

CHAPTER-VII

CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined in the preceding chapters presents an observation and major findings on the historical, socio-cultural, political and displaced refugee life of the Hajong tribe of the Northeastern states of India. The chapter draws the conclusion of the study through the descriptive and analytical method of data analysis. It also present some suggestions based on the findings of the study that may have policy formulation by the Government for the social and political improvement of the Hajongs. A summary of the findings of the preceding chapters is presented below-

The very first chapter includes the key theoretical concepts of the study, the ethno-historical background, the racial affinity, their origin, the demographic distribution and the present population of the Hajong tribes. From the study of physical as well cultural characteristics, we can say that the Hajong tribe is purely Mongoloids groups of people. But some of the Mongoloid characteristics like head-hunting, tattooing by pricking, aversion to milk, primitive form of agriculture, joom cultivation, dwelling house built on posts and piles, disposal of the dead body on raised platform etc. are very much absent among the Hajong tribe. Again some of the features like chewing betel-nut, tattoo, loom for weaving clothes, burned or boiled food, wet cultivation, patrilineal etc, prove to claim the Mongoloid features of Hajong people. The position of Hajong is such that though they are sub-tribe to Bodo group of tribes, they ethnically closer to the caste population of North-East India. More importantly, the Hajong also display relatively more Caucasoid morphological features as are observed among the castes people in India. Rightly they may be called a hybrid. It might be a sub-tribe of the greater Bodo-Kachari group of people with Mongoloid and some non-Mongoloid features.

Moreover, the work also tries to locate the origin of the term 'Hajong'. It has been found that the Hajongs lacks authentic written history to ascertain it. This is the most relevant point of the study. Again there is much possibility that the word 'Hajong' is derived from the name of the place 'Hajo'. Scholars and majority of the respondents claimed to have come from the Hajo areas of Kamrup District of Assam. Subsequently,

they have migrated to Borhazari and other areas of Garo Hills, North Mymensing and Sylhet Districts of East Bengal. The inhabitations are found both in India and Bangladesh. After the partition of the Indian sub-continent, majority of the Hajongs was displaced from the erst while East Pakistan especially from the Mymensing and Sylhet Districts and started living a segregated refugee life in different part of India especially in North Eastern states. After examining various Census Reports, non-governmental records that their population is found not exceed more than 2 Lakh both in India and Bangladesh. Besides, the second part includes objectives, hypotheses, methodology and universe of the study, variables, chapter schemes and some limitations of the study.

Then in chapter II an effort has been made to give a comprehensive review of related literature on the study of the tribes of North East India in general and Hajong tribe in particular has been undertaken with a view to carry out the study in proper perspective. All these studies focused on one or other aspects of the problem. In fact, a very little elaborate and authentic works have been done on the Hajong tribe in proper historical and socio-political perspective. Moreover, no known study has so far been made on the massive displacement, migration, refugee life and statelessness of the Hajong tribe. A full-length intensive study on the socio-cultural and political identity crisis facing by the Hajong tribe is found very scant. In view of this, an effort is also made to overcome the theoretical-methodological limitations and gaps as revealed by earlier studies. It is kept in mind the strength and limitations of the earlier studies conducted at different fields and tried best to make the present study meaningful and relevant. Besides, the chapter highlighted the research gap of the present study along with the significance of the study. An attempt has made to overcome the theoretical-methodological limitations and gaps as revealed by earlier studies.

The chapter III has dealt with and set to analyse the political life and struggles of the Hajongs. It is found that since the life of the Hajongs is full of struggles for their survival. As such, the chapter focuses on various struggles and movement started by the Hajongs against the exploitation of zaminders in North Mymensing district in East Bengal and later on in erstwhile East Pakistan. The role of Hajong freedom fighters including Lalit Sarkar Hajong, Rasmoni Hajong etc were found commendable. In fact,

these political movements were found responsible for the segregation and political deprivation of the Hajong tribe in erstwhile East Bengal and later on in erstwhile East Pakistan. After independence, the Hajongs became the target of the East Pakistani Government for their anti-imperialist struggles in the whole North Mymensing District. They were the worst victim of the partition of the Indian sub- continent in 1947. Despite their efforts, the Boundary Commission of Bengal poured cold water on the hope and expectations of the Hajongs by incorporating their indigenous land with the newly born East Pakistan. The subsequent communal violence, racial discrimination, political deprivation and violation of human rights forced them to leave East Pakistan and settle somewhere else in India.

