 2005

[106] The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is the register containing details of all Indian citizens. After conducting the Census of 1951, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was prepared by recording particulars of all the persons enumerated during the 1951 Census. For detail please check http://www.nrcassam.nic.in/faq10.html

[107] The Assam movement was taking place for six years between 1979-85. The Movement is also termed 'anti-foreigners' movement as the nature and the prime objective of the movement was to make Assam free from the illegal foreigners. The movement had brought huge casualties and human havoc as more than 6 thousand people were to loose their lives. After six years of unrest and agitation a tripartite agreement was signed between GOI (Government of India), GOA (Government of Assam) and agitating group.

[108] The RGI had in 2010 notified for a pilot project for updating the NRC in the Barpeta revenue circle in Barpeta and Chaygaon revenue circle in Kamrup district. But the opposition that ensued ended in mob violence and death of four people following which the project was suspended. The deaths were in police firing after the All Assam Minority Students' Union had protested on July 21, 2010 against alleged anomalies in the enumeration process (The Telegraph, March 19, 2013, Calcutta). The All Assam Students' Union, the Centre and Dispur in May 2005 had agreed to March 24, 1971, as the cutoff date for inclusion of names in the NRC. On 20 August 2014, the Supreme Court gave the Centre and the Assam government three years to complete the entire process to update the National Register of Citizens (NRC), which will help weed out illegal migrants from the state. Reacting to the Supreme Court order, Prateek Hajela, state coordinator, NRC, had told that the launching of job and the process across the state would be done from December 2014 to December 2016," he said. (The Telegraph, August 21, 2014, Calcutta).

[109] Legacy data is the record of NRC and electoral list prior to 24th March 1971 uploaded in the official website of NRC, Assam. People seeking for NRC new NRC were to download own respective record from official website and to submit the same in respective area NSK (Nagorik Sewa Kendra).

communities living in the far remote rural areas. Realizing this hardship, the some communities have been relaxed. The communities those got relaxation where exempted from producing proof of existence prior to 1971.

In this case Gorkhas were not exempted. Gorkha organizations are demonstrating for exemption from producing the documents from the proof of residence in Assam prior to March 24, 1971. Harka Bahadur Chhetry, the Chairman of GACDC and the pioneer leader of *Raithane Gorkha* (indigenous Gorkhas) movement says that the community which shared the history of the region since the time of inception has been deliberately marginalized and attempted to massacre the history. He furthers,

> "…like many other tribal communities in the state, Gorkhas in Assam are living in remote areas in Assam. This community is a cattle farming and agro-dependent community. Gorkhas historically used to live in jungle and interior areas with the *khutis* or *goaths* or *bathans* rearing the cattle. The lived in forest areas for the availability of fodder for cattle. This fact was even recognized by colonial administration. Hence, they were recognized and permitted to use forest land as grazier-cultivator community through Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act, 1886. It was difficult to protect the document papers for long years by the ancestors who were living in such remote and interior region and educationally not aware of preserving the documents. Similarly, our forefathers were contributing in architecting this land with their sweat and blood. They did not know that their descendants would have to face such situation. Gorkhas are living with many other tribal communities share each others' language, culture, history, lifestyle and land. Not only Gorkhas, forefathers of many tribal communities also could preserve the document papers of historical residential proof. Government could understand this problem of our ethnic counterparts; But Gorkhas have been discriminated against. If other ethnic counterparts could not preserve the document then, how could Gorkha ancestors of same land, same village and same region could do? While most of the communities of this land have been exempted, why not Gorkhas are? It's an extreme height of marginalization and deliberate attempt to nullify the historical existence of a community in this land and region."

The GACDC has been launching the *Raithane Gorkha* agitation in collaboration with AAGSU and AGS demanding equal state of exemption, like other ethnic counterparts, from proving documental proof in NRC update mission. An ex-president AAGSU says that the cutoff dateline of March 24, 1971 in updating NRC cannot be applicable in the case of Gorkhas like many other tribes.

Subscribing the ideas of Lopita Nath (2006, 2007) conclusion can be drawn in this chapter that Assam in present context is at a critical juncture with social and political forces sharply divided regarding their approach to identity and development. In this situation the alignment of the forces committed to communal amity and national integration is of paramount importance, the grievances of the Gorkhas need a sincere attention and reasonable promotion. The community in state feels that their interests have not been articulated properly. Lack of realization in figuring out the complexity in heterogeneous multi-ethnic spaces by our successive government and policy makers in country impelled post-colonial Indian state in multi layer perennial Ethno-Political mobilisations and conflicts in the region. The ethno sub-national groups have perceived the complex discursive structure of national policies and homogenizing tendency which remained as a continuous source of contestation in the country, particularly North Eastern state like Assam. Lately, state has attempted to engage seeking amicable solution and transformation of through constitutional mechanism, yet the problem remains addressed. The ethnic minority communities like Gorkha of the region have always been on the centre of those politics and ethnic mobilization as well as confrontations both peaceful and violent conflicts. The implications and impacts of the situation on Gorkhas have been a considerable issue as discussed in this chapter and more field based discussion and analysis is made in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER 5

IMPACTS OF ETHNO-POLITICAL MOBILISATION ON GORKHAS IN ASSAM: FIELD NARRATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The true essence of a real democracy is not only to prioritize the desires and commands of numerically strong called majority. It is to pay attention and implement efforts to keep even minority groups away from the victimhood of exclusion from the benefits of collective wellbeing. In the age and space of governance by numerically strong section of society, value of real democracy rests in protecting all political, socio-cultural, and economic or to say all fundamental rights of minority communities, thereby protecting their existence. Contemporary scenario of India, however, depicts a different picture. There are a number of excluded communities and regions with millions of excluded lives. Newer 'others' are being manufactured and violent securitization by every 'other' making life difficult, as peace gets withered away making room for victimization spoiling the lives of generations. Lives of many communities are alienated from the self and are compelled to live under a regime of constant disorder, exclusion and marginalization. Tools and propagandas are often induced to reduce minority communities on the other side of the slash of binaries like us/other, we/them, local/outsiders, indigenous/encroachers, national/anti-national, prospect/threats and so forth. The cases of Gorkhas in the country bring the notice into similar picture, particularly in the North Eastern region.

This scenario is often presented in good number of academic circumferences showcasing the corresponding picture of North Eastern part of India. The North East is always considered as a region in conflict in the rest of India. This region time and again is produced, in media as well as in academic exploration with various images like trouble torn area, insurgency area, war zone, boiling pot and so on. The region has experienced several conflicts such as nationalist and ethnic conflicts, migration induced conflicts, natural resources conflicts, and conflicts over the for protection of identity or culture. Widespread violence has become a fact of life in the region. In

such a situation, the voice and historical existence of minorities, particularly of linguistic minorities is constantly marginalized. In centre of such situation, there are number of instances which float the grievances of Gorkha community in the region. The reports and literature on community brings into notice that the community is constantly put under the misconceived eye-sight and face itchy questions in regards of nationality, origin and belongingness causing the situation of bare life. For a ccredible exploration of it, the issue is being taken into the scanner in this chapter.

This chapter attempts to scale the experiences and perception of the people based on the data collected through interviews/schedules. For the same, data have been collected using variables like sex, age, education, religion, occupation, income, place of residence, linguistic composition and so on. Attempts have been made to understand and locate any changes brought by the ethnic conflicts in the social, economic, cultural life of Gorkhas as well as demographic changes in the area of research operation. The role of governmental, non-governmental agencies towards the community and the role of Gorkha community during the conflicts in pacifying the conflicts at the individual or organizational level are also brought under the scanner of analysis. Variables are further factored in analyzing the socio-economic, political, cultural conditions and the context of sample population with an endeavor to understand the role of conflicts in shaping the political, cultural, economic and the demographic position of the Gorkha community. This chapter will try to interpret the data obtained through the response of the respondents.

5.1. Composition of the Sample Population

The sample population is composed of 300 interviewees. Out of total 300 samples, 40 samples were expert/judgmental sample (from various organizations of community), 20 each from Udalguri and Sonitpur district. Total 280 samples could be taken into account since rest 20 sample remained incomplete due to lack of necessary information sought in the research. With rejection of total 20 schedules (10 each from both of the districts) 140 schedules from each district are taken into consideration. During the selection of the sample size all variables like number of both males and females, variation in age, education, occupation, income etc were taken into account. Out of the total respondents, 20 were (ten from each district) the key informants comprising the leaders from the community in the political parties, social workers,

pressure groups such as AAGSU, AGS, and Nepali Sahitya Sabha (NSS) as well as leaders and intellectuals from the communities. All the respondents were originally hailing from Udalguri villages/town namely- Dimakuchi, Rauta, Suklai, Bholatar, Golmagaon, Kalikhola, Bhimajuli, Nunaikhuti, Udalguri, Bakainay-dara of Udalguri district and Panibhandar, Majhgaon, Bihali, Gambiri, Gorkhachawk, Dekiajuli, Namjuli Santipur, Singri, Nepalipara from Sonitpur district.

Figure 5.1: Total Sample Population in Study
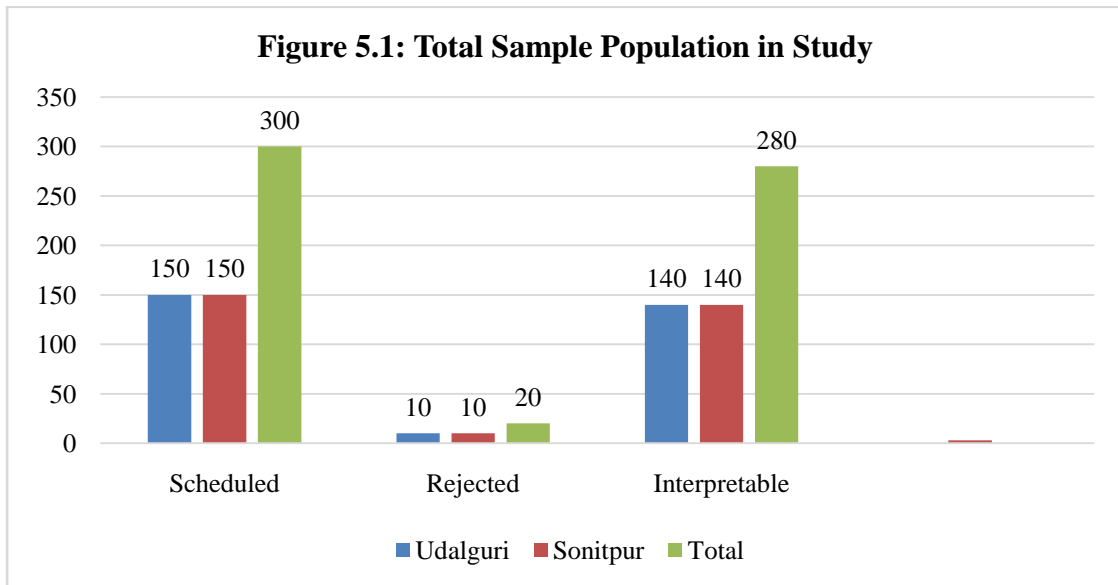
Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 – February 2017

5.1.1. The Structure of Sample Population on the Basis of Sex

The total sample population comprised of 182 males and 98 females. Emphasis on gender was given to understand the gender perspective and their experiences during the conflicts caused by Ethno-Political mobilization. Among 98 female respondents 43 and 55 were from Udalguri and Sonitpur district respectively. Similarly, among male respondents 97 and 85 were from Udalguri and Sonitpur district respectively. Among expert sample, from Udalguri district, 15 respondents were male and rest 05 were female. Similarly, the expert sample of Sonitpur district comprised 12 male and 08 respondents. A difference in perception between male and female respondents was clearly visible. Women were encouraging male member to participate in the interview. Often female members were not ready to respond to the interviewer given the sensitivity of the issue. Almost all male respondents showed active interest in responding to the queries and questions.

Figure 5.2: Sample Population on the Basis of Sex
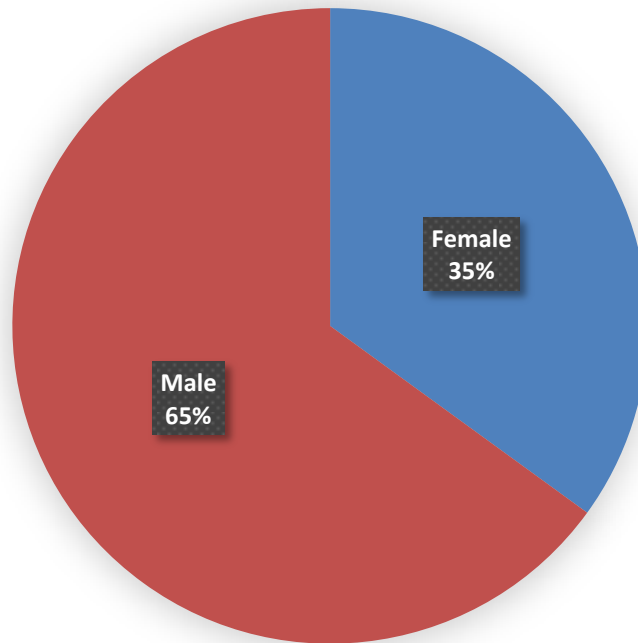
Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 – February 2017

5.1.2. Age Group Composition of the Respondents

The age of the respondents were diverse. The emphasis was given to respondents above the age of eighteen. The number of respondents above 50 years old was predominant constituting 50 percent of the total population. In scrutinizing the age groups, respondents of the age of 18 years are taken in the lower limit with an interval span of 10 in the table. Respondents of the age above the 67 years are counted in the lowermost interval column. The respondents under the age group of 18 to 27 constituted 15 percent with 5 percent female and 10 percent male respectively. The respondents with the age group 28 to 37 also constituted 15 percent of total respondents where both female and male constitute 7.50 percent each. The age group within the age 38 to 47 years comprised to 20 percent with 7.50 percent male and 12.50 male respondents. Similarly, the respondents within the bracket of age group 48 to 57 constituted total 25 percent with 10 percent female and 15 percent male. The respondent within the bracket of age group 58 to 67 and above comprised total 25 percent which included total 5 percent female and 20 percent male. The bottom interval column in table 5.2 included 5 respondents who were at their eighties and other two were at their nineties.

Table 5.1: Sample Population on the Basis of Age

Age Groups	Female	Male	Total	Female%	Male%	Total
18-27	14	28	42	5.00	10.00	15.00
28-37	21	21	42	7.50	7.50	15.00
38-47	21	35	56	7.50	12.50	20.00
48-57	28	42	70	10.00	15.00	25.00
58-67 and	14	56	70	5.00	20.00	25.00
Total	**98**	**182**	**280**	**35.00**	**65.00**	**100.00**

Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 – February 2017

5.1.3. Sample Population on the Basis of Religion

The respondents fall into three major religious groups. A total of 87.50 per cent of the total respondents practiced Hinduism, 10 per cent Christians and 2.50 per cent respondents are from the Buddhist. The number of male respondents from Hindu background were comparatively less than the female respondents of the same background, whereas Christian female respondents were more than the male respondents of the same category. During the interview, religion was not considered as a criterion to choose the sample size. Yet the category is taken as a normal occurrence.

Figure 5.3: Sample Population on the Basis of Religion
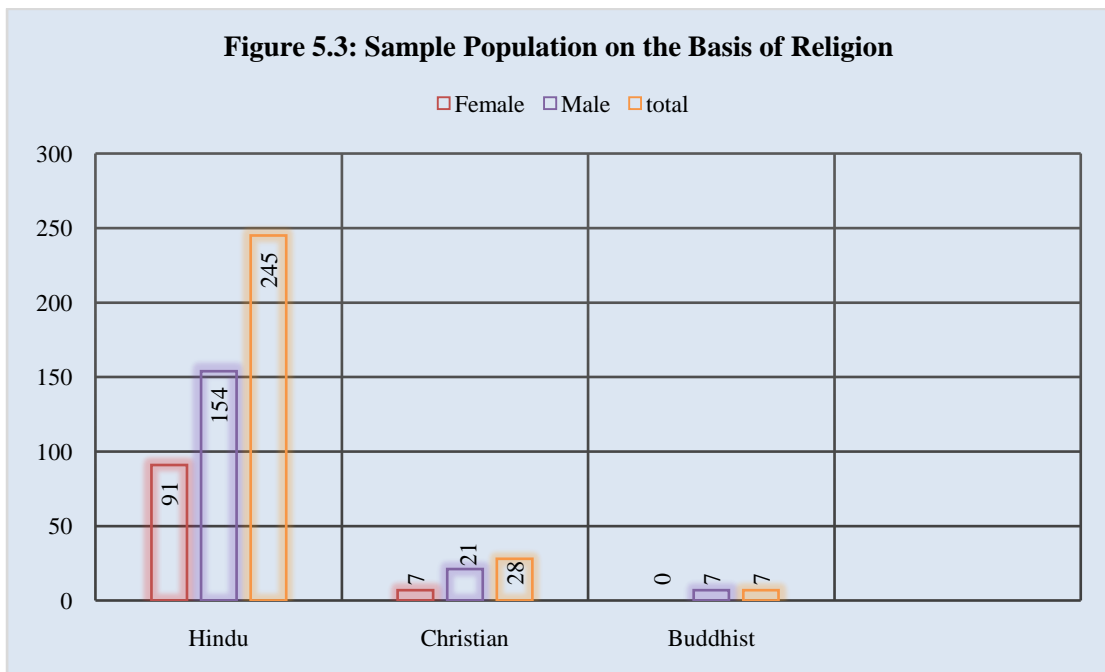
Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 to February 2017

5.1.4. Educational Qualification of Respondents

Out of the total respondents, 28 respondents did not have formal education. Total 35 respondents were having education within the class 10th level. Total 84 respondents were within the education level between class 10 and 12 and, majority. Total 56 respondents were under the education level between class 12 and graduation. 56 of total respondents had completed graduation and other 21 have education level of post graduation and above. 7 respondents had PhD degree. It needs to be mentioned that among the total respondents, number of female respondents were more than male counterpart to have graduation and above. It was so because, often only the female respondents who had education level 12 and above were interested to interact. Very often females were promoting the male member of family to interact. Those who had education level of class 12 and above were found comfortable and confident to respond to the questions.

Table 5.2: Sample Population on the Basis of Educational Qualification

Education Categories	Fema	Male	Total	Female	Male%	Total
No formal Education	07	21	28	2.50	07.50	10.00
Below Class 10	07	28	35	2.50	10.00	12.50
Between class 10 and 12	28	56	84	10.00	20.00	30.00
Between class 12 an	21	35	56	7.50	12.50	20.00
Graduation	28	28	56	10.00	10.00	20.00
Post Graduate and above	07	14	21	2.50	05.00	07.50
Total	**98**	**182**	**280**	**35.00**	**65.00**	**100.0**

Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 to February 2017

Out of the total male respondents, 14 percent did not have any formal education; another 14 percent had qualifications below class 10. Similarly, 28 percent of them had qualification between 10 and 12 standard. 22 percent of the total male respondents were 12th pass but below graduation. 14 percent of male respondents were graduates and rest 8 percent were post graduates. 13.34 percent of total female respondents did not have any formal education and 6.68% of the total female respondents were below class 10. 23.34% of total female respondents had qualification limit between class 12 and graduation and 20% of the same category of

the respondents were graduates. Rest 3.34% of the total female respondents had post graduate degrees.

5.1.5. Occupation of Respondents

53.2 percent of the total respondents were engaged in agriculture and cattle rearing. 25.3 percent of them were employed with 12.5 and 12.8 percent in public sector and private sector respectively. Other 21.4 percent were from the background of business and other small scale industries and students. Respondents in other category apart from students were engaged in small scale business like tea stall, stationary shop, medicine store, vegetable vendors and milk vendors.

Figure 5.4: Diversity of Sample Population on the Basis of Occupation
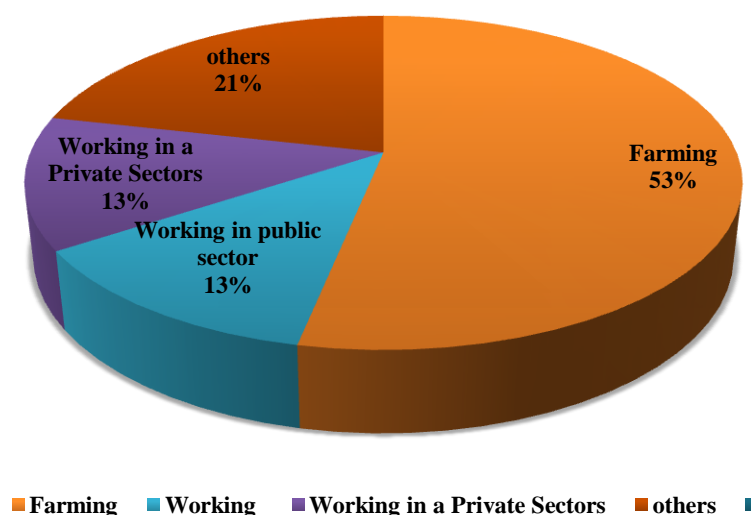
Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 to February 2017

5.1.6. Distribution of Sample Population on the Basis of Marital Status

Some total of respondents were from both back ground i.e. unmarried and married. Majority of the respondents were from the latter status. The marital status among female respondents was comparatively more the male counterpart.

146

Figure 5.5: Sample Population on the Basis of Marital Status
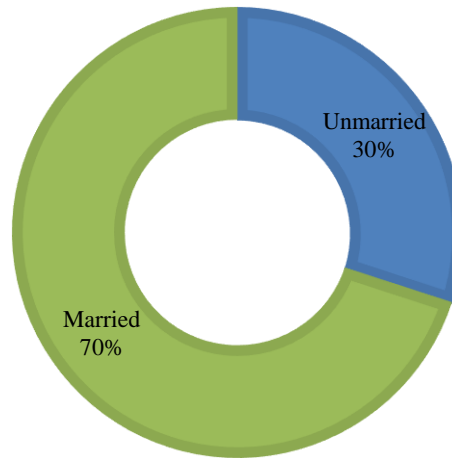
Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 to February 2017

5.2. Responses of Sample Population on the Basis of their Experiences and Opinion

With the above classified composition of the sample size, an attempt has been made to understand the respondents' perception of the present relationship between ethnic groups in the area under investigation. Related variables have been deployed to understand whether the respondents had experienced ethnic conflicts in the area and the number of such conflicts that they have witnessed. One variable within the sub-units will try to draw up the respondent's perception on how they feel about the impact of ethnic conflicts. Similarly, core variable will emphasize on the respondent's perception on cultural, economic, social, demographic changes if they had observed in the area caused by the conflict, their idea about the role of governmental, civil society and humanitarian agencies in the area upon them also are of the crucial part of the variables. Besides the above issues, one of the core variables will focus on the respondent's role, if any, during the conflict, to pacify the situation as well as their idea of how they can do the same in future. The views of the respondents were predominantly qualitative in nature. Yet, these variables are quantified on the basis of limited criteria given to respondents to express their views.

