

Chapter I

Introduction

Tribal movements in the Northeast are entirely different from those of elsewhere in the country and they stand as a category by themselves because of the unique geopolitical situation and historical background. Many tribes living on the international boundaries traditionally acted as bridge or buffer communities until the advent of colonialism and shared ethnic and cultural affinities with tribesmen across the frontiers. Developments across the frontiers had a profound influence on the situation in the Northeast.¹ This region was also not completely integrated within the political and economic system of colonialism. It remained relatively isolated from the cultural systems of the mainland and the political upheavals of the freedom struggle. It is interesting to record that the entire system of the non-regulation administration had its origin in the experiences of the tribal uprising of 1820s in the Arakan hills, which was a disturbed area. Many of the elements of this system were introduced elsewhere in the country, while they tended to isolate the north-eastern region from the rest of the country.² Tribal people's institutions are relatively intact. They remain in possession of their land and forest. Christianity has emerged as the strongest factor of modernization, and has given the tribals as it has done elsewhere a strong sense of identity. Considering the geopolitical factor, the relative isolation from the political system and cultural influences from the mainland, the dominant form of movement has been political, seeking goals

¹ K.S. Singh, *Tribals Movements in India*, Monohar Publishers, New Delhi, 2006, p. 11.

² *Ibid*, p. 11.

ranging from autonomy to independence and relying on means ranging from constitutional agitation to armed insurgency.³

As a consequence of ecological, historical and geographical factors, the rural and tribal communities and the different ethnic groups in Northeast India remained relatively isolated from each other for centuries. During the long course of history there were occasions when these peoples came in contact with other communities through migration, invasions, emergence of new dynasties and religious movements. Before the advent of the British administration in Northeast India, the social life of the ethnic groups such as the Garo, Khasi, jaintia, Lushai (Mizo), Karbi, Dimasa, Kuki, Bodo and Naga was confined to their family clan, khel and village.

Northeast India, since early times, was influenced by its physical features, ecology and the political conditions. The larger part of the region consists of the lower hill ranges or offshoots or splinters of the Himalayas, while the plains areas are connected with the Gangetic plains by unbroken chain of lowlands. The major plains segments are (i) the Brahmaputra Valley, (ii) the Barak –Surma Valley and the Tripura Plains, and (iii) the Trans-Barak Manipur Valley. The human migrations in the region took place in innumerable waves since pre-historic times from the Indo-Gangetic plains as well as the Himalayan and the Southeast Asian regions. The societies in the region absorbed pan-Indian political and cultural traditions as well as the impact of the socio-economic and political developments in neighbouring Southeast Asia and experienced a fine blending of these two ethnic and cultural traditions represented by the Indo-Aryan and the Indo-Mongoloid communities. The emergence of the chiefdoms or pre-state politics and the early states from the indigenous as well as immigrant social bases was a significant development in the early and mediaeval history of the region.⁴

The Northeastern region has, over the centuries, seen an extraordinary mixing of different races, cultures, languages and religions, leading to a diversity

³Ibid, p. 11.

⁴ J. B. Bhattacharjee, *State and Wealth- the Early States in Northeast India*, DVS Publishers, Guwahati, 2010, p.15.

rarely seen elsewhere in India. With an area of about 2.6 lakh square kilometer and a population of a little over 39 million.⁵ Northeast India today consists of seven states - Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. This is virtually most isolated region and strategically it is much more important than any other regions as it faces China and Bhutan in the North, Burma in the southeast and Bangladesh in the west. Prior to the advent of the British different areas of this region were ruled by different kings and traditional local chiefs maintaining independent sovereign status. The whole region has been full of heterogeneous population with their distinct socio-cultural identities. During the British rule most of the areas of the Northeastern region were, however, brought under one administrative unit.⁶

Even after independence, most of the areas in Northeast remained as a single administrative unit in the name of Assam. But since the sixties, the process of reorganization of the states in northeast India started and consequently the states and Union Territories such as Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram have been carved out of the original state of Assam. All these newly formed states cover a wide range of hill areas inhabiting various hill tribes with different traditions, culture and social system characteristically distinct from the people of the plains who occupied the dominant position in the undivided Assam.⁷ The hill states were mainly created in order to fulfill the socio-political aspiration of the hill people. They felt terribly insecure of their interest within a greater Assam. Indeed, they were never happy with the dominant leadership of the plains during the British rule. After independence, the sense of deprivation and exploitation by the plains reached its extreme point in the minds of the hill people resulting in the demand for autonomy.⁸

Demand or movement for autonomy based on ethnic considerations is a global phenomenon. The history of the world is replete with countless examples of

⁵ Subir Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery -Crisis of India's North East*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2009, p.1.

