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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE FACTORS LEADING TO OUTWARD MIGRATION OF THE CHAKMAS FROM CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

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Abstract

Chittagong and its hill tracts has been historically the homeland of various tribal groups. Such that when the British annexed the tracts, to suit their administration various laws were promulgated to protect and declared 'excluded' it from generally laws applicable to the plains. These same laws were more or less similar to the hills tribal areas in different parts of British India. In fact, the tribal leaders of CHT having feared to be part of Islamic state choose to be with the liberal side, India. However, partition came with different story leaving the tribals to struggle for their political future. Unlike India, the then East Pakistan choose to subdue, if not abolished, the British protectionist policy for the Hill Tracts. Following the extremist policy, the new Pro Islamic State chose development policies harming the tribal demography. The Chakma being the largest tribal communities faced the atrocity of State the most. There, the present study analysed on how various state sponsored programmes had affect the tribal in CHT leading to outward migration as a result of - dam projects, non-tribal resettlement in tribal areas, counter insurgency programme.

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Introduction:-

Apart from its territorial difference from other part of Bangladesh, Chittagong Hill Tracts is pre dominantly occupied by the tribes not only culturally and historically different from the low land Bengalis. Maximum of the tribes follow Buddhism as their religious practice totally different from the Bengalis Muslim. Looking into their demographic differences, at the dawn of India's independence when the partition was inevitable, the tribal, the majority of the Chakmas leaders were in favour of joining India, and met some prominent leaders of the Congress like Gandhi, Patel, SP Mukerjee¹. Though the Congress sent delegation to Rangamati to appraise the situation, it was soon leant that the inclusion of CHT under Indian union was impossible. Thus, in 1946 the Tribal Chiefs formed 'The Hillmen Association' to negotiate for separate administration for the CHT and also proposal to be confederate state under India. This attempt failed. In desperation Sheha Kumar Chakma hoisted Indian Flag at Rangamati on August 14, 1947, while the Marma whose ethnicity link with people living in Burma side hoisted Burmese flag at Bandarban. However, all these movements by the tribals were futile and CHT became part and parcel of the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Hereon, it was argued that the suspicion between the tribal and the Bengalis had

¹ Shelley, Mizanur Rahman (General editor). (1992). *The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh : The Untold Story*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Centre for Development Research. P. 29.

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been ignited and the loyalty of the tribal had always been suspect by the Pakistani rulers². Till today, some Chakma association continued to protest the inclusion of CHT to Pakistan/Bangladesh and they even observed August 17 as 'Black Day' as a sign of injustice done to the people of CHT.³

Thus the present study analysed the factors on how the tribal communities in CHT had been gradually suppressed in the post-colonial state, which had eventually force the tribal to leave their home land and migrated to the neighboring countries.

Abolishing and diluting the Colonial laws to protect the tribals and the Hill Tracts

After partition, the Pakistan government soon banned 'Jana Samity' (People's Association) the only tribal political association and, the first administrative changes had taken place by repealing the Chittagong Hill Tracts Frontier Police Regulation of 1881, absorbing the local police into the East Pakistan Police⁴. Then in 1955 there was a move from the Government to abrogate the special status of CHT under the Regulation 1900, which was strongly protested by the tribal and thus thwarted. Thus, the first constitution of Pakistan in 1956 retained the status of Excluded Areas for CHT and the Regulation of 1900. Like its counterpart in India, franchise right was given to the tribal which was denied under the Colonial rule. However, the worst for the tribal protectionist policy came under the regime of Ayub Khan in 1962 as the administrative status of 'Excluded Areas' was changed into 'Tribal Area'. Again the special status was altogether abolished by the constitutional amendment of 1963 and became operative in 1964⁵. Though, the Regulation, 1900 was still operative in CHTs and special law for the tribal had been enjoyed by the tribal, there had been gradual decline and modification on the special status of the tribals as the process for mainstreaming the tribal into the national life which was oriented toward mono culture of Bengalis Muslim.