5.2.1. Multi-ethnic Space

Entire sample population is living in a multi-ethnic space although the number of ethnic communities is diverse from each other. The major communities in area of this research operation were Assamese, Bodos, Santal and tea tribes, Rajbongshis, Bengalis, Bengali Muslims, Biharis, Marwaris and Punjabis and the community which is under this research. The Ethnic composition was varieds between rural and urban areas. The village ethnic communities majorly included the communities like Assamese, Bodos, Santals and Tea tribes, Rajbonshis, Bengali Muslims whereas the ethnic composition in urban areas comprised the communities like Biharis, Marowaris, Punjabis and other business communities. Although the presence of communities those majority in rural population composition are not unnoticeable. This set and composition of villages were also mention worthy. In some cases there was complete segregation of the villages on community wise one to other. Such set of villages were dominated or complete populace of one community. On this backdrop, villages were found to be known as Bodo basty (Bodo village), Santal Basti (Santal village), Gorkha or Nepali basty (Nepali village) or villages named after community although such villages also have other official name too. The other set of villages were mixed and intermingled by many communities together.

5.2.2. Multi-ethnic Space and Inter Group Relation

It is found in the study that majority of the people are not in a confident position to say that the ethnic relation in the area they live are free from conflict undercurrent. Thirty five percent of the total respondents have opined that the ethnic relation in the area they live is a visible conflict current. Their opinion is that though violence does not exist perennially but the conflict is. There are ethnic demands like Bodoland in on fray by Bodo ethnic outfit of both moderate and extremist nature. The organization like Ana Bodo Suraksha Samittee (ABSS) is opposing the creation of Bodoland and trying to carve out the non-Bodo populace areas from the Bodoland Territorial Council. Similarly, the demand of ULFA for a sovereign Assam is proliferating. The demand for GAC is another one in same space. On this backdrop the afore mentioned section among the total sample size are very vocal in expressing their opinion that the interethnic relation in their multiethnic space is hazardous.

Despite the societies in both of the districts being dependent on each other for number of social functions and ceremonies, there is a noticeable suspicious perception over ethnic relations. A section of the respondents have opinion that there is a clear cut hidden differences among ethnic groups. The relation that is noticeable in interdependent atmosphere can be broken any time with a small spark of difference and with it; ethnic groups will be led by elites and political leaders into respective ethnic poles. Respondents have an opinion that each of the major ethnic groups have their own demands and feelings of depression particularly the feelings of relative deprivation. The ULFA is projecting self as the forerunner of the issues of linguistic Assamese community and demanding sovereign Assam (the anti talk group led by Paresh Barua). The NDFB (anti talk faction) feels relative deprivation in relation to elite groups of linguistic Assamese and the India in general. Similarly, the ABSU is demanding separate Bodoland within the Indian federation. The AASU is expressing the pressure of illegal influx from Bangladesh over the indigenous communities. Similarly, the Bengali Hindu outfits claim that there should be an amicable solution of Hindu Bengal refugees. At the same time the Gorkha community has protesting against the labeling of them as foreigners. The Gorkha community leaders are very vocal against such stereotype. They are of the opinion that the centuries old existence of Gorkhas in the region is being overlooked. In such environments, about 12 percent of the respondents have opined that grievances and demand of ethnic communities is overlapped one over other and social tie between communities can be broken any time as it has happened many a times in past.

Of the total respondents, 35.71 percent felt that there was an agreeable relation among the ethnic communities in the area of investigation. 5 percent of them doubt that the existing relation between the communities is not cordial. They have the opinion that present ethnic relation cannot be taken comfortably, because in the past, the relation has frequently soured. Despite the doubtless interaction at the individual level, a small spark is enough to cause sudden conflict any time.

Describing an incident, a fifty seven years old respondent says that, "*One day in the month of April, 1983, the agitators of anti foreigners had plastered a poster with a warning to 'Bangladeshi encroachers' to quit the village. Next morning the poster was found torn. The news reached to a group of agitators. The*

whole day was under uncertainty. During the evening around 7 to 8 pm, the village near the tree where the poster was plastered was burned. There was no investigation as to who had torn the poster. For a poster the entire village was victimized, the villagers victimized were populace of Bengali and just because their language was similar to people to Bangladesh, agitators alleged them as Bangladeshi. It caused a huge sense uncertainty in the area. Next day, five innocent pedestrians were mercilessly beaten in another nearby village just because their language was similar to the language of the agitators who had plastered the poster. Such way, the act of violence is often committed by some unknown people but consequences are born by innocent people belonging to different ethnic communities. Here it has caused on irreparable damage boundaries amongst communities that have had histioric coexistence".

Another respondent narrates, *"The recurrent conflict between different ethnic groups has prepared ethnic conflict in such a way that any time the relation can turn hostile. Hostility is always in existence in a latent state; but manifestation may take place any time. Even a single spark of news that somewhere in the state conflict and violence between two ethnic communities similar to this area is taking place comes. Instantly the suspicion and agony between such two ethnic groups start to demarcate the markers for conflict and violence. For that there is no dearth of instigators. The group which is in numerically minority position is brutally targeted and victimized damaging property and even lives. In such a situation, the groups which are minority but not the part of both the conflicting parties have to bear more cost of conflict as they are force to join in violence by conflicting groups and many a time such ethnic group is torn into both the conflicting polar. We Gorkhas of these villages have bitter experience of many such incidents."*

Table 5.3: Diversity on Perception on Present Ethnic Relation(s)

Opinion on Interethnic relation	Number	%
Congenial	100	35.71
Hazardous	98	35.00
Suspicious	33	11.79
Other	35	12.50
Cannot say	14	5.00
Total	**280**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 to February 2017

5.2.3. Witnessing Ethno-Political Mobilisation, Interethnic Conflict and Violence

The ethnic mobilization and its outcome as conflicts is a common phenomenon experienced by the majority of population in the area of operation. The majority of the population in Udalguri and Sonitpur, both the districts has opinion that, they have seen ethnic conflicts and violence in one way or another, directly or indirectly at least once. In many cases, the population in both the district has the experience of witnessing ethnic turmoil twice or more times.

Figure 5.6: Sample Population that have/have not Witnessed Interethnic Conflict(s)
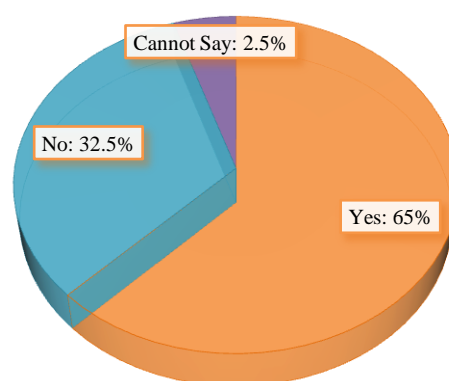
Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 to February 2017

Total 65 percent of the respondents acknowledge that they have witnessed conflict(s) directly between ethnic communities in their area. Among the female respondents, about 61 per cent of the total female respondents have witnessed ethnic conflicts and its related violence. A difference between the male and female response

151

existed because of the fact that some female respondents were newly married in the place. Hence, they have not witnessed the violence in the area. 32.50 percent of the respondents from the villages or towns which are far from the conflict area have not witnessed the violence directly.

5 percent respondents are not in a position to say that they have witnessed the conflict or not. Among this bunch of respondents too, there are respondents who have seen the conflict directly but they do not have the idea that those conflict may be considered as ethnic violence or not. The opinion of this bunch or respondent is that communication and market strikes have been seen, blazed public offices could be noticed, people were arrested by police and military persons but could not see where from such spark came and how it damaged the entire environment. It is also said that sometimes people were arrested because of protest and violence and, many a times such agitation and violence took place when people were killed extrajudicially in custody by the state machinery. Repeatedly, it was seen that the innocent people were found to be the victim of such custodial death in the name of contending the violence. So it is difficult to judge that this kind of conflict and violence are ethnic or not. A 24 years old respondent recount a misfortune as,

"It was the year 2011, month of May, I reached home from college. I took tea and snack. After a short rest I walked towards a communally owned pastoral field of our village to take our cattle back home. When I was on my way back home with my cattle, some elders of the village were discussing that Arun's son had been found to be a cadre in the NDFB, and the army has shot him to death near his home. It shocked me. Arun uncle from next village is like my father. His son Rwisumwi was my very good friend. We often used be together starting from school days to college. I know that neither he was in any kind of involvement with the said underground outfit nor anyone from this area can believe it. Aurn uncle lost his elder son and I lost a beloved and dearest friend. I cannot say that this was part of ethnic violence or not."

The possible essence of the argument made by the respondents of the third category in figure no. 5.6 is juxtaposed to witness of conflict and violence. They prefered option "cannot say" because they were not in posture to categorise what they have seen as ethnic conflicts or not. If the respondents who refer category third option

of the table is added with option one of the same table, it can be considered that total 70 percent of the respondents have found to witness the ethnic conflict in one or other way. The number of the respondents those who have seen the conflict related to Ethno-Political mobilisation is comparatively more in Udalguri district than the counterpart in Sonitpur district. 119 of total 140 respondents from this district accepted that they were a part of societies which have gone through certain Ethno-Political mobilisation related conflict directly or indirectly.

5.2.3.1. Nature and Factors of Ethno-Political Mobilisations Witnessed

The natures of Ethno-Political mobilisation were found to be both violent and non-violent in nature. Respondents share that most often, in initial stage, the nature of mobilization were non-violent and peaceful. With the passage of time, the mobilization got older, the varieties of techniques and mode of operation started to be accumulated. Similarly, as the number tools and techniques get added with the mobilisation and agitations with growth of support the confidence among the mobilizing elites. Sometimes it is found, the growing support and confident among elites motivate them to take the coercive violent twist to rush towards the projected goal. In many cases the events and technique of mobilization and the result were mix of both violence and non-violence. Several times, some phases of conflict were started with violence and ended with non-violence and appeal to stay calm and, equally sometimes agitations were attractively peaceful but with fatal end. The most painful situations were those when Ethno-Political mobilisation turned to interethnic conflicts. Such conflicts were often quick, fast spreading and destructive with untold miseries. Respondents those who witnessed the conflicts associated with Ethno-Political mobilization have the opinion that they have seen conflict in both violent and non-violent state as well as combination of both. They were of the opinion that political mobilisation on ethnic lines could initially be seen in news and media sources that certain ethnic group place demand for reservation, autonomy, statehood etc. Later mass mobilization for such demand could be observed when large number of secret gathering, public rallies, mass gathering, silent walks, mock mob, and mask rallies started to take place. It was often critical situation when even a provocation sprouted during or in the midst of such public gathering, mass procession. Spark of

provocation spread like wild fire turning all peaceful falavour of mobilisation tool into a fatal vandalism.

Sharing an example of a serious episode provocation and violence, 70 years old respondent who was initially in Kokrajhar district but currently shifted to Routa, Udalguri district says that,

"It was the incident of 1994. A secret gathering of a particular community was taking place in interior village in Kokrajhar (presently that village is in Chirang district). Suddenly a provocative rumour spread among the people in gathering that few people from other community (naming a particular community) are attending the meeting in traditional attires of the community whom the secret meeting was meant for. In the said gathering other ethnic community members were not allowed. The provocative rumour contained that there were people from other community among the attendees as spy to leak and pass the information of the gathering. The entire environment in the gathering turned out to be chaotic. An agony spread amongst the community members whose meeting was going on. Agony and hatred caused by the said rumour took uncontrolled shape of ethnic violence between two ethnic communities of populace. As a result of that provocative rumour, number of people (officially 68) lost their lives and other 70,000 were reduced as internally displaced people."

Respondents from each group found to have the experience of witnessing the conflicts and violence rooted to ethno-mobilization albeit the nature and number of instances were varied from one to another. The respondents from the age group 58 and above was found to have lived experience of witnessing Assamese language movement, Udayachal movement launched by PTCA, Assam Movement (anti-foreigners movement), ULFA's armed movement for Independent Assam, Bodoland Movement for separate statehood movement, and the armed movement led by NDFB for sovereign Boroland. Similarly respondents of this age group from Udalguri district shared the experience regarding the rise and existence of BLT, formation of BTC and Bodo Intra-ethnic violence among BLT and NDFB, formation of Bodoland Peoples' Progressive Front (BPPF) and its division between Rabiram Narzary and Hagrama Mohilary squads. They share the experience regarding the contestation between PTCA led Udayachal agitation and ASSU led anti foreigners' Assam movement and

violence, ethnic violence between Bodo and Bengali Muslim in 1994 and 2008-9, Bodo-Nepali/Gorkhas tussle in 1994 and 2013, Bodo-Santal riot of 1996, 1998 and 2014, Bodo and alleged Bangladeshi riot 2012.

Fully or partially, respondents of the age group within 38 and 57 were found to have the experience of witnessing most of the Ethno-Political mobilization, conflict and violence those witnessed by the respondents of the age above 58 except the Assamese language movement (official) of 1960, Udalayachal Movement for Bodo homeland 1967, and Assamese language movement (medium of instruction in educational institutions) of 1972. The respondents of age group within 28 and 37 did not have experience of witnessing the conflicts and violence those were prior to Assam movement of 1985. The respondent of this age group was found to be part of the society to witness the conflict and violence those witnessed by the above discussed two age groups after the year 1990. Very young respondents within the age group 18 to 27 were also not free from the experience of witnessing the conflicts associated with ethnic aspiration and insurrection. Out of total number of respondents forty (fifteen percent) were this age group and surprisingly thirty eight of them were very vocal to share their experience that how they have witnessed ethnic conflict in the space they are living with. Starting from the rise of ethnic militarization to ethnic conflicts of 1994, 1996, 1998, 2008-9, 2012 and 2014, respondents from this age found to have knowledge about major incidences those took place in their surroundings. They shared the opinion that their life span is growing witnessing the conflicts.

From the opinion and experiences of the respondents who have experience conflict and violence it could be understood that the plurality of ethnic mobilizations for different goals by deferent communities in the same space makes them confused. They are of the opinion that there are a number of mobilization for ethno-aspirations like separate state of Bodoland, sovereign Boroland, independent Assam, ST status for Adivasis and tea garden workers and, Gorkhas as well, separate of state Kamatapur and GAC at the same time and in the same space we share.

5.2.4. Experience of Impacts and Victimhood

76.07 percent respondents have answered that they have witnessed the conflict in the area they are living. Among the respondents who have seen the conflict, they have seen their neighbour's house set to ablaze by miscreants, turning of neighboring villages into ashes, and the gangs which came to demolish the property and establishments of conflicting opponent party. A person pointing toward a neighbouring village recalled,

"...I have seen burning of that village several times in my life. In 1983, during the Assam movement this village was completely reduced to ashes. Slowly it was resurfacing. But during the Bodo-Bengali Muslim conflict in 1994, again it reached the same condition like in 1983. It faced the most disastrous demolition in the conflict of 2012."

Another villager recounted an incident of 2008 that took his friends life. Missing his friend, he laments,

"It was the day of 7th July. We were freadingthe newspaper with sips of tea in a stall owned by a couple from our village. Following a report of the newspaper, we were discussing the issue of Bodo-Bengali Muslim violence that was taking place 10 Km away from tea stall. It was the report of the third day of conflicts we were talking about. My friend belonged to Bodo community. The local bazaar where we were discussing had a mixed population although the Bengali Muslim community was dominant. I told my friend that since the previous two days the Bodo community members were very rarely visible in bazaar. I advised him to be cautious and avoid frequent visit to bazaar since the situation was very tense and uncertain. My friend replied that this bazaar proved the unity of many communities living together peacefully since centuries. The people of communities like Bodo, Gorkha, Bengali (both Hindu and Muslim), Assamese, Adivasi were/are living together without spoiling the fabric of staying together, he added. It was around 11 am in the morning, we were to disperse for own homes when we heared stirring and aggravating slogans. Suddenly five to six people entered the stall and caught us both. We were punched and kicked. My friend managed to escape. I was hit on the head and I did not know what happed after that. Afterwards, I found

myself on a bed in a civil hospital. I came to know that, my friend had managed to escape from the trap of the miscreants' group but not from the arrows stroked upon him. I heard, he could bear the pain of wound caused by more than twenty arrows and lost the life at the centre of bazaar. This was how I lost a good ally belonging from the Bodo community. This was how the agony and hatred caused by enter-ethnic conflict painted our memories to live with."

The 18.93 percent of the respondents from the villages or towns which are far from the conflict area have not witnessed the violence directly. The numbers of respondents who have seen the conflict have seen the burning of their neighbour's house, the neighbouring villages, and the miscreants which came to demolish and burn the conflicting opponent party. The respondents who were of the opinion as direct victim of conflicts argued, they have witnessed ethnic violence in the region between Bodo-Bangla speaking Muslim (alleged foreigners) and the Bodo-Santhal at different times. They were not the direct party in the conflict but the consequences of the conflict fell directly on them. As they have argued, they had to take shelter in the relief camps when their houses were burned and their business settlements were demolished. In this regard, respondents from communities (Bodo, Santhal and Bangla-speaking Muslim) give similar opinion that Gorkha population was directly affected in various places in the district when ethnic conflicts took place.

Table 5.4: Sample Population on Experience of Impact and Victimhood

Impact and victimhood	Number	%
Yes	213	76.07
No	53	18.93
Cannot say	14	05.00
Total	280	100.00

Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 to February 2017

5.2.5. Changes Brought by the Ethnic Conflicts in the Lives of the Respondents

The experience and observation of respondents portray that the recurring ethnic conflicts and violence have brought manifold changes in the life-world of the

Gorkha community in Assam. The table and sub sections below help to understand that how the recurring conflicts on the milieu of Ethno-Political mobilisations have brought the changes in socio-cultural, Economic, Political and other (demographic) landscape of Gorkha community of state.

Table 5.5: Sample Population that Experiences Changes in Life-world Caused by Ethno-Political Mobilisation

Changes in the respondents' life	Yes		No		Cannot Say		Total	
	NR[@]	%	NR	%	NR	%	NR	%
Socio-Cultural Landscape	210	75.00	56	20.00	14	05.00	280	100.00
Economic Landscape	210	75.00	53	18.93	17	6.07	280	100.00
Political Landscape	216	77.14	50	17.86	14	05.00	280	100.00
Other	220	78.57	15	18.93	07	2.50	280	100.00

@Number of Respondents

Source: Fieldwork, November 2016 to February 2017

5.2.5.1. Socio-cultural Landscape

The total of 75 per cent of the total respondents said that there were visible changes in the social life of the Gorkhas in the districts. The recurring conflicts and violence caused by confronting Ethno-Political mobilisation had brought such changes. Of the total respondents, 20 per cent of the respondents are of the opinion that there is no change in the socio-cultural aspects and rest 5 percent were not in the position to say that if here is changes or not. Among 210 respondents those who had observed the socio-cultural life-world of the community, 190 of them were of the opinion that there were visible changes in the social life. For them, since the ethnic contestation and conflicts started between major ethnic groups i.e., Bodos, linguistic Assamese, Bengali (both Hindu and Muslim) and Rajbongshi the major change can be seen in the social demography of the Gorkhas in the districts. Respondents among those who were of this opinion, largely belonged from Udalguri district. Out of total 210 of them 126 were from the said district.

As per their observation, the changes brought by the conflict and post conflict scenarios had caused the socio-cultural change in their life. They say that since the Assamese language movement till date, there is drastic change due to the domination in the domain of language and culture. 71 years old retired teacher says,

"I have seen the domination of three major languages in the area since I was appointed as a teacher in a primary school in 1963. When I was a child it was still the British rule in the area. Our parents used to interact with the people of other communities (other than Gorkhas) in Bengali. The official communication was done in Bengali. The receipts of revenue payment and other official documents were provided in the same language. I was taught in Bengali and I started teaching in Bengali. After the Assamese Language movement of 1960s and 70s, the medium of instruction was changed to Assamese. All the official communications converted to Assamese. I needed time to learn Assamese, but those who could not talk Assamese had to suffer in the hands of the Assamese officials in the governmental offices. Our people learned Assamese slowly, hence they could adapt to the changes. The sudden supremacy of Assamese language at the official level and as a medium of instruction raised questions about the future of Bodo language. The emerging educated youths of the Bodo community led a campaign for the preservation of Bodo language and culture through the creation of Bodoland movement. Though Bodoland is still a dream, the campaign for creation of Bodoland gave hope for better prospects of Bodo language and culture. Bodo medium schools were established, students from the Bodo community started going to Bodo medium schools. The Autonomous administration through the creation of the BAC and now the BTC gave space to an official interaction in Bodo language. People from the Gorkha community are showing interest in Bodo language. Most of them who hail from Bodo dominated area can speak Bodo as fluently as Nepali. Many of the Gorkha parents have started to send their children to Bodo medium schools. They can interact in Bodo in government offices. I hope, within a short time, Gorkha people of this district will be more comfortable with Bodo language than the previous language of interaction in these parts."

From the interaction with respondents it appears that many times the members of the community in this research had had to fall in dilemma regards of ethno dress

code. In contesting multi-ethnic space of both Sonitpur and Udalguri districts, the language, festivals and dress code remained as dominant factors representation for the hegemonic ethno symbolism. The language spoken and dress code in school also played dominant role. The Assamese medium schools preferred to adopt Assamese *chador-mekhela*[110] for female students whereas organizations from the Bodo community considered such directory as the hegemonic tendency and opposed the same with direction to Bodo students to appear with Bodo ethnic attire *dwkhona*[111]. Similarly, in the Bodo dominated areas especially in Udalguri districts communities like Adivasis and Bengali adivasis counter both dress codes, i.e., Assamese and Bodo with preference to own ethnic attire. As respondents shared experiences, they were in dilemma in choosing any dress code as their ethnic attires was not allowed. In such condition, they were also mobilizing to demand for allowing of their ethnic attire *chaubandi gunyo-choli*[112] in the school of their populace.

The ethnic-militarization too has found to touch socio-cultural sphere of life. The undeclared dress codes tactics of ethnic rebels, time and again, affected the people in the areas of the rebels'. Respondents said that for a certain period of time, the wearing of shoes of woodland[113] brand was a very common phenomenon among the NDFB cadres and also it was the symbol to indentify the cadres and sympathizers. As soon as the spy and intelligence squads of security agencies found out that secret, the youths whosoever were found to be wearing similar shoes were detained and interrogated in unkindly, even with huge extrajudicial treatment. To puzzle the security machinery the cadres and sympathizers of the NDFB in the areas of their dominance notified that all those who wear the shoes should be wearing the Woodland branded shoes. With Gorkhas youths of the areas were to wear same shoes to avoid the surety of security personnel that who was NDFB cadres and who was not among the majority putting similar shoes.