Then chapter IV presents a very clear picture about the displacement & Migration of the Hajong tribe and discusses the causes of displacement and forced migration from erstwhile East Pakistan into different parts of North-East India including Nagaon district of Assam. Various historical and political causes responsible for their displacement and forced migration from the East Bengal and later on East Pakistan were analysed elaborately. It has been found that the demand for amalgamation with India, demand for formation of Adhistan (Tribal Land), religious discrimination, communal violence, arrival of Bihari Muslim (Muhazirs) refugees to East Pakistan, village transfer (Rewaj Badal), Hajrat Bal Mosque rumor and the impact of communist movement in the Hajong inhabited regions of North Mymensing district were responsible for the large scale flow and migration of the Hajongs into India. Besides, it has been found that the migration that took place in two different phases- during the struggles of the Hajongs against the zaminders and landlords especially at the time of Hati Kheda (elephant Capturing) and Tonto movements. The second phase commenced in the wake of independence of the Indian sub-continent from the erstwhile East Pakistan in 1964 and in 1971.

The Hajongs are the indigenous tribe like many other tribes in the North East regions of India. More importantly it has also been found that there a number of Hajong villages were existent since ancient time in the district of Goalpara, Dhubri and Garo Hills district of Assam and Meghalaya. The major findings is that most of the

Hajongs living in different North Eastern states especially in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya are migrants who were displaced forcefully from the indigenous land of North Mymensing and Sylhet districts of erstwhile East Pakistan. Besides, it is also found that a few Hajongs who migrated into Assam from the erstwhile East Pakistan as a result of mutual land transfer deal which was not known earlier. They may be considered as the indigenous like other tribes of the North East India.

The chapter V, focuses on various steps taken so far for the protection of refugees in international spheres with the most accepted definition of refugees. It highlighted the position of India in handling the massive refugee problem of the country as India is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, 1951. The discussion on the legal and institutional arrangements for the protection of refugees in India is one of the relevant aspects of the chapter. It has been highlighted that India has refugees but no refugee laws. Article 21 and 25 are not enough to deal with the refugee problem of the country. Consequently, the absence of specific refugee legislation often subjected to harassment and denied their basic refugee rights. However, the role of the Indian courts has often come to the rescue of refugees. But judicial verdict cannot be considered to be a substitute for Refugee Legislation in India.

The chapter elaborately narrated the refugee life of the Hajong tribes those who migrated in the wake of the partition of India. It includes the name and numbers of refugees migrated to India in different phases mainly in 1964 and in 1971 from the erstwhile East Pakistan and sheltered in different refugee camps in the undivided Assam by the Government of India. The process of refugee rehabilitation was a stupendous task in front of the Government. Despite, registration, rehabilitation have been provided to the refugees including the Hajongs. It has been found that most of the Hajong refugees were rehabilitated into undivided Assam which included different districts of present Assam including Garo Hills District of Meghalaya and NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh). Besides, beyond North East region a number of Hajong refugees were rehabilitated in Dandakaranya, West Bengal and in Andaman Islands and their numbers is not known yet.

The second part of the chapter elaborately presents a picture of the Hajongs who are still living a stateless refugee life in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is found that the

major hurdles that stood in the way of acquisition of citizenship are like the indigenous Arunachalee tribes, Students' Organisation and even the successive State Government of Arunachal Pradesh. Their perception of opposition to the rehabilitation of the Hajong and Chakma refugees in the state was found due to the demographic imbalances and displacement of the indigenous people by the rapid growth of the refugee populations, threat to indigenous Arunachali cultures, political and economic marginalization and rising ethnic conflict among the refugees and local Arunachali tribes. On the other hand, the intensified struggles for citizenship by the Hajong-Chakma since the early 1990s have been highlighted. Even the steps taken by the Government of India, National Human Rights Commissions, the Election Commission of India and the Supreme Court of India to resolve the unending Hajong citizenship problems proved helpful in protecting the human rights of the Hajongs in A.P. However, the last part of this chapter incorporates the statelessness and the present status of the Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh as stateless people still fighting for the citizenship status. They are found on the verge of threat of second displacement, if the Hajong refugee problem of Arunachal Pradesh is not solved politically.

Then in chapter VI, a complete picture of changes mainly in social and cultural life of the Hajong tribe as a result of displacement has been highlighted. The changes as a result of acculturation in socio-cultural, religious-festivals and even in language of the Hajongs have been discussed. The influence of dominant Bengali and Assamese culture on the Hajongs cannot be denied and the factors responsible for identity crisis among the Hajongs are focused. However, it has been found that the Hajongs are not fully assimilated like many other tribes of North East India. Many traditional worships and festivals are still prevalent among the Hajongs. At the same time the new generations of Hajongs are found ignorant about their rich customs and traditions.