⁶ Girin Phukon, *Politics of Regionalism in Northeast India*, Spectrum Publications, Delhi, 1996, p. 14

⁷ Ibid, p.14.

⁸ Ibid, p.15.

countries getting fragmented on ethnic grounds. At present, many countries of the world are facing immense problems caused by both violent and non-violent ethnic movements. India is no exception. In India, after independence, a number of autonomy movements or movements for statehood have been organized by various ethnic groups.⁹ This is more in case of the Tribal Societies of North-East India. Some of the movements started during the pre-Independence period were considered as revolts or insurgencies against the British rule. These movements, though suppressed by the British laid the foundation for the subsequent political developments among the tribal peoples of the region. In the post-Independence period the number of movements among the different tribal groups has multiplied rather fast. At present, in every state of North-East India some type of social movement has been going on.¹⁰ This may be accounted for by variety of factors- such as geophysical situation, historical background, legacy of British administration, identity problem and socio-cultural isolation from the rest of the country. Of these, the question of identity seems to be very important.

The urges of different ethnic groups of Northeast India for maintaining their distinct identities have been a living phenomenon in the politics of the region in particular and of the country in general. They have their own language, dialect, culture, customs, tradition, historical background and so on. And they are not prepared to merge their culture completely with the national mainstream and want to maintain their distinct identity. As a means for maintaining their identity, they have been demanding for separate states or administrative arrangement on the basis of their respective ethnicity. More importantly, some sections of these groups have been carrying on an underground movement demanding a sovereign independent state outside Indian union. A movement of this kind naturally involves the question of integration of this region with the rest of the country.¹¹

⁹ D. Doley, 'Tribal Movements in the North-Eastern Region' in K.S. Singh (ed.), *Tribal Studies of India Series T 185- Antiquity to Modernity in Tribal India*, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p. 14

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 14.

¹¹ Girin Phukon, op. cit., p. 1.

In Northeast India, the increasing assertion of tribal identity is because of the forces of social change and modernization in tribal lifestyle. The pace of change has been rapid, particularly since independence; mainly as a result of a massive induction of administrative resources into hitherto isolated areas. The process of modernization has also intensified the search for a secured place and identity. Tribal communities becoming conscious of the fact that in order to acquire the benefits of modern civilization they need to be viable in human resources.¹² As a consequence, small and distinct local groups combine – even if at a formal level through the creation of a socio-political organization - to form a larger group and adopt a common appellation.

Though there are numerous factors behind the demands for separation, autonomy and statehood in the North-East India, the policies- social, economic and political- adopted by the Indian Government after independence has been responsible for their intensification. Because the policies of government sharpened not only the caste, religious, linguistic and ethnic distinctions, but also increased regional disparities and the feeling of deprivation, negligence and insecurity among various ethnic and tribal groups. These policies of both the central and state Governments have paved the ways for inequality, exploitation, negligence, and oppression by creating a big rift between the haves and have-nots among the people of this region.¹³ Those who are beneficiaries of the policies and development programmes are siding with the Government of India on all fronts while the leaders of the deprived and neglected sections relying upon guerrilla warfare adopted from the Maoist line, called the former puppets in the hand of the government.¹⁴

Distinguishing features such as language, religion, caste and tribe do not by themselves automatically and necessarily lead to the emergence of national consciousness. It emerges when a rising middle class, belonging to such a group, steps in to mediate. The class highlights one or more of these distinguishing

¹² Bibhash Dhar, 'Tribal identity Dilemma in Arunachal Pradesh' in B. Pakem (ed.), *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1990, p. 121.