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[110] Ethnic attire Assamese women

[111] Ethnic attire Bodo women

[112] Ethnic attire Gorkha women

[113] As respondents said, the NDFB cadres were shoeing the Woodland brands as they considered the same as affordably available and lasting one. Cadres were to walk through dense jungles, river valleys and hilly terrain in the foothill and hill of Bhutan as most of the camps they lived were in Bhutan or the Indo-Bhutan borders.

Similarly, as respondents exposed, ULFA also, apart from the common camouflage uniform, had have its secret identical clothing code in certain areas. When ULFA cadres used to visit markets and other public space, they used to wear their shirts in free mode of same over the paint and without the sleeve tied to be identified by other colleague and sympathizers. When that secret symbolism was discovered by state intelligence, the security machinery detained the people who were found in said dress code. The action of security machinery led sympathizers of ULFA to come with newer plea in their areas of dominance ordering youths to follow the described clothing mode irrespective of ethnic groups they belong and sympathy affiliation they had. The youths of Gorkha community also were not in a position to remain exceptional. They jumped onto fray. Those ethnic regimentations eased the way to rebels to hide their face in croweded public sphere troubling and puzzling the security state security mechanism. But quite often than not, such ethno-military regimentation put common people under the state security scanner with extra-judicial dealing and unexplained miseries.

5.2.5.2. Economic Landscape

Like observation in case of changes in socio-cultural landscape, equal numbers of respondents or 75 percent of the total respondents have observed and experienced impact of Ethno-Political mobilization and contestation in economic concerns. From their response, it is found that Gorkha ethnic life-world in state is undergoing change in economic landscape. Among the economic aspects, the changes in the sources of income have been crucially mentioned by respondents. With the contestation of major ethnic groups with ethnic opponents as well as state, the earning sources of Gorkhas have been affected. They said that farming and cattle herding were a chief source of livelihood of community. Their *gothes* (cattle sheds) were badly affected, the number of the *gothes* disappeared. Respondents explained that the *gothes* are/were mainly constituted inside the forests. With the emergence of ethnic militarization, the ethnic militaries (ethno-revolutionaries) started to encamp in jungles. Ethnic revolutionaries like ULFA, NDFB, Assam Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA), and BeLT started to harass their owners and caretakers in the *gothes* asking daily ration to share. Often cattle were killed by rebel outfits for eatable purpose. *Goth* owners were asked mammoth amount of money in the form of

extortion. Ethnic rebels used to use workers and caretakers as their medium to collect their daily necessary goods.

As respondents said, people of the *gothes* were forced by rebels to manage food other necessary goods from town and market in their favor. Respondents also add that their *gothes* fell in crossfire between conflicting rebel groups in one hand and in the centre of battle between rebels and state security machineries in other. According to them, during search operation of security forces, rebel used *gothes* as hideout until the former could know this fact. As soon as the security forces started to discover it they raided the *gothe*s, it turned the prime sources of bread earning of Gorkhas people in villages into killing fields. The *gothes* were in the target of both rebel groups and security forces. Rebels used to visit to collect their necessary goods, extort money and other purposes similarly, the security personnel used to reach in search of rebels. In such situations, both rebel groups and state security machineries doubted the *gothes* of passing information of one group to other which caused severe victimhood of people living in *gothes*. A vegetable vendor turned former *gothwala* (caretaker of *goth*) recalled back an incident that he suffered as,

"The temperature of 'swadhin Assam' and 'sovereign Boroland' movements led by ULFA and NDFB respectively was echeloning higher day by day. The number of members in these rebel groups was increasing with their increasing extremism or extreme activities. They were using the route those were passing nearby our goths. On a particular evening, a group of NDFB cadres entered our goth and ordered us to prepare dinner. They stayed back in the goth itself for the night because it was raining heavily. They left us early in the morning. About that, we did not know how the information reached to army camp. It was hardly, five to six hours that NDFB cadre left us, a team of armies reached to interrogate us and raided our entire goth. I and my two associates were thrashed by them. After it, they entered other gothes near to us for interrogation and raid. By the evening, there was an encounter between rebels and armies at a distance of two to three km from the location of our gothes. There was no information of death, but we heard about cases of injuries in both side (rebels and armies). After three days, it was around 11 p.m. a large group of rebels reached the location of our gothes and burned down our entire establishment. Rebels doubted if we had passed the

information to armies. The security forces and rebels were with their respective designated goals but we were sandwiched between them with irreparable damage to our livelihood."

Respondents add that the insurgency and ethnic militarization caused the disappearance of traditional culture of cattle herding like *gothes* and *khuttis*. The rapid disappearance of *gothes* and *khuttis* led to out migration of youths in search of better prospects and means of income to back the family. Apart from the *gothes,* other sources of income are also found to be severely affected. The tea and betel-nut plantations are other chief sources of earning of the community in the area of the research operation. According to the respondents, betel-nut trees give them an output once a year whereas they have to pay extortion money frequently even more than four times to various extremist groups in a year. Each betel-nut tree is counted by the extremist groups and as per the number of beetle-nut tree; the extortion amount is fixed by them to be paid annually. When they have to pay the extortion money, the market price is never calculated. In such a situation if the market price of the nut is low, then the people fall into hard times.

The respondents those were employees experienced the impacts on their economic life-world have the opinion that they were to segregate their monthly earnings for the extortion amount for the payment to various ethnic rebels. As they said, on one hand it was very difficult to save a considerable amount from their salary for numerous extremist outfits and in other hand, it was more difficult to send the same amount to them. Consequences were very bad when payments were delayed or not paid to them. Similarly respondents were to hide the fact from the information since any leak of information of payment of extortion to rebels caused extreme extra-judicial action by security personnel. Respondents also disclosed that the amount paid to one rebel group was to be secret to other since nature of dominance of such group in the areas was the deciding parameter for the range of amount paid.

Ethnic pricing also was found to touch the economic life-world of the community that respondents belonged. Respondents were of the opinion that during and after the conflict or even during hot but latent state of contestation intra-ethnic cohesion within parties competing stayed strong. It was reflected even in buying and selling the daily necessary material in market. Ethnic preference remained

determinant in selling or buying the product. During the conflicts products prepared to sell by one community was prevented to buy by other ethnic opponents. For instance, it is found that during the Bodo-Bengali speaking Muslim conflict of 2008-09 and 2012, some Bodo organizations prevented or to say banned buying and selling of everything from conflicting opponent. In same way, the Bengali speaking Muslim in their populated areas restricted all kind of business interaction with Bodo communities. The sets of punishment were announces against those who were contravening the ethnic banning. Ethnic preference in buying and selling in markets often cause the misery in business run by minority community. Respondents expressed their experiences that their vegetable production and cattle farming received large scale problem as their vegetable and cattle farming product could not be preferred as ethnic preferences were dominating the value of items set to sale. A respondent said,

"...We live in a village surrounded by bodo villages and Bengali speaking communities. In the centre of village we have local market. There were conflicts between Bodo and Bengali Muslim communities in 2009 and 2012. Although the market is visited by people belonging to different ethnic communities the dominant community is Bengali Muslim. During or after the violence for several months, buying or selling anything to Bodo community members in market or inside entire village was strictly prohibited. A strong prohibitory directory was announced that anybody found buying or selling anything to bodo community would be punished charging Rs. 10 thousand, 50 thousand and 1lakh for first, second and the third time respectively. Similarly, nine km. away from here there is another Gorkha people concentrated village with a local village market surrounded by the Bengali speaking community in populace. During the time of conflicts mentioned above, it was locally notified by some Bodo organizations and village that they disallow purchasing and selling exchange of things with Bangals.[114] There were similar situations in other nearby villages and markets between linguistic Assamese and Bodo while there was huge anti-Assamese and pro-Bodoland agitation during the period of 1986 to 1993 albeit there was no any kind of formal directory or announcement from any of the conflicting ethnic parties."

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[114] Bengali speaking community sometimes referred as Bangals locally.

There were respondents those who have experienced positive impact in this regards. They said that they could get advantages as they were choice of both conflicting parties. 53 of total 280 or a sum of about 19 percent of respondents placed their opinion that they have not perceived any kind of impact in economic sphere of their lives. They argued that the changes of economic vistas are the part of time.

5.2.5.3. Political Landscape

The 216 of total 280 respondents or 77.14 percent of them have the opinion that they have been experiencing the political changes persistence of Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts. They feel that the increased Ethno-Political assertion by other ethnic groups have drastically alienated the community that they have sense of belongingness. They share their experiences as repeatedly surfacing ethno-contestations and related conflicts for cultural hegemony has sidelined and uprooted the deep rooted history of the Gorkha community. They explain that, the community they belong was under the list of "protected class" in the tribal belt and block area in the state. The state government detached the community from this status all of sudden in 1969 degrading the community as disturbing elements in the tribal belts and block areas. Respondents add that the common tribal communities in tribal belt and bloc areas share historical attachments going since centuries and with this attachment general tribal people did not see the Gorkhas such derogatory way. The emerging middle class elites from the state played the card of 'outsiders' and 'foreigners' against the Gorkhas to seize power. Gorkhas were alleged 'outsiders' or the 'foreign nationals' along with alleged 'Bangladeshi infiltrators' during the 'anti-foreigners' movement in 1985. They seized power and realized what injustice they have committed upon the innocent Gorkhas.

Respondents also explain that the spontaneity of 'anti-foreigners' upsurge called Assam movement provided a fillip to the Bodo identity movement, paving the way for Bodoland movement. With the rise of separate state of Bodolnd movement, suddenly the Gorkhas have been tagged with foreigners suffix by some Bodo leaders (not all) of the Bodoland movement leading to large scale violence against the community. Respondents of Udalguri district refer the case of pamphlets distributed by some self designed Bodo leaders mentioning Gorkhas as foreigners in the eyes of Bodos. Respondents also mention that the move of pamphlet was hugely protested,

because of their joining in protest people were killed by miscreants in Maradhansiri, Kukurakata and Amjuli Udalguri in 1993. Gradually, the educated and far sighted leaders from Bodo community started to take control of the Bodoland administrative council. The Gorkha community of the tribal belts and blocks were re-included at the effort of a Bodo leader in 1996. Although, the ghost of 'foreigners' has not yet exhausted, Gorkhas of the area heaved a sigh of relief.

Respondents placed their experience as the emergence of Assamese nationalism, the political loyalty of Gorkhas or the Nepali speakers were doubted as 'outsiders' or the 'foreign nationals'. The bona fide Indian citizens of state, time and again, have been listed in 'D voters' (Doubtful voters) of the voter's lists blacklisting them as 'unwanted foreigners. It has caused unwanted frequent harassment to the community. The members of the community are asked to prove the local domicile and Indian citizenship. As respondents added that since Assam movement, the community they belonged had to live with multiple harassments as some organization constantly branded them as 'foreigners' in public space and in government machineries often harassed calling them to prove their domicile. Some respondents were to visit offices frequently as the officials were not ready to accept many authentic documents produced by them. The Gorkha families who preserved these documents could prove their domicile but this could not be expected from all the families. Many did not have any idea that they would have to prove their nationality despite their ancestor's contributions. The Gorkha families who failed to produce their documents proving their domicile or nationality had to undergo hardships. Equally, illiteracy, ignorance and unsuspecting nature of the community led to the failure in producing the papers which were sought as proof of their local domicile. But these weaknesses of the Gorkha community were used as a tool to harvest the political benefit by the political leadership. According to respondents, once the trend was started by the leaders of Assam movements, it remained as a crucial card in the political bargaining throughout Bodoland movement. A 62 years old politician and retired teacher says, "...Gorkhas of Assam have become a stepping stone for many aspiring politicians. They are 'seasonal foreigners' for the people who aspire to be a leader. It has brought changes in the political position of the Gorkhas in the state in general and Udalguri and Sonitpur district in particular."

One of the bigger political problems found to be faced by the community that respondents belonged was 'D voter'[115]. Respondents those who were suffering from this problem opined that they were suddenly tagged as 'D voter' with 'D' suffix to their name in electoral rolls despite their forefathers casting votes since many yester years. Even though respondents produced valid relative documents to prove the validity of their bona fide right to voting they were not allowed to cast vote. The officials gave them assurance about rectification of error with rare execution. With the tag of 'D voter' in electoral rolls, the victims were often harassed by police in the name of seeking authenticity of their citizenship. Despite authentic documents were produced by victims, in most of the cases eviction notices were sent. In many cases police were found to seek bribery charging mammoth amount of money. Of course, the case was raised in the Gauhati High Court vide WPC 7957/2005 and the bench of Justice Biplab Kumar Sarma directed the Deputy Commissioner of (Tinsukia and Margherita) to update the voters' list by deleting the tag of 'D' from the names of the Nepali-speaking voters of the district by March 31. It is not clear that this verdict can be applicable to Sonitpur, Udalguri and other districts of state or not.

5.2.5.4. Demographic Changes

Four-fifth of the total respondents shared that there have been demographic changes in the villages and area they are living due to recurring ethnic contestation and competition among potential ethnic groups. About 79 percent of respondents have the opinion that they could notice in population mobility among the ethnic community they belong. According to respondents, many villages those were inhabited by the community they belong are now either fully deserted or reduced to scanty population with such villages covered by conflicting ethnic communities. According to them, a large portion of the Gorkha population has left the area there old old habitat in search of safer areas in the Gorkha concentrated other areas in the district, other neighbouring or other places like West Bengal (Siliguri, Darjeeling and Doars), Sikkim and Nepal. Some Gorkha majority villages have grown bigger in the districts as the Gorkhas from those villages/areas within the district locally migrated, where they were a minority and there is always a conflict like situation among the people of dominant ethnic groups. The conflicting major ethnic communities were in search of

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[115] D voter means doubtful voter.

population strength which led to circumstances invite the inflow of population to be numerically strong to counter the contesting ethnic opponents. Receive of such population could not be possible in the areas of opponents ethnic community concentrated areas or village. In such situations, the contesting ethnic communities often encouraged the inflow of migration in nearby areas or villages which were inhabited by the ethnic group comparatively less in number in regards of population.

A total of 63.75 per cent of the total population hold the opinion that the socio-political developments due to ethnic contestations in the district have resulted into a complex situation for the Gorkhas in the district. As the numbers of ethnic conflicts have gone up in the district, problems for the Gorkha community have gone up. The respondents expressed their experience of the growing differences between the ethnic groups who are already caught in the conflict or the ethnic groups which do not have a comfortable inter-ethnic relationship. They say that it is difficult to interact and deal with individuals of such groups. The deepening ethnic differences led to changes in people's perception and such changed perception is nothing but a suspicion of one ethnic group upon other. In such a situation, being friend to a member of a particular ethnic group is seen with suspicion.

The respondents say that they have seen the conflicts between Bodo, Santal, Rajbongshi and Bengali Muslims. The conflicts have created huge rift between these ethnic groups. Differences among other ethnic groups found to cause respondents in a puzzling situation that if they closely interact and communicate with a Bodo then it would be a source of suspicion among Santhalis that they are getting friendly with Bodos, and, vice versa. A relation between a Gorkha and a Bodo may create a problem for the Bangla-speaking Muslim, since their relationship with Bodo people is often seen as their alienations with the people of Bengali Muslim as well as friendly relation with Muslim Bengali would be a distance to Bodo people. These situations push them in a tight corner where neither can maintain the distance nor maintain a comfortable relationship with those ethnic groups.

5.2.6. Response of Government and Non-governmental Machineries

There have been variations on respondents' opinion in regards of governmental procedure in dealing with the issues those faced by the community

caused in the centre of ethno contestations and conflicts. As the study is based on the community which is not the direct party in the ethnic conflicts, the responses are drawn from the respondents from the community. A total of 70 per cent of the total respondents were of the opinion that they were left with improper concerns by governmental machineries during and after the ethnic conflicts. This population comprises of respondents who feel that were indirectly affected during the conflict. On other hand, 25 per cent of the total respondents have the opinion that they were not marginalized and rest 25 percent were not in a position to make any comment on governmental policies towards them.

The respondents' who feel marginalized by governmental policies in the space of during the ethnic contestation and conflicts were saying that the governmental machineries were not taking their problems into account. In their opinion, whenever conflict(s) took place entire communication and transportation system was disrupted, the markets were closed due to bandhs and blockades. The necessary articles of daily life fell short. In such situations they tried to bring governmental attention but could not succeed. Respondents said sometimes, during the conflicts they were to manage hiding out or safer places in absence of security guarantees. The respondents also could not take the risk of staying back at their homes and villages while major ethnic counterparts were in conflict. Driven by fear, they had to take shelter in relief camps or other safer locations for few days until normalcy returned. About ten percent of the respondents found to take the shelter in relief camps or other safer locations. Despite such facts, they were not considered as victims or conflict afflicted population by the governmental machineries.

The respondents who felt they were marginalised say that their problems have always remained invisible. The invisibility of the problem has led them to be marginalized. The ethnic groups which were direct parties of conflicts received attention and compensation. Ethnic groups those who were the direct parties in conflicts and victimhood while they lost their homestead and property during the conflicts received state concerns and redressal of issues one way or the other. But respondents say their stories of the community they belong were different. Among them those who were directly affected losing their houses and property during the conflict, for them question could not arise while they were seeking assistance from

government. But those who did have evidence of losing their houses and property or who were affected indirectly had to face severe problem while they sought relief and security assistance. Their problems were not less than the people who were directly affected. A respondent from Gohpur village explains,

"...in the year of 1983, there was a distressing ethnic contestation between Bodo and linguistic Assamese community. All the neighbouring villages were fully in tussle. Our village was picketed regularly by the picketers of both the communities. We were frequently asked by some youths of both the communities to join them. Youths from the one community asked us to join them to fight against the picketer of their ethnic opponent and vice-versa. We could not do anything in such situation. Later, youths of one ethnic group suspected us of supporting the other one. Finally, no option was available with us and we left the village in fear and took shelter in villages where we could feel safe. We sought assistances from government discussing the matter with concerned officials, but they turned deaf ear to our pleas. No attention was given to the problem. Our miseries remained with us, nobody came to know of it."

75 per cent respondents said that they had to take shelter in safer places, seeking security assistance. When they were staying in relief camps, they did not have anything to eat. They used to feel helpless and frustrated until governmental and other humanitarian assistance reached. Affected people use to enter the villages of the "third ethnic party"[116] seeking food and shelter. In many cases, the hapless victims of conflict indulged in looting and destruction of third ethnic party's property. The incidents of looting and burglary went up. Numbers of houses were looted by victims who were taking shelter in the relief camps. The governmental machineries showed immediate preference to the victims of the conflict instead of attending to indirect problem(s) caused by the conflict(s).

A local leader from the Bakainay-dara village of Udalguri district says, "...There was a huge problem in this village when an ethnic conflict between these two communities erupted in 2008-09. Many houses were burnt down. People from both the communities (Bodo and Bangla speaking) had to take shelter in relief

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[116] The ethnic group other the two direct conflicting parties.

camps. We Gorkhas were in minority in the village and knowing this fact we could not stay back in our houses. Like these two communities, we also left the village and took shelter along with Gorkhas of other neighbouring villages fearing for our lives. The relief team of the government had visited the relief camps of the Bodos and Bengali Muslims providing necessary things required for the daily life. But they did not turn up to investigate the problem faced by us. Later, some elders among us visited the concerned department. We had sought relief but, government officials rejected us. We wanted to return to our homes if some security personnel were deployed in our areas in the village. Our requests were not given any consideration saying, "we do not have any access to care the communities who are not reported as affected community."

Respondents those who did not feel the marginalization admitted that they were provided with all the necessary items like food, sleeping kits, clothes, etc which were provided to the victims of directly conflicting parties. Similarly, when they had to return home, a lump-sum compensation to re-build house, roof-sheets were provided along with all the affected victims of the conflict. Families of the deceased were provided ex-gratia amount which was part of governmental relief package for the conflict victims.

Respondents those who considered the constructive responses from the side of state have the opinion that the government have given sometimes necessary concerns to the community they belong. The respondents those who have positive response explain that government have scheduled them in the central list of OBC (Other Backwards Caste) considering their socio-economic backwardness in 1993 which helped them in searching better avenues for socio-economic empowerment. They add that the government of Assam and India considered Nepali the language of Gorkha community as a language under eight schedule of the constitution of country which could preserve their language under administrative responsibility. As respondents described, the representation could be been seen in administrative set up and conflict resolution mechanism.

In 1993, the state government with the government of India talked with ABSU and BPAC to resolve the Bodo issue and declared local administrative set up called BAC where Sanman Chhetry was chosen as representative from Gorkha community

under the interim executive. The respondents also added that BAC was dissolved later and to find an amicable way to solve the issues raised by BLTF, BTC was constituted in 2003. The first elected executive was formed in 2005 for BTC council where Madhab Karki was nominated as representative from the community and Basudev Upadhyaya was in 2010. The respondents further added that some community halls, beneficiary schemes and other developmental schemes have been granted by governments to Gorkha community members and the areas of their populace recognizing the bona fide rights.

5.2.7. Respondents in Pacifying Conflicts

A total of 47 per cent of the total respondents say that a community which is not a direct party in the conflict can play vital role during the conflicts between major ethnic parties. They say the community which is neutral during the conflicts in the multi-ethnic space always has the role to create a situation where the groups in the contestation(s) can be brought into the table of the discussion. Respondents say that they engaged in mediating conflicting ethnic parties personally as well as at organizationally. They opined that they were invited when the peace committees were formed to reduce the intensity of conflicts. Gorkha organization like the AAGSU, AGS, NSS and ANSP is found to take a lead role during the initiatives taken to create amicable atmosphere for the inter-ethnic relationship during or after the conflicts. The leaders of the AAGSU, AGS, NSS and ANSP feel that they took initiative to create congenial relationship between conflicting ethnic groups in 1993, 1996, 1998, 2008, 2012 and 2014. A leader of the AGS says that in 2008 he was called by then superintendent of police of Udalguri to initiate village wise peace committees in areas where the conflicts had taken place. He says that he was directed to include members from the communities in conflict and equal number of the individuals who were not party in the conflict. When the peace committees were being formed there was constant support from the district administration.

L. Sedai, the president of the AGS says that he was included as one of the convenor in the panel of peace initiative team prepared by the Udalguri district administration during the Bodo-Bengali Muslim conflict in 2008. On the request of the district administration a team comprising leaders of 14 different ethnic communities had visited all the affected areas. He says that the Gorkha community

was the largest community other than the communities in conflict. Hence leaders from this community were largely expected by the district administration as well as other leaders of other communities to be included in the panel. All the village level units of the AGS as well as AAGSU were asked to take initiative to organise village level peace meetings to create confidence among the affected people.