Another factor that drastically impacts the tribal of CHT was the influx of refugee due to partition that had been rehabilitated in some parts of CHT. Though the tribal did not welcome the rehabilitation of the refugee, the state machineries encourage the re-settlement of the refugee within and on the proximity of CHT. Though Regulation, 1900 under Rule 51 gave the Deputy Commissioner the power to forbid any person other than the native to reside in the district if that person is injurious to peace and good administration of the district, the High Court of East Pakistan in 1965 declared Rule 51 as Ultra-vires of the constitution. As a result, the non-political person or otherwise the refugee, even though unwelcome by the tribals, could not be expelled from CHT. Again in 1979, a major blow to dilute Regulation, 1900 was sanctioned by the Government by inserting new rule under Rule 34 by the Ministry of Land Administration and Land Reforms giving advantage to the non-tribal 'non-hillmen' with relations to land settlement in CHT. This was interpreted by the tribals as an infringement to their rights and privileges in their homeland⁶. Even after Bangladesh liberation in 1971, the new independent state of Bangladesh did not pay heed to the tribal demands for restoration of their lost constitutional special status as the new constitution moved toward uniformity of 'people's republic'. It was only after two decades that "the CHT Regional Council Act of 1998 attempts to partially revive the region's special status by recognizing it as a "tribal inhabited area"⁷.

In addition to the legal and administrative changes undertaken by the Government in CHT, the massive blow against the tribals of CHT came along with the development project to exploit the natural resources in the tribal dominated

² Shelley, Mizanur Rahman (General editor). (1992). *The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: The Untold Story*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Centre for Development Research. P. 29.

³ Deb, Debraj (2019), "Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh integral part of India: Chakma Bodies of Tripura", *The Indian Express*, August 17, 2019, Agartala. Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/tripura/chittagong-hill-tracts-bangladesh-integral-part-of-india-chakma-bodies-tripura-5912693/>. Accessed on January 06, 2022.

⁴ Ahsan, Syed Aziz-al and Bhumitra Chakma (1989), "Problems of National Integration in Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 10 (Oct., 1989), pp. 959-970. P. 963.

⁵ Roy, Raja Devasish (2004), "Challenges for juridical pluralism and customary laws of indigenous peoples: the case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh", *Arizona Journal of International & Comparative Law*, Vol 21, No. 1. 113-182. P. 118.

⁶ Shelley, Mizanur Rahman (General editor). (1992). *The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: The Untold Story*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Centre for Development Research. P. 31.

⁷ Roy, Raja Devasish (2004), "Challenges for juridical pluralism and customary laws of indigenous peoples: the case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh", *Arizona Journal of International & Comparative Law*, Vol 21, No. 1. 113-182. P. 119.

hills. The most effected tribes of the development imperatives of the Government were the Chakmas as they are the largest tribes as compare to other tribal communities. The Chakmas, the most advance among the tribes are also the most aggressive to defend their homeland and fought to retrieve the special status and autonomy.

The impact of Kaptai Dam: The interface of homeland and the State development policy

David E. Sopher has depicted how the developmentalist policy of erstwhile East Pakistan had impact the demography of tribal of CHT due to the construction of Kaptai dam⁸. After partition, due to the government indifferent policy toward the tribes of CHT, it was inevitable that the post-colonial government development agenda look into the potential of the natural resources in CHT. As Sopher wrote, “a significant ecological fact relevant to the dislocation of the Chakmas is that people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts were already pressed for space before the dam was built”⁹. The Kaptai dam project in CHT was started in 1957, sponsored by the United State Agency for International Development (USAID)¹⁰. For relocation, the Chakmas in early 1960, had to take immediate action for their relocation which were –

1. To move to higher ground within their own mawza or one nearby or
2. To move away from the vicinity of the reservoir to (a) the Kasalong Rehabilitation Area,, (b) unreclaimed flat land in the upper Chengri and Myani Valleys, or (c) some other part of the district.¹¹

The above choice had been so urgent that the hillmen had no other choice but to comply by the preference of the official and the pressure of the headmen¹². In such a situation where decision need to be taken beyond individual or single village, at the level of the Chiefs, the situation had prompted each family or village to take immediate decision for their relocation. In fact, the Chakma Chiefs had no other public meeting apart from their annual chiefs’ assembly. So, in such particular case, “the headmen and other prominent villagers sifted opinions and made recommendations in the course of visits by individuals or small groups. These then considered the matter further within their respective family circles”¹³. The other affected tribal group such as Moghs and Tontsongya were treated also separately. But what caused the resentment of the Chakmas was the advantage given to the Bengali cultivators in the relocation process by the administrator¹⁴.