¹³ Chandrika Singh, *North-East India Politics and Insurgency*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2009, p. 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.9.

features to make the group self conscious so that by mobilizing mass support, it could win some of its demands skillfully posed as the group's national demand.¹⁵

The identity movement of various ethnic groups has been articulated through religion, language, culture, region, caste and race. This problem is very much acute in Assam. The different groups inhabiting this state have been launching movement either for the creation of separate or autonomous state on the basis of their ethnic identities or for special constitutional safeguards of their respective identities. Though at the beginning, they started their assertion with non-political issues such as the development of their language and culture, the uneven economic development gave it a political direction in the subsequent period.¹⁶ As a result, they have become assertive of their political right and started movement for adequate share of political power in order to maintain their distinct identities. The movement for Dimaraji is one such movement.

After 67years of independence, there has been no trace of development or change in the Dimasa society in any respect. On the other hand, numerous problems are cropping up everyday. The reorganization of Cachar, N.C. Hills, Nagaon and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam had been made without keeping in view the Dimasa people's predominance and legitimacy as the last ruling dynasty over the land. This has badly affected their existence, safeguard and progress. The Dimasa populated areas of Cachar, Nagaon and Karbi Anglong districts adjacent to the NC Hills border ought to have been included in the NC Hills district so as to serve the interest of the Dimasa people. But the State Government has done nothing about the matter. The boundary between Assam and Nagaland has not yet been demarcated and settled, in consideration of all traditional rights and claims of the people.

The most important factors in any tribal identity movement are the underdevelopment of tribal economy and scarcity of resources. The reason for

¹⁵ Quoted by P.S. Misra, 'Identity Consciousness Among the Dimasas of Assam' in B. Pakem (ed.), *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India*. Omsons Publications, Guwahati, 1990, p. 191

¹⁶ Girin Phukon, op. cit., p.131.

tribal movement lies in the conflict for controlling of political power and economic resources. As tribal aspirations arise and economic development is painfully slow and uneven, militancy is bound to grow. So, the rising educated middle class and petty bourgeoisie in tribal society at first have started peaceful movement for autonomy. But their peaceful movement could not pressurize the government. As a result, they are bound to take up arms to pressurize the government to fulfill their demands. This is mostly the cases of Dima Hasao (erstwhile North Cachar Hills) and Karbi Anglong Districts of Assam.

Statement of the Problem:

The term 'autonomy' means self-government or self-rule. It also means a kind of emancipation from socio-cultural and economic deprivation of ethnic groups having a distinct culture, language, and common traditions in a given territory. Thus, when small nationalities launch movements for autonomy, it is conceived as a movement to alter or supplant the existing socio-economic and political arrangement of the system.¹⁷ Autonomy movement is a type of social movement. A social movement is a collective action of an identifiable section of the population with a purpose of bringing about a change, either partial or total, in the existing socio-political arrangement of the system. When the collective action is somewhat sustained as distinct from a sporadic occurrence, it takes the form of a movement.¹⁸ Again, a social movement is a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution, or withdrawal into a utopian community. However, some held that "a social movement occurs when a fairly large number of people, or an otherwise identifiable segment of the population, deliberately band together for collective action in order to alter, reconstitute, reinterpret, restore, protect, supplant or create some portions of their culture or social order, or to better their life chances by redistributing the power of control in a society".¹⁹ A movement may be peaceful or violent in nature depending upon the pattern of leadership, the

¹⁷ Santanu Sengupta, 'Autonomy Movement: A Theoretical outlook' in R.N. Prasad (ed.), *Autonomy Movement in Mizoram*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997, p. 35.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 35-36.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 36.

release of force, and the coercive method adopted by the system under which it operates. It tends to modify, reinterpret, readjust and alter the age-old tradition, values and above all political culture, attacking the very foundation of legitimacy of the system for a new kind of social order.

In India before independence, there had been demands for independent state with special status or relationship with the British. Punjab, Assam, Madras belong to that category. In Madras, the Justice Party, the progenitor of D.K. and D.M.K. in a convention in December, 1938, resolved to demand for a separate state, loyal to the British Raj under the Secretary of State for India. In 1939, the Dravida Nadu Conference organized by Naicker, echoed the demand for independent Dravidistan. In Punjab, the demand for Azad Punjab was projected by the Akali Dal in 1943. In 1944 the All Parties' Sikh Conference, attended mostly by Akali supporters, made the demand for separate Sikhistan. Both the D.M.K. and Akali leaders had negotiations with the Muslim League for reciprocal support of their separatist demands. They offered support to the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and asked for the League's support for their independent state.²⁰ The Assamese urge for separation was rooted in a consciousness of a distinct identity arising from the fact that Assam had never been politically united with the rest of India prior to British occupation. A memorandum was thus submitted to Nehru in 1937, by Assamese leaders in favour of secession of Assam from India.²¹