5.3. Some Findings those could be mapped out from above Field Study and Narratives

Attempts have been made to understand the impact of recurring ethnic contestations and conflicts on the community in research and area in operation of research. Attempt have been made to understand the respondent's perception on the present inter-ethnic relationship in the area, their views on the implication(s) or the affliction(s) caused by the hostile and conflicting ethnic relationship in past on their lives. Efforts have also been made to find the social, economic, cultural and others changes brought by ethnic conflicts between the major ethnic groups in the areas. Some impacts of ethnic conflict(s) on the lives of Gorkhas in Udalguri and Sonitpur districts. It may not be easy to derive generalizations from a preliminary study like the present one. Despite its obvious limitations, one may still venture to list some findings as follows.

Gorkhas in Assam were found to be minority community in Assam in the centre of minorities. It is found that there are hierarchical minority layers in the state. The linguistic Assamese community is a minority community in larger Indian context. The Assamese nationalist leaders perceived threat to Assamese language and culture while Indian nationalist leaders engaged in nation-building process. Assamese nationalist leaders, in certain instances considered agendas of national policy makers and Indian nationalist leaders as 'Indianization' which was countered in the form of both peaceful as well as violent agitations. The solving of the problems of the Assamese nationalist leaders found to generate fear among Bodo nationalist leaders. The Bodo community is culturally a minority community in Assam in relation to Assamese linguistic community. Policies of Assamese nationalist leaders and policy makers perceived agenda of 'Assamization' by Bodo nationalist leaders which cause ethnic assertion and conflict. Similarly, the short term address to Bodo issue could not solve the problem, in fact, it was found to cause proliferations of ethnic contestations

and conflicts in the western part of Assam. The region as already witnessed large scale violence, casualties and victimhood of people.

Apart from feeling of marginalization of ethnic properties, claim and demand of share over history as well as resources found to cause the contestation and conflicts. Similarly, the desire of elite of ethnic communities for power and privileges were found to keep conflict situation ongoing.

Desires of heroism among youths of certain communities were found to cause the ethnic militarization and conflicts in the region. Such desire of elites of ethnic groups found to be contributed by the factors like exiting educational and economic backwardness as well as underdeveloped state of region.

With the Ethno political mobilisation and related contestation among ethnic group with overlapping of issue and over same space the ethnic militarization got to be polarized in both of the districts. In one hand radical Assamese linguistic nationalist elites considered Assam as the colony under Indian domain and in other, Bodo leaders identified proposed Bodoland or Bodo dominated area as colonized by Dispur. Similarly, the non-Bodo ethnic organizations started to accuse Bodo leaders of dominating or leading 'Bodoisation' over other ethnic communities. Adivasi Cobra Militants of Assam (ACMA) and Birsa Munda emerged as the extremist outfit from the Adivasi community in demand of the Schedule Tribe (ST) status and autonomy for the Adivasi community. Another underground extremist outfit AANLA (Assam Adivasi Nationalists Liberation Army) also claimed to emerge for the socio-economic liberation and justice for Adivasi community.

These extremists outfits also started to protest the policies of Bodoland movement. The separate state of Kamatapur cultivated ethno sensitive mobilization among Koch-Rajbongshi community. The Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO) began to recruit youths from the respective community with sharp extremists training to revive the glorious history of Kamatapur demanding separate Kamatapur state carving the eastern part of north Bengal and including proposed Bodoland area Assam. Including both these districts, an extremist underground outfit Minority United Liberation Tiger of Assam (MULTA) sought its strength in proposed Bodoland area in the name of protection of Bengali-Muslim. Similarly, the Bengali

Liberation Tiger Force (BeLT) militant outfit also prepared the ground justifying their policy against the marginalization of Bengali Hindu community in the same area. The race of strengthening the militia outfits in each of the ethnic groups i.e., Bodo, Adivasi, Rajbongshi, Bengali-Hindu and Bengali-Muslims caused large scale extortion, ransom and murders.

In the space of polarized ethnic militarization, the Gorkhas emerged as a sandwiched community, caught in the cross fire. The result of ethnic militancy was clearly visible in few case of victimhood of the Gorkha community. The NDFB gunned down six Gorkhas along with one ethnic Assamese and one ethnic Bengali in areas bordering to Udalguri district in October 15, 1995 which was as a kind of retaliation against non-Bodos settled in Bodo dominated areas. NDFB had gunned down Dharani Rijal of Sonitpur. Dhanpal Subba of Balijuri, Sonitpur was shot to death in January, 1998 when he was ubable to pay ransom money in time that set by the underground outfit. In the month of May 1998, Hindi Bahadur Karki of Gohpur was killed for the similar reason. Similarly, Man Bahadur was killed by the BeLT when failed to respond forceful donation amount demanded to him. Eight Gorkhas along with 6 from other communities at Bhimajuli, a village in Sonipur district in 2009 were killed when they failed to send the ransom amount fixed by the NDFB.

The members of Gorkha community who inhabited in interior areas in the proposed Bodoland found to live in continuous fear. Until a big massacre, their victimhood got less or rare attention, since their settlements are in the interior parts of the region. Declaring unilateral armistice, the BLTF awaited response from the central as well as state government over the issue of Bodoland in 1999. The plea of BLTF brought heterogeneous stand up among ethnic communities of the proposed Bodoland into 'Pro-Bodoland' and 'anti-Bodoland' poles. The polarity put Gorkhas of the area in dilemma, AAGSU stood with the ABSU led Co-ordination Committee for Bodoland Movement (CCBM) for the campaign to pressurize government of India and Assam for peace process with the cadres of BLTF and creation of Bodoland. On other hand, 13 non Bodo organizations under the banner of the Sanmilit Janagosthia Sangram Sammitte (SJSS, United Ethnic Coordination Committee) opposed all types of move towards creation of Bodoland. The divided opinion between CCBM and SJSS has grown up to manifest in physical violence.

In search of prevalence of peace, BTC was accorded demarcating 8970 sq.km as its area[117]. People in the areas dominantly inhabited by other than Bodos vehemently opposed the inclusion of their villages into BTC. The minority Gorkhas of interior villages remained in constant targets for the activists of the SJSS and other outfits which in opposition of demarcation of territory for BTC and proposed Bodoland. In 2012, ABSS (Ana-Bodo Suraksha Samittee, an outfit which claims to advocate for rights and protection of Non-Bodo communities in proposed Bodoland areas)[118] was encountering the possible creation of Bodoland. The organization has constantly been agitating in demand of carving out of the areas of Non-Bodo populace from the BTC.

The tussle between the cadres of ABSS and ruling party BPF (Bodoland progressive Front) of BTC and other pro-Bodoland groups thwarted the Gorkhas of disputed region boiling into vicious circle. A senior leader of AAGSU, from Baska district presently residing in Udalguri narrates the situation that Gorkhas where affected from both of the scuffling poles. As the Cadre of ABSS tried to pull minority Gorkha youths to stand in rallies demanding the exclusion of non-Bodo populace villages from BTC and proposed Bodoland whereas groups in other side forced to join picketing to check and encounter the opposing block of Bodoland. As he furthers, in such situation, the minority Gorkhas were to be divided into two opposing poles fighting endogenously several times.

Both the districts in this research operation were not only under the shadow of interethnic antagonism and scuffle but also under the distress of intra-ethnic contention. The region was found to experience the endogamous conflict among Bodo organisations and also among the organizations of linguistic Assamese populace. Ideological differences between the Bodo organizations caused conflict both in latent and manifest state continuously. While BLTF placed the issue of separate state within the Indian sovereignty with the support of CCBM and the NDFB considered it interference on the way of creation of sovereign Boroland. The escalation of the issue

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[117] On Feb 10, 2003, the BLTF, Government of Assam and the Government of India reached a consensus paving the way for peace in Bodo dominated areas. The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was created under the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution with the jurisdiction over four new districts viz., Chirang, Baska, Odalguri and the district of Kokrajhar.

[118] The outfit later renamed as Sanmmilit Janogosthia Aikya Moncho

tore the Bodo dominated areas causing fratricidal conflicts between supporters of the BLTF and the NDFB.

The state administration clamped down army operation. The Gorkhas of the BLTF dominated areas were targeted by the NDFB supporters and so by the BLTF and armies in the areas of NDFB supporters. The intensity of clash between ULFA and SULFA (Surrendered cadres of ULFA) was not less than the fratricidal condition faced in Bodo dominated areas. The active ULFA cadres considered the SULFA members as the betrayers objectifying them to target for revenge. Similarly, penetrating issue of secret killing also found to affect the Gorkhas inhibited in Sonitpur district.

Most of the Gorkha families from the interior parts of the districts had their *Bathan* or *Khuti* (the cattle farm to rear the cows) in forest areas as the primary ethnic source of livelihood. But such *Bathan or khutis* are severely suffering because of existing conflicts and ethnic militarization. A former leader of AGS says that around sixty percent of such *khutis* belonging to Gorkha community have fully disappeared in both Sonitpur and Udalguri districts. Rapid disappearance of this traditional means of livelihood has led to out-migration of youths from the community towards urban areas. A 45 years old respondent expresses his situation as,

> *"... Among with twelve other khuttis belong to neighbours, our family used to have a khutti inside the forest near to the village we live. There were 80 cows in our khutti. Our family used to earn a satisfactory amount of income as at an average, we used to sell 40 to 50 litre of milk every day through out the year. After the emergence of underground militants from various ethnic communities, the forest areas where we used to have our khutti to rear cattle started to reduce as it became a hide out of such militant groups. We khuttiwalas started to be victimized by both militant groups and security personnel. Militants groups forced us to store their food and other material in our khuttis. Often we were charge unaffordable amount of mony as extortion by militant groups. In failure to pay or afford the things they demanded we were harassed. Some of our neighbor khuttiwalas were murdered. Even security personnel often used to harash us. Security personnel thought that khuttis as the shelter and hideout of militant groups. We were beaten and asked the names of militiant group members. In such situation we were in*

double problem. If we denied to name out the members of militant group we were beaten as well as filed the charges as middlemen of such militant groups. Militant groups used to think us as informer to security personnel. We could not sustain and abandon our age old and traditional means of livelihood. We were reduced to jobless. Most of my former counterparts have scattered now to many town and cities in search of manual job. I started to work in Banglore as security guard. I came home to meet my daughter. I have lost whatever amount I have earned. Now again, I am bound to rush towards Banglore to join work as soon as possible."

The problem of militancy and ethnic conflicts has led to internal displacement as well as steady migration of the community from the districts. Some of the affected Gorkha community members have migrated internally within the same districts or neighbouring districts. Migration and displacement has affected the socio-cultural institutions of the community. It was found that a publication house named Surya Prakashan, and Aama-prakashan of Udalguri run by a Nepali literary organization have completely disappeared. During the days of their existence, these publication houses contributed to the flourishing of Nepali literature in the region. Cultural organisations like *Lali-Gurans* (it was only Nepali theatre in state. Assam is rich in traditional theatre culture) *Purbeli Sangitik Munch*, *Sunkhari Aagan and Himali Sanskritik Sangha* do not exist anymore. The studies have shown that many villages in districts of research operation have been fully vacated by the Gorkhas where the community was a dominant populace once few years before. These villages are Teligaon, Garuduba, Dherai-Majuli of Sonitpur. Similarly, Deuchunga, Nunaikhutti, Sadhubasti, Samarang, Bholatari, Dipabasti, Kalikhola, Duwamukha, Amaajuli, Lijingaon, Kalajhar, Phulbari, Sapangaon, Khauranga, Balenguri, Harchinga, Khudunbari, Tarajuli, Tarkhutti, Rajagarh and Bhairabkundagaon of Udaluri district. A leader of NSS and respondents from Panibhandar village of Sonitpur district says that,

"... I used to be the lead character of the popular theatre named Lali-Gurans. The team of the theatre used to move from one place to another in the state to exhibit our show. Due to often outbreak of the conflicts, in several instances we could not complete the show. Sometimes, there would be no audience because of the fear of occurance of unwanted situation. One day, when we were in a show, there was

huge incounter between security personal and banned underground outfit just outside our camp. We characters of the show were to hide the face to save our lives. We were to abandon the program in its first show although the camp was laid for four consecutive days. In another occasion, when we were in the show, our lead female character was dragged from the show by some miscreant outfit. She was misbehaved and threatened to death when denied to marry with the member of the team of miscreants. Next day we stopped all the programs. The management of our team was to repay the price of ticket. We suffered a lot psychologically and economically. Since then we failed to revive our theatre, the prime means of livelihood and, now we member of this theatre are struggling to manage our hand and mouth…"

The recurring Ethno-Political mobilization brought ethnic pricing. The sharp ethnic differentiation and conflicts reflected in every walk of life including ethno-favoritism even in local local market like evening market in villages. Buyers chose to buy things/products from market even like vegetable from the sellers those belong to buyer community and seller preferred to ease the garaging of necessary and product in scarcity to those buyer to belong to same ethnic group. Such ethnic pricing affected the socio-economic sphere of minority community like Gorkhas. Ethnic preference in buying and selling in markets often caused the misery in business run by minority community although in some cases such minorities could get advantages as they were choice of both conflicting parties.

The whole history how this community came to exist in the region was often found to be neglected reducing the community as a historyless community. The community members are often termed as 'outsiders' as well as 'foreigners'. Ignoring the history of community, the Gorkha people are accused to enter in the region taking the advantage of Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty 1950. Hence, organizations from the community like AAGSU and AGS have been raising the issue of Indo-Nepal friendship and peace Treaty 1950 demanding that the Treaty must be repealed. They are demanding to union government for the introduction of visa-passport system between India and Nepal sealing the open border for permanent solution of stereotype and doubtful look over their citizenship.

Due to their small numbers in terms of populations, Gorkha community members are in some cases, rarely in focus of governmental, civil society, humanitarian and scholarly attention. Impacts of ethnic conflicts in these districts (particularly in Udalguri) as well as other parts of the state have usually led to their helplessness and humiliation. A respondent from the Bakaine-dara village of Udalguri district says,

"...the village we live is in the midst of the villages of Bangla Muslims and Bodos. In the month of November 2008, riot between Bengali-Muslim and Bodos erupted. Many houses of both the communities were burnt down. People from both the communities had to take shelter in relief camps. We Gorkhas were in minority in the village and knowing this fact we could not stay back in our houses. Like these two communities, we also left the village and took shelter along with Gorkhas of other neighbouring villages fearing for our lives. The relief team of the government had visited the relief camps of the Bodos and Bengali Muslims providing necessary things required for the daily life. We hoped that the relief team would visit us too. But they did not turn up. Later, some elders among us visited the concerned department. The government officials rejected our proposal thoroughly. We had sought relief. We wanted to return to our homes if some security personnel were deployed in Gorkhas dominated areas in the village. But government official shot down our request saying, "we do not have any access to care the communities who are not reported as affected community. You cannot be recorded as affected population or victims hence there is no logical reason to record you as a bona fide victim..."

Another respondent from Gorudhara village of Sonitpur district explains,

"..."there was a devastating ethnic conflict in our area during the Assam movement also during the initial days of Bodoland movement. All the neighbouring villages were fully burnt down although our village lived of Gorkhas were somehow left untouched. But Gorkhas were frequently thretened by some youths of the conflicting ethnic parties to join them. We did not have option except vacating the village in fear. We took shelter in relief camps. We were seeking relief package haplessly but no attention was paid to our problem. After a few days we returned to the village and found everything deserted except the empty houses. Our miseries

remained unaddressed and unattended with us. It remained even unknown to other people, except us.

Union Governments of country finds short-term solutions of the penetrating problems. State is often found to skip from the problems bringing short-term policy instead of engaging in finding the way for long term pacification and conflict transformation. A leader of AAGSU says,

"…governments need to find the permanent solution but often the successive governments in centre as well as in the state try to find the solutions of the problems which appear as momentary only. They try to scape from the problem after very short term relief mechanism only. When government failed to realize the need of wholistic way of redressal of the problems then solution of the problem of one community raise the issue and problems of other community even within the community whose issue were in address. It could be seen cases of Assam accord of 1985, the BAC accord of 1993 and the BTC accord of 2003.

The Gorkha community members were not only found to remain as the receiving end of victimhood of conflicts and misery, but in some cases, they were found to play crucial role in placating the hostile conflicts situations. The community members found to play role as a third ethnic party as well as a mediator party to pacify the conflict(s).

It is not that Gorkha community members suffered as victim of ethnic conflicts, but in many cases, they were advantageous of some developmental steps taken by governments attempting pacification and transformation of conflicts. A local village headman from the community of Budi-suklai village of Udalguri district says,

"…the village we are living did not have any road connectivity life we have in present day. We used to walk miles to reach market. It was very difficult to sell our agro-products. Our children had to bear the pain to roadlessness to reach their schools and colleges. After the movement that was carried by the organizations of Bodo community, central government of India and the state government of Assam were bound to brings some developmental programs like construction of village connecting roads, schools, beautification of market areas,

construction of community halls etc which benefited the communities apart from the Bodos, the community raised the movement against chronic backwardness of the region.

The existing conflict situation and feeling of ethnic marginalization found to create space for ethno self Introspective position among Gorkhas. Educated youths from the community are growing conscious realizing the socio-economic, political, cultural and other status of community. The organizations from the community are reviving to accommodate all necessary ethnic properties, components for socio-economic, cultural and political interest of the community in centre of drawn ethnic boundaries. There have been organizational movements for socio-economic and political security for the community (see detail in appendix X). The proto-middle class from the community is trying to provide leadership for airing Gorkha grievances. Various organizations have been organizing mass rallies, demonstrations and submitting memorandums to the centre and state governments as well as local autonomous bodies seeking security of life and property from time to time. A former General Secreatary of AGS argues,

> *"… Perpetual victimhood in the centre of reccuring ethnic conflicts left us no laternative but to raise our issues to an audible platform through mobilisation of the community we belong to. Our youths started to realize seeing the path of our other ethnic counterparts that when our democratic and constitutional rights are not properly inlpemented by the people in policy implementation, only means left is to make our voice heard. The organizations from the Gorkha community are leading the democratic movement for the rights like, ST status to community, reservation in governmental institutions and jobs, introduction of our language in educational institutions, development of roads, market, construction of the cultural halls to preserve the culture and custom of the community. Our organizations are now demanding the constructions of stuatues of our forefather like Chhabilal Upadhyaya, Dalbir Singh Lohar, Bishnulal Upadhyaya, Hariprasad Gorkha Rai, Hari Bhakta Katual and so on of those who sacrifice and laid down their lives during freedom movement of the country, the language movement in the state and other socio-economic development in larger context of the society in state …"*

From the above ground level study it is understandable that the political environment of Assam is undergoing through number of Ethno-Political upheaval shaping its present political state. Such politics has brought discernible changes in the composition of the socio-political structure of the society through violent as well as peaceful means. The minority communities like Gorkha community of the valley has always been in the centre of those politics and confrontations over time. The implications of such sub-national politics contestations and conflicts on Gorkhas have been a considerable issue. Especially the case and status of small linguistic and cultural groups in space of identity mobilization and ethno-nationalistic contestations and conflicts is found to be vulnerable.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

After the World witnessed two devastating world wars, i.e., the first and second World Wars, intra-state conflicts have been the major challenges to the states globally since the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century. Often the key reasons behind such intra-state conflicts have been mostly the majority-minority conflicts based on religion culture, language, idenity and ethnicity. In a large extent, the conflicts in both the forms like peaceful as well as disastrous conflicts those modern states facing across the world are in the guise of ethnic division and Ethno-Political mobilisations. The modern states, more or less, are a habitat of a number of minority groups. India is not an exception in this regard as it is also a space of multi-ethnic societies. In fact, the socio-cultural diversity and the extent of distinctiveness of India is unmatched in the world or in comparison to many other countries. The distinctiveness of India's diverse society contains numerous groups which are minority in nature particularly in its North Eastern region. And these minority groups appear on the basis of religion, culture, language, ethnicity and regions. It is perceptible that some of minority groups express feeling of deprivation and alienation in relation to majority groups in the same space of existence.

In nation building process, sometimes even the majority communities in a number of the countries are found to raise the issue of uniform religion, language, culture and ethnicity in a heterogeneous multi-ethnic space. In such situations the worries of minorities apparently discomfort to majority leading both the peaceful as well as violent conflicts with the sense of belongingness and the binary of self and other. Mobilisation in form of majority and minority often shapes into intra-state conflicts.

Ethno-Political Mobilisation, the rise of the feelings of oneness and collective identity of ethnic groups is perceived as a threat over the socio-political and economic

status of other previously privileged community. It is found to lead the competition, conflict and identity polarization between two or more ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society. It is visibly found to occur in a group when it perceives or identifies as being marginalized or deprived. It leads the emergence of a number of political mobilizations holding demonstrations. Ethnic disintegration, ethnic division and ethnic political mobilizations are the most challenging situations the modern states are facing. On this backdrop, there a number of approaches are in appearance like primordial, instrumentalist-mordernist, constructivist-situationalist defining ethnicity and Ethno-Political mobilisation.

The primordialist approach focuses objective basis of ethnic groups and their membership through common descent the members of the group share. From the writings of Edward Shils, Steven Krosby, and Clifford Geertz in this relation it can be traced that the basis of ethnicity is the blood relationship within the members of a group which is more or less endogamous, historical-cultural community. The argument adds that the primary blood bond is dominant in strengthening the emotional attachment and loyalty towards the sense of belongingness to the group. Ethnicity is attributed and given, and it surpasses to individual orientation and personal situations. It is a property of the ethnic group and everyone is born into a group. The strength of the ethnic attachments is blood ties and emotional sense of belongingness to the same. The primordialist approach further adds that every individual carries with him some 'attachments derived from his place of birth, kinship relationship, religion, language and social practices which are natural for him, spiritual in nature and that provide a basis for an easy affinity with other people from the same background.

The advocates of the instrumentalist or modernist approach like Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Paul R. Brass and so forth attempt to portray ethnicity as part of the process of modernisation. According to their arguments, ethnicity is the product of political myths, created and manipulated by cultural elites in pursuit of advantages and power. The Intrumentalists or Modernist approach treats ethnicity as a remnant of the pre-industrial order gradually declining in significance as the modern state and national integration advance, and the assimilation of ethnic minorities occurs.

