

CHAPTER-IV

DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION OF THE HAJONGS

The displacements and migrations are the words which were widely used in international spheres during the Second World War. Since then the displacement of people and communities has been one of the challenges facing the statelessness of people in different parts of the world. It obviously renders people homeless and is being deprived of their places of abode. Globally the magnitude of the problem is astounding. In Indian sub-continent several thousand of people have been affected by displacement and living a stateless refugee life by the partition of India in 1947.

The North East of India is comprising of eight states-Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim are surrounded by many countries such as Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and China, This obviously shows that about ninety nine percent of the Northeast boundaries is international and only one percent is domestic boundary. In view of this the historical connections among the traditional tribes in the Northeast are largely of Tibet -Burman- Mongoloid stock and closer to somewhat Asia than South Asia. The region is ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the other states of India. Besides, the major problem areas is that the Northeast is territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries in the 1950s, giving rise to discontentment and assertion of one's identity in the region. As a result of distinct environmental, socio-economic and political transformation, the entire North Eastern region has experienced massive internal displacement, migration and refugee problem of its population.

The Hajongs are the worst victim people of the partition of India in 1947. Even after the partition of the Country, the Hajong tribe which remained in East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) was displaced massively. They were oppressed and suppressed by the majority groups on the one hand and put atrocities by the Government forces of erstwhile East Pakistan on the other. They are forced to migrate to India. Finding no shelter, the Hajong tribe along with other communities had left East Pakistan and took

shelter in India as refugee. Thus, an attempt has been made in this chapter to discuss the displacement causing forced migration of the Hajong tribe in different part of the North East India including Nagaon District of Assam.

3.1. A Brief History of Forced Migration- The terms ‘involuntarily, and ‘forced migration’ are synonymous. From the 15th century to the first half of the 19th century millions of Africans were forced to migrate from their homeland and sold in to bondage in distant land by other Africans. But forced migration occurred in an institutional form when governments compelled certain population to move to other parts or to leave the country altogether. The oppressive Christian inquisition, for example, forced Jews and Muslims to flee Spain in the 15th century. In the 17th and 18th centuries England banished thousands of convicts in overseas. This banishment was called transportation. Besides, the natural disasters including floods, earthquake, political upheavals and even political events such as the creation of new political entities dominated by particular ethnic or religious groups also led to forced migration.

However, the peak of modern migration occurred with the beginning of the 20th century. The impact of World War-I cannot be denied in this regard which resulted many changes in the policy decisions of many countries of the world. After 1920s, many nations particularly those that had been receiving the deluge of immigrants imposed restriction on immigration. In fact, tightening passport and visa requirement cut voluntary migration to much smaller proportion during the time of the League of Nations (1920). However, the history witnessed the mass migration in the wake of the World War-II. The partition of the Indian sub-continent into two independent sovereign states resulted in a large scale migration and transfer of people. Some 6.6 million Muslims migrated into Pakistan from India and around 5.4 millions Hindus and Sikhs migrated to India. Similarly, the formation of Israel in the Middle-East in 1948 resulted in the migration of hundreds of thousands of Jews to that state and displaced about 720,000 Palestinian into neighbouring countries. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s more than 5 million Afghans forced to migrate from their homeland. In 1991 Afghans made up the world’s largest refugee group. The violence that accompanied the break-up of erstwhile Yugoslavia into separate, ethnically based states in the early 1990s

has forced million to leave their homeland. In Africa with more than 40 nations and 600 ethnic nations, have about one-third of the world's refugees. Even some African nations have both an inflow and outflow of refugees. For instance, the political and ethnic fighting in Rwanda displaced more than two million people in 1994, and of those about 400,000 were refugees forced to migrate to other countries seeking refugee status.

Thus, forced migration after the World War-II caused millions of people homeless not only in Indian sub-continent but also in other parts of the world. The majority of the Hajong tribe which migrated from the East Pakistan to the undivided India and Assam was the victims of political prosecution in that country.

3.2. History of Migration of the Hajongs: - The North-East region of India is located in a corner of the Indian union and has natural frontiers in three sides. Her Northern Frontier from Sankosh River on the west to the entrance of the mighty Brahmaputra into Assam is guided by the Himalayas. The Mac Mohan Line separates North-East India from Tibet. She is bounded by Bhutan in the west, Tibet and China in the north and east, Myanmar in the south-east and Bangladesh in the South.¹ No other part of India occupies such a strategic position as the North-East because of her common frontier with four foreign countries. It is said that the region is landlocked and sandwiched between foreign countries and the geographical location of the region has been responsible for its isolation.

The North-Eastern region of India stretching between 22' N and 29'5' N latitudes and between 89'70 E and 97'30 E longitudes covers a total geographical area of 225.083 square kilometers.² The regions accounts for 7.7 percent of the total surface of India. The composition of the population in this area is diverse. Nowhere in India are these large of tribes as in North-East India. The early men of numerous ethnic stocks having diverse socio-cultural background entered in this region from different direction at different stages and made the region as their permanent abode. The Austro-Asiatic linguistic groups are believed to be the earliest settlers of north-east India. They were

¹. Rao, V. V 1975, *A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India (1874-1974)*, S. Chand & Company Ltd., New Delhi, p.2.

². Ibid; p.86.

followed by the Mongoloids which linguistically belonged to the Tibeto-Burman group. While the migration of the Mongoloids to this regions was a continuous process. Besides, there was migration of Caucasoid or Aryan from the western route along with the valley of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. In the post independence period, a large number of people belonging to various ethno-linguistic and religious groups have migrated to this region from other parts of India, especially from East Pakistan and Nepal. During the partition there was a big riot between the Hindus and Muslims, consequently many Hindus and tribal people left East Pakistan. Again in 1964, there was a communal war and subsequently the Mukti Yudda (Freedom Movement) of Bangladesh of 1971 displaced millions of people including the Hajong tribe who had migrated to the North-East region as refugees causing massive changes in the demographic balance of the region.

3.3. Early Migration of the Hajong Tribe:-The Hajongs are one of the microscopic minority tribe of north-east India. The history of migration of the Hajong tribe in the region remained obscure and unexplored. Different opinions were expressed in respect to the migration of the Hajong tribe in the region. In the Garo Hills District Gazetteer, it is mentioned that the Hajong belong to the Indo-Tibetan group of the Mongoloid race. They had come from the Tibet to the North-Eastern India along the Brahmaputra and the Tista and their tributaries and spread over in the Sankush valley.³ In the same way, the District Gazetteer of Mymensing it is recorded that the Hajong were a section of the Indo-Barman group of the main Mongoloid race. From the South-East Asia they had penetrated into Assam through Burma and had settled firstly in Kamrup.⁴ While expressing the similar views with the Garo Hills District Gazetteer, Risely and Hodgson in 1849 thought that the Hajongs are to be the Mongolians who entered into the North-Eastern portion of Bengal and the western half of Assam through the valleys of Tista, Dhorla and Sankush rivers.⁵

Majority of the Hajong people at the time of interview claimed that the ancestral home of the Hajong was in Hajo area of present Assam and they are the

³. Hajong, B 2002, *The Hajong and their struggle*, Hawakhana, Tura, Meghalaya, p.2

⁴. Ibid,

⁵. Ibid.,p.3.

descendents of Hajo. According to Monoharan Hajong⁶, the ancestral home of the Hajongs is the Hajo area. Subsequently, from Hajo they had migrated to all over the nearby regions including the northern portion of East Bengal (present Bangladesh) for historical and socio-political reasons. Sri Jadunath Sarkar⁷, while giving a comprehensive historical account of the disastrous defeat of Malik Yuzbek who attacked Kamrup or Kamata kingdom in 1257 A.D, says that when Kamata kingdom lost control, some Mongoloid tribes emerged in power in the middle of the 14th century in the vast North-Eastern portion under 12 Koch Chiefs or Bhuyans. Among those Koch Chiefs, Hajo or Hajgoya was the most powerful. He had dominated the other Chiefs or Bhuyans and brought under his rule the whole of Rangpur and a large portion of Kamata kingdom with his capital at a place subsequently called as Hajo after his name for his commemoration. It is also held that a grandson of Hajo founded the Koch kingdom, converted to Hinduism and took the name of Rajbongshi. Many people of the area apparently did the same; while other became Muslims. Those remaining faithful to Hajo began to call themselves” Hajbongsis,” which, in time became “Hajong”.⁸

About the migration of the Hajong tribe, another view is that when Raghudev (1581-1603 A.D.), son of mighty Chilarai became the king of the Eastern part of the Koch kingdom who had established his capital at Hajo. Raghudev and his son Parikshit (1603-1613 A.D.) subsequently had brought under their control the entire Mechpara, Kalumalu and Karaibari Paraganas and extended their sway up to Dashkahania and Shusung paraganas. He made the Rajas of these paraganas as their vassal chiefs. It is believed that during the time mighty rule over these paraganas the Hajbongsis later on Hajongs had started their migration under propulsion and settled in Goalpara and in the foot hills plains of Garo Hills.⁹

⁶. Interviewee-Monoharan Hajong (56), Matia, Camp No-19 (Pachim Kadamtola) , Goalpara, Assam.

⁷. Hajong, Biren., op.cit. p.3.