India, in the post-independence period, witnessed movement of different kinds including secessionist movement. Movements for autonomy or statehood were the common movement organized from time to time by various ethnic groups that ultimately resulted in a situation compelling the government to reorganize a number of states in the past sixty years. North East is, perhaps, the most affected by the state reorganization resulting from the demand for autonomy.

In North East India, the different tribal groups are not prepared to merge their culture with the national mainstream or with the dominant culture of the

²⁰ Sajal Basu, *Regional Movements - Politics of Language, Ethnicity-Identity*, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1992, p. 13.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 13.

region. They want to maintain their distinct identity. Separate state has been taken as the means for maintaining this identity. Consequently, different ethnic groups have been launching autonomy movement for separate states within the territory of India.

The root of a Movement for an autonomous state also lies in the economic backwardness of the tribal areas. The tribals of Assam are economically the most backward segment of the state. Movements for an autonomous state were launched by different tribal groups, because of their economic and political frustration. Apart from this, the problem of identity crisis is another factor responsible for the growth of autonomy movement in Assam. If any group in Assam has been facing the problem of identity crisis, it is obviously the tribal community. They have remained socially, culturally, economically, and politically exploited and the most oppressed group. But in course of time, tribals too have become conscious of their distinct identity and started reviving their own languages and advocating their rights in their historical homeland through political mobilization and agitation. The present study is an attempt to understand one such movement, the movement for Dimaraji.

Historical Background:

The movement for Dimaraji, though has specificity of its own, cannot be studied in isolation from the similar movements. And in studying the autonomy movements of the different tribal groups of north eastern region, what is often referred to is their isolation. The territorial boundary of Assam got extended during the colonial rule through the inclusion of hill areas and the districts of Sylhet, Cachar and Goalpara to Assam. Though the British included the hill areas to Assam, they followed a policy of non-interference towards the tribes of the hills.²² Between 1874 and 1934, the tribal population in the region were administered under a succession of extraordinary provisions that segregated them into categories called “non-

²² D. Bhattacharjee, ‘Hmar – Dimasa Conflict in Assam : A Historical-Perspective’ in G. Phukan (ed.), *Inter Ethnic Conflict in Northeast India*, South Asia Publishers, New Delhi, 2004, p.120.

regulated”, “backward”, or “excluded areas”. The Inner Line Regulation of 1873 prohibited access to these areas to all outsiders except those who obtained special permission from the government. This regulation was extended to most of hill areas and thus created a frontier within a frontier, accentuating the political and cultural schism between the tribal areas and the plains.²³ The overall result was that the region which was a mass of heterogeneous people before the advent of British rule retained basically the same character.

There was not much change in the situation after independence. The policy of segregation was continued in the form of autonomous council and villages. State power and the fruits of developmental activities were monopolized by the elites. Tribals and other marginalized sections were kept out of the narrow field of employment. At this juncture the movement to install Assamese as the official language of the state deeply disturbed the tribals and linguistic minorities living in the State. The official Language Bill of 1961 was perceived by the tribal groups as a barrier to their advancement and as an obstacle to get jobs in government offices. Further, it was apprehended that the domination of Assamese would adversely affect the future of their language and culture. The emerging middle class, the youths and the students of different ethnic group began to develop a sense of deprivation from what they call, legitimate share of political power. The middle class of these groups started realising that without political power they could not solve their problems. For this reason, they demanded autonomy or statehood and have been successful in mobilising the people of their respective communities in support of their demand.

The Dimasas became politically restive since 1972. All the expectations generated by the assurance of the Assamese leadership as well as by the creation of North Cachar Hills Autonomous District Council were belied by the decision taken

²³ A. Uppadhyay, ‘Terrorism in the North East’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. XLI, No. 48, Dec, 2006, pp. 2-8.

in 1972 by the Academic Council of Gauhati and Dibrugarh Universities to introduce Assamese as the medium of instruction in collegiate education.