The constructivist or situationalist approach appears as opponent to both the former approaches. This approach emphases that ethnicity is socially constructed by people depending on the situation they live. What really matters for the constructivist or situationalist approach is that people define themselves as culturally distinct from others. Shared descent is secondary and may be manufactured or invented. Fictive kinship, invented blood ties may serve their purpose as well as real ties. The arguments on ethnicity put forwarded by scholars like Federik Barth and Donald Horowitz and Dipankar Gupta loosely fit into this.s

The scholars like Pahi Saikia, Charles Tilly, Sidney Torrow, Gayatri Chakravorthy Spivak define issues related to Ethno-Political mobilization as a process by which members of a group collectively organize around an ascriptive identity for example, language, religion, customs, origin or interests to achieve collective goals. It is a process or outcome of a social movement by a particular ethnic group and it possibly happens when members of such group commonly share a feeling of marginalization or victimization in a given society. It is as a process that occurs before protest activities erupt and a social movement takes place. Scholar like Spivak analyse that formation of ethno nationalism may vary from one region to other and from one socio-cultural values but the very essence of it remain the same in all the places and the essence 're-memoration' of the feeling of one-ness, feeling of collective identities based on historical narratives, cultural homogeneity and geographical space.

From the observation, it may be drawn that since the late 1960s scholarly attentions with such Ethnic mobilization and conflict have been the main obsession and it remains a central focus for the research in 1990s and to till date. India is also not free in this regard. India, right from the beginning of its post-colonial space has been witnessing a number of conflicts based on Ethno-Political mobilisations. The Dravidian movement, the Khalistan confrontation, *swadhin Axom* movement, Naga secessionism, the Mizo unrest, the Gorkhaland demerger unrest, the separate Bodoland movement are some examples of internal ethnic issues in the country. Predominantly, the North Eastern region of the country has been frequently reported with conflicts and violence. Such conflicts and violence in the region have been often ethnic in nature. The Ethno-Political mobilizations and conflicts in the region are

varied and sometimes overlapped. There have been secessionist movements of NSCN, the Independence State of Assam led by ULFA. The Kamatapur and Kangleipak are revivalist movements in nature to revive the old kingdoms. The movement for separate state for Bodos, Garos and Tripuris are time and again reported for peaceful as well as violent manifestations. The ethnic autonomy movements, Schedule Tribe (ST) status movements also are manifested with huge mobilizations that are ethnic in nature. The inter ethnic conflicts like Dimasa-Hmar riots, Naga-Kuki conflict, Paite-Hmar conflict, Gorkha-Khasi conflict, the Bodo-Santal conflict, the Bodo-Rajbongshi conflict and the Bodo-Bengali Muslim conflict resulted in economic and psychological damage and wretchedness.

Among North Eastern states of India, particularly Assam is witness to a number of Ethno-Political mobilizations and many times victim of violent manifestations since the early days of post colonial space of the country. The scholars of the concerned field observe that the nation-building process generated the scope to perceive the threat to lingo-cultural existence of peripheral groups. Such perception started to overlap one over the other in Assam with conflicting manifestations. The Assamese nationalist leaders' apprehension over discursive agenda bagged by Indian nation-building process caused the agitation in Assam for the security of language and society during 60s, 70s and 80s of last century. In some cases the policies of Indian policy makers and successive governments were perceived a threat to Assamese nationalism and manifested through various agitations, particularly during Assam Movement led by AASU and AAGSP. Later the perception of threat to Assamese language and culture was admitted by the ruling class of the country granting safeguard mechanisms to protect the same.

The safeguard mechanism prepared for Assamese language and culture started to grow as a reference to other local sub-nationalist forces. Agendas those were taken to secure the Assamese nationalism opened a space to perceive threats of it over other non-Assamese-linguistic ethnic groups. In this regards the Bodo ethnic group appeared as a prime one. The educated Bodo youths led an agitation demanding constitutional mechanism to protect Bodo language and culture from Assamese-ism also considered as 'Assamization'. The national policy formulators, to some extent, tried to exhaust the anxiety of Bodo leaders granting safeguard apparatus to protect

187

the Bodo language and culture albeit such apparatuses have been considered to be insufficient.

In the course of expressing anxiety and apprehension over dominant discourse through peaceful as well as violent methods in Assam, elites from disgruntled group(s) imagined own community primordializing the past in "history of present". It has broken the collectively shared "history of past". Instead of imagining that 'what we are' often it has been imagined that 'what others are not', mapping the socio-cultural political cartography between primordialised "imagined we" and "imagined others". En route, the history collectively shared by Gorkha community in "history of past" in Assam has been negated. Presence and nationality of community in present space of Assam has been reduced to 'alien others' subjugating through marginalization, victimization in guise of Agambenian "bare-life". The sub-nationalistic forces in the state started to see the national policies as 'Indianization'. In Assam, the national policies began to be seen as a threat to Assamese nationalism. This feeling of insecurity to Assamese nationalism is reflected in the Language movement of 1960 and 1972, and the 'anti-foreigner' movement of (1979 to 1985). The threat to 'Assamese nationalism' as perceived by the Assamese nationalist leaders was somewhat solved, but it again became a source of suspicion for the Bodos and called it 'Assamization'. The fear of 'Assamization' led the Bodo ethnic identity movement paving for the demand of Bodoland since 1986. The contestation between 'Assamese nationalism' and 'Bodo nationalism' remained a constant source of conflict(s) in Assam.

As the result of ethnic standoff and sub-national contestations the region witnessed ethnic militarization. Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) emerged as an underground outfit refueling the demand of a separate Bodoland state within the Indian federal union while the Adivasi Cobra Militants of Assam (ACMA) underground outfit has been fighting for ST status to the Adivasi community (Santal and tea garden workers) and also protesting certain policies of Bodoland movement. Underground outfits like Minority United Liberation Tiger of Assam (MULTA), the Bengali Liberation Tiger Force (BeLT) also came into existence. Such ethnic militancy is found to affect the ethic-life word of the Gorkhas along with other communities.

The problems were sought to be resolved through constitutional mechanisms, yet the contestation(s) remain unabated. In the midst of the Bodo-Assamese contestation, violence between Assamese, Bodos, Bangla speaking Muslims, Rajbongshis and Santal broke out regularly. There have been number of ethnic conflict(s) in the state of Assam. Similarly, there were polarized Ethno-Political mobilization and sub-national assertions in search of identity and autonomy. The limited and fragmented study on Gorkhas of Assam shows that the community in the state has been victim falling in cross fire and constantly targeted group during such contestations and conflicts. A comprehensive attempt has been made to understand the issue of Gorkhas addressing the issues like socio-economic and political conditions, and the role played by the said community during such contestations.

Gorkha community of the state is found to have a deep-rooted history prior to the arrival of British colonial masters in the country as well as the North Eastern region and Assam in particular. Though a section of the Gorkha population came to the region during British colonial age, the presence of the community in the region has its root since the beginning of history of the state. This existence is contributed in a major way by the nature of the region before and during the colonial cartography became a crucial apparatus of governance under British colonial master. From a deeper observation it comes to appear that the trend of marginalization of the Gorkhas in the region started sice colonial rule. The colonial masters branded the community as a 'martial race' deploying the community as a "revenue machine" and an "instrumentalised force" to discard anti colonial insurrections raised by diverse local communities. Other than the status of "Graziers/cultivators" for the legal protection with Tribal communities of the region under Assam land and revenue regulation act, 1886, there were rare evidences in colonial policies those carried for the socio-political, cultural and economic welfare. This attitude of the colonial masters gave them an identity of 'martial coolie', 'grazier coolie' and 'plantation coolie' which served to make the community an imagined Diaspora in the post colonial space in the region.

After the departure of the colonial masters, the Gorkha community was ensured the constitutional safeguards as "Protected Class" in tribal belts/blocks areas along with the tribal community in the Assam particularly in its Brahmaputra valley

since November 5, 1947. But after independence when the nationalist leaders of the country started to frame a unified 'Indian nation', they took a different approach. The North Eastern region, importantly the northern bank of Brahmaputra valley was soon drawn into Ethno-Political mobilization, contestations and conflicts of sub-nationalist forces. In this context, the Gorkhas of state became soft targets. Anti-Gorkha sentiment was whipped by labeling them as illegal migrants. They were declared as a disturbing element to the indigenous community. The status of "Protected Class", the constitutional safeguards of the community in state was taken away in 1969. However it was retained in 1996 after a huge constitutional fight back got underway by pioneering organizations representing the community. A local leader of community expresses, there is still a conspiracy to prepare a policy mechanism to disallow the land rights of Gorkhas along with other communities of "protected class" in the BTC region of Assam. The approval to such mechanism, as he furthered, prevents the communities under the category of "protected class" of the region from selling and buying or other form of exchange of land that they own since generation.

The study has revealed that the Gorkhas are suffering from the rejection of the history that they have been living in Assam and the region. Despite the community being a part and parcel of the collective past of the region, it hardly finds any space on equal footing in the state. The community has been passing through several critical positions and situations in the space of conflicts and contestation. Due to their small numbers in terms of the population, they have rarely been in focus of governmental, civil society, humanitarian and scholarly attentions. Impact of ethnic conflicts in the state particularly in the areas of this research as well as other parts of the state has usually led to their helplessness and humiliation. Such positions and situations of the community have become a growing concern among the seducated youths of the community. There have been organizational movements for socio-economic and political security for the community. The proto-middle class from the community tries to provide leadership for grievances of the community. Various organizations have been organizing mass rallies, demonstrations and submitting memorandums to the centre and state governments as well as local autonomous bodies seeking security of life and property from time to time.

The AAGSU, the erstwhile AANSU have been demanding Indo-Nepal Friendship Treaty of 1950 must be repealed. In a rally organized at Dhubri district of the state in January 1996, the organization protested against not-fulfillment of the assurances made by the Union and state governments. In a memorandum submitted to union and state government it demanded the introduction of visa-passport system between India and Nepal sealing the open border, permanent settlement to Nepali settlers who were evicted, introduction of Nepali language in all educational institutions, membership of Gorkhas in the UPSC and APSC and their inclusion in Schedule Tribes (ST) status as the bona fide citizen of the land. Similarly, the issue of identity problem has been occupying an important space in the intelligentsia and politicians and non-political organizational circle. The All Assam Nepali Students' Union was renamed after 26 years suffixing the word 'Gorkha' in place of the word 'Nepali' in March 22, 2002. Bhaskar Dahal, the then president of the organization strongly defended the plea that the word 'Gorkha' subsumes the identity of the community in the state. He added that the community has been a victim of a sustained campaign to project Gorkhas as immigrants from Nepal and, the government of India never paid heed to demands to repeal the treaty which has proved deceitful to the Gorkhas of the Assam.

Keshab Chhetry, the office bearer of BPF says that it is the need of time that the voice of the community should be heard. The Special Protected Caste Demand Committee (SPCDC) and Gorkha Autonomous Council Demand Committee (GACDC), the political parties headed by the leaders from the community in collaboration of Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU) have been raising the demand of Gorkha Autonomous Council (GAC) in the state. In this regard, Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharya, the then adviser of AASU and the president of North East Students Organization (NESO) exerted pressure on the government of Assam and India that the demand for Gorkha Autonomous Council (GAC) carried by AAGSU is a legal and mandatory right of Gorkhas of Assam. Other organizations viz., All Assam Moran Students' Union (AAMSU), Human Rights Organization of Assam (HROA), Matak Juva Sammion, and All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA), assured moral support for the demand of Gorkha Autonomous Council and other constitutional demands.

The state of Assam is at a crucial in point of time as strident division of social and political forces is noticeable in relation to their approach to distinctiveness and progress. In this situation, the authorities and forces concerned for harmony and maintaining congeniality in multi-ethnic space as well and national integration have vital roles to play. The grievances of the minority like Gorkhas need a sincere consideration and realistic resolution. The government should give an equal footing to this community (Gorkha) with all the communities in the state.

Governments should protect the socio-economic and political rights as well as the cultural uniqueness of various communities in a given multi-ethnic space. Homen Borgohain, the then president of Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) in his presidential address at the Dibrugarh session of the ASS in 2001 said that the attitude toward the Nepali should be similar to the other indigenous tribes of Assam. On December 24th, 2005, Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharya, the adviser of AASU and the then president of North East Students Organization (NESO) substantiated the call of Homen Borgohain when he stressed that Gorkhas are on integral part of greater indigenous communities of Assam. Similarly, Kampa Borogoyary, the deputy chief of Bodoland Territorial Council states, "Gorkhas have always been close to the pain and suffering of the society in BTC, particularly of Bodos and there for it is the duty of BTC authority to ensure that their political, social, economic, linguistic, academic and cultural development must be on an equal footing with Bodos. Bodo leaders can never forget the contribution of Gorkhas in the BTC".

It has been observed that when two or more ethnic groups are in the direct conflict through Ethno-Political mobilisation, ethnic competition or ethnic contestations, many other small or minority ethnic communities belonging to the same multi-ethnic space remain silent or free from self assertive contestation. But such minority communities could not remain untouched and unaffected during the problem of contestations and conflicts since these are aggravated by assertive ethnic groups. Conflict situation in multi-ethnic space may affect the entire communities who share the same space. Especially the small or minority ethnic communities in the area of conflict are found to be affected directly and indirectly. The study of Gorkhas of Udalguri and Sonitpur district of Assam appears juxtaposed to this observation

although it may not be easy to derive generalizations from a preliminary study like the present one.

Gorkhas in Assam has been found to be a minority community in the state and in the centre of minorities. The state of Assam is a home of minority in hierarchical layers. The state has been the witness of overlapping Ethno-Political mobilisations and recurring conflicts. Assamese nationalist leaders perceived threat to Assamese language and culture. The solving of the problems of the Assamese nationalist leaders found to generate fear among Bodo caused manifestation of grievances. Similarly, the short term address to Bodo issue could not solve the problem rather caused proliferations of ethnic contestations and conflicts in the state.

In one hand some radical Assamese linguistic nationalist elites considered Assam as the colony under Indian domain and in other, Bodo leaders identified proposed Bodoland or Bodo dominated area as colonized by Dispur. Similarly the non-Bodo ethnic organizations started to accuse Bodo leaders of dominating other ethnic communities. The race of strengthening the militia outfits in each of the ethnic groups i.e., Bodo, Adivasi, Rajbongshi, Bengali-Hindu and Bengali-Muslims caused large scale extortion, ransom and murders. In space of polarized ethnic militarization, the Gorkhas emerged as a sandwiched community, caught in the cross fire. The result of ethnic militancy was clearly visible in few cases of victimhood of the Gorkha community. Gorkha minority in such situations was forced to be divided into various opposing poles of conflicting parties in multiethnic contestation space. Gorkhas and the history of the community is found to be marginalized in the space of contestation and conflict. The community members are often termed as 'outsiders' as well as 'foreigners'. Ignoring the history of community, the Gorkhas are accused to have entered the region by taking advantage of the Indo-Nepal Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1950.

The recurring violent Ethno-Political mobilisation and conflicts have greatly hampered the tradition and primary means of livelihood like *Bathan* or *Khuti* (the cattle farm to rear cattle) of Gorkha community in Udalguri and Sonitpur. Rapid disappearance of this traditional means of livelihood has led to out-migration of youths from the community towards urban areas. The problem of militancy and ethnic conflicts has also led to internal displacement as well as steady migration of the

community from the districts. Migration and displacement has affected the socio-cultural institutions of the community. Many villages of these districts have been fully vacated by the Gorkhas where they used to be a dominant populace.

The recurring Ethno-Political mobilisation has brought practice of ethnic pricing in the space of contestation and conflict. Ethnic pricing has affected the socio-economic sphere of minority community like the Gorkhas. Ethnic preference in buying and selling in markets has often been the cause of misery in businesses run by minority community although in some cases such minorities derived advantages as they were chosen of both conflicting parties. Issues of the Gorkha community members are rarely found to be the focus of governmental, civil society, humanitarian and scholarly attention. Impacts of ethnic conflicts in the districts of this study (particularly in Udalguri) as well as other parts of the state have usually led to their helplessness and humiliation. Governments of the country try to find short-term solutions of the penetrating problems. State often found to skip from the problems bringing short-term policy instead of engaging in finding the way for long term pacification and conflict transformation. The Gorkha community not only remains at the receiving end of victimhood of conflicts and misery, but in some cases, they are found to play a crucial role in placating hostile conflicts situations. The community, in many instances, played crucial role of mediator as a third ethnic party to pacify the conflict(s).

Educated youths from the community are growing conscious and realizing the socio-economic, political, cultural and other status of community. There have been organizational movements for socio-economic and political security for the community. Various organizations have been organizing mass rallies, demonstrations and submitting memorandums to the centre and state governments as well as local autonomous bodies seeking security of life and property from time to time. It has been observed from this study that the afflicted situation created by recurrent ethnic contestation(s) and conflict is leading the Ethno-Political mobilisation of Gorkhas in Assam.

The society in Assam has witnessed politics in various dynamics over a period of time and it has shaped the present political environment of the state. Such politics has brought discernible changes in the composition of the socio-political structure of the society through violent as well as peaceful means. The Gorkha community of the

state has always been in the centre of those politics and confrontations over time and again. The social history is rich with narratives of pain, agony and pride. The myriad identities and cultural groups indeed form a synthesis of a different kind. It is as much a challenge for the community leaders as it is for the governments. The government has a desirable task of maintaining community on one hand and in other, to protect the democratic rights of the marginalized groups. Restoring law and order can be done purely through use of state force democratically and with common acceptance. Nonetheless, perpetuating harmony is much more difficult. Even more difficult is the task of protecting the freedom and dignity of the people. The coming days will be exciting and interesting times.

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APPENDIX I

Treaty of Segowlee: 2nd December, 1815

Treaty of peace between the Honourable East India Company and Mhaha Raja Bikram Sah, Rajan of Nipal, settled between Lieutenant Colonel Bradshaw on the part of Honourable Company, in virtue of the full powers vested in him by His Excellency the Right Honourable Francis, Earl of Moira, Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garte, one of His Majesty's Most Honourable Pirvy Council, appointed by the Court of Directors of the said Honourable Company to direct and control all the affairs in the East Indies, and by Sree Gooro Gujraj Misser and Chunder Seekur Opedeea on the part of Maha Raja Girmaun Jode Bikram Sah Bahadur, Shumsher Jung, in virtue of the powers to that effect vested in them by the said Rajah of Nipal, - 2nd December 1815.

Whereas was has arisen between the Honourable East India Company and the Rajah of Nipal, and whereas the parties are mutually disposed to restore the relations of peace and amity which, previously to the occurrence of the late differences, had long subsisted between the two States, the following terms of peace have been agreed upon:

Article 1st

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honourable East India Company and the Rajah of Nipal.

Article 2nd

The rajah of Nipal renounces all claim to the lands which were the subjects of discussion between the two states before the war, and acknowledges the right of the Honourable Comapany to the sovereignty of those lands.

Article 3rd

The rajah of Nipal hereby cedes to the Honourable the East India Company in perpetuity all the under mentioned territories, viz –

First :- The whole of the low lands between the Rivers Kali and Rapti

213

Secondly: - The whole of the low lands (with the exceptions of Bootwul Khass) lying between the Rapti and Gunduck

Thirdly: - The whole of the low lands between the Gunduck and Coosah, in which the authority of the British Government has been introduced, or is in actual course of introduction.

Fourthly: - All the low lands between the Rivers Mitchee and the Teestah.

Fifthly :- All the territories withing the hills eastward of the River Mitchee including the fort and lands of Nagree and the Pass of Nagarcote leading from Morung into the hills, together with the territory lying between that Pass and Nagree. The aforesaid territory lying shall be evacuated by the Gurkha troops within forty days from this date.

Article 4th

With a view to indemnify the Chiefs and Barahdars of the state of Nipal, Whose interests will suffer by the alienation of the lands cede by the foregoing Article, the British Government agrees to settle pensions to the aggregate amount of two lakhs of rupees per annum on such Chiefs as my be selected by the Rajah of Nipal, and in the proportions which the Rajah may fix. As soon as the selection is made, Sunnuds shall be granted under the seal and signature of the Governor General for the pensions respectively.

Article 5th

The Rajah of Nipal renounces for himself, his heirs, and successors, all claim to or connexion with the countries lying to the west of the River Kali and engages to have any concern with those countries or the inhabitants thereof.

Article 6th

The Rajah of Nipal engages never to molejst or disturb the Rajah of Sikkim in the possession of his territories; but agrees, if any differences shall arise between the State of Nipal and the Rajah of Sikkim, or the subjects of either, that such differences shall be referred to that arbitration of the British Government by whose award the Rajah of Nipal engages to abide.

Article 7th

The Rajah of Nipal hereby engages never to take or retain in his service any British subject, nor the subject of any European and American State, without the consent of the British Government.

Article 8th

In order to secure and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two States, it is agreed that accredited Ministers from each shall reside at the Courts of the other.

Article 9

This treaty, consisting of nine Articles, shall be ratified by the Rajah of Nipal within fifteen days from this date, and the ratification shall be delivered to Lieut-Colonel Bradshaw, who engages to obtain and deliver to the Rajah the ratification of the Governor-General within twenty days, or sooner, if practicable.

APPENDIX II

Treaty of Yandaboo, 24th February 1826

TREATY of PEACE between the HONORABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY on the one part, and HIS MAJESTY the KING of AVA on the other, settled MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL, K.C.B., and K.C.T.S., COMMANDING the EXPEDITION, and SENIOR COMMISSIONER in PEGU and AVA; THOMAS CAMPBELL ROBERTSON, ESQ., CIVIL COMMISSIONER in PEGU and AVA; and HENRY DUCIE CHAD, ESQ., CAPTAIN, COMMANDING BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S and the HONORABLE COMPANY'S NAVAL FORCE the IRRAWADDY RIVER, on the part of the Honorable Company; and by MENGYEE-MAHA-MEN- KYAN-TEN WOONGYEE, LORD of LAYKAING, and MENGYEE-MARA-HLAH- THUO-HAH-THOO-ATWEN-WOON, LORD of the REVENUE, on the part of the King of Ava; who have each communicated to the other their full powers, agreed to and executed at Yandaboo in the Kingdom of Ava, on this Twenty-fourth day of February, in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six, corresponding with the Fourth day of the decrease of the Moon Taboung, in the year One Thousand One Hundred and Eighty-seven Gaudma Era, 1826.

ARTICLE 1

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honorable Company on the one part, and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other.

ARTICLE 2

His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty States of Cachar and Jyntia. With regard to Munnipoor it is stipulated, that should Ghumbheer Sing desire to return to that country, he shall be recognized by the King of Ava as Rajah thereof.

ARTICLE 3

To prevent all future disputes respecting the boundary line between the two great

Nations, the British Government will retain the conquered Provinces of Arracan, including the four divisions of Arracan, Ramree, Cheduba, and Sandoway, and His Majesty the King of Ava cedes all right thereto. The Unnoupectoumien or Arakan Mountains (known in Arakan by the name of the Yeomatoung or Pokhingloung Range) will henceforth form the boundary between the two great Nations on that side. Any doubts regarding the said line of demarcation will be settled by Commissioners appointed by the respective governments fur that purpose, such Commissioners from both powers to be of suitable and corresponding rank.