⁸. Kim Amy, et. al , 2005, *The Hajong of Bangladesh: A Socio-Linguistic Survey*, (Un published manuscript), SIL International, p. 9, viewed 23 November 2013, < [http:// www.01.sil.org/./silesr042.pdf](http://www.01.sil.org/./silesr042.pdf) >.

⁹.Hajong, Biren. op.cit., p.4.

However, many educated Hajong people believe that they are the descendents of Barman dynasty of ancient Kamrup.¹⁰ During the time of Bhaskar Barman, the last king of the dynasty there was downfall of Hajo kingdom and some twelve thousand people migrated from Hajo to Barohazari, a place in present West Gara Hills of Meghalaya.¹¹ The place is still known as Barohazari comprising the areas of Namajoar and Arjunguri with the village of Balachanda, Ketikibari, Nayapara, Dalguri, Sapalguri, Bhandabhok and Sellsella development block of West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya.¹² But some scholars refuted the way of migration of the Hajong tribe to Barohazari and held that during the time of the Burmese invasion (1819-1824 A.D.) the Hajong people being unable to bear the torture of the Burmese invaders had left Hajo area and migrated to Barohazari and other areas of Garo Hills.¹³ Eminent scholars among the Hajong agreed that to escape the inhuman torture meted out by Man, the people of Hajo area and almost all the people of nearby Hajo took shelter in the Koch kingdom on the one hand and the British administered nearby hilly borderland areas of western Garo Hills on the other.¹⁴ The perpetuated inhuman torture by the Burmese invaders on the people was supported by many historical documents. During the time of the Burmese invasion, the Hajongs were in Hajo. In search of safer places the Hajong fled from the Hajo for their survival to avoid torture and spread to surrounding areas.¹⁵ While leaving the place of inhabitation, some of the Hajongs took the swords and shields along with them which were used by the Hajongs while serving in the Assam king.¹⁶ But during the time of the British rule keeping swords and shields were declared illegal. In order to get rid of any legal actions or undue interrogations from administration, the Hajongs preserved their ancient weapons hiding in iron box by digging shallow hole in the shape of sword and shields under big trees using some locally applied technique in order to protect them from decay. Even some of shields were hid in the thatched roof of the

¹⁰. Seikh, E.A 2012, *Hajong Jonogoshthi : A Micro Ethnic Tribe of North-East India*, Bhawani Offset & Imaging Systems Pvt. Ltd. ,Guwahati pp-12.13.

¹¹. Ibid. ,p.12.

¹². Hajong, Biren, op.cit. p.4.

¹³. Ibid.

¹⁴. Sheikh, E.A, op.cit.,p.22.

¹⁵. Kim,Amy. ,et.al. op. cit , p.8.

¹⁶. Sheikh, E. A, op.cit.,pp.24-25.

houses.¹⁷ It may be stated that in the Hajong marriages it was a practice to keep a sword along with other associate materials with due solemnity. Till today, this traditional practice is followed with care in Hajong marriages and one token knife with associate materials are tied in the corner of the veil cloth of the groom and kept till the marriage is over. The practice of keeping the sword or token knives are called by the Hajongs as “Manikathri” (mani=precious, Kathri= big knife or sword).¹⁸

It becomes evident that as a consequence of Burmese invasion there was huge migration of people who are none other than Hajongs, which created population pressure on the then areas of Rongpur (undivided Goalpara) district. Some of them were provided shelter and distributed land for their rehabilitation in the British administered mainland of Singhimari.¹⁹ It may be noted that even before the independence of the country the Singhimari was included in the Hajong inhabited areas. This becomes evident from the fact that the Kamakhya Mandir which is situated near Singhimari at Mankachar was most adored and prayed by the Hajongs. Besides, Bukanon Hemilton in his work ‘Account of the District of Rangpur’ confirmed the presence of the Hajongs at Rongpur areas.²⁰

Biren Hajong (2002) while narrating the history of migration of the Hajong tribe has said that current-day Kamrup district of Assam is adjacent to Nalbari district. He refers to when he writes, “the Hajongs claim their ancestral home was in Hajo area of present Nalbari district of Assam.”²¹ But he did not state the reasons as when they moved to Barohazari and spread to surrounding areas of Garo Hills. He cited that from Barohazari the Hajong people in groups proceeded towards the Southern part of Garo Hills and Goalpara district of Assam. Even from among the groups one group descended more southern direction and reached up to northern side of Mymensing district of present Bangladesh.²² As regards the settlement and habitation in the Northern part of Mymensing district, it is said that the area was settled for the first time by the Hajongs by

¹⁷. Hajong, Biren, op.cit. p.5.

¹⁸. Ibid., p.6.

¹⁹. Gait, E 1905 (Reprint 1984), ‘*A History of Assam*’ Calcutta, p.238.

²⁰. Hajong, Rai. Brahmacharan, (1983) Hajong Upavasha Aru Samaj Bebasta’, in Hajong, Lakhinanda (ed) ‘*Chetana*’, Tura, Meghalaya, p.14.

²¹. Hajong, Biren., op. cit., p.4.

²². Ibid.,

cleaning and cutting the dense forest. It is said that due to some historical reasons the Hajongs were forced to leave the Hajo area and fled to Garo Hills from where they spread to Mymensing, Rajsahi, Sylhet , etc. places of East Bengal.²³

Another important view regarding the migration of the Hajong tribe to the northern part of East Bengal held that the zaminders of Koraibari, Mechpara, Sherpur, Susang and Durgapur of erstwhile East Bengal brought the Hajongs to the Garo hills and Mymensing, to cultivate their lands and catch elephants. The Raja of Susang, who earned a considerable income from the elephants of the Garo Hills, employed the Hajongs in the Kheda operation for trapping elephants.²⁴ This, however, indicates that in the earlier days, the Hajongs were probably forest dwellers and were expert in catching elephants for which they were brought to the region by the local Rajas. Similar view held that Hajong were brought to the Northern Mymensing and adjacent areas from the Garo hills by the Zaminders to cultivate their lands as the Hajongs were expert in wet land cultivation. The statement of Robert Montgomery Martin also ascertained the presence of a small number of Hajong families in the area. In his own words

*“Near Linggimari are perhaps sixty (60) families of Hajong who are in the original inhabitant of the adjoining territory of Koroyivari, and whose chief was lately its proprietor. Their number being very small, I shall them over, by stating, that in this district at least, they have adopted entirely the language of Bengal, but continues to delight in all the impurities of the Pati Rabha. Their chief, however, whose ancestors had long possessed the territory, pretended to be a Rajbongsi, and observed some sort of decency. He neither eats neither pork nor fowls, nor does he publicly drink strong liquors, and he receives instructions, (upodes) from a Brahman. His estate was lately purchased in the name of the Raja of Vihar.”*²⁵

The opinion expressed by a few scholars about the migration and spread towards South of Garo Hills said that there was perpetual conflict among the Garos and

²³. Barman, Matilal, (1987), ‘ *Hajong Samaj Aru Sanskriti (Assamese)* in Golden Jubilee Souvenir of Uttar-Pub Bharat Hajong Unnayan Samiti, Lakhimpur, p.38.

²⁴. Bareh, H M (ed.) 2001, *Encyclopaedia of North-East India, Meghalaya*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, p.214.

²⁵. Martin, Robert, Montgomery, (1838), *Puraniya, Ronggopoor and Assam, of the History Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, Vol-3 W. H. Allen and Co., Harvard University (Digitized on 14 June, 2008), p.552.

Koch inhabitants in the Koraibari region with the migrated Hajong tribe in the region. As a result of unending conflict a few of the Hajong migrated and shifted towards the plain areas of South Sylhet and adjacent Mymensing district.²⁶ Biren Hajong opined that a group of Hajong tribe had migrated to Bhawal-Joydebpur areas near Dhaka (present capital of Bangladesh) due to fear of raids and head-hunting by the Garos. This is popularly known among the Hajong as 'Garo Katadhoom'.²⁷

There are some historical documents which also indicate that sometime in ancient time the Hajong also migrated to the North-Cacher (present Dima-Hasao District). Colonel Dalton has mentioned that—"the Hajongs appear to be identical with Hozai Kacharis of North-Cachar Hills...."²⁸ The remnants of Hajong inhabitation are found in the 'Langting-Mupa' hills of North-Cacher. The hill is spreaded and laying around 80 k. m. to the north of present Haflong town. There are several villages namely, 'Hajong pukhori'(Hajong pond), 'Purana Hajong'(old Hajong), 'Natun Hajong'(New Hajong), etc. bears the names after Hajong tribes and carries the memories of Hajong inhabitations in North-Cacher also.²⁹ But it is not known why and when they had left these villages from North-Cacher. Some Hajong people believe that they had evacuated the villages because of some unknown reasons or most probably for superstitions.

During my field visit and personal interview with respondents, I have detected that almost majority of the respondents expressed their inability to say anything about the migration of the Hajong tribe in the region. However, almost all the respondents confirmed and agreed that they belonged to the greater mongoloids race and their original place of inhabitation was Hajo area. From Hajo they were compelled to migrate and spread to different areas in the regions including the present Bangladesh for socio-economic and historical reasons. Before migration to different nearby places in the region, the claims of the Hajong to be the ancient inhabitant of Hajo may be proved correct because of the following reasons³⁰

²⁶ Sheikh, E. A, op. cit. , p.30.