The construction of Kaptai Dam (1957-62) had serious effects on the socio-economic and life patterns of the people in CHT region, of which the tribal were the worst victim. As per records, the dam inundating an area of approximately 400 square miles which included 125 mouzas and the major portion of the district headquarters at Rangamati¹⁵. The submerged area includes 54,000 acres of cultivable land. That is about 40% and 90% of the total area of the district and Rangamati subdivision, respectively. About 10,000 ploughing families and 8,000 jhumiya families constituting more than 100,000 persons were affected due to flooding caused by the dam. The government could allocate only 20,000 acres of flat cultivable land which are of somewhat inferior quality in comparison with the original 54,000 acres. Thus, there was a net loss of 34,000 acres of land. Of 18,000 families, 11,761 could had been rehabilitated so far. Previously, the average land holding of the 10,000 families was estimated at six acres per

⁸ Sopher, David E. (1963), “Population Dislocation in the Chittagong Hills”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Jul., 1963), pp. 337-362.

⁹Sopher, David E. (1963), “Population Dislocation in the Chittagong Hills”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Jul., 1963), pp. 337-362. P. 346.

¹⁰ Singh, Deepak K. (2010). *Stateless in South Asia: The Chakmas between Bangladesh and India*. New Delhi: SAGE. P. 15.

¹¹Sopher, David E. (1963), “Population Dislocation in the Chittagong Hills”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Jul., 1963), pp. 337-362. P. 349.

¹²Sopher, David E. (1963), “Population Dislocation in the Chittagong Hills”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Jul., 1963), pp. 337-362. Pp. 349-350.

¹³Sopher, David E. (1963), “Population Dislocation in the Chittagong Hills”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Jul., 1963), pp. 337-362. P. 350.

¹⁴Sopher, David E. (1963), “Population Dislocation in the Chittagong Hills”, *Geographical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Jul., 1963), pp. 337-362. P. 350-1.

¹⁵ Islam, Syed Nazmul, “The Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh: Integrational Crisis between Center and Periphery”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 21, No. 12 (Dec., 1981), pp. 1211-1222. P.1216. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2643880>.

family, but under the new settlements in the non-submerged and de-reserved areas provided them with only an average of two acres per family¹⁶.

It had also been calculated that there was a huge leakage in the process of compensation. Though there had been an allocation for compensation amount to sum of \$59 million, it was believed that only US \$ 26 million could be utilized for resettlement and rehabilitation and, that many tribal families did not received any form of compensation for the loss of their homeland¹⁷. The destruction caused by the dam was not only the submerged a large amount of cultivable land, it caused irreparable damage to the jhum pattern of cultivation thereby affecting the tribal livelihood and it also deeply impact the overall economic life cycle of the tribal. The dispossessed tribal had no other economic alternative but they were forced into entered the newly state-imposed economic policy of their livelihood¹⁸. Later, in the survey it was found that tribal demography and economic lives had been deeply deteriorated by the economic policy of the State in CHT, as they were deprived on new opportunities as well as it did not suit the everyday skill of the tribals.

Tribal employment in major industries like the Kaptai project and Chandraghona Paper Mill has been less than 1 %. Business is also dominated by outsiders, and one can hardly find a tribal shop in the bazaars of the Hill Tracts. These developments and conditions heightened the feeling of deprivation among the tribals. A survey in 1979 found that 69% of the Chakma felt their food and economic crisis was caused by the Kaptai dam; 89% said they were displaced by the inundation of their homes and land; 87% said they had to face serious trouble in building new homes; 69% complained about insufficient compensation and corruption of government officials; 78% complained of having no opportunity for jobs in the hydroelectric project; and 93% said that before the Kaptai dam was constructed their economic condition was better.