ARTICLE 4

His Majesty the King of Ava cedes to the British Government the conquered Provinces of Yeh, Tavoy, and Mergui and Tenasserim, with the islands and dependencies thereunto appertaining, taking the Salween River as the line of demarcation on that frontier ; any doubts regarding their boundaries will be settled as specified in the concluding part of Article third.

ARTICLE 5

In proof of the sincere disposition of the Burmese Government to maintain the relations of peace and amity between the Nations, and as part indemnification to the British Government for the expenses of the War, His Majesty the King of Ava agrees to pay the sum of one crore of Rupees.

ARTICLE 6

No person whatever, whether native or foreign, is hereafter to be molested by either party, on account of the part which the map have taken or have been compelled to take in the present war.

ARTICLE 7

In order to cultivate and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two governments, it is agreed that accredited ministers, retaining an escort or safeguard of fifty men, from each shall reside at the Durbar of the other, who shall be permitted to purchase, or to build a suitable place of residence, of permanent materials; and a Commercial Treaty, upon principles of reciprocal advantage, will be entered into by the two high contracting powers.

ARTICLE 8

All public and private debts contracted by either government, or by the subjects of either government, with the others previous to the war, to be recognized and liquidated upon the same principles of honor and good faith as if hostilities had not taken place between the two Nations, and no advantage shall be taken by either party of the period that may have elapsed since the debts were incurred, or in consequence of the war ; and according to the universal law of Nations, it is further stipulated, that the property of all British subjects who may die in the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava., shall, in the absence of legal heirs, be placed in the hands of the British Resident or Consul in the said dominions, who will dispose of the same according to the tenor of the British law. In like manner the property of Burmese subjects dying under the same circumstances, in and part of the British dominions, shall be made over to the minister or other authority delegated by His Burmese Majesty to the Supreme Government of India.

ARTICLE 9

The Kink of Ava will abolish all exactions upon British ships or vessels in Burman ports, that are not required from Burmah ships or vessels in British port nor shall ships or vessels, the property of British subjects, whether European or Indian, entering the Rangoon River or other Burman ports, be required to land their guns, or unship their rudders, or to do any other act not required of Burmese ships or vessels in British ports.

ARTICLE 10

The good and faithful Ally of the British Government, His Majesty the King of Siam, having taken a part in the present War, will, to the fullest extent, as far as regards His Majesty and his subjects, be included in the above Treaty.

ARTICLE 11

This Treaty to be ratified by the Burmese authorities competent in the like cases, and the Ratification to be accompanied by all British, whether Europe or Native, American, and other prisoners, who will be delivered over to the British Commissioners ; the British Commissioners on their part engaging that the said Treaty shall be ratified by the Right Honorable the Governor-General in Council ,and the Ratification shall be delivered to His Majesty the King of Ava in four months, or

sooner if possible, and all the Burmese

prisoners shall, in like manner be delivered over to their own Government as soon as they arrive from Bengal.

ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL. LARGEEN MEONJA, *Woonghee.*

T. C. ROBERTSON,

Civil Commissioner. SEAL OF THE LOTOO. HY. D. CHADS, *Captain, Royal Navy.* SHWAGUM WOON, *Atawoon.*

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE

The British Commissioners being most anxiously desirous to manifest the sincerity of their wish for peace, and to make the immediate execution of the fifth Article of this Treaty as little irksome or inconvenient as possible to His Majesty the King of Ava, consent to the following arrangements, with respect to the division of the sum total, as specified in the Article before referred to, into instalments, *viz.*, upon the payment of twenty-five lacks of Rupees, or one-fourth of the sum total (the other Articles of the Treaty being executed), the Army will retire to Rangoon. Upon the further payment of a similar sum at that place within one hundred days from this date, with the proviso as above, the Army will evacuate the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava with the least possible delay, leaving the remaining moiety of the sum total to be paid by equal annual instalments in two years, from this Twenty-fourth day of February 1826 A.D., through the Consul or Resident in Ava or Pegu, on the part of the Honorable the East India Company.

ARCHIBALD CAMPBELL. LARGEEN MEONJA, *Woongee.*

T. C. ROBERTSON, Civil Commissioner

SEAL OF THE LOTOO HY. D. CHADS,

Captain, Royal Navy. SHWWAGUM WOON, *Atawoon*

Ratified by the Governor-General in Council, at Fort William in Bengal, this Eleventh day of April, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six.

AMHERST. COMBERMERE.

J. H. HARINGTON. W. B. BAYLEY.

From: C. U. Aitchison, ed. *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads: Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*. Vol. XII. Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1931, 230-233.

APPENDIX III

THE ASSAM LAND AND REVENUE REGULATION, 1886

REGULATION 1 OF 1886 [As amended]

(Vide Government Notification No. RD281/47/43, dated 24th August/1984) CHAPTER IX RULES FRAMED UNDER SECTION 171 OF CHAPTER X OF THE ASSAM LAND AND REVENUE

REGULATION FOR DISPOSAL OF LAND WITHIN THE TRIBAL BELTS OR BLOCKS

1. The disposal of land within the Tribal belts or blocks constituted under the provisions of section 161 of the regulation shall be made in accordance with the provisions of those rules. Settlement of waste land shall be made only with the classes of people, notified under section 160(2) and specified in section 163(2) of the Regulation.

   [All powers of the Deputy Commissioner under these rules shall be exercised subject to any general or special orders issued from time to time by the State Government.]

2. In these rules —

   [An annual lease means a lease granted for one year only and confers no right in the soil beyond a right of user for the year for which it is given. It confers no right of inheritance beyond the year of issue. It confers no 'right of transfer or sub-letting and shall be liable to cancellation for any transfer or sub-letting even during the year of issue. Provided that the State Government may waive their right to cencel an annual lease and may allow its renewal till such time as the State Government may direct in those cases in which the land is mortgaged to Government or to a State sponsored Co-operative Society".

   A periodic lease, except in the case of town land, means a lease granted for a period longer then one year, and in the case of town land, a lease for a period longer than three years Subject to and so far as is consistent with any restrictions, conditions and limitations contained therein, a periodic lease, the term of which is not less than ten years conveys to the lessee the rights of a landholder as defined in the Assam land

and Revenue Regulation.]

(Cultivators pertaining to the following classes namely plains tribals, hill tribals, tea garden tribals, Santals, Nepali cultivator-graziers and Scheduled Castes have since been notified as persons entitled to protection, vide Notification No. RD69/46/19, dated the 5th December, 1947) Person enlitled, means persons notified under section 160(2). Waste land means land at the disposal of the Government which the Government has not disposed of by lease, grant or otherwise, and which is not included in a forest reserve, or in a forest proposed to be reserved under section 5 of the Assam Forest Regulation, VII of 1891, or in a protected forest constituted under the rules made under the said Regulation, and has not been allotted as a grazing ground under rules framed under section 13 of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation.

3. Settlement of land under these rules will be only on written application to be made to the Deputy Commissioner, or the Officer empowered in this behalf under section 168 of the Regulation, or any officer specially authorised by the Deputy Commissioner to entertain applications on his behalf. (Deleted vide Notification No. RSS.351/64/97, dated 18th May 1967)

4. On receipt of the application the Deputy Commissioner or an officer deputed by him or the officer empowered in his behalf will enquire into the availability of the land and the claims of the persons entitled to obtain settlement.

5. (Substituted vide Notification No. RSS.351/64/97, dated 18th May 1967) [(1) In making settlement of land the Provisions of Section 163(2) shall be strictly followed and settlement shall be made for each class of people in compact blocks as far as possible. Where compact blocks of 50 bighas or more are available settlement shall be made ordinarily with registered Co-operative Societies formed by actual landless cultivators belonging to the classes of persons notified under section 160 (2) or mentioned in Section 163(2).

(2) When settlement has to be given to individuals, the area shall ordinarily be limited to a bighas to 12 bighas per family according to the fertility of the soil. In given to individuals, preference shall be given in the following order:—

(a) Settlement holders belonging to classes of persons notified under Section 160(2)

or mentioned in section 163(2) who have been rendered landless due to flood, erosion or earthquake or due requisition or acquisition of their lands by Government for public purposes.

(b) Landless cultivators belonging to a classes of persons notified under Section 160(2) or mentioned in Section 163(2).

(c) Cultivator of the classes mentioned above having landless than 8bighas.

Note – (1) A person who holds land less then 8 bighas in his name or in the name of any member of his family shall be eligible to get settlement of only so much of land as shall, together with his existing holding, not exceed 8 or 12 bighas, as the case may be.

Note – (2) In case of tribal communities who live in community house according to tribal customs' all the residents in such community house or Chang need not necessarily be treated as one family, and for the purpose or calculation of the number of families, every five member of the Chang shall be treated as forming one family]

6. All settlement shall in the first instance be on annual lease; the land should be cleared and brought under cultivation except such areas as are required for growing thatch and sun grass for bonafide use of the family or for the grazing of cattle. No annual lease shall be renewed unless this condition is complied with, provided that the Deputy Commissioner may exempt from the operation of this rule case in which he is satisfied that the failure on the para of the settlement holder is due to circumstances beyond his control.

7. Land settled on annual lease may be converted into periodic lease when the conditions prescribed in rule 105 of the Land Records Manual are fulfilled, [and the requisite premium, if any, fixed by the State Government has been paid.]

8. No, land held under annual lease shall be transferred or sublet. If any such land in transferred or sublet in contravention of this rule the settlement shall forthwith be terminated. Provided that if the settlement holder dies during the currency of the lease the heirs of the deceased will inherit for the remainder of the term [Provided further that the State Government may waive their right to cancel an annual lease and may allow its renewal till such time as the State Government may direct in those cases in which the land is mortgaged to Government or to a State-sponsored Co-operative Society.]

9. Except in the case of estates mentioned in section 162(3), lands held under periodic lease may be transferred subject to the following condition:—

A land holder may transfer or sublet his holding or any part of it within the belts or blocks only to persons belonging to the class of people notified under section 160(2) or those mentioned in Section 163(2) (i) (b) and (c), [or mortgage the whole or a part of his holding within such belt or block to Government or to a State-sponsored Cooperative Society functioning within such belt or block] If any transfer is made in contravention of this rule the lease shall be cancelled forthwith with the approval of Government and the land holder will forfeit his right and status in respect of the land so transferred.

10. If any person is found in occupation of any annual land otherwise than in accordance with the provisions of these rules he will be liable to eviction forthwith.

If any person other than a person belonging to the classes of persons notified under section 160(2) or mentioned in section 163(2) (a) (b) and (c) is found in occupation of any waste land he will be evicted forthwith.

In the case mentioned above the Deputy Commissioner or officer empowered in this behalf will make a summary enquiry and if he is satisfied that the occupation is unauthorised he will proceed to evict the encroachee forthwith and any structure or crops found on the land will be liable to forfeiture to Government.

11. If any person belonging to the classes of people notified under section 160(2) or mentioned in section 163(2) (a), (b), and (c) is found in occupation of any waste land otherwise than in accordance with these rules he shall be evicted: provided that the Deputy Commissioner or Officer empowered in this behalf may after satisfying himself as to the eligibility of the claim, the bonafide of the occupant and availability of the land, offer settlement of the land in accordance with these rules after realising the back revenue to be assessed from the date of occupation. When evicting a person under this rule the Deputy Commissioner will serve a notice requiring the encroacher to vacate the land within a specified time, and he may, in his discretion, allow or disallow him to remove the structure and harvest the crops within the time so specified.

12. If any person is found in occupation of any land held under a periodic lease otherwise than in accordance with the provisions of these rules he shall be evicted

there from. For the purpose of eviction the Deputy Commissioner will serve a notice requiring the occupant to vacate the land and to remove all structure or crops standing thereon within such period not exceeding one month as he may think fit. Such notice will be served on one or all of the occupants or if the occupants cannot be found it will be sufficient for the purpose of this rule if the notice is ser4vfed by hanging at the last place of residence and pasted on the Gaonbura's notice Board and on the land in question.

If the occupant fails to vacate the land or remove the structures or crops as required in the notice the Deputy Commissioner may forcibly enter into and take possession of the land and destroy the structures or crops found thereon.

Any disobedience of orders will be dealt with under section 188, Indian Penal Code.

13. All other matters which are not covered by the above rules will be governed by the relevant rules under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation.

D K Gangopadhyay

Commissioner& Secretary to the Government of Assam

Revenue Department

May 5, 2003

TREATY OF PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND THE GOVERN MENT OF NEPAL

SIGNED AT KATHMANDU, ON 31st JULY 1950

The Government of India and the Government of Nepal, recognising the ancient ties which have happily existed between the two countries;

Desiring still further to strengthen and develop these ties and to perpetuate peace between the two countries;

Have resolved therefore to enter into a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with each other, and have, for this purpose, appointed as their plenipotentiaries the following persons, namely,

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA:

His EXCELLENCY SHRI CHANDRESHWAR PRASAD NARAIN SINGH, Ambassador of India in Nepal.

THE GOVERNMENT OF NEPAL:

MOHUN SHAMSHER JANG BAHADUR RANA, Maharaja, Prime Minister and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of Nepal, who having examined each other's credentials and found them good and in due form have agreed as follows.

Article 1

There shall be everlasting peace and friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Nepal. The two Governments agree mutually to acknowledge and respect the complete sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of each other,

Article 2

The two Governments hereby undertake to inform each other of any serious friction or misunderstanding with any neighbouring State likely to cause any breach in the friendly relations subsisting between the two Governments.

1 Came into force on 31 July 1950, as from the date of signature, in accordance with article 9,

Article 3

In order to establish and maintain the relations referred to in Article I the two Governments agree to continue diplomatic relations with each other by means of representatives with such staff as is necessary for the due performance of their functions.

The representatives and such of their staff as may be agreed upon shall enjoy such diplomatic privileges and immunities as are customarily granted by international law on a reciprocal basis : Provided that in no case shall these be less than those granted to persons o£ a similar status of any other State having diplomatic relations with either Government.

Article 4

The two Governments agree to appoint Consuls-General, Consuls, Vice- Consuls and other consular agents, who shall reside in towns, ports and other places in each other's territory as may be agreed to.

Consuls-General, Consuls, Vice-Consuls and consular agents shall be provided with exequaturs or other valid authorization of their appointment.

Such exequatur or authorization is liable to be withdrawn by the country which issued it, if considered necessary. The reasons for the withdrawal shall be indicated wherever possible.

The persons mentioned above shall enjoy on a reciprocal basis all the rights, privileges, exemptions and immunities that are accorded to persons of corres pounding status of any other State.

Article 5

The Government of Nepal shall be free to import, from or through the territory of India, arms, ammunition or warlike material and equipment necessary for the security of Nepal. The procedure for giving effect to this arrangement shall be worked out by the two Governments acting in consultation.

Article 6

Each Government undertakes, in token of the neighbourly friendship between India and Nepal, to give to the nationals of the other, in its territory, national treatment with regard to participation in industrial and economic development of such territory and to the grant of concessions and contracts, relating to such development.

Article 7

The Governments of India and Nepal agree to grant, on a reciprocal basis, to the nationals of one country in the territories of the other the same privileges in the matter of residence, ownership of property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and other privileges of a similar nature.

Article 8

So far as matters dealt with herein are concerned, this Treaty cancels all previous Treaties, agreements, and engagements entered into on behalf of India between the British Government and the Government of Nepal.

Article 9

This Treaty shall come into force from the date of signature by both Governments.

Article 10

This Treaty shall remain in force until it is terminated by either party by giving one year's notice.

DONE in duplicate at Kathmandu this 31st day of July 1950.

(Signed) (Signed)

CHANDRESHWAR PRASAD MOHUN SHAMSHER

NARAIN SINGH JANG BAHADUR RANA

For the Government of India for the Government of Nepal.

Central list of OBCs for the state of Assam displays that the Gorkhas (Nepali speakers) of Assam are included in the list of OBC in the state since 1993

CENTRAL LIST OF OBCs FOR THE STATE OF ASSAM

Entry No	Caste/ Community	Resolution No. & Date
1.	Ahom	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
2.	Baria	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
3.	Barui	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
4.	Barjubi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
5.	Baroi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
6.	Chutia, Chutiya	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
7.	Choudang	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
8.	Ganak in Districts of Cachar, Karimganj & Hailakandi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993 2011/21/95-BCC dt 15/05/1995
9.	Ghosh, Gop, Gowala, Gawala, Goal,	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
10.	Kumar, Rudra Paul of districts of Cachar, Karimganj & Hailakandi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
11.	Kupadhar, Kushiari, Parh	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
12.	Mahisya Das, Mahisya	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
13.	Manipuri, including Manipuri Brahmin & Manipuri Muslim	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
14.	Moran, Motok	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
15.	Mukhi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
16.	Napit	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993

	Nepali (i.e. Thapa, Gurung, Lama, Gaine Rai, Chhetri, Lihu, Magar, Lohar, Dami, Sarki i.e. Cobbler)	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993 12011/21/95-BCC dt 15/05/1995
17.	Koch-Rajbonshi* (* The entry after restoration of caste/ community 'Koch-Rajbonshi' w.e.f. 03.04.1997 (expect for the period when ordinance regarding inclusion of the caste/community 'Koch-Rajbonshi' in	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993 12011/2/96-BCC dt. 27/01/1996 12015/13/2010-B.C. II. dt 08/12/2011
18.		
19.	Sudra Das, Dey	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
20.	Saloi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
21.	Sut, Soot	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
22.	Scheduled Caste persons converted to Christianity	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/1993
23.	Tantripal, Tanti, Tantri	12011/68/93-BCC(C)
24.	Tea Garden Labourers, Tea Garden Tribes, Ex-Tea Garden Labourers, & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes as	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93 12011/21/95-BCC
24.1.	Ahirgoala	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.2.	Arya Mala	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.3.	Asur	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.4.	Barhai	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.5.	Basphor	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.6.	Bhokta	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.7.	Bauri	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.8.	Bowri	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.9.	Bhuyan	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.10.	Bhumij	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.11.	Bedia	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.12.	Beldar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.13.	Bharaik	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.14.	Bhatta	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.15.	Basor	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.16.	Baiga	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93

24.17.	Baijara	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.18.	Bhil	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.19.	Bondo	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.20.	Binjia	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.21.	Birhar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.22.	Birjia	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.23.	Beddi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.24.	Chamar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.25.	Chowdhari	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.26.	Chere	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.27.	Chick Banik	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.28.	Dandari	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.29.	Dandasi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.30.	Dusad	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.31.	Dhanwar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.32.	Ganda	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.33.	Gonda	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.34.	Gond	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.35.	Ghansi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.36.	Gorait	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.37.	Ghatowar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.38.	Hari	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.39.	Holra	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.40.	Jolha	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.41.	Keot	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.42.	Koiri	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.43.	Khonyor	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.44.	Kurmi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.45.	Kawar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.46.	Karmali	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.47.	Korwa	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.48.	Kol	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.49.	Kalahandi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.50.	Kalihandi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.51.	Kotwal	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.52.	Kharia	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.53.	Kumhar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.54.	Kherwar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.55.	Khodal	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.56.	Khond	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.57.	Koya	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.58.	Kondpan	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.59.	Kohor	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.60.	Kormakar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.61.	Kashan	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93

24.62.	Lahar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.63.	Lodha	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.64.	Lodhi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.65.	Madari	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.66.	Mahli	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.67.	Mohali	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.68.	Modi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.69.	Mahato	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.70.	Malpatharia	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.71.	Manki	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.72.	Majwar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.73.	Mirdhar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.74.	Munda	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.75.	Nonia, Nunia	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.76.	Nagasia	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.77.	Nagbansi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.78.	Nath	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.79.	Oraon	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.80.	Pasi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.81.	Paidi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.82.	Pan	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.83.	Panika	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.84.	Parja	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.85.	Patratanti	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.86.	Pradhan	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.87.	Rajwar	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.88.	Sahora	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.89.	Santhal, Santal	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.90.	Sarvera	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.91.	Turi	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.92.	Telenga	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.93.	Tassa	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.94.	Tantubai	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.95.	Teli	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
24.96.	Tanti	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
25.	Teli	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
26.	Yogi, Jogi,	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
27.	Maimal (Muslim Fisherman)	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93
28.	Maria	12011/68/93-BCC(C) dt 10/09/93

APPENDIX VI

MEMORANDUM OF SETTLEMENT (BODO ACCORD)

(Signed on 20th February, 1993)

1. Preamble

(i) Both the Government of India and the Government of Assam have been making earnest efforts to bring about an amicable solution to the problems of the Bodos and other Plains Tribals living in the north bank of river Brahmaputra within Assam.

(ii) Towards this end, the Government of India held a series of meetings with the State government as well as with leaders of All Bodo Student's Union (ABSU) and Bodo People's Action Committee (BPAC). The State Government has also separately held discussions with the Bodo leaders. As a result, it has been considered necessary to set-up an administrative authority within the State of Assam under a scheme, the details of which are outlined in the succeeding paragraphs:

2. Objective

The objective of this scheme is to provide maximum autonomy within the framework of the Constitution to the Bodos for social, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural advancement.

3. (a) Name: Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC)

There shall be formed, by an Act of Assam Legislative Assembly, a Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) within the State of Assam comprising contiguous geographical areas between river Sankosh and Mazbat/river Pasnoi. The land records authority of the State will scruitinize the list of villages furnished by ABSU /BP AC having 50% and more of tribal population which shall be included in the BAC. For the purpose of providing a contiguous area, ever the villages having less than 50% tribal population shall be included. BAC will also include Reserve Forests as per the guidelines laid by Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, not otherwise required by the Government for manning the

international border and tea gardens located completely within the BAC contiguous area.

(b) Powers

The BAC will comprise of a General Council comprising 40 members, 35 elected on the basis of adult suffrage and having a life of five years. The Government will have powers to nominate 5 members to the Council, particularly from groups which could not otherwise be represented. This Council will have powers to make bye-laws, rules and orders for application within the BAC area on the subjects enumerated in Schedule 'A'.

(c) The Executive Authority of the BAC would be exercised in its Executive Body to be known as Bodoland Executive Council (BEC). The BEC will be responsible for implementation within the BAC area of the laws on subjects enumerated in Schedule 'A'.

(d) The General Council and the BEC will hold office during the pleasure of the Governor of Assam. Consultation with the State Law Department of Government of Assam would be necessary if the Governor proposed to dissolve either the General Council or the BEC before the expiry of its term in accordance with the provisions of law. The executive authority of the BEC will be exercised by the party enjoying a simple majority in the General Council. On completion of elections, the Governor would invite the leader of the majority party to constitute the BEC.

4. **Finances**

(i) (a) The finances for the BAC will be earmarked under a separate subhead within the State budget, in keeping with the guidelines laid down by the Government of India from time to time.

The government of Assam would have no powers to divert this earmarked allocation to other heads/areas except in exigencies when there is unavoidable overall Budget cut.