²⁷ Hajong , Biren, .op, cit, p.7.

²⁸ Dalton, E T 1978, *Tribal History of Eastern India*, (Reprinted), New Delhi, p. 88.

²⁹ The Assam Tribune, May-17, 2005.

³⁰ Sheikh, E. A, op. cit. , p.26.

1. Ardent devotees of the Hajong for Haya-gribo-Madhab and Goddess Kamakhya of Nilachala;
2. The language of the Hajong had much similarity with the Koch which indicates that they were the inhabitants of the North-Bank of the Brahmaputra;
3. Hajong and Koch used to live in nearby adjacent villages with brotherhood relationships. The close cultural relationship between both the tribes is also notable;
4. High use of betel-nut in the marriages and social festivals;
5. Waving in the house also indicate the same characteristics;
6. Use of soda like other tribes of Kamrup;
7. The prevalence of witchcraft among the Hajong also indicate their relationship with Goddess Kamakhya.

While analyzing various historical documents, it is almost clear that Hajong are Mongoloid and belong to the great Tibeto-Burman race. It has been supported by historical evidence that in course of time the Tibeto-Burman race occupied the whole of North-East, except Khasi and Jaintia Hills which Mon-Khmer speaking family had already occupied. They had settled down in the Brahmaputra valley, notably in Goalpara and Kamrup district and Bangladesh. Some of the migrated to the Hills along with river valleys.³¹ Scholars held the view that with the successive hordes of the different ethnic groups, the Hajong perhaps migrated from Tibet and penetrated through the North-West corner of Assam to the North Brahmaputra valley. With the passage of time they moved towards south-east and permanently settled in the Garo Hills. Gradually from the Garo Hills they extended their settlements towards southern regions, which are now part of Mymensing district of present Bangladesh.³² It is supported by the earlier history of Mymensing district which reveals that in the 16th century there were Garo, Hajong, Koch ruler who ruled independently in the vast area which spreaded from the foot hills of Garo

³¹. Sangma, N S 2005, Bangladesh *Immigrants in Meghalaya*, Anshah Publishing House Delhi p.14.

³². Gupto, P 1971, *Jey Sangramer Ses Nei*, (Bengali) . New Age Printers, Kolkata, p.12.

hills up to the south of Brahmaputra River. In the Garo Hills District Gazetteer, it has also been supported that the Hajong migrated from the far south-east and settled first at Kamrup area of Assam for many years and shifted to the Garo Hills subsequently. It is to be mentioned here that the Hajong as a Sub-Tribe of the Tibeto-Burman race as descendents of the Kochari(Bodo) people migrated to Kamrup in different groups and the first groups had migrated somewhere in the later part of the 14th century or in the early part of the 15th century in the region. The claims of some Hajong and other people can easily be refuted who wanted to say that the Hajong originated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh³³ and then migrated to the Northern areas of Bangladesh and into India.

3.4. Partition of the Indian Sub-Continent and Human Migration-

It is said that the history of contemporary South-Asia is replete with instances of people on the move- be it refugees or proactive migrants. In fact, the first wave of decolonization in South Asia in the late 1940s was accompanied by the largest single bilateral flow of people in the region and also perhaps the biggest refugee movement of the 20th century.³⁴

The partition of the sub-continent in 1947 and the subsequent emergence of India and Pakistan as two modern sovereign nation states, the geo-political landscape of South-Asia changed forever. The partition, more importantly has changed the ethnic structure of the region when people with a common historical past and shared ethnicities got divided on the basis of culturally unsustainable communal line. The euphoria which had marked the birth of new nation-states proved unimagingly short-lived, as it was simultaneously accompanied by the cataclysmic partition of the sub-continent resulting in one of the worst incident of human tragedy in recorded history with millions of people becoming refugee and hundreds of thousands of unparalleled intensity and scale. The British policy of 'divide and rule' which sowed the seeds of communal conflicts and

³³. Kim, Amy et, al. op.cit ,p.8.

³⁴. Sing, D K 2009, *Stateless in South Asia: The Chakmas between Bangladesh and India*, Sage Publication , New Delhi, p.7.

interreligious dissension has characterized the socio-political landscape in the region. A study on the aftermath of partition in South Asia notes-

*“across national boundaries in South Asia the view is now widely shared that partition was an ‘epic tragedy’ that changed the destinies of people in the region. Increasingly, as the long term consequences of partition are becoming manifest, the perception is gaining ground that partition was not just an event but a trigger for a series of reverberation, the tremors of which can still be felt in the region.”*³⁵

In fact, the partition of Indian sub-continent resulted sheer population migration and accompanied by unprecedented human misery making it one of the largest and most tragic international flows of people across time and space. The tragic event and its consequences still remain horrifying memories. It has been illuminated by Bhutalia (1998) as she stated that- “ partition has deep personal meaning, its profound serve of rupture the differences it engendered or strengthened, still live on in so many people’s live. I began to realize that partition was surely more than just a political divide, or a division of properties, of assets and liabilities. It was also, to use a phrase that survivors use repeatedly, a division of hearts”.³⁶

The partition and flow of migration were accompanied by communal massacres that passed the elements of genocidal violence. About 6.6 million Muslims migrated to Pakistan from Indian territory and an estimated 5.4 million Hindus and Sikhs migrated to India.³⁷ A recent study observes that, “... the story did not end in 1947. The partition did not provide a ‘solution’ to the ‘communal problem’ which may have hoped for: rather the problem of the minorities was exacerbated. Their prosecution continued; as shown by the demographic movements across the borders which continued till the 1960s, particularly in the Bengal region. Refugees whose numbers in the final count are estimated to be over 18 millions struggle to resettle themselves and the energies of at least two generations were expended in rebuilding lives shattered by the violent uprooting caused by partition. The partition continues to leave its imprint on aspects of everyday life in the sub-continent. In a sense, sixty years on, the story of partition is still

³⁵. Tan, Tai Young & Kudaisya, G 2000, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, Routledge, London, p.8.

³⁶. Bhutalia, U 1998, *The Other Side of Silence; Voices from the Partition of India*, Penguin, New Delhi, p.8.

³⁷. Singh, D. K., op.cit. p.8,

unfolding.³⁸ A large numbers of partition victims' migrants living in refugee camps or in designated camps established by the respective governments. They are treated by the locals as new migrants or refugees and most frequently foreigners. The effects of the partition could easily be seen on the migrants fighting for citizenship, despite having valid migration certificate issued by the competent governmental authority. Even they are deprived of possessing international refugee status, since India is not a signatory member to the UN Refugee Convention, 1951.

3.5. Flow of Migration from the erstwhile East Pakistan- In the wake of partition of India, the East Bengal which became East-Pakistan in 1956, became an integral part of Pakistan. Although politically or geographically the west and East Pakistan consists of its territory, but since time long the people of East-Pakistan maintained a separate ethno-cultural and even more importantly linguistic entity. The effects of these variations further added a new dimension after 24 years later when an outburst of ethno-cultural contradiction in East –Pakistan led to its dismemberment from Pakistan and the subsequent creation of Bangladesh as sovereign independent state in 1971. Religion on its own had obviously failed to work as a unifying force. As all kind of other contradictions based on language, culture, ethnicity and civilization assumed preponderance in East Pakistan's struggle to liberate itself from the control of the Pakistani nation-state. In fact, the birth of Bangladesh as an independent nation-state thus not only exposed the myth of the Two-Nation Theory, but also demonstrated the futility of the very rationale of partition. An estimated 10 million Bengalis had crossed over to India as refugee to escape Pakistani repression during 1970-71.³⁹

During the period from 1947-1971, both Bengali Hindus and Bengali Muslims became migrants of India, mostly rehabilitating in West Bengal and in some North Eastern states, especially in undivided Assam. Besides, there are some other little known communities and tribes like the Santhals, the Hajongs, the Kochs, the Garos were forced to displace from the Northern frontier district of East Pakistan. Over 9000 Hajongs, Kachins and Koches migrated in to the former Garo Hills District of Assam

³⁸ Tan and Kudaisya, , op.cit. ,p.8.

³⁹ Singh, D. K., op.cit. p.8,

(now Meghalaya). They had migrated mainly from Mymensing, Rangpur and Sylhet districts of East Pakistan. These minority tribes had very little options but to leave ancestral home and enter Assam. A media report described their plight in the following lines-

*“ it is for the first time since partition that such a large number of tribals belonging to the Christian faith had been forcibly ejected from their ancestral homes and lands in Pakistan. Most of these refugees belonging to the Garo tribe living in the border areas of East-Pakistan’s Mymensing district, which has a 100 miles border with the Garo Hills district of Assam ”.*⁴⁰

Besides, the tribals having faith in Hinduism of East-Pakistan continued to migrate in India in large numbers whenever religious agitations escalated. They were victimised by both the mob and the state apparatus whenever they demanded for their rights and conflicted with Pakistani authorities. In order to avoid inhuman torture, they sought shelter on the basis of threat to life due to communal violence gave them refugee status and they had a potential homeland in India.⁴¹ This becomes vivid from the abrupt reduction in the numbers of minorities in that country .As per the census documents published by the Government of Bangladesh that in 1941, 28.03% of the total population was minorities. Out of this, of Hindu was 11.88 million, while 588 thousand was other religious and ethnic minorities like Buddhist, Christians and animist. As per 1991 census report, the Muslims majority increased by 219%, while the Hindu community increased by 4.5%. If usual increase rate of population prevailed, the number of the Hindu community would have been 32.5 million in 1991, but the actual figure is 12.5 million.⁴²

The estimated number of displaced people migrated to India from East-Pakistan may be shown in the following table-

⁴⁰ The Statesman, Feb. 23, 1956.