The Hajongs are the indigenous tribe like many other tribes in the North East regions of India. More importantly it has also been found that there a number of Hajong villages were existent since ancient time in the district of Goalpara, Dhubri and Garo Hills district of Assam and Meghalaya and all Hajongs are not migrants as revealed

by some earlier studies. However, the major findings is that most of the Hajongs living in different North Eastern states especially in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya are migrants who were displaced forcefully from the indigenous land of North Mymensing and Sylhet districts of erstwhile East Pakistan. Besides, it is also found that a few Hajongs who migrated into Assam from the erstwhile East Pakistan as a result of mutual land transfer deal which was not known earlier. They may be considered as the indigenous like other tribes of the North East India. The Hajongs rehabilitated in Assam also deprived of their basic human rights. A number of Hajong families were not granted original land patta (deed) of their rehabilitated land. The Hajongs those who were rehabilitated at Derapather of Nagaon district of Assam were not granted land patta rights even 45 years after of their rehabilitation.

In fact, the present study on the displacement and Crisis of identity of the Hajong tribe of North East India have more relevance in the present context to draw the attention of the Government as well as the society they do belong to for the eradication of their deprivation, exploitation, poverty, unemployment of the ethnic group and identity politics to bring into the mainstream. Finally, the study will encourage further investigation and research about the diminishing microscopic tribe like Hajongs and to protect them from decay.

The following hypotheses have been found verified and proved.

Hypothesis 1, the smaller tribal groups tend to merge with the larger groups for cultural assimilation is testified. It becomes clear that a number of little known tribes like Dhimal, Hajongs, Thengals, Dhalu, Hudi, and Banai are on the verge of ruin. Their identity and rich folk-culture, customs and traditions are on the verge of ruin in many parts of the regions. It may be mentioned here that the Hajong tribe which once lived in several parts of West Bengal like Kochbihar, Nodia, Santipur, Khardah almost they lost their identity. Those who are rehabilitated in Dandakaranya and Andaman and Nicobar Island have already lost their identity as Hajongs. The problem of acculturation is high among the Hajong tribe especially those who are displaced from their original abode. The Hajongs claims that they are Hindus and follow the Hindu rites and customs. The language spoken by the Hajongs, their social structure and different festivals practiced

by them are influenced by the Bengali and Assamese dominant culture which is an indication of acculturation for assimilation. This obviously had direct impact of displacement on the socio-cultural life of the Hajongs. At the same time it has been found that Hajongs still adhered to their traditional festivals and customs in North East India but with some variations. They are not merging or fully assimilated with the Bengali, Assamese or any other tribal societies in North East India all at once. The trends and gradual process of assimilation are found among the Hajongs. Many organizations of the Hajongs like the Hajong Jatiyo Parishad, Hajong Welfare Society is fighting to protect their age old traditional identity in the region. Therefore, the said hypothesis is proved.

Hypothesis II has been tested and proved that displacement and stateless refugee life of the Hajongs lead to them socially segregation and politically non-represented. In fact, the displacement causing forced migration of Hajong tribe from erstwhile East Pakistan that took place in two different phases—the first phase from 1947-51 caused displacement as a result of partition of the country and communal tensions. During the second phase from 1964-71, there was huge displacement and migration of Hajong tribe along with other people as a result of Indo-Pak war of 1965 and Mukti Yudda (Freedom Movement) of East Pakistan. They are rehabilitated in different districts of Assam in such a way that they can never represent a Hajong on their own. No Hajong candidate is represented to the Assam Legislative Assembly till date. However, a few Hajongs represented to the Meghalaya Assembly from the Garo hills district. In Arunachal Pradesh the Hajongs are fighting for the rights of citizenship and found living as stateless refugee life till date. This is only because of their displacement from their original abode.

Hypothesis III, has also been proved that numerically small and displaced tribe is much prone to face the identity crisis also verified. The Hajong are one of the microscopic minority tribe of north-east India as they are marginalized and in the category of less than 1% population of the total tribal population in Assam. As per the Census Report of 1991 Hajongs are 0.008 % of the total tribal population in the state of Assam. Likewise, the Census Report of 1981 recorded merely 85 Hajong tribes in the

state of Mizoram. The declining trend of the Hajong population in the state is very much clear from the Census Report of 2001, in which only 2 persons returned as male having no female in the state. Similarly, beyond the North East India, the Hajong inhabitations are also recorded in West Bengal. The Census Report of 1981 recorded 1035 numbers of Hajong tribe in the state and especially in Jalpaiguri district. The diminishing number of Hajong population are also recorded in the Census Report of 2001 which reported 597 (334 Males and 263 Females) in West Bengal. The Census Report 2011 also depicted the same declining trend of the Hajongs in comparison to the other tribes in North-East India. This amply proves that the numerically small size of the Hajongs had to face identity crisis as a result of their displacement.