The government encouraged the tribal people to take up new occupations such as fishing and horticulture but the response was not promising for two important reasons: the circumstantial disadvantage and the tribals' lack of necessary skills. By the late 1970s, about 3,000 registered fishermen were on the lake created by the dam. Only 20-25% of them were local people and Bengalis controlled and regulated the commercial fishing.¹⁹

However, the worst affected hill people were the one who were left with no choice but to seek refuge in the neighbouring countries of India and Myammar (Burma). It has been estimated that over 40,000 Chakmas had left CHT to seek refuge in north eastern region of India in the present states of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram which were then NEFA and Mizo District (Assam) respectively²⁰. Even after the 1964, the influx of the Tribal of CHT, the Chakma in particular continued in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Tripura²¹. Though they were being recognized as 'refugee' in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, such recognition has not been exercise in the states of Mizoram and Tripura thereby giving political advantage for permanent settlement.

Insurgency in Chittagong and the its impact on Chakma migration

The other factor that resulted into the Chakma migration from Bangladesh, particularly into the North eastern States of India, is to escape the atrocity of the Bangali nationalism which tries to assimilate the tribal population and also uncheck migration of Bengalis into the tribal territories in CHT. As it has been said earlier that since the dawn of partition, the tribals communities, the Chakma leaders in particular, demanded to be merged with India. This attempt had been due to the similar British administrative set up with the Hills of North East and also the nature in which the diverse cultures was to be accommodated under India unlike Pakistan based on Islam religion. So, when the tribal

¹⁶Ahsan, Syed Aziz-al and Bhumitra Chakma (1989), "Problems of National Integration in Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 10 (Oct., 1989), pp. 959-970. Pp. 964-5.

¹⁷Rajkumari Chandra Kalindi Roy (2000). *Land Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh*. Copenhagen: International Work Group For Indigenous Affairs. P. 100.

¹⁸Jahagir, B.K. (1979), "Tribal Peasants in Transition: Chittagong Hill Tracts". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 14, No. 11 (Mar. 17, 1979), pp. 597+599-600. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4367434>. P. 600.

¹⁹Ahsan, Syed Aziz-al and Bhumitra Chakma (1989), "Problems of National Integration in Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 10 (Oct., 1989), pp. 959-970. P. 964.

²⁰Prasad, Cahnnu (2006). Migration and the Question of Citizenship: People Of Chittagong Hill Tract in Arunachal Pradesh. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 67, No. 3 (JULY - SEPT., 2006), pp.471-490 P. 474

²¹Saikia, Anup (1994), "Tension over Chakma". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 29, No. 53 (Dec. 31, 1994). Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4402189>

communities of CHT demanded the continuity of their rights and privileges under the 1900 regulation and exert their identity differences, the Pro-Islamic Government of East Pakistan and later Bangladesh treated as being Pro-India, which can be assumed or indirectly implies anti-Pakistan or Bangladesh²².

Moreover during the Bangladesh liberation war, it had been estimated that about 30,000 to 50,000 Bengalis had entered and occupied into the land of the tribal who had fled to India.²³ This illegal settlement was operated with the help of the then Pakistan Army and even after Bangladesh independence, when the tribal returned their lands had been occupied and they gradually became the victim.

With the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, the new nation adopted a new Constitution for ‘fundamental state policy’ used ‘Bengali Nationalism’ as the basis of ‘State Nationalism’, as Article 9 of Bangladesh Constitution read –

“The unity and solidarity of the Bangalee nation, which, deriving its identity from its language and culture, attained sovereign and independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence, shall be the basis of Bangalee nationalism”.

The above definition of nationalism totally excluded the tribal community and it did not recognise their distinct and unique identity, totally different from the Bengali identity. This was challenged by a sole Chakma member in the Parliament, Manobendra Narayan Larma, in the following lines:

You cannot impose your nationality identity on others. I am a Chakma not a Bangali. I am a citizen of Bangladesh, Bangladeshi. You are also a Bangladeshi but your national identity is Bangali.....They [Hill People] can never become Bangali²⁴.

So the Chakma leaders demanded Constitutional safeguard of the tribal identities and their land which was denied by the Bangladesh government. The discontentment of the tribal communities triggered by the destruction caused by the construction of Kaptai Dam led to formation of organisations like CHT Welfare Association in 1966 and also the Rangamati Communist Party (RCP) on May 16, 1970. However, these new organisation under the leadership of the new ‘middle class’ did not get much support of the chiefs as any form of political platforms can undermine their status while the 1900 Regulation was still in application²⁵.