⁴¹ Zolberg. A. R. ,Suhrke. A. ,& Aquayyo. S 1989, *Escape from Violence: Conflict and Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 132-135.

⁴² Das. S 2009 , ‘ Humanity Assassinated : Ethnic Cleansing of Minorities in Islamic Bangladesh’ . Islam Watch, Viewed on 20 March, 2012, < <http://www.islam-watch.org/index.php?option=com-content&view=article&id=88>.

Table-4.1

Number of displaced persons those who migrated to India as Refugee, 1947-1993:

<u>From</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Numbers:</u>	
East-Pakistan	1947-51	1, 08,000	
	1951-61	2.5 million	
	1964	1 million	
	1970	2.5 Lakh	
	1971	10 million (...million repatriated)	
	1971-81	537 Hindus leaving Bangladesh- for India every day.	
	1981-91	439 Hindus leaving Bangladesh for India every day.	
	1986-93	50,000 Jumma Refugee (3000 repatriated)	

Source:- Mukherjee. S., 'Indian Experience with Forced Migration: It's Lessons & Limitations'. (A seminar paper presented at the Conference of scholars & other professionals working on Refugees and Displaced Persons in South Asia, held in Rajendrapur, Bangladesh, on Feb, 9-11, 1998, p.2.

3.6. Migration of Hajongs from East Pakistan-The history of Hajong tribe is void without the history of their migration. The Hajong tribe is the most harassed and afflicted tribe among other little known tribes like- Koch, Banai, Dhalu, Garo, Hodi, Morgan etc.,⁴³ Majority of the scholars agreed that all these tribe including the Hajong tribe are the sub-tribes of the greater Bodo (Kachari) groups of people. It is firmly believed that the Hajong people being unable to bear the atrocities and torture of the Burmese invaders had left the Hajo areas, which was the ancestral home of the Hajong and migrated to the Barohazari and other areas of Garo Hills. Some scholars believe that during the time of migration from Hajo, the Hajong people divided into two parts—one group proceeded towards Southern part of Garo Hills and adjacent Goalpara district of Assam. The other groups descended more South ward and reached to the northern areas of Mymensing district of present Bangladesh.⁴⁴

⁴³. Sheikh, E. A, op. cit. , p.236.

⁴⁴. Hajong , Biren, .op, cit, p.4.

As regards the settlements of the Hajongs in the Northern Mymensing district, it is said that the area was settled for the first time by the Hajongs cleansing the dense forest and jungles before the advent of any generation in the area. Some of the writers including Hajong people are not ready to accept the way they were migrated to the areas of North Mymensing district. Instead, they wanted to say that during the stay at Garo Hills, there was constant conflict between the Hajongs and the already settled Garo people. In order to avoid the perpetual conflict, the peace loving Hajong people migrated towards Southern directions and permanently settled in the Mymensing district. It has also been held that a group of Hajong tribe had migrated to Bhawal-Joydevpur areas near the Dhaka (the present capital of Bangladesh) due to fear of raids and 'Head Hunting' by the Garos.⁴⁵

Despite variations of opinion regarding the migration of Hajong tribe, majority of the scholars conceded that there was large concentration of Hajong people in East Bengal (present Bangladesh) during the pre partition days of India. The Hajong inhabitation were said to have bounded by Suwarkuna village in the North near Lakhipur of Goalpara district of Assam by Jamkona or Jongkona village in the South East, now in Sylhet district of Bangladesh and by Morkona village in the West Garo Hills district and near Mankacher of Assam. In this periphery of Hajong habitation the region from Mahiskhola to Laochapara- Bahadur kata near Mahengraganj in the border of composite Garo Hills and Bangladesh the Hajong habitations were compact and concentrated. It becomes obvious that the majority of the Hajong inhabitation concentrated and remained in the East Bengal portion in the wake of partition of the country. From Mohiskhola to Laochapara 160x9= 1440 sq. km. of areas of land patch was predominantly inhabited by the Hajongs and the Garos.⁴⁶

The whole Hajong inhabited areas were divided into several Paraganas. The area from Patlai (Gomlaghat Ranikor) river to eastern most Ichamati was known as Laor Pargona, the area between river Patlai to river Mohiskhola was known as Bongshikunda Paragana, the area between river Mohiskhola and Nitai was known as

⁴⁵. Ibid. p.7.

⁴⁶. Ibid.

Susang Paragana and the area from Nitai river to Laochpara village was known as Dash Kahania Paragana. Besides, the Hajong inhabited areas in the Garo Hills from Bangladesh border to Goalgaon in the north was known as Koraibari Paragana and from Phulabari to Tikrikilla was known as Mechpara Paragana. For the convenience of administration, perhaps these paraganas were divided into Chakla in Bangladesh and as Joar in Garo Hills.⁴⁷ All these Paragans were falling within five thanas namely, (1) Shribordi (2) Nalitabari (3) Haluaghat (4) Susang-Durgapur and (5) Kalmalanda. Thus, the concentration of the bulk of Hajong tribe in the erstwhile East-Pakistan to the Southern part of Garo Hills district can be shown in the map in Appendix-IV.

3.7. Factors responsible for the migration-The problem of migration between India and East Pakistan started as early as the partition of the country in 1947. The endless flow of migration from East Pakistan to India has generated a range of socio-economic, political, ethnic and communal tension between both the countries. In fact, the migration of the Hajong tribes took place in different phases. Even before the independence, there was migration of the Hajongs into the undivided Assam. During the period they were mainly driven by economic factors to migrate to Garo Hills and other places of North East India in search of virgin land for cultivable land from East Bengal.

Besides, the migration as a result of marriage relationship between the Hajongs of East Bengal and native Hajongs of Garo Hills, Goalpara and Southern part of Dhubri district cannot be denied. Sri Bhupendra Hajong⁴⁸ stated that,

” I had visited the Garo Hills districts while I was about 10 years of old. It was convenient for us to visit our relatives at the Garo Hills districts. I remember many youth of our localities married bride from the Garo Hill districts as it was not far away from the Mymensing district”.

The large scale flow of migration of the Hajongs from the erstwhile East Pakistan may be attributed of the following factors-

3.7.1. Demand for Amalgamation with India- There was an relentless efforts even before the partition of the country in the North Mymensing district by Hajongs, Garos

⁴⁷. Ibid. , p.8.

⁴⁸. Interviewee-Bhupendra Hajong (73), S/O, Lt. Vidya Sagar Hajong, Moudangapather, Nagaoa, Assam.

and other non-Muslim communities to amalgamate the ‘ Partially Excluded Areas’ with the Indian Union. Their efforts went in vain because of some vested interested of political leaders at that time.⁴⁹ It had been stated that apart from Koraibari and Loar Paraganas of the foot hills areas of Garo Hills, Goalpara and Sylhet district of the then undivided Assam the main habitat of the Hajongs were confined in the plains lying along with the border of Garo Hills under Mymensing district of the present Bangladesh. These habitats of the Hajongs were then divided into three main paraganas, namely-(1) Doskahania (2) Susang and (3) Bongshikunda. Again, these Paraganas were falling under five Thanas (police stations). They are-(1) Susang (2) Kalmakanda (3)Haluaghat (4) Nolitabari and (5) Shribardi. Besides, the Hajongs of these paraganas were largely inhabited by the Garos, Banais, Dhalus, Hudis etc. Both Bengali Hindus and Muslims were very rare under these five thanas and overwhelmingly non-Muslim majority,⁵⁰ as per the Census Report of 1931 and 1941. In fact, in view of the presence of large scale tribal population and their backward condition, the entire area was declared as partially excluded area of Bengal along with the Chittagong Hill Tracts mainly inhabited by the Chakmas, Maghs and Tipperahas by the Government of India Act 1935. The Governor of Bengal was exclusively made responsible for the administration of these partially excluded areas of Bengal.⁵¹

Indeed, the month of June, 1947 was the most tumultuous days in the history of our freedom movement. The long arduous struggle for freedom had reached at its climax with the acceptance of the proposal of the ‘Cabinet Mission’ made at Shimla on 3rd June 1947 to attain independence at the cost of partition of the country. Two Boundary Commissions- one for Punjab and other for Bengal with Cyril Radcliffe as chairman of both the commission were constituted to accord the final award for the fate of the people of these two provinces. During those fateful days, the demand was made by the Hajongs to incorporate the five Thana areas comprising the partially excluded areas

⁴⁹. Sheikh, E A, op.cit. p.266.

⁵⁰. Sangma,S.N, op.cit. p.49.