(b) The provisions made in 4 (i) (a) regarding allocation of funds should be in line with the spirit of the Constitution (seventy second) and (seventy third) amendment.

(ii) The BAC would also receive grant-in-aid from time to time within the principles and policies enunciated by the Government of India.

(iii) The General Council will have powers to raise finances from levies/fees/taxes etc., on subjects mentioned in Schedule 'A' subject to Constitutional amendment mentioned above.

(iv) The finances for the BAC will be managed exclusively by its General Council and the statement of its annual audited accounts will be laid on the table of the State Assembly.

5. Powers of appointments

The Bodoland Executive Committee would have powers to appoint Class III and Class IV staff within its jurisdiction for implementation of schemes connected with the subjects enumerated in Schedule 'A'.

6. Reservation of Seats

The Election Commission of India will be requested by the BAC to consider seat reservation and delimitation of constituencies, both Lok Sabha and State Assembly, within the BAC area to the extent permitted by the Constitution and the law.

7. Special provisions for the BAC area

The General Council shall be consulted and its views shall be given due regard before any law made on the following subjects, is implemented in the BAC area:

i) The religious or social practice of the Bodos;

ii) The Bodo customary laws and procedures; and

iii) The ownership and transfer of land within the BAC area.

8. Special status for the Bodoland Autonomous Council

The BAC shall, within the laws of the land, take steps to protect the demographic complexion of the areas falling within its jurisdiction.

9. Special Courts

Action will be taken in consultation with the Guwahati High Court to set up within BAC area

Special Courts as specified below to try suits and cases between parties all of whom belong to Scheduled Tribe or Tribes in accordance with the tribal customary law and procedure, if any.

(a) Village Courts

(b) Subordinate District Customary Law Courts within a civil Sub Divisional Territory, and

(c) District Customary Law Court.

10. Appointment in the Central Bodies

The claims of the Bodos shall be considered for appointment to the North Eastern Council.

11. Official Language

The General Council can lay down policy with regard to use of Bodo language as medium of official correspondence within the BAC area. However, while corresponding with offices outside the BAC area, correspondence will have to be in bilingual from in accordance with the Article 345 of the Constitution and the provision of law in this behalf.

12. Changes in Geographical Boundary

The geographical area of the Bodoland Autonomous Council as agreed upon can be changed with the mutual consent of the BAC and the Government of Assam.

13. Revision of List of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

The scheduling and de-scheduling of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes residing within the Bodo areas will be done as per the Commission appointed by the Government of India under the Constitution.

14. Trade and Commerce

The General Council will have powers to regulate trade and commerce within its jurisdiction in accordance with the existing law. For this purpose, it can issue permits and licenses to individuals within the BAC area. The Government of Assam and the Union Government while considering allotment of permits to people residing within the BAC area will give preference to the Bodos.

15. Employment opportunities

The BAC will have powers to reserve jobs for Scheduled Tribes within its jurisdiction. However, exercise of such powers shall be in accordance with the existing constitutional and legal provisions.

16. Civil and Police Services

(i) The Government of Assam may from time to time post officers of the rank of Class II and above to posts within the BAC in accordance with the exigencies. While making these postings due regard will be given to, views of BAC about officers being so posted.

(ii) The officers posted to the BAC area will be accountable to the BAC for their performance and the assessment of their work recorded by the BEC authorities, will be incorporated to their ACRs by the State Government.

(iii)The Central Government, while making recruitments from the State of Assam to the Army, para military forces and police units, will hold special recruitment drives within the BAC area.

17. Appointment of Interim Bodoland Executive Council

The Government of Assam will take steps for the formation of an Interim Bodoland Executive Council for the BAC from amongst the leaders of the present Bodoland movement who are signatories to this settlement, during the transition period, i.e. prior to the holding of election.

Such Interim Council would be formed before a prescribed date mutually agreed between the Central and State Governments.

18. Relief and Rehabilitation

(i) ABSU - BPAC leaders will take immediate steps to bring overground and deposit with the District authorities all arms, ammunition and explosives in the possession of their own supporters and will cooperate with the administration in bringing over ground all Bodo militants along with their arms and ammunition etc. within one month of the formation of the Interim BEC. In order to ensure the smooth return to civil life of the cadre and to assist in the quick restoration of peace and normalcy, such surrenders made voluntarily will not attract prosecution.

(ii) The Government of Assam will consider sympathetically the withdrawal of all cases against persons connected with the Bodoland Movement excluding those relating to heinous crimes.

(iii) The Government of India will initiate steps for review of action against the Bodo employees of Government of India and subordinate offices as well as in respect of Central Government Undertakings. Similar action would be taken by the Government of Assam.

(iv) The Government of Assam will initiate immediate steps for suitable rehabilitation of the Bodo militants coming overground as a result of this settlement. Similarly, the Government will organise ex-gratia payments as per rules to next of the kins killed during the Bodo agitation.

19. Share in collection of excise duty on tea

The Government of Assam will deposit in the BAC Fund revenue collected from the tea gardens falling within the BAC area.

20. Protection of rights of non-tribals

The Government of Assam and the BAC will jointly ensure that all rights and interests of the non-tribals as on date living in BAC area in matters pertaining to land as well as their language are protected.

21. Ad-hoc Central grant for launching the BAC

After the signing of this settlement, an ad-hoc Budget on reasonable basis will be prepared by Interim BEC and discussed with the State and Central Governments for necessary financial support.

<u>Signatories</u>

(i) K.S. RAO Add. Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam

(ii) S.K.Bwiswamutiary, President, ABSU.

(iii)Rabi Ram Brahma, General Secretary, ABSU.

(iv)Subhash Basumatari, Chairman, BPAC.

In the presence of

(i) Rajesh Pilot, Minister or State (Internal Security) Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

(ii) Hiteswar Saikia, Chief Minister of Assam, State Govt. of Assam.

List of subjects and Departments over which BAC will have control within the BAC area

1. Cottage Industry

2. Animal Husbandry and Veterinary

3. Forests

4. Agriculture

5. P.W.D.

6. Sericulture

7. Education

   a)   Adult Education

   b)   Primary Education

   c)   Upto Higher Secondary including Vocational training

8. Cultural Affairs

9. Soil Conservation

10. Co-operation

11. Fisheries

12. Panchayat and Rural Development

13. Handloom and Textiles

14. Health and Family Welfare

15. Public Health Engineering

16. Irrigation

17. Social Welfare

18. Flood Control schemes for protection of villages (not of highly technical nature)

19. Sports and Youth Welfare

20. Weights and Measures

21. Library Services

22. Museums and Archaeology

23. Urban Development - Town and Country Planning

24. Tribal Research Institute

25. College Education (General)

26. Land and Revenue

27. Publicity/Public Relations

28. Printing and Stationary

29. Tourism

30. Transport

31. Any other matter connected with development

32. Municipal Corporation, Improvement Trusts, District Boards and other local authorities

33. Tribal Welfare

34. Markets and Fairs

35. Lotteries, Theatres, Dramatic Performances and Cinemas

36. Vital statistics including registrations of birth and deaths

37. Food and Civil Supply

38. Intoxicating liquors, opium and derivatives etc.

MEMORANDUM OF SETTLEMENT

(Signed on 10th February, 2003)

1. The Government of India and the Government of Assam have been making concerted efforts to fulfill the aspirations of the Bodo people relating to their cultural identity, language, education and economic development. Towards this end, a series of talks were held between Government of India, Government of Assam and Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) since March, 2000. As a result, it is agreed to create a self-governing body for the Bodo Areas in the State of Assam as follows:

2. Objectives

The objectives of the agreement are: to create an Autonomous self governing body to be known as Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) within the State of Assam and to provide constitutional protection under Sixth Schedule to the said Autonomous Body; to fulfill economic, educational and linguistic aspirations and the preservation of land-rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the Bodos; and speed up the infrastructure development in BTC area.

3. Area

3.1. The area of proposed BTC shall comprise all the 3082 villages and areas to be so notified by the State Government. The above mentioned villages and areas shall be divided into 4 contiguous districts after reorganization of the existing districts of Assam within a period of 6 months of the signing of the agreement on the lines of the proposal given by BLT subject to clearance of the Delimitation Commission.

3.2 A committee comprising one representative each from Governments of India & Assam and BLT will decide by consensus on the inclusion of additional villages and areas in the BTC from out of 95 villages and areas on the basis of the criteria of tribal population being not less than 50%, contiguity or any other agreed relevant criteria within a period of three months of signing of this MoS.

4.   Status of Bodoland Territorial Council

The provision of the Sixth schedule and other relevant Articles of the Constitution of India will apply to BTC, mutatis mutandis in terms of this agreement. The safeguards/modifications for the non-tribals in BTC area, inter-alia, will include the following:

4.1. Provision of para1 (2) of Sixth Schedule regarding Autonomous Regions will not be applicable to BTC.

4.2. A provision will be made in Para 2(1) of the Sixth Schedule for increasing the number of members for BTC up to 46 out of which 30 will be reserved for Scheduled Tribes, 5 for non-tribal communities, 5 open for all communities and 6 to be nominated by Governor of Assam from the unrepresented communities for BTC area of which at least two should be women. Nominated members will have the same rights and privileges as other members, including voting rights. Election from the 40 constituencies of BTC shall be on the basis of adult franchise. The term of the elected members of BTC shall be for 5 years.

4.3. Safeguards for the settlement rights, transfer and inheritance of property etc. of non-tribals will be suitably incorporated in Para 3 of the Sixth Schedule. Any such law as may be made by the BTC in this regard will not, in particular:

(a) Extinguish the rights and privileges enjoyed by any citizen of India in respect of their land at the commencement of BTC, and

(b) Bar any citizen from acquiring land either by way of inheritance, allotment, settlement or by way of transfer if such citizens were eligible for such bonafide acquisition of land within the BTC area.

4.4. Provision will be added in para 6 of Sixth Schedule that in BTC area, language and medium of instruction in educational institutions will not be changed without approval of the State Government.

4.5. Provision of para 8 of Sixth Schedule regarding power to assess and collect land revenue and impose taxes shall be applicable to BTC.

4.6. Para 10 of the Sixth Schedule will not be applicable to BTC area.

4.7. Provision of Article 332(6) of the Constitution will be so modified that the existing status of representation of BTC area in the State Assembly is kept intact.

After the creation of BTC, the Parliamentary & Assembly Constituencies shall be delimited by the Delimitation Commission in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

4.8. In the event, **Panchayati Raj** system ceases to be in force in the council area, the powers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in such matters shall be vested with the Council.

The Amendments to the Sixth Schedule shall include provisions in such a manner that non-tribals are not disadvantaged in relation to the rights enjoyed by them at the commencement of BTC and their rights and privileges including land rights are fully protected.

5.   Power and Functions

5.1. The Council shall have legislative powers in respect to subjects transferred to it as enumerated below. All laws made under this paragraph shall be submitted forthwith to the Governor and until assented to by him, shall have no effect. The BTC shall have executive, administrative and financial powers in respect of subjects transferred to it.

Subjects to be entrusted to BTC by Assam Government

1. Small, Cottage and Rural Industry; 2. Animal Husbandry & Veterinary; 3. Forest; 4. Agriculture; 5. PWD; 6. Sericulture; 7. Education (Primary Education, Higher Secondary Including vocational training, Adult Education, College Education (General); 8. Cultural Affairs; 9. Soil Conservation; 10. Co-operation; 11. Fisheries; 12. Panchayat and Rural Development; 13. Handloom and Textile; 14. Health & Family Welfare; 15. Public Health Engineering; 16. Irrigation; 17. Social Welfare; 18. Flood Control; 19. Sports & Youth Welfare; 20. Weights and Measures; 21. Library Services; 22. Museum & Archaeology; 23. Urban Development – Town and Country Planning; 24. Tribal Research Institute; 25. Land & Revenue; 26. Publicity/Public Relations; 27. Printing & Stationery; 28. Tourism; 29. Transport; 30. Planning and Development; 31. Municipal Corporation, Improvement Trust, District Boards and other local authorities; 32. Welfare of Plan Tribes and Backward Classes; 33. Markets and fairs; 34. Lotteries, Theatres, Dramatic performance and cinema; 35. Statistics; 36. Food and Civil supply; 37. Intoxicating liquors, opium and derivatives

etc.; 38. Labour and employment; 39. Relief and Rehabilitation; 40. Registration of Births and Deaths.

5.2. There shall be an Executive Council comprising of not more than 12 Executive Members, one of whom shall be the Chief and another one the Deputy Chief of the said Executive Council. There shall be adequate representation for the non-tribal members in the Executive Council. The Chief and the Deputy Chief of the Council shall have the status equivalent to the Cabinet Minister and the other Executive Members equivalent to the Minister of the State of Assam for protocol purposes in BTC area.

5.3. The BTC shall have the full control over the officers and staff connected with the delegated subjects working in the BTC area and shall be competent to transfer officers and staff within the BTC area. ACRs of these officers shall also be written by the appropriated BTC authority.

5.4. BTC shall also be competent to make appointments for all posts under its control in accordance with the rules of appointment followed by the Government of Assam. However, the posts, where recruitment is made on the recommendation of APSC, shall not be covered under this provision. The Council may constitute a Selection Board for appointments to be made by it and may also make rules, with the approval of the Governor of Assam to regulate appointments and to ensure adequate representation for all communities living in the Council area.

5.5. No posts shall be created by BTC without concurrence of the Government of Assam and it shall also abide by the decision of the Government of Assam in respect of abolition of/temporarily keeping vacant any post.

5.6. Development functions and bodies within the competence of BTC shall be transferred to BTC. In respect of DRDA, concurrence of Government of India will be obtained.

5.7. The offices of the Dy. Commissioner and Superintendent of Police will be outside the superintendence and control of BTC.

5.8. The State Government would provide an amount, to be decided every year on population ratio basis, as grants-in-aid in two equal installments to the BTC for executing development works. The proportionate share for the BTC shall be calculated on the basis of the plan funds available after setting aside the funds

required for earmarked sectors and the salary. This amount may be reduced proportionately if the state plan allocation is reduced or there is plan cut due to resource problem. In addition, the Council will be paid a suitable amount of plan funds and non-plan funds to cover the office expenses and the salaries of the staff working under their control. The BTC shall disburse the salaries of the staff under their control and would ensure strict economy in the matter.

5.9. BTC authority shall prepare a plan with the amounts likely to be available for development works, both under State share and Central share, covering any or all the activities of the departments under their control. The Council shall have full discretion in selecting the activities and choosing the amount for the investment under the same in any year covering all groups of people in a fair and equitable manner. This plan will be a sub set of the State plan and would be treated as its integral part. Once the plan of the State, including BTC plan, gets the approval of the Planning Commission the BTC authority will start execution of their plan in the BTC area. Modifications, if any, made by the Planning Commission in the BTC proposal, shall be binding on the BTC authority. The State Government shall not divert the funds allocated to the BTC to other heads and also ensure its timely release. BTC may have Planning Department to prepare the plans for BTC area to be submitted to Planning Commission through the Government of Assam.

5.10. The executive functions of the BTC shall be exercised through its Principal Secretary who shall be an officer of the rank not below of Commissioner/Secretary to Government of Assam. The sanctioning powers of the Government of Assam shall be vested with the Principal Secretary of BTC and sanctioning powers of head(s) of the Department(s) including for technical sanction shall be conferred on the senor most officer of that Department preferably not below the rank of Additional Director, who may be designated as Director of BTC for that department. The Principal Secretary and other officers shall exercise their powers under the overall guidance and supervision of BTC.

6.   Law and Order

To strengthen the Police Administration, Government of Assam shall appoint an IGP for 4 districts of BTC and the jurisdiction of the DIG Kokrajhar shall also be modified to cover these 4 districts.

7.   Revision of list of ST

Consequent to the inclusion of BTC area into the Sixth Schedule, the list of ST for the State of Assam shall be so modified so as to ensure that the tribal status of Bodos and other tribals living outside the BTC are does not get affected adversely.

8.   Grant of ST status of Bodo Kacharis of Karbi Anglong and NC Hills districts

The Government of India agrees to consider sympathetically the inclusion of the Bodo Kacharis living in Karbi Anglong and NC Hills Autonomous Council area in the ST (Hill) List of State of Assam.

9.   Development of Bodo Language

9.1. The Government of India agrees to consider favourably the inclusion of Bodo Language in Devnagri Script in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

9.2. Bodo language shall be the official language of BTC subject to the condition that Assamese and English shall also continue to be used for official purpose.

10.   Additional Development Package for BTC

10.1. The State Government, within the limitation of financial and other constraints, may offer or allow the Council to offer, possible and sustainable additional incentives for attracting private investment in the Council area and would also support projects for external funding.

10.2. In order to accelerate the development of the region and to meet the aspirations of the people, the Government of India will provide financial assistance of Rs 100 crores per annum for 5 years for projects to develop the socio-economic infrastructure in BTC areas over and above the normal plan assistance to the State of Assam. The size of the Corpus will be reviewed after a period of 5 years. Suitable mechanism will be built in the system to ensure that the funds are transferred to BTC in time and at regular intervals. An illustrative list of projects which may be considered to be taken up in BTC given below:

List of projects:

1. To establish a centre for development and research of Bodo language.

2. Upgradation of existing educational infrastructure by way of renovation/addition of buildings, providing modern facilities for teaching such as computers, science laboratories etc. from primary level to college level in BTC area.

3. A cultural complex to be established at Kokrajhar to promote and develop Bodo tradition and cultural heritage.

4. To establish a super-speciality hospital with all modern facilities at Kokrajhar Government Hospitals shall be established in all district, sub-divisional and block headquarter.

5. To establish sports complexes in all the district headquarters.

6. Food processing plants and cold storage facilities at Kokrajhar, Kajolgaon, Udalguri and Tamulpur.

7. Construction of a bridge over river Aai to connect Koilamoila, Amguri etc. with the rest of the district.

8. To build a Bodoland Bhawan in Delhi.

9. To set up integrated agro-processing Park and textile-cum-apparel Park.

10. Revitalization of Kokilabari Agricultural Farm.

11. To develop adequate infrastructure to promote Manas sanctuary as an international tourist spot.

12. To complete Champa, Suklai and Dhansiri irrigation projects.

13. To construct a highway on the Indo-Bhutan border from Jamduar to Bhairabkunda to connect remote places located adjacent to the border.

14. To set up model dairy, fishery, horticulture and poultry farms/training centres at different places in all the 4 districts to encourage youth for self-employment.

15. To enhance the existing facilities in veterinary hospitals in BTC area.

10.3. Government of India will provide necessary one time financial assistance required for development of administrative infrastructure in the newly created district headquarters, sub-divisional headquarters and book headquarters, besides the BTC Secretariat Complex at Kokrajhar.

11. Centrally funded University

11.1. A centrally funded Central Institute of Technology (CIT) will be set up to impact education in various technological/vocational disciplines such as Information Technology, Bio-Technology, Food Processing, Rural Industries, Business Management, etc.

11.2. The CIT will be subsequently upgraded to a centrally funded State University with technical and non-technical disciplines to be run by the BTC.

12. Relief & Rehabilitation

12.1. The BLT would join the national mainstream and shun the path of violence in the interest of peace and development. After the formation of the interim council of BTC, BLT will dissolve itself as an organisation and surrender with arms within a week of swearing-in of the interim council. 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. Financial support in such cases, however shall be limited to be provisions of the scheme prepared and funded by the Government of India. Withdrawal of cases against such persons and those related to overground Bodo movement since 1987 shall be considered according to the existing policy of the State of Assam.

12.2. The Government of India will initiate steps for review of action against the Bodo employees of Government of India and subordinate officers as well as in respect of Central Government Undertakings. Similar action would be taken by the Government of Assam.

12.3. Bodo youth will be considered for recruitment in Police, Army and Paramilitary forces to increase their representation in these forces.

12.   Special Rehabilitation Programme for the people affected by ethnic disturbances:

The Special Rehabilitation Programme (SRP) for the people affected by ethnic disturbances in Assam, who are at present living at relief camps in Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon etc. shall be completed by the Government of Assam with active support of BTC. Necessary funds for their rehabilitation shall be provided by the Government

of India and lands which are free from all encumbrances required for such rehabilitation shall be made available by the BTC.

13. Interim Council

Immediately after signing of the agreement, Interim Executive Council for BTC shall be formed by Governor of Assam from amongst the leaders of the present Bodo movement, including the signatories to this settlement, and shall include adequate representation to the non-tribal communities in BTC area. The Interim Council shall not continue for a period beyond 6 months during which period election to the Council shall be held. Government of Assam shall dissolve the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) and repeal the BAC Act.

15. Government of Assam will consider inclusion of all tribals including Bodos in RHAC/MAC/LAC in consultation with leaders of these Councils.

16. The Implementation of the provision of the Memorandum of Settlement shall be periodically reviewed by a Committee comprising representatives of Government of India, Government of Assam and BTC.

Signed on 10th February, 2003 at New Delhi in the presence of Shri L.K. Advani, Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister of India and Shri Tarum Gogoi, Chief Minister of Assam

(Hagrama Basumatary)	(P K Dutta)	(R C A Jain)
Chairman	Chief Secretary	Secretary(BM)
Bodo Liberation Tigers Force	Govt. of Assam	Ministry of Home Affairs
		Government of India

**Resolution of the Convention of the minority coordination committee[1]
mentioning also the problems faced by Nepali speakers in the name 'foreigners'
in the state**

[Excerpts]

On Memorandum of settlement of Settlement of Foreigner Problems in Assam:

This convention of the Minority Communities of Assam views with grave concern that the Government of India has entered into an Accord with the Assam agitation and Government of Assam without taking the representative bodies of the minorities into confidence.

The convention considers the Accord detrimental to the interest and safety of the Minorities living in Assam .It has created a fear psychosis in the minds of the minorities.

Though the constitution and legal provision, international Agreement, National Commitment and humanitarian considerations have accepted the guiding principles for the settlement and these principles have been shown in the terms of the settlement.

Fixation of 1.1.1996 as the date and year for the detection and deletion of the names of the foreigners, violates the terms of the Indira –Mujib Agreement, 1977? And national commitment in respect of displaced persons from erstwhile the Pakistan. Besides, itsviolates the protective provisions of the immigrants [Expulsion from Assam] Acts, 1950, in respect of displaced persons. The convention asserts that the displaced persons are protected by the National Commitments and laws of the land and, therefore, are not liable to deletion.

The memorandum of the settlement provides that those who entered in Assam after 1.1.1996 (Inclusive) and up to March 24, 1971 shall be detected, then their names

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[1] CRPC,All Assam Minorities Students Union,Jamiatual Ulema,Minority Juba prishad, and Minority forum for Assam comprised this commitee at the Minorities Convention held on 28th and 29th September ,1985 at Haji Musafirkhana ,Guwahati.

shall be deleted from the Electoral Rolls and lastly they shall have to register themselves as Foreigners according to the provision of Foreigner Registration Act and Rules 1939.Rights of franchise shall be restored to those persons so detected and registered after ten year from the date of detection.