Then, the tribal resentment had culminated in to the formation of political organisation called Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) on February 15, 1972 under the leadership of Manobendra Narayan Larma²⁶. First the PCJSS took the political route and even Manobendra Narayan Larma on April 24, 1973 presented the demands to the drafting committee of the Bangladesh Constitution. The demand were – (1) autonomy of CHT and separate Legislative assembly; (2) inclusion of CHT regulation 1900; (3) Preservation of the institution of tribal chiefs and tribal customary law; (4) Prohibition of amendment of 1900 Regulation to prevent Bengali settlement in CHT²⁷.

On the contrary, all the demand related to any form of tribal rights and protection of their land culture had been rejected and thus, denied by the new constitution of Bangladesh. The oppression on the tribal continued on their own land and this indifferent attitude of the Government had finally turned PCJSS to resort in armed struggle. To defend their claims and objectives, the PCJSS always kept the door open for political negotiation and solution for peaceful dialogue. So, on one hand the PCJSS exerted their armed struggle for rights to self-determination and on the other

²²Mohsin, Amena (2000), “State Hegemony”, in P. Gain, (ed.), *The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Life and Nature at Risk*, Dhaka: Society for Environmental and Human Development (SEHD). P. 61.

²³ “Revolt in Chittagong Hill Tracts”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 13, No. 17 (Apr. 29, 1978), pp. 723+726-727. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4366569>

²⁴ Panday, Pranab Kumar and Ishtiaq Jamil (2015), “Conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: An unimplemented accord and continued violence”, in Jugdep S. Chima (ed.), *Ethnic Subnationalist Insurgencies in South Asia: Identities, interests and challenges to state authority*. New York: Routledge. 143-160. P. 145

²⁵ Mohsin, Amena (1997). *The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited. P. 48.

²⁶For detail information on PCJSS see the official website, <https://www.pcjss.org/about-pcjss/>.

²⁷Majumdar, Shantanu (2012), “Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti”, in Islam, Sirajul & Ahmed A. Jamal (ed.) *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh (2nd Ed.)*. Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

hand, the carry forward formal dialogue with the successive Bangladesh Government which finally led to the signing of CHT Accord in 1997²⁸.

But by the time the CHT Accord was signed the damage had been done beyond irreparable as the demography of CHT has been predominated by the non-tribal Bengali. As the official figure has shown that the Bengali Muslim Population in the CHT was around 2 per cent in 1947 had tremendously grown to 49 per cent in 2003. On the other hand, the tribal population that had comprised of around 98 per cent in 1947 had declined considerable to 51 per cent in 2003²⁹. Even this official figure, for many has been manipulated to show that the tribal population is majority to Bengali population, according to indigenous source the Bengali population is figured at more than 65 per cent³⁰. Various study has shown that there are many factor attributed to the unchecked increased of the Bengali population, particularly the encouragement of the Government policy to re-settle the non-tribal and also the Bengali refugee in the CHT where the density of population is one-tenth of the entire country³¹. Particularly after PCJSS in 1975 launched its armed wing called Gana Mukti Foj (People's Liberation Army) popularly known as Shanti Bahini³², the government forces show no mercy on the hill people and it was written that "Amnesty International reported more massacres perpetrated jointly by the military and new settlers from March 1980 to May 1986"³³.

Soon after the Bangladesh independence, the identity asserted by the PCJSS was termed as 'Jumma Nationalism' as it articulates the identity of the hill people³⁴. Thus, this Jumma Nationalism had turned to violent though Shanti Bahini as an option to protect the rights of the hill people failed through a constitutional mean. When the armed movement peaked in the 1980s, the Bengali settlers also suffered in the hand of the Shanti Bahini which cannot be denied, but the fact had been clearly outlined by Economic and Political Weekly in India in 1984, as follows:

"An estimated 40,000 soldiers - about a third of the total Bangladesh army - are fighting the 3,000 to 4,000 strong guerrillas, but with little enthusiasm. The army has been unable to make any headway. But the government is also providing large financial incentives to Bengali settlers who come mostly from neighbouring districts. These settlers number today about 4 lakhs and constitute a major threat to the tribals whose population is close to 600,000, i.e., they could well lose their majority if the present colonisation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts continues. Understandably, the tribals seem to lack any confidence in the Bangladesh government whose promise of amnesty failed to get a significant response: only a few hundred people surrendered"³⁵.