⁵¹. Ibid.

of Bengal with the Garo Hills district of Assam. The background of demand was the concentration of the majority Hajong people in the said areas.⁵²

In order to fulfill their demand of amalgamation of their territory with the Indian Union, the Hajong communities submitted two important memorandums to the then Congress President Acharya J. B. Kripalani and Jawaharlal Nehru respectively. The Hajong representatives like Sri Monoranjan Roy Hajong, Sri Dinesh Chambugong (later on Sangma), Rohini Madhav Jowardar, Moni Sarkar, Narendra Chandra Sarkar and Dipendra Sarkar took active part for submitting the memorandums.⁵³

The man who had guided the Hajong representatives in submitting memoranda was Surendra Mohan Ghosh, then President of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee (BPCC). A telegram was sent by him to the Secretary, Mymensing District Congress Committee on 11th June, 1947 from Delhi asking for to send a team of representatives comprising one each of the Hajongs, Garos, Banais, Dhalus and Hudis. However, due to stress of time, the team of representatives including all the tribes could not be formed. Having no other alternatives, Dinesh Chambugong and Monoranjan Roy Hajong were selected as representatives and entrusted the task for submission of memoranda. Both the representatives took their journey to Delhi under the care of Sri Kalipada Mukherjee, the General Secretary of BPCC. They submitted two important memorandums seeking incorporation of their land with the Indian union. The first one was submitted to the Congress President, Acharya J. B. Kripalani in the morning hour of 15th June, 1947, just before the commencement of the All India Congress Committee Conference in the Constituent Assembly Hall (Appendix III).

Before the submission of the second memorandum the representatives led by Professor Khirod Prasad Sanyal, a veteran Congress worker visited Mahatma Gandhi at Bhangi colony on 7th July, 1947. The memorandum demanding the cause of the Hajongs and other tribes was read out before Gandhi for his advice and blessings. The father of the Nation had given a patience hearing for full 45 minutes and blessed the visited representatives with an advice to submit one memorandum to Jawaharlal Nehru

⁵² Hajong, B, op.cit, p.70

⁵³. Ibid.

for action. On 10th July, the memorandum was submitted to Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru in the South Block of the Central Secretariat. Mr. Nehru enquired the representatives and asked whether they were ready to hold a referendum in the said areas. The Deputies, however, overtly denied the questions of holding referendum. Instead they tried to convince Nehru about their demand and causes of amalgamation of their land with the Garo Hills district of Assam. Their demand was supported with whole heartedly by Tarlok Singh, I.C.S, and the then Private Secretary to Jawaharlal Nehru. He had also pointed out about the similar demand made by the Chakmas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and assured the representatives that the case would be referred to the Boundary Commission for Bengal at its Headquarters in Calcutta.

The Boundary Commission of Bengal was consisted of some Judges from the Calcutta High Court. The prominent judges from among them were Justice Charu Chandra Bhandari and Justice Akram Zaman. Besides, the pleader those who pleaded the claims and counters claims of political parties before the Commission were Barrister Mazumdar for the Congress and Fazhal Haque for the Muslim League. The Boundary Commission held its proceeding in the Belvaderia Bulding at Calcutta, the Royal abode built during the visit of George V in 1910. Sri Monoranjan Roy Hajong along with other representatives was present at the time of award of decision on the demarcations of boundary lines between East Bengal and India. The Hajong representatives expressed profound grief and discouraged by the award accorded by Radcliffe as Chairman of the Commission. They found the declaration was a one- man job and to be a mere show to appease some aggrieved people. Despite their repeated efforts the demand for annexation with the Indian union of the entire North-Mymensing region was left unfulfilled. The fate of the Hajong tribe and other tribes of that area was sealed for good into an abysmal darkness.

Monoharan Hajong, an inhabitant of Kalmakanda of the erstwhile East-Pakistan, Presently living in Matia camp- II in Goalpara district, expressed his anguish during interview and said,

“ the Hajong people were worst affected along with other tribes by the bifurcation of the country in 1947. The Hajong People are peace loving people and were

mainly concentrated in the Mymensing and Sylhet district of the East Bengal. The freedom fighters had tantalized the whole Hajong people. Our forefathers supported the freedom movement in order to free the country from the clutch of the mighty British Raj. But who knew that we were merely fighting to shift from foreign to another foreign government. The appeal and memorandums submitted by our people to amalgamate our land with the Indian Territory was turned down without assigning any reasons. Even, I remember that some Hajongs and Garo people hoisted Indian National flag to celebrate the Independence Day in our locality. But the leaders poured cold water to our long cherished dreams and plunged into grief the whole Hajong tribe and which helped the anti people government to displace us forcefully from our land (East Pakistan).⁵⁴

Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the man who was entrusted the job to demarcate the boundary between India and Pakistan had never visited British India before and had absolutely no idea about the complexity of the ethnic make-up or the varied cultural practice of the numerous communities inhabiting this colonial territory. He was assigned this job more because of his closeness to the last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, than his accomplished acumen in the art of border-marking. As pointed out by Tan and Kudaisya (2000: 94), 'Radcliffe knew only too well that his job had been a butcher's job, and not a surgeon's operation, and that his rushed job of an award would please no one.' To quote from one of the letters he wrote to his stepson on the eve of his departure from India: 'Nobody in India will love me for the award about Punjab and Bengal and there will be 80 million people with a grievance who will begin looking for me. I do not want them to find me'⁵⁵. These words of Radcliffe proved ironically prophetic for the millions of refugee including the Hajong tribes.

It would be pertinent to mention here that like the Hajongs the Garos living in the borderline areas raised their demand in order to amalgamate their ancestral villages into the Indian Union simultaneously. In fact, their demand was based on the Government of India Act, 1935 under Section 91 which clearly stated, "Into this area, then under jungle the Garos came some 150 years ago. They were the first to open the country."⁵⁶ The Garos conveyed their desire to place before the Partition Committee in Delhi for the amalgamation of the strip of land in the Mymensing district, known as the

⁵⁴. Interviewee-Haranath Hajong (65), S/O, Lt. Pantharam Hajong, Matia, Camp-1, Goalpara, Assam

⁵⁵. Tan and Kudaisya, op. cit., p. 94.

⁵⁶. Sangma, N.S., op. cit. p.49.

Shusung and Sherpur Paraganas, through the Rev. V. J. White of the Australian Baptist Mission of Birisiri.⁵⁷ Later on, due to some problem of Mr. White the task for placing the demand before the Partition Committee was entrusted to Rev. Binoy Bushan Sangma. However, Mr. Sangma failed to place the case of the Garos before the Partition Committee because of his pro-Pakistan influences and by unforeseen difficulties in his way,⁵⁸ resulting in the merger of Garos inhabited areas into the East –Pakistan forever.

Like the Hajongs, the Garos inhabitant of the border areas suffered a huge loss by the partition of the country. Even in the wake of partition the Garo community reiterated their demand to amalgamate their land with the Indian Union. They took active part by forming organization like A-Chikna Chilchakani Kotok (The Garo Welfare Organisation) in 1951. Mr. Dewansing S. Rongmuthu was the first president of the organization who undertook all the correspondence with the Government of India in order to get their demand fulfilled.⁵⁹ Under his initiative, a memorandum was submitted to the then Honorable Prime Minister of India, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru on 17th January, 1951, on behalf of the organization. The memorandum was signed by about 2001 Garo people staying on the border areas of East-Pakistan. A reminder was submitted on the 9th August, 1952 to the Prime Minister Nehru in order to get their demand fulfilled at the earliest.⁶⁰ Besides, another organization known as ‘**Adivasi Sangram Parisad**’⁶¹ was constituted consisting of other minority tribal communities including the Hajongs of borderland areas to press their demand. The case of the Garos like the Hajongs was never negotiated by the authorities.

It becomes clear that due to the inclination of the Hajongs and other minority tribal communities inhabiting in the strip of land of North-Mymensing district were regarded as anti-Pakistani and disloyal to the authority of the Pakistani government. Because of this reason, Pakistani forces wanted to drive out these minorities tribal groups from their ancestral abode in order to get rid of anti-Pakistani forces from their land. In retaliation countless inhuman torture was meted out on the Hajong tribe by the Pakistani

⁵⁷. Ibid.

⁵⁸. Ibid. p.50.

⁵⁹. Ibid. p.49.

⁶⁰. Ibid. p.51.

⁶¹. Ibid. p.49.

armed forces. The Hajong tribe along with others had migrated to India crossing international border to protect their life.

3.7.2. Demand for Adhistan (Tribal land)- Even long before the partition of the Indian sub-continent into two political independent nations, there was a demand to form a separate state known as ‘Adhistan’⁶² by the Hajongs , Garos and other smaller tribes of the partially excluded areas of East- Bengal. They raised their demand under the leadership of Mr. White, the father of the Baptist Mission, Birisiri (Durgapur Police Station). It may be mentioned here that the demand for an independent state and annexation of their land with the India was raised simultaneously. The tribes managed to convince the leaders like Amrit Kaur, A. K. Azad of the Indian National Congress about their demand for ‘Adhistan’ . Moreover, the demand of the Hajongs was supported on the basis of the Census Report, 1941, which reported the majority Hajongs and other tribals of the partially excluded area. It may be mentioned here that the Chakmas raised the similar demand at the Chitagong Hills Tracts during that time. However, Cyrel Radcliffe, the Chairman of the Bengal Boundary Commission overtly denied to accede to their demand for a separate independent state.