These provision of the Accord are decisively anti-minority and contrary to the provision of the India-mujib Agreement, National Commitment, citizenship Acts and Immigrant (Expulsion from Assam) Acts, 1950, and above all the constitution of India .The Constitution does not provide for double standards in respects of the citizenship and therefore any steps for implementation of the Accord will be *ultra vires* of the Constitution. Moreover, this will put the entire minority subjects to persecution.

The provision as laid down in clause 5(7) of the Accord for expulsion of those who were earlier wrongfully expelled and were compelled to reenter prior to 24.3.71 and those minorities who had to leave India in accordance with the protection provided under the Assam Evacuees Acts.

Besides, keeping the entrants between 1.1.1996 to 24.3.1971 as stateless for ten years, and clause 5.2 of the Memorandum of settlement, violates and Indira –Mujib agreement and provision of the Assam Evacuees Acts.

Besides, keeping the entrants between 1.1.1996 to 24.3.1971 as stateless for ten years, and clause 5.2 of the Memorandum of Settlement, violates the Declaration of Human Rights and National Commitment. The manner in which 5.2 of the Agreement is constructed, when implemented, the detection and deletion would not remain to the period of 1.1.66 to 24.3.71 as stated . To find out the entire minority communities of Assam will become liable to scrutiny, consequent harassment and ultimately.

In respect of the post 1971 entrants, the Accord has made a departure from the accepted principle of the Convention of Law of Nation observed by the civilized states by making provision for expulsion instead of deportation which is a bilateral act enjoined by the Indira-Mujib Agrreement 1972 .The Convention condemns all attempts ,mow being made to push the so- called foreigners forcibly across the border by unilateral acts;

This Convention of the Minority Communities of Assam views with dismay and horror that the memorandum of the settlement signed among the representative of the

government of Assam and leaders of Assam agitation and bears a discriminatory approach against the minorities of Assam and hence it is not acceptable to the minorities of the states;

In the views of the above, the convention argues upon the progressive and democratic forces and the minorities of the states to stand united in this hour of crisis to face with courage and determination, the persecution that may follow the implementation of the Accords.

The Convention also demands of the Government of India to take note of the wounded feeling of the minorities of the states and to scrap the Accords in the general interest of the states and the Nations.

On preparation of Electoral Roll

This Convention of the minorities Communities of Assam express its grave concern at illegal and arbitrary procedures adopted by the Election Commission of India in preparation of the voters, list in Assam as a result of which a few lakhs of India citizens belonging to religious

The election Commissioner has done irreparable damage to the Citizenship rights of minorities by issuing illegal circulars, one after another, which have created great confusion for the minorities and partisan officers talking advantage of contradictory types of circulars, depriving lakhs and lakhs of constitutional rights of franchise. The minorities are going through unthinkable harassment in sustaining their claims and in facing innumerable objection petitions filed by interested parties and individuals on flims and misleading grounds. The four documents viz. Entry of Names in 1971 or 1971 Rolls, copy of N.R.C 1951,Citizens Certificates and Birth Certificates are the only documents ,which are being insisted upon are arbitrary, whereas reconstructed copies of the 1971 electoral rolls made available are incomplete ,and do not contain more than 3 lakhs   voters of 1971 roll on which the 1972 election were held .Citizenship Certificates have not been issued in most cases to the naturalized Indian citizens and birth registers nothing but a conspiracy to deny rights of franchise to the minorities .Other reliable public and private documents like academic certificate, radio licences, land records, ration card and other facts as admissible under the Indian Evidence Act should be accepted as proof in support of right of franchise for inclusion in the Electoral Rolls. The Election commissioner in its guideline issued for

the preparation of the Electoral Roll and other circulars issued on racial and partisan lines are in clear violation of provision of the People Representation Act and Rules thereunder and Regulation of electors Rules of 1960.

The Convention therefore strongly protest against the procedures followed and urges upon the house of Parliament to hold an enquiry through the petition committees to enquire into the conduct of the election commission .Unless the Electoral Roll is prepared in accordance with the relevant Act and Rules ,the Convention apprehends that not less than 1.2 million Indian citizens would be deprived of their rights of Franchise .From the manner in which the Electoral Roll is prepared in Assam currently ,it has become evident that the Election Commission has usurped the power the tribunal as envisaged in the immigrant Expulsion (Determination by Tribunal) Act,1983.In essence it has assumed the roll of determination of Foreigners in course of preparation of the Electoral Roll. This too is contrary to its own declared policy that the Election machinery is not proper forum to go into the question of citizenship in respect of persons already enrolled or enlisted in any electoral roll. This too is contrary to the supreme court judgment in 1984 in Indirajit Barua's, the Election Commission has arbitrarily chosen the 1971 Electoral Roll in the preparation of the Electoral Roll of 1985.The supreme Court upheld the 1977 Electoral on the basis of which the 1979 Electoral Roll was prepared declared free from all infirmities and such the election of 1983 was upheld as valid.

The convention further resolves that legal and extra –legal remedies be sought to protect the rights of Indian citizens from arbitrary deletion of names from the Electoral Roll.

Further resolved that the national political parties, representing in Parliament be requested to send Parliament Delegation to Assam to study the situation arisen due to issuance of illegal , arbitrary and racial circulars issued by the Election Commission of India for preparation of voters' list in Assam.

On Eviction

In pursuance of clause 10 of Assam Accord, the Government, has started serving Eviction Notice on peasant primarily belonging to Minorities communities, occupying for a long time as *patta* and *touji* holders, Government, land and lands of Tribal belt and blocks. Taking advantage of the clause and in connivance ith the

revenue and forest officials, the agitationists and anti social elements have taken upon themselves, the responsibility of forcibly evicting helpless poor peasantry from land in their possession of looting their properties.

Already a large number of such families belonging to displaced persons, immigrant Muslim and Nepali communities in the districts of kokrajhar , Darrang, Sonipur and Lakhismpur are evicted and some of them were attempted to be pushed out of Assam to Bangladesh .Unless this inhuman process of eviction and harassment is stopped fothwith, the future 2.5 million people belong belonging to above categories is going to be threatened and the whole socio-economic fabric will be destroyed will disastrous consequences.

Further direct pursuance of clause 11 of the Assam Accord in respect of transfer of land by and from persons who are not citizens of India is being interpreted and applied in a manner giving to apprehension in the mind of minorities about sale and purchase and also other transactions relating to land owned and in possession of the minorities.

Problems of Nepalese

This Convention notes with grave concern that the Assam Accord infringes the rights of Nepalese living in Assam conferred in pursuance of the Indo-Nepal .Treaty of 1950 .In the case of the Nepalese the Government introduced Restricted Area Permits for entering Assam prior to this date and settled in Assam, the question of cut-off year and defranchisement of Nepalese from 1.1.1966 to 24.3.71 does arise.

The Government and Election machinery have started arbitrary action touching the Nepalese depriving them from registering their names as electors settled permanently in India and Assam in particular .Eviction has also started in various rural areas and terrorising of bonafied citizens.

The Convention urges upon the Government, to provide all necessary safeguard, and protection to the Nepalese in Assam and also give justice in view of the Indo-Nepal 1950 and other relevant orders and laws.

Copy forwarded   (Ahmed Ali Bauskandi)

Imran Shah, *Convenor*   *President*

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED

TO

Sjt. Tarun Gogoi

Honb'le Chief Minister

Govt. of Assam, Dispur

By

ALL ASSAM GORKHA STUDENTS' UNION (AAGSU)

&

GORKHA AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL DEMAND COMMITTEE

(GACDC)

H.O. NEPALI MANDIR, PALTAN BAZAR

GUWAHATI-8

DATE: 11 DECEMBER- 2006

Hon'ble Sir,

We the undersigned, on behalf of All Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU) & Gorkha Autonomous Council Demand Committee (GACDC) would like to draw your

kind attention towards the long standing grievances of the indigenous Gorkha living in Assam since time-immemorial. All Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU) & Gorkha Autonomous Council Demand Committee (GACDC), an apex organization of the Gorkha Students and youth of Assam particular and Gorkha people in general, has been raising its voices for the constitutional rights of the indigenous Gorkha since its inception i.e. 1976. As well, it has been unequivocal in airing its voices about the burning problem of Assam, but till date our voices has never been get positive responses from authority concern. Therefore, this time, we hope your good authority would take the matter seriously for greater interest of Assam and Assamese Composite Society.

Sir, the nation has already been celebrated her 60 years of Independence. We are proud of that our ancestors of Gorkha origins too, have shed their blood and toil in alter of Independence. But the plight of our community is more miserable than that of the time of Pre-Independence. Today, we the Gorkha are vulnerable and insecure in Assam. We are subjected to the status of a 'displaced people' even deprived of minimum basic human rights worth the name. In the name of 'foreigners' illegal infiltrators' or 'non-local, we are subjected to untold harassment creating a perpetual fear psychosis deep down. A situation has been created where every Gorkha is compelled to prove his citizenship individually thousands of times on day to day activities. Not a single person could be escape from this social hazard which started in the late 'part of 80s'. We think all faux passes are being committed by the vested interests for their utmost effort to dub the community as the 'people without nationality or citizenship' at worst downright misleading effort indeed.

Keeping in view of the above pressing problems, the AAGSU, in its 11th biennial conference and silver jubilee celebration held from 25th, 26th, 27th and 28th December 2002 at Tezpur under the Sonitpur District and resolved the demand of **Gorkha Autonomous Council** within the state of Assam comprising Gorkha Dominated Area after given up its previous demand special protected class.

Our Basic Demand:

1. **GORKHA OF ASSAM BE PROVIDED GORKHA AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL SECURITY AND ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT OF GORKHA COMMUNITY IN ASSAM.**

Other General Demands:

1. A full-fledge department having all sorts of facilities for study preservation and research for protection and promotion of Gorkha Culture and language be created under the State Government.

2. Provision for teaching Nepali language as elective and major subjects in Higher Secondary and College respectively be made.

3. Nepali department in Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University be opened.

4. Nepali language be introduced as an MIL in the elementary and high school where there are at least 15% Gorkha Student and subsequently teachers be appointed.

5. A Gorkha guest house be constructed in Guahati.

6. The contribution and sacrifices to the National building process with special reference to Composite Assamese Society and Culture and National in general, that had been tendered by the Gorkha since time immemorable should be given to learn to future progeny of entire Assam by means of curriculum of school, college and University.

7. Life history and their sacrifices of the great freedom fighter Chabilal Upadhaya, Dalibir Singh Lohar and Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan who belongs to Gorkha Community should published and let it learned to all coming generation including it in various curriculum of school, college and university.

8. Bronze Statue of the great freedom fighter Chabilal Upadhaya, Dalbir Singh Lohar and Bhakta Bahadur Pradhan be constructed in Tezpur, Digboi and Dibrugarh town place respectively.

9. The day of Bhatri-Ditiya, the National Fastival of the Gorkha of Assam should be declared at State holiday.

Hon'ble Sir,

The Gorkha people of Assam have suffered too long, their language, culture, socio-political right have always been cruelly dismissed by the politics of division and communalism. Untill and unless Gorkha Autonomous Council for security and prosperity of Gorkha as per as constitutional safeguard all the efforts of Govt. to provide security to this loyal and brave community will be futile. In your able leadership, we the All Assam Gorkha Student Union and GACDC have reposed our faith for redressal of the issue highlighted through this memorandum, we simcerly hope, your Govt. guided by the wisdom of your experience in running the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state like Assam, would be resolved the demand for the

safeguard to the community and give them a chance to survive and make strong prosperous.

That Sir, the Govt. of Assam has been extending us full proof assurance of constitutional safeguard and security solving our long standing demands since 1976. But, regrettably we like to express that everytime we are compelled to be remained satisfied in those pseudo –assurance. So, this time, the AGGSU with full hope highly request your authority to findout amicable solution of our grievances and demands for the greater interest of Gorkha People of Assam within the one month of this date. Otherwise, we the AGGSU and GACDC will launch vigorous democratic movement in favour of our demands and solution.

With sincere regards and warm thanks

On behalf of

All Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AGGSU) &

Gorkha Autonomous Council Demand Committee (GACDC)

Bhaskar Dahal	Tharka Adhikar
President, AAGSU	General Secretary, AAGSU
Padum Baraily	Dil Bahadur Limbu
Vice-President, AAGSU	Asstt., Secretary, AAGSU
Harka Bahadur Chetri	Delip Dahal
President GACDC	Org. Secretary, AAGSU
Bhojraj Chetri	Dillu Sharma
Vice-President, GACDC	Gen. Secretary, GACDC
Arjun Chetri	Hari Paudel
Vice President, GACDC	Executive Member, AAGSU

Puran Chertry

Sopkesman, GACDC

Debakar Sarma

Executive Member, AAGSU

Sanjib Chetri

Executive Member, AAGSU

Keshab Pandey

Office Secretary, AAGSU

APPENDIX X

A Joint Memorandum Submitted by AAGSU and GACDC Seeking Security to the lives and properties of Mass People

To,

The Hon'ble chief Minister

Govt. of Assam

Dispur, Guwahati-6

Assam

Sub: Memorandum Submitted Seeking Security to the lives and properties of Mass People.

Date: 14/10/09

Hon'ble Sir,

We, the undersigned, for and on behalf All Assam Gorkha Students' Union (AAGSU) and Gorkha Autonomous Council Demand Committee (GACDC) would like to draw your kind attention to the grief and sorrow created by the National Democratic Front Bodoland (NDFB).

That Sir, the brutal massacre, which was occurred in the evening of 4th October at Bhimajuli, under Siswanath Sub-Division has proved that the life of the people residing along the Indo-Bhutan Border and Assam-Arunachal Border is in high risk and in vulnerable condition. Extortion and killing of innocent people become the Part and Parcel of the NDFB as it has been witnessed since past more than one decade. People's are keeping mum about the harassment meted out by this extremist group to save their lives and properties for the first time, people of this locality tried the protest democratically the harassment and they were mercilessly gunned down. Nobody can

be remained silent and uttering for security. Every human being condemned the recent mass killing as the incident was unbearable. In this plight, it is only you who can console Promoter of security and sense of relief in this valley of dead and sorrow. So, we the AAGSU and GACDC jointly urged the following demands upon your kindness for prompt necessary and fulfillment.

OUR DEMANDS

1. Arrest all the Culprits who were involved in the recent massacre at Bhimajuli and Punish them with sentence to death.
2. 100% life security should be provided to the people living in the Indo-Border i.e., Assam Bhutan from Kokrajar District to Darrang and Assam-Arunachal Border areas upto Sadia as it is the highest Terrorist Prone Areas.
3. Declare as "Most Vulnerable Areas" to the Assam-Bhutan Border and Assam-Arunachal Border and Adopt New Policy of Security.
4. Govt. of Assam should be taken the responsibility of total look after till the end of his educational life of Miss Nomita Pradhan, (9 months) Sri Suraj Upadhaya (12 yrs.) infants whose parents and kin were gun-down in this brutal killings.
5. Govt. should provide govt. Service to the kin of the persons who were died in this massacre. Military operation should be launched till the total washout of the NDFB.
6. A Military Camp should be set-up at Bhimajuli.
7. Rehabilitation measure should be taken immediately for the re-settlement of all the victim families.
8. Martyrs tomb should be constructed for all who sacrifice their life in the hand of NBFB.

That Sir, the above demands are the demands of the masses and we sincerely hope positive response from your honour, any delay in desire justice will lead us to vigorous democratic movement.

With Sincere regards and thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Dil Bahadur Limbu   Harka Bahadur Chetry
President, AAGSU   President, GACDC

260

Tharka Adhikari
General Secretary, AAGSU

Bhaskar Dahal
Advisor, AAGSU

Padum Baraily
Vice-President, AAGSU

Birendra Subba
Vice-President, AAGSU

Ram Chandra Adhikari
Asstt. Secy, AAGSU

Digambar Chetry
Publicity Secy.AGGSU

Santosh Boral
Org. Secy, AGGSU

Dilip Dahal
Literacy Secy,

Dillu Sharma
General Secretary, GACDC

Bhojraj Chetri
Vice-President, GACDC

Arjun Chetri
President, GACDC

Ajoy Subba
President, GACDC

Purna Chetry
Spokesman, GACDC

Ganga Dhakal
President, Sonitpur Dist. GACDC

Krishna Rai

Keshab Pandey
AAGSU Life Member AAGSU

Interview Schedule

This interview schedule has been prepared for collection of data for PhD thesis on **Ethno-Political Mobilisation and its Impact on Minorities: A Case Study of Gorkhas in Assam.** This study is trying to explore issues related to ethno-political mobilization, ethnic conflicts and impact in the society. In this study, Gorkhas of Assam has been taken as a case study to understand the impact(s) of the conflict(s) on minorities which are not the direct parties in the conflict in particular and the entire society at large.

In most of the cases the ethnic conflict takes place between: a. two or more local ethnic groups, b. one or more than one ethnic group in one end and government in another end and, c. One or more local ethnic groups in one end and non-local groups at the another end. In such cases, apart from the group or parties which are cut affected being direct party in the conflict, many other ethnic groups found to be affected being cut in crossfire. Such conflicts found to bring many changes and transformation in socio-political relation between the ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic contestation space. Sometimes conflicts between directly involved parties bring adversarial relations and, other times constructive too. The cases of the groups which are not direct conflicting parties but borne impacts and adversaries are rarely addressed. Hence to understand above mentioned situation, this study tries to inquire into the different phases of ethno-political mobilization, root causes and both adversarial and constructive impacts on Minorities which are not the direct parties in the conflicts.

In this regards, I humbly request you to fill the following details to the best of your knowledge.

Thanking You,
Tikendra Kumar Chhetry
Ph.D Scholar
Department of Peace and Conflict Studies
Sikkim University
Email: tikendrameets@gmail.com
Mobile No. +919002088897/7908843564

Part: I (Optional)

Name of the respondent_____

Sex_____

Age_____

Present   Address:

Village/Town_____District_____State_____

Permanent: Village/town_____ District _____State_____

Occupation: 1. Farmers 2. Govt.sector _____3. Pvt..Sector _____

4.

others_____

Educational

Qualification_____

Marital Status _____

Category_____

No. of Family Members_____

Monthly

Income_____

Religion: 1. Hinduism_____2. Islam_____3. Christianity_____

4. Any others_____

Part: II

Please fill with the tick (√) mark wherever necessary

1. Is your locality a multi-ethnic space?

i. Yes

ii. No

iii. Cannot say

Addition to your answer (if any)_____

2. If yes, how many ethnic groups do you notice in your locality?

   i. 1

  ii. 2

 iii. 3

 iv. 4

  v. More than above

     Addition to your answer (if any)_____

3. What is your opinion on present ethnic relations in your locality?

   i. Congenial

  ii. Hazardous

 iii. Suspicious

 iv. Any other(s)

     Addition to your answer (if any) _____

4. Have you seen any conflicts associated with ethno-political mobilization in your locality?

   i. Yes

  ii. No

 iii. Cannot say

     Addition to your answer (if any)_____

5. If yes, how was/were the nature of conflict?

   i. Non-violent

  ii. Violent

 iii. Both Violent and non-violent

 iv. Any other

     Addition to your answer (if any)_____

6. What are the factors that promote such ethnic conflict?

   i. Competitiveness among ethnic groups

  ii. Claim over resources

 iii. Political consciousness

     Addition to your answer (if any) _____

7. Have you ever been the victim of conflict(s)?
i. Yes
ii. No
iii. Cannot say

Addition to your answer (if any)_____

8. If yes, how were you affected?
i. Directly
ii. Indirectly
iii. Falling in crossfire
iv. No idea

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

9. What were the situations those conflicts caused in your life and family?
i. Lost of residence and property
ii. Scarcity of daily necessities
iii. Fear
iv. Any other

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

10. Have you ever received any kind of treatment/support from the government agencies/NGO/INGO any during the conflict?
i. Yes (please, mention the name in case of NGO/INGO)
ii. No
iii. Cannot say

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

11. If yes, what kind of treatment and assistance did you received?
i. Compensation against damage
ii. Rehabilitation
iii. Security mechanism
iv. Any other

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

12. Have you seen any change(s) in the life-world of Gorkhas in your locality because of ethnic conflict(s)?

i. Yes

ii. No

iii. Cannot say

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

13. Have you noticed economic changes in your locality because of any ethnic conflict? If yes, what kind of changes have you noticed among Gorkhas in your locality?

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. If you have notices changes in the socio-cultural life of people in your locality after ethnic conflict? If yes, what kind of changes have you noticed among Gorkhas in your locality?

_____

_____

_____

_____

15. Have you noticed changes in the political life in your locality after conflict(s)? If yes, what kind of changes among Gorkhas?

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. Have you noticed any changes in the demographic composition in your locality? If yes, what kind of changes?

_____

_____

_____

17. What in your opinion may better the relation among ethnic communities in your locality?

i. Prospects of better life-style opportunities

ii. Better Governance

iii. Sharing of resources

iv. Any other

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

18. According to you what should be the initiatives of the Government to better the ethnic relation in your locality?

i. Economic development

ii. Solving ethnic demand

iii. Accountability

iv. Any other

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

19. How do you see the governmental policies toward the ethnic community you belong other than the conflicting ethnic parties during or after the conflict(s)?

20. What kind of situation the non-conflicting ethnic group(s) undergo during the conflict(s)?

i. Socio culturally assimilated to the dominant group(s)

ii. Economically deteriorate

iii. Politically subjugated

iv. Assert their group identity

v. Unite the group

vi. Other

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

21. Do you think peaceful-coexistence is possible under present socio-economic-political environment of the district?

i. Yes

ii. No

iii. Cannot say

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

22. If no, why do you think so?

i. There is hostile relation between ethnic communities

ii. Relation between ethnic group is suspicious

iii. There lack of trust between different ethnic group

iv. Any other

Addition to your answer (if any)_____

23. How can ethnic relations in your locality be improved?

i. Peace initiatives from the side of people, civil societies

ii. Respecting each other's ethnic diversity

iii. Administrative interfere

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

24. What type of role the ethnic community you belong can play in establishing the peace during conflict(s)?

i. Mediating to conflicting parties in building peace

ii. Creating Mutual trust during the conflict

iii. Balance between conflicting parties to avoid the conflict(s)

iv. Any other

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

25. What kind of political development do you foresee in the overall politics in Assam as a result of the problems faced by Gorkhas in different parts of Assam?

i. Improve

ii. Will not improve

iii. Will remain as it is

iv. Any other

Addition to your answer (if any) _____

Thank You

Signature of Respondent