These atrocities committed on the tribal people in CHT soon became an international concern, particularly with the 'genocide' committed by the Bangladesh military on the tribal people in 1980, in revenge to the ambush by

²⁸ <https://www.pcjss.org/about-pcjss/>. Accessed on January 8, 2022.

²⁹ Panday, Pranab Kumar and Ishtiaq Jamil (2015), "Conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: An unimplemented accord and continued violence", in Jugdep S. Chima (ed.), *Ethnic Subnationalist Insurgencies in South Asia: Identities, interests and challenges to state authority*. New York: Routledge. 143-160. P. 146.

³⁰ Panday, Pranab Kumar and Ishtiaq Jamil (2015), "Conflict in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: An unimplemented accord and continued violence", in Jugdep S. Chima (ed.), *Ethnic Subnationalist Insurgencies in South Asia: Identities, interests and challenges to state authority*. New York: Routledge. 143-160. P. 146.

³¹ Ahsan, Syed Aziz-al and Bhumitra Chakma (1989), "Problems of National Integration in Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 10 (Oct., 1989), pp. 959-970. P. 968

³² The Shanti Bahini is dominated by the Chakma community who otherwise were the worst sufferers due to the construction of Kaptai dam and Bengali settlement in CHT. See, Zaman, M. Q. (1982), "Crisis in Chittagong Hill Tracts: Ethnicity and Integration". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Jan. 16, 1982), pp. 75+77-80. P. 78. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4370578>

³³ Ahsan, Syed Aziz-al and Bhumitra Chakma (1989), "Problems of National Integration in Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 10 (Oct., 1989), pp. 959-970. P. 968. Source extracted from Amnesty International (1986). *Bangladesh: Unlawful Killing and Torture in the Chittagong Hill Tracts* (London: Amnesty International, September).

³⁴ Chowdhury, Khairul (2008), "Politics of Identities and Resources in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: Ethnonationalism and/or Indigenous Identity. *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 36, No. 1, SPECIAL FOCUS: State, Culture and the Economy (2008), pp. 57-78 P. 67.

³⁵ "Massacres in Chittagong Hill Tracts", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 19, No. 29 (Jul. 21, 1984), p. 1141. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4373433>

Shanti Bahini³⁶. But the Bangladesh Government denied any of such allegation made by NGOs like Amnesty International, Anti-Slavery Society, The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), etc³⁷. In fact, the Bangladesh government policy against the tribal has been continued by re-settling the non-tribal in the CHT with the help of the army and the government official. Initially this re-settlement of the non-tribal was developed secretly since 1978 but it was soon exposed the intention of the Bangladesh Government. But, the settlement of the non tribal Bengali was still continued till the 1990s, in fact, “in total, more than 4,00,000 landless Bengalis were given land in the CHT from 1978 to 1983”³⁸. The report of the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights in 1984 also stated that even after the birth of Bangladesh massive influx in the tribal areas had been sponsored by the State that “by 1981 it is estimated that nearly 200,000 had been settled.This massive programme of settlement will make the indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts a minority in their own land”³⁹.

Soon, pressure was mounting on the Bangladesh Government, particularly from the international organisations, during the regime of General Ershad, sponsored settlement of Bengalis in the Hills had been ended in 1984 or 1985. According to CHT Commission, “Ershad ruled that no new land grants would be made to settlers” and also, “Bengalis settlers had been prohibited from leaving CHT to return to the plains. Ershad ended that prohibition in 1989”⁴⁰. Hereafter, there had been some positive development to accommodate the distinct tribal identity and their land, though it was already late to repair the damaged caused.

During all this time of conflict and struggle, many tribal were force to leave their homeland in CHT from the very beginning of the counter insurgency programme of the Bangladesh armed forces. Whatever development programmes taken up in CHT, the primary concerned were not for the upliftment of the Tribal people, but for the speedy development of counter insurgency process and even foreign donation had been misappropriated and misused against the tribal⁴¹. Counter insurgency had been programmed hand in hand with the re-settlement of the non-tribal in the tribal land in CHT, thereby coercing the tribal families to seek refuge in the neighbouring country of India. In fact many families had migrated to the present state of Mizoram to escape the atrocities of the state forces. One such incident happened in 1977 when the entire village of Guichari, 50 miles of Rangamati, around 80 families fled to Mizoram under their leader name Mukunda Talukdar⁴².