In fact, the demand of ‘Adhistan’ of the Hajongs so consistently denied the opportunity to exercise one of their basic universally recognized fundamental human rights- the right to self determination. Since the day of denial of their demand by the boundary commission, the incidence of inhuman atrocities and extortions increased more on the tribes including the Hajong tribe as anti-national in their areas. As a result, in order to avoid atrocities at the hand of the East- Pakistani forces a large number of tribes including the Hajong tribe had left their native place and migrated to India especially in the years 1949, 1950, 1964 and in 1971.⁶³ In 1948, for the first time a large number of Hajong tribe had left their native place and took shelter in India. The East-Pakistani government had created a rare example in human history by declaring these indigenous tribes as ‘enemy’.⁶⁴ This becomes obvious from the Enemy/Vested Property Acts, 1972 (Amended) and its operation in that country. It is not known whether the insidious act

⁶². Sheikh ,E A,op.cit.p.259.

⁶³. Ibid.,

⁶⁴. The Assam Tribune, 18th January, 2000, ‘The Hindu Minority in Bangladesh’.

was withdrawn or not despite repeated pressure and criticism from the international community.

3.7.3. Religious Discrimination-The partition of Indian sub-continent in 1947 and subsequent communal clashes that caused massive migration of minority communities from the erstwhile East Pakistan to India. In fact, religious cult was one of the factors of migration from the East Pakistan in the wake of partition which continued till the birth of Bangladesh as a nation state in 1971. It has been stated that majority of the tribal communities like Garos, Koch, Dhalus and Hajongs were residing along the border strip of the Mymensing district was annexed with the East Pakistan mainland. Because of their religious differences majority of the tribe migrated to India after partition of the Indian sub-continent.⁶⁵ The Hajongs follow a religion similar to Hinduism. According Ahmed Rafiq, “in terms of religious beliefs Hajongs are close to Hindus, Hajong worship Durga and other Hindu Gods and Goddesses. But Shiva is their chief deity. They observe a number of bratas (vows) including the kartik brata performed in the month of kartik (October-November). Girls and women dance and sing in brata ceremonies. Hajong also worship the Brahmaputra river. Like Hindu Brahmin, Hajongs wear paita (the holy thread) on their bodies. Hajong are believers in incarnation too.”⁶⁶

3.7.4. Communal Tensions- The communal violence that broke out in the wake of the partition of the Indian Sub-Continent had left an indelible black mark in its history. The communal disturbances may be attributed as the sole cause of cross border migration of refugees between both the countries. As new born states, both the countries had to face a number of challenges in the aftermath of their partition. But the problem of erstwhile East-Pakistan was different to a great extent to its counterpart. A number of problems like mass migration and mass movement, armed revolt of the peasantry, failure of the Pakistani Government to meet the demand of the East-Pakistani people in their new constitution to be framed, birth of a neo-elite youth and students progressive force, disillusion of a section of Muslim population towards the unquestionable leaderships of the Muslim League engulfed the Pakistani Government. It is pertinent to be mentioned

⁶⁵. Kim, Amy et. al.,op.cit. P.11.

⁶⁶. Ahmed, Rafik, 2003, *Banglapedia : National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka, p.490.

here that Muslim League was the lone single-largest party existed in the East as well as West-Pakistan till 1950. There was no prominent opposition forces among the Muslims in East-Pakistan and which resulted the cleavage between the ruling elite of West Pakistan and the mass people of East-Pakistan. In order to strengthen their hold over the administration of East-Pakistan, the Muslim League was frequently launching mal propaganda against the Government of India for hatching a conspiracy to annihilate the Pakistan.⁶⁷ In fact, West- Pakistani Government used communal violence as a tool to tighten their sway over the East-Pakistan. Their main objective was to nip in the bud the nascent Bengali nationalism in disguise of communalism.

The acute communal feelings of the Muslim League caused horrible communal riots in East-Pakistan. The communal tension that broke out in the district of Noakhali in 1946 had preceded the exodus of people from East-Pakistan. Once again, both the communities in India and Pakistan were plunged into communal violence in the month of March and April, 1950. The incident in the Khulna district of East-Pakistan was considered as the starting point of the communal violence of 1950. In fact, in order to arrest a few absconding communist workers the police went to Kalsira village under Khulna district of East-Pakistan. During their search operation in the village, the police tried to spoil the chastity of a girl in the locality. The villagers along with the victim girl came out of their houses and opposed the heinous crime of the police vehemently. In retaliation, the police and Ansar forces started disturbances in the village ransacking in the area.⁶⁸ As soon as the news of Khulna incident reached in Calcutta, the horrible communal frenzy broke out and killing a large number of innocent people.

It is important to mention here that the Rajshahi jail incident of 21st April, 1950, that occurred simultaneously with Khulna incident also added fuel to the communal violence. It had been alleged that the communal riots broke out inside the Rajshahi jail due to conspiracy of the then jailor Mr. Mannan.⁶⁹ However, some thinkers refuted the allegations and wanted to say that several thieves and robbers were provoked to create disturbances inside the cells of the jail. In order to bring the situation under

⁶⁷. Hajong, Biren, op. cit. p.96.

⁶⁸. Gupta, P. op.cit, p.137.

⁶⁹. Ibid, p.138.

control the police lathi-charged on the shelterless prisoners. The jailor, Mr. Mannan ordered police firing on the rioting mob inside the jail killing a few leaders of East-Pakistani people and wounding several others. The leaders those who laid their lives in police firing inside the jail were-Peasant leaders from Dinajpur Komporam Singh, young student leader Anwar Hussain, labour leader Dilwar Hussain, youth leader Sudhin Dhar, student leaders from Mymensing Sukhen Bhattacharya, Hanif Seikh, Vijhon Sen respectively.⁷⁰ These martyrs were the prominent leaders of the East Pakistani people.

It becomes evident from the fact that East Pakistani Government used communal violence as a means to strangle the strong organization of the Peasants Movement and to gag the growing protest movement against the Government. The Muslim League Government acted on two main objectives like the exploitation of the East Pakistan and to drive away the religious minority communities from the East Pakistan. In fact, the acute anti-Hindu policy of the Muslim League was responsible for the outbreak of communal riot in 1950.⁷¹ Thus, the communal tension increased the flow of migration across the border of both the countries. But the flow of migration reached its highest number in 1964. As per records, between 1964-71, average in every year 1, 96,296 numbers of refugees including the Hajong migrated to India from the East Pakistan.⁷² Urmila Hajong narrated her tale very succinctly during interview that:

“...in fact, our (Hajongs) destiny became bleak before the British had left the country. The situation turned worse since the days of the partition of the country. Many of our relatives and other tribes and communities had left their villages and migrated to India. But still we determined and tried to stay in East-Bengal (Mymensing District) despite repeated attack on our tribe. But the communal violence that broke out in 1964 (approx) forced us (Hajongs) to leave behind our native village abandoning our homeland and valuable properties. When we crossed the border to India, we got all kinds of humanitarian help in refugee camp at Garo Hills. Subsequently, we are shifted to Goalpara (Matia camp) and issued migration certificate by the authorities making our

⁷⁰ . Ibid.

⁷¹ . Ibid, p.140. also in Kalahan, ‘*Bikhubda Pakistan*’, p.167.

⁷² .The Assam Tribune, Jan,18,2000, ‘The Hindu Minority in Bangladesh’

*stay legal in India. It is also required to display at the time of collection of reliefs like rice, wheat, salts, clothes, blankets and medicines.*⁷³

3.7.5. Arrival of Bihari Muslims (Muhazirs) Refugees to East-Pakistan- The arrival of large numbers of Bihari Muslims(Muhazirs) from the state of Bihar and Assam to East Pakistan also responsible for the forced displacement causing migration of the Hajong tribe. It may be noted here that Muhazirs are the Bihari Muslim refugees migrated to the East Pakistan from India as a result of communal violence. The Muhazirs were regarded as the descendants of the Mughal in India.

The impact of communal violence that broke out in March-April, 1950, at Khulna and Calcutta was not merely confined to the regions of East and West Bengal. Its wave spreaded even in Assam and in Bihar states of India. As an immediate consequence of the violence there was large scale exodus of Urdu speaking Muslims (Muhazirs) from Bihar and Assam to the East Pakistan.⁷⁴ At the same time there was an in-flow of Urdu-speaking migrants from West Bengal to the East Pakistan. According to an estimate furnished by Ahmed,⁷⁵ by 1951, Urdu speakers accounted for about 20 percent of the total population of East Pakistan. The migrated Muhazirs approached the East Pakistan Government for food, shelter and rehabilitation. In fact, the flow of migration of Muhazirs as refugee was just like a blessing in disguise for the East Pakistani ruler. The Government adopted dual strategies to tackle the rehabilitation issue of the migrated Muhazirs. The first was the rehabilitation of Muhazirs in the tribal occupied land and the second was to cause force exodus of the recalcitrant insurgent peasants like Hajongs, Garo, Dhalus and other tribes. As per the plans, the Muhazirs were pushed towards the North-Mymensing aborigines areas with pretext or plea to uproot the Hajongs and other indigenous tribes. Despite strong opposition, the police, the Ansars used 7 to 8 elephants⁷⁶ to evict the tribal peasants from their land. Besides, the Government forces provoked

⁷³. Interviewee-Urmila Hajong (67),W/O- Lt, Joggeswar Hajong, Matia, Camp-1, Goalpara, Assam.