Some Suggestions:-

There can be no question that the Hajong tribe are of Indian origin and have been residing in Arunachal Pradesh for more than 47 years. Under the Indira- Mujib Agreement of 1972, it was determined that India and not Bangladesh would be responsible for all migrants who entered India before 25th March 1971. In that case, the East Bengal Regulation Act 1873, which require taking of prior permission (Inner Line Permit) before entering the Arunachal Pradesh cannot be applied for forcible deportation of Hajong tribe.

More importantly, if the Tibetans who fled to Arunachal Pradesh on their own can be given Indian citizenship rights, why can not the Hajongs, who were settled by the Central Government in Arunachal Pradesh. In 2002, the Arunachal Pradesh Government granted citizenship to 90 Tibetan refugee families of Shyo village in Tawang district bordering the China who came in 1950s and 1960s.

In addition, the Supreme Court has recognized the citizenship rights to the Hajongs who had migrated over a period. The state governments of Arunachal Pradesh and Central Governments in the affidavit to the Delhi High Court have recognized that the Hajongs are indigenous like the rest of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, it is legitimate on the part of the Hajong tribe to claim Indian citizenship right in Arunachal Pradesh.

In Arunachal Pradesh the Hajongs are still living as a stateless people like the Palestinian in different countries of Middle-East, even though they have been staying there since 1964. It would be worthwhile to mention here that there has been threat to forcible expulsion of the Hajongs in Arunachal Pradesh in recent times. The Government measures and assurances to protect the Hajongs against all kind of harassment were not adequate because of the fact that although India is party to all the International Human Rights Conventions, the provisions with regard to the protection of the refugees have not been so far incorporated in the domestic legislation leaving enough room to expose to forcible deportation of Hajong refugees. Therefore, it is imperative on the part of India to sign refugee related international treaties and to formulate a domestic laws to tackle long pending refugee problem in the country.

The Hajong refugees those who migrated from the erstwhile East Pakistan were granted Indian citizenship certificates except Arunachal Pradesh. They were allotted land as part of refugee rehabilitation programme. But there are some rehabilitated Hajong areas that are not granted permanent land patta by the Government. The Hajongs of Tengripar and Derapather of Nagaon district are deprived of this rights till date. They should be provided land holding rights on the allotted lands by providing permanent land patta.

It is also suggested to include all the little known tribes or communities in the Government Census Report irrespective of their size of population. They should not be abandoned by simply saying marginalized groups. It has been noticed that despite the presence of Hajong in different districts of Assam, only two Hills Districts confirmed the presence of the Hajongs in the Census Report of 1971 and 1991.

Besides, the terms refugees, migrants and displaced persons are used according to the convenience of time and situation by the states at the national and international spheres. Those who are forced to flee their homeland because of political persecution and cross international border should also be equated with those who have forced to move by loss of livelihood, man-made disaster and natural calamities as per established international refugee law. The present definition of these terms is rather narrow, uni dimensional and need to be reviewed and reformulated in order to accommodate the

current reality. The fact is that the domestic as well as international laws should be formulated to protect the rights of these helpless people who have no legal existence in most countries of the world like the Hajongs of Arunachal Pradesh.

South Asia has the fourth largest concentration of refugees in the world. A large number of displaced persons who have crossed international border in the region are not regarded as refugees by the host Governments. They are usually treated as 'undesirable aliens' or 'illegal migrants' and most frequently 'foreigners'. Besides, there are no domestic laws which define or distinguish refugees from others who cross the international borders. The respective Governments in the region neither signed nor ratified the UN Convention, 1951 concerning the status of refugees which is the sole mechanism for the protection and rehabilitation of refugees. So it is imperative on the part of all the states including India to sign the UN Conventions on Refugees to handle the unending flows of refugees in the region.

There is an urgent need for the formulation of a Charter for South Asian countries in order to protect the stateless people in the region. It is because of the stateless people who are mainly the creation of the decolonization process associated with boundary demarcation exercise in the region.

Most importantly, everybody should know that there is a limit to what the law and Courts can do. Because the law and courts do their best but these get stonewalled by the implementing authorities. Law Courts are not law-enforcing agencies and it merely shows the utility of a court verdict. As the law cannot initiate any change unless the society is ready for accepting and implementing it. The Supreme Court verdict on NHRC Vs. State of Arunachal Pradesh (1996) has been overruled by the local administration. There was helplessness in implementing the verdict.

A modern multicultural state like India is bound to protect the life and liberty of all the people of the country, be he a citizen or otherwise. A specific measure and policy should be formulated to save the rich customs, cultures, and traditions of the most microscopic tribe like Hajongs from their extinctions. It is essential to protect them from any kind of discrimination. The civil society, NGOs and people at large have an obligation to protect the identities of a small tribe like Hajongs along with nationalities for strengthening the unity and integrity of the country.