However, one has to understand that after a few years of Independence, the military power had dominated the executive in Bangladesh. So, the period from 1975 to 1990, Bangladesh had witnessed a political turmoil in the hand of the military controlled executive government and that the judicial and the legislative branches were in the hand of the military⁴³. The situation of Bangladesh during this military regime has been written by Schendel in the following lines, “In this period civil rights were much more curtailed than they had been in the initial years after independence. This was something that many citizens of Bangladesh refused to accept. Their aspirations for the future expressed themselves in continual struggles to improve the quality of their lives and to increase their influence over the

³⁶For detail see, Levene, Mark (1999), “The Chittagong Hill Tracts: A Case Study in the Political Economy of ‘Creeping’ Genocide. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Apr., 1999), pp. 339-369 Pp. 358-9.

³⁷ “Human Rights in Chittagong Hill Tracts”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 21, No. 43 (Oct. 25, 1986), p. 1876. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4376249>

³⁸Arens, Janneke (1997), “Winning Hearts and Minds: Foreign Aid and Militarisation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts”. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 29 (Jul. 19-25, 1997), pp. 1811-1819. P. 1813. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4405649>.

³⁹Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights (1984), “Report for 1984 to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations”. Retrieved from https://www.cwis.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/cht_un84.txt. Accessed on January 9, 2022.

⁴⁰ The Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (1991). *‘Life is not Ours’: Land and Human Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh. The Report of The Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission, May 1991*. Amsterdam: The Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission. P. 17.

⁴¹For detail see, Arens, Janneke (1997), “Winning Hearts and Minds: Foreign Aid and Militarisation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts”. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 32, No. 29 (Jul. 19-25, 1997), pp. 1811-1819. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4405649>.

⁴² “Revolt in Chittagong Hill Tracts”. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 13, No. 17 (Apr. 29, 1978), pp. 723+726-727. P. 727. Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4366569>

⁴³ Schendel, Willem Van (2009). *History of Bangladesh*. New York: Cambridge University Press. P. 197.

state”⁴⁴. In such situation where the general condition of the citizen of Bangladesh seem so gloom, one can assume that the lives of the tribals would had been worse compare to the general living condition of the non tribal Bengali.

Conclusion:-

From the above analysis of the situation and plight of the tribal communities, the Chakmas in particular, in CHT Bangladesh, one can draw a conclusion that, their deteriorated situation vis-à-vis the State of Bangladesh has force them to migrate to the neighbouring countries, particularly the North East of India. In this present chapter, it has been analysed three main factors that led to the out migration of Chakmas from the CHT. The first was the developmentalist policy of the then East Bengal government which constructed the Kaptai dam in 1959-1964 submerging vast tracts of fertile land on which the tribal had been depending. This was followed by the destructive policy of re-settlement and rehabilitation policy of the then Government on the affected tribal communities. Another factor was insurgency and the counter insurgency policy which resulted in the atrocity of the State on the tribal people. Along with these two factors, the post colonial government since Independence of 1947 encouraged the resettlement of non tribal Bengalis in the hill to predominate the tribal life and culture. This was the result of the partition in which the nation state of Pakistan later Bangladesh was born base on one culture, one religion or otherwise called it as Islamic nation. On the other hand, the tribal communities, the Chakmas in particular mostly followed Buddhism faith which was totally different from the Bengalis Muslim.

To a certain extent, the impact of Bangladesh government policy on the tribal people and their land has cause serious problem in the adjoining neighbouring states of North East India. Particular, in the small state of Mizoram, the migration of Chakma has been resulted into the changes of demography in the southwest corner of the state. In the present context the region has been predominated by the Chakma communities and that to accommodate the Chakma population, regional council now autonomous council has been established for their local governance and development. Otherwise, the Chakmas has never been regarded as indigenous to Mizoram and even during the British ruled in Mizo Hills they were termed under ‘foreigners’. Mizoram is the only state where the Chakmas has been given separate politico-institution recognition under the Constitution of India, while in the state of Arunachal Pradesh they were categorised under ‘refugee’ having denied citizenship.

⁴⁴ Schendel, Willem Van (2009). *History of Bangladesh*. New York: Cambridge University Press. P. 197.