⁷⁴. Gupta, P 1963,op, cit., P.116.

⁷⁵. Ahmed, Rafiuddin,(ed), (1990), *Religion, Nationalism and Politics in Bangladesh*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, pp.13-14.

⁷⁶. Gupta, Promath, (1971), op.cit, p.139.

the Muhazirs against the tribes to capture their land and to snatch away their valuable properties.

It would be worthwhile to be mentioned here that the dimension of the aboriginal inhabited area in North-Mymensing district was extended from Panchgaon Mohiskhola to Meghdol Korana jhora and Laochpara near Mahendraganj. It was about 100 miles in length and six miles in breadth.⁷⁷ As per the hidden plan of the Government, the Muhazirs who migrated first were rehabilitated in each village under Susang-Durgapur and Kolmakanda police stations.⁷⁸ However, the large flow of Muhazirs from Assam in the month of March-April, 1950 deteriorated the situation more badly increasing the amount of harassment on the tribes including the Hajongs. They were forcibly rehabilitated into the densely populated villages of aboriginal peasants under the police stations of Haluaghat, Nalitabari and Sribardi. There were reports that about 150 villages evicted entirely to accommodate the Muhazirs which included- Panchgaon, Kharnoi, Chaityanna Nagar, Langura, Jigtola, Haluaghat, Vehikura, Maizpara, Ghoshgaon, Gajirbhita, Bhavankura, Jugali, KakorakandiManpara, Bokura, Kangsa, Jinaighat ⁷⁹ etc. Besides, a number of Hajong villages were evicted partially for rehabilitation of Muhazirs in the northern borderland strip of Mymensing district. In the midst of protest, all the peasant leaders and youths were apprehended and jailed without any trial. The amount of inhuman torture was so horrible that had left 25 tribal peasants death inside the jail.⁸⁰

The minority peasant's leaders had intensified their protest movement against the sinister motive of the Government. Even they tried to convince the Muhazirs about the secret conspiracy of the League Government and appealed them for sparing their houses and cultivable land. The peasant's leaders went further in provoking the Muhazirs to capture the land of zaminders for their rehabilitation. The Muhazirs responded to the appeals of the peasant leader immediately. They encroached on the lands of a few zaminders under Haluaghat and Nalitabari police station. The League

⁷⁷. Hajong, Biren, op. cit. p.97.

⁷⁸. Gupta, Pramath,, Op.cit. p.139.

⁷⁹. Ibid., p.116.

⁸⁰. Ibid., p.117.

Government, however, had taken stern action against the Muhazirs for this act. A few leaders of them were arrested and tortured by the Government forces to free the occupied lands of the zaminders. After the incident, once again the Muhazirs were induced to grab the lands of the tribals and to oust them from their homes. The Hajongs along with other tribes had to leave their ancestral home to avoid inhuman persecutions. According to Sri Binoy Hajong ⁸¹ of Derapather migrated from the Ramegora village under Nalitabari Police Station of Mymensing District of the Erstwhile East- Pakistan stated the cause of his migration as-

“ my family and most of the people of our village had left our native place and migrated to India because of the sudden arrival of Bihari Muslims refugees. They were present largely in our village and adjacent villages. The Government of Pakistan encouraged the Muslims refugees from Bihar to rehabilitate in our tribal land. In Mymensing alone there were around 40,000 Muslims refugees from Assam and Bihar. They were brought during the night hours into the lands abandoned by the minority tribal communities including the Hajongs”.

This becomes evident that the communal tension that broke out in both halves of the Bengal had profound impact in Bihar and Assam. As a result, there was large scale migration of Urdu speaking Bihari Muslims from Assam and Bihar to the East Pakistan. The Government’s decision to rehabilitate these refugees into the North Mymensing regions, the aboriginal land of the Hajongs and other small tribes was responsible for the migration of the Hajong tribes. The Hajongs are the worst victims of the communal frenzy of 1950.

3.7.6. Village Transfer (Rewaj Bodal)- The system of mutual village transfer is also another cause of migration of the Hajong tribe from the erstwhile East Pakistan to India. During my field study, I have detected such a few Hajong villages in Assam. In the wake of communal disturbance of 1950, especially in the year 1951, there were several village transfer or Rewaj Bodal or mutual land transfer deal happened between the East Pakistani aboriginals and Muslims of Assam. As per the system of the deal prior approval and

⁸¹. Interviewee- Binoy Hajong (80), S/O. Lt. Vinod Hajong, Derapather Assam.

consent of both the communities was a must .Once the deal was finalized both the communities had to left their inhabitat villages and own the new one crossing the India-Pakistan border. Many remnants and remaining are still found in some villages indicates the evidence of village transfer deals. There are some Mosques of Muslims in some Hajong villages and some temples in Muslims inhabited villages could easily be visualized. In Assam under Chirang district a few such villages like Batabari, Bishnupur, Jakhati etc, were inhabited once by the Muslims could easily be noticed. The Muslims inhabitants of these villages became the residents of once inhabited villages like Laoachpara, Kornajora etc. under present Mymensing district of Bangladesh. Likewise, a few villages were completely transferred by both the communities in Dhubri and Darrang (presently Udhalghuri) district of Assam. A number of Hajong villages under Udhalguri district namely, Nepal Basti, Mymensing Hajong Gaon, Kachari Tup, Dhansari are the examples of such village transferred Hajong villages. The Hajong tribes of these villages were the inhabitants of Sidleey, Manpara, Maokura, Bhabeer etc.⁸² of the Mymensing district of East Pakistan. This obviously shows that the migration of Hajong tribes also took place in Assam as a result of village transfer deal among the Muslim communities of Assam and the Hajong communities of erstwhile East Pakistan.

3.7.7. Hajrat Bal Rumor – It has already been stated that during the time of partition of the country the entire Hajong inhabited territories were annexed with East Bengal. Biren Hajong (2000) has mentioned that “in the present Bangladesh partition from South of Mahishkhola to Laochpara the Hajong inhabitation were compact and hundreds of Hajong inhabitations were in existence until the year of 1964.”⁸³ During the period 1950-1964, most of the Hajong villages were deserted from the East Pakistan and the population constrained to shift elsewhere. In fact, the flows of migration of the Hajongs were continuous since independence due to political and religious persecution. However, the flow of migration of the Hajongs reached its highest numbers in 1964 in the wake of communal violence of 1964. As per records, between 1964-71, every year average 1,

⁸². Sheikh, E.A. , op. cit. pp. 40-41.

⁸³. Hajong, Biren, op. cit. , p.7.

96,296 numbers of refugees including the Hajongs migrated to India from East Pakistan.⁸⁴

In 1964, there was genocide in East Pakistan in the wake of an alleged theft of what was believed to be the Prophet Mohammed's hair from the Holy Hajrat-Bal shrine in Srinagar. In fact, there a sudden rumor that the hairs of Prophet Mohammed went missing from Hajrat-Bal shrine of Srinagar on 27 December, 1963. The rumor was so widely dissimilated in every nook and corner of India and Pakistan. It was alleged that the act was done intentionally by some non-Muslims to deteriorate the communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims. There was mass protest over the disappearance of the relics. On January 4, 1964, it was reported that the missing relic was found and the miscreants involved was arrested.⁸⁵ But on the next day the Pakistan radio announced the recovered relic as fake.⁸⁶ The immediate consequence of the Hajrat-Bal incident was the communal violence in different parts of East Pakistan including the Hajong populated areas of Mymensing and Sylhet district. Sri. Khorid Chandra Hajong⁸⁷ of village Gasgora, Post Office- Duara Bazar under Sunamganj Police Station of Sylhet District of the East Pakistan, now a resident of village Tengripar under Nagaon district of Assam also heard the rumor being spread that, "they were taking revenge on the minority of East Pakistan for the destruction of a Muslims shrine in Kashmir". Grohonsing A, Marak stated in his unpublished manuscript "The Bangladesh in the Background" that in January 1964, large ghastly killing of minority groups in East Bengal, and the victims were Bengalis, Garos, Koches, Hajongs, Dhalus, Banais etc. As a consequence, large number of East Pakistani refugees streamed into the eastern tip of India, viz. Tripura, Mizoram and Meghalaya.⁸⁸ It must be mentioned here that claim of Grohonsing about the flow of refugees to Meghalaya cannot be accepted. Because Meghalaya as a state came into existence in 1971 and not in 1964 and it was a district of Assam. During field investigation I found that almost all the Hajongs migrated through the Garo Hills district of Assam and not through Tripura or Mizoram border. Whatever it is, the rumor of

⁸⁴ The Assam Tribune, January 18, 2000.

⁸⁵ Mukhapadhaya, K P 2007, *Partition, Bengal and After: The Great Tragedy of India*, Reference Press, New Delhi, p.48.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.53.

⁸⁷ Interviewee- Khorid Ch. Hajong (70), S/O- Lt. Sadharam Hajong, Tengripar, Assam.

⁸⁸ Marak, A. Grohonsing, *The Bangladesh in the Background*, An Unpublished Document, p.2.

Hazrat-Bal incident turned into communal violence causing huge flow of migration of the Hajong tribe to India. Later on, it was proved that the incident of Hajrat Bal was a rumor to create panic among the people.

3.7.8. Impact of Communist Movement-It is important to note that among the minority tribes to flee first from their home were the Hajongs and Koches. The real cause behind their migration was found the growing involvement of the Hajongs and Koches in the militant peasant movement under the auspices of the Communist Parties. In fact, both the communities supported and joined the communist party to fight against the exploitation of the then zaminders of the North Mymensing district and to prevent the atrocities of police Thanas (police stations) on the Hajong peasants. They even threatened to dare the Thanas ⁸⁹ in their region. As already stated that the whole North Mymensing district especially the Hajong inhabited areas were influenced profusely by the wave of Communist Movement under the West Bengal Kisan Sabha. The movements like Tonko Movement, Tebhaga , Hati Kheda Beggar system were dominated by the Communist Party leaders of the Hajong tribes against the exploitation of the zaminders. Some of the Communist Party leaders namely, Lalit Sarker Hajong, Sachin Hajong(Bharatpur) ,Prasanna Hajong, Jehal Hajong, Jameswar Hajong, Monmohan Hajong, Birat Hajong, Tanuram Hajong, Kangal Das Hajong, Rasendra Hajong, Biswerswar Hajong, Nayan Hajong,⁹⁰ etc. struggle for the peasants against the zaminders. A photocopy of the Lalit Sarkar Hajong along with other comrades is shown in the photo section. Besides, the involvement of the Garos, Banais, Dhalus with the Communist Movement cannot be denied. The names of Jogendra Bonowari, Upen Rema from the Garo community and Kalaram Banai, Gomuti Banai ⁹¹ from the Banai community may be mentioned here.

The militant activities of the Hajong peasants not only worried the British Government but also the East Pakistani Government in the wake of independence. In order to suppress the communist movement and their leaders, the East Pakistani forces started combing operation to nab the ring leaders of the movements. The Pakistani forces

⁸⁹. Sonowal, Khema, (2014). Tribes of North East India, *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, [Internet]. Vol.3, Issue 2, Feb, 2014, p.8.<www.theglobaljournals.com/gra/file.php2_val=Feb-2014>, Accessed on-01. 04.2014

⁹⁰. Hajong. Biren, op.cit. p.68.

⁹¹. Ibid.,

used to harass mainly the A-Chiks and Hajongs since they regarded Hajongs as communists and A-Chiks as anti- Pakistani.⁹² It had also been stated that if the East Pakistani authority would have been tolerated the aggressive behavior of the Hajongs and Koches, one day they might harm the state authority. Due to this feeling of insecurity they drove out Hajongs and Koches⁹³ from their home. The anti communist feelings of the Pakistani Government becomes clear from the statement which read as-

“ the target of the Muslim League was to annihilate the anti-imperialist activities especially the Communist Party and class organizations. These parties were active in the beginning, but declared as illegal after the creation of Pakistan. The Muslim League played nasty politics and hatched a conspiracy to destroy the Communist Party movement with the help of communal violence. Because of historical reason, majority of anti-imperialist and democratic workers belonged to Hindu community during that time. The workers were arrested and jailed mercilessly to stop the operation and activities of the Communist Movement. Those days were remembered as the dark days in the history of Pakistan.”.....Tarun Sen .⁹⁴

In this way, there are evidences to show the abrupt decline in the numbers of Hajong population from the erstwhile East-Pakistan after the partition of the country. The following table (4.2) clearly indicates the decline in numbers of tribes in East Pakistan after the partition of the country-

Table-4.2.

Ethnic Composition of the population of East Pakistan, 1951

Communities	% of population
Muslims	76.8
Scheduled Caste Hindus	12,0
Caste Hindus	10.0
Others(including Tribal Groups)	1.2

Source- Government of Pakistan (1955), Table-2.

⁹². Sangma. N. Sengirang, op. cit, pp.43-44.

⁹³. Sonowal. K. op.cit. p.8.

⁹⁴. Promoth, Gupto. ,op.cit. p.141.

Biren Hajong (2000) stated that about 60,000 Hajongs inhabitants⁹⁵ and a great chunk of them forced to evacuate their native villages from the East-Pakistan. The victimised Hajongs were forced to leave their homeland following communal clashes in the Mymensing district.⁹⁶ Even the forced migration of the tribal people, especially Christian tribal created a lot of stir in the international community. Realising the consequences, the Pakistan Government made an effort to woo the tribal people back home. The District administration of Mymensing also appealed to the refugees for return to their homeland. However, tribal refugees including the Hajongs rejected the appeal and declined to go back to Pakistan.

The following table (4.3) also corroborates the response of the respondents about the causes of their migration:

Table- 4.3.

Response on the Migration of the Hajongs from the erstwhile East Pakistan

Causes	Respondents	%
Voluntary	4	1.18
Communal Conflict/violence	196	57.65
Religious Discrimination	50	13.74
Land Transfer Deal	19	5.59
Political Violence	25	7.35
Others	1	0.29
Total	340	

Source: Field data generated by the investigator

Thus, it becomes clear that the Hajongs were the victims of the bifurcation of the Indian sub-continent. They became the target of the communal violence that broke

⁹⁵. Hajong, Biren., op. cit. .p.33.

⁹⁶. Sebastian, K, O. ,(2008), Internally Displaced Persons of Changlang District, in the Das, Samir, Kr.(ed), *Blisters on their Feet : Tales of Internally Displaced Persons in India's North East*, Sage Publication India, Pvt. Ltd. Mathura Road, New Delhi- 110044, p.70.

out in East Pakistan in 1950s again in 1964 and later in 1971. Biren Hajong (2000) explicitly stated that the immigrants of the aboriginal tribes from the erstwhile East Pakistan took place in two different phases during 1950 and 1964 along with thousands of Hindu, Christian and Buddhist, who entered India in search of safer places for survival.⁹⁷ Majority of the respondents of Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh displaced forcibly from the Northern Mymensing and Sylhet district in 1964. Sangma (2005) stated that it is mainly because of the atrocities that the minority people of East Pakistan fled across the border during 1964. Once the Hajong population of the East Pakistan was about 40 thousand (Anon. 2003), but at present hardly 10 thousand Hajongs are living in present Bangladesh. The incidence of Human Rights violence of the Hajongs along with other tribes in East Pakistan becomes evidential from the memorandum submitted to Kurt Waldheim, the then Secretary General of the United Nations on 16th December, 1980. It stated that “in 1964, some Muslim goondas or anti-social elements, with the help of the East Pakistan police, deliberately set fire to 128 (one hundred twenty eight) houses at village Jayramkura, Police station Haluaghat, District Mymensing, Bangladesh, resulting in the loss of human life, countless head of cattle, several thousand tons of paddy in the granaries. The houses belonged to Hajongs and Koches, the minority tribal people in Bangladesh” .⁹⁸ It is also found that during Mukti Yuddha of Bangladesh, 1971, a large number of Hajongs were displaced from Sylhet district of erstwhile East Pakistan and later on rehabilitated in Nagaon District of Assam. Gupto (1971) while narrating the horrible incidence of that period stated that,

“the peasants forced to become the beggars of path and in search of cultivable land they had in Mymensing district of Bangladesh and entered into Assam in different phases” .⁹⁹ Similarly, Tarun Sen, a renowned writer commented on the plight of the People of East Pakistan as:

“...hardly there could be a single country in the human history, where freedom fighters were declared as traitors, tortured and oppressed and jailed after spending 200 years under foreign domination. During the last 20 years, such type of

⁹⁷. Hajong, B.,op. cit., pp.98-99.

⁹⁸. Sangma. N. Sengirang, op. cit, p.52.

⁹⁹. Promoth, Gupto. ,op.cit. p.17.

heinous crime happened in front of our eyes. The people of Pakistan could not enjoy the taste of independence for a single day".¹⁰⁰

The above stated circumstances are the root cause of displacement resulting forced migration of the Hajong tribe that took place in different phases.. Then there are some indigenous Hajong people's villages in were also found in Assam, those who were not displaced and migrated from the East Pakistan. But majority of the Hajongs of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and other North Eastern states are displaced from the erstwhile East Pakistan. Besides, all the immovable prosperities were looted and burnt in East Pakistan. Even Hajong immigrants were not allowed to bring their jewelleryes.¹⁰¹ They were rehabilitated by the Government of India in different District of Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. It has also been established that beyond North Eastern states, the Hajongs those who migrated from the East Pakistan also rehabilitated in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dandakaranya and in West Bengal. But their number is yet to be ascertained. The Hajongs are the worst victims of the partition of India and forced migrants induced by political factors.

¹⁰⁰. Ibid., pp-109-110.

¹⁰¹. File No. GRRO 7/65/3396 dated Dalu, the 20 th March, 1965.