The decision of the Academic Council of Gauhati and Dibrugarh University created a lot of resentment among the non-Assamese People. The Mikir (presently called Karbis) and North-Cachar Hill leaders Conference submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister in 1973 explaining how they were persuaded to remain in Assam, how the promises made were forgotten, how the central grants have always been misused and how the Assamese leadership were determined to Assamise them. Besides, a sense of frustration started to set in among the Dimasas and the Karbis when they compared them with the people of those districts that have opted for going out of Assam. They felt that the people of those districts that have opted out of Assam could have not only their political aspiration fulfilled, but could also enjoy a much larger share of national resources for their development. The Dimasas and the Karbis considered them lagging behind.²⁴ Therefore, they demanded separation. They demanded separation from Assam not only for the fear of losing their identity but also to have their own separate homeland like Nagaland and Mizoram, so that they can have their development within sovereign India.

The Dimasa demand for statehood can be traced to the formation of Autonomous State Demand Committee in 1986. Since then the Karbi and the Dimasa people of N.C. Hills and Karbi Anglong have been jointly demanding for the creation of an Autonomous State under Article 244 (A) of the Constitution of India.

Although the Dimasas and the Karbis have been jointly demanding an Autonomous State under the leadership of Autonomous State Demand Committee, in 1991 the Dimasa Students organised themselves under All Dimasa Students Union (ADSU). The All Dimasa Students Union has been demanding for creation of a separate full fledged state 'Dimaraji' by incorporating all the territories that were included in the ancient Dimasa Kachari Kingdom so as to enable them to enjoy all constitutional rights and privileges to bring all round developments. The

²⁴ P.S. Datta, *Autonomy Movements in Assam*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 59-60.

All Dimasa Students Union and the Dimaraji Revival Demand Committee jointly submitted a memorandum to Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, New Delhi in 1996, demanding a separate homeland for the Dimasas.²⁵ As a result, the relation between the Dimasas and the Karbis came under stress.

However, to press their demand the All Dimasa Students Union has been adopting the techniques of organising bandh, dharnas, road blockade, rally, etc. Besides the constitutional path, a violent or so called militant path surfaced with the formation of Dimasa National Security Force (surrendered in 1994) and Dima Haram Daogah (DHD) in early nineties adding a new dimension to the Dimaraji movement of the Dimasas. The emergence of these militant outfits can be ascribed partly to the no-responsive attitude of the government to the constitutional agitational path followed by the Dimasas and partly to the politics of expediency of the dominant class.

The Dima Haram Daogah (DHD) came into being with the vow to create 'Dimaraji', i.e., a Dimasa State comprising the districts of N.C. Hills, Karbi Anglong and Cachar and part of the district of Nagaon in Assam and also part of Dimapur in Nagaland. But within a short time, differences developed among the DHD cadres centering mainly around the techniques to be followed to pursue the demand. This ultimately resulted in a split. A faction led by Dilip Nunisa signed Ceasefire Agreement with the Government of India on January 1, 2003 and thereafter abjured violence till date. Another faction led by Jewel Garlosa which was formed on 31 March 2003. The later group came to be known as DHD (J) or Black Widow.

Both the groups of the DHD claim to be struggling for 'Dimaraji' which, according to them, is the only solution to the problem of the Dimasas. But the 'Dimaraji' of their perception resulted in making other ethnic groups, especially the Hmars living in the district of North Cachar Hills and the Karbis living in the district of Karbi Anglong, suspicious. They apprehended that if the DHD succeed

²⁵ A memorandum to Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of India, submitted by The Dimaraji Revival Demand Committee & The All Dimasa Students' Union, in 1996.

in getting its demand for 'Dimaraji' fulfilled, they would be marginalised and would come under Dimasa domination. Consequently, they opposed the demand. Their opposition strained the relationship between the Dimasas on the one hand, and the Hmars and the Karbis on the other. This strained relationship resulted in conflagration, especially in the districts of N.C. Hills and Karbi Anglong. There were violent clashes between the Hmars and the Dimasas in 2003 and between the Karbis and the Dimasas in 2005. These ethnic clashes resulted not only in the loss of hundred of lives and properties worth crore of rupees, but gave birth to an uneasy relationship between the ethnic groups living in the N.C. Hills and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam.

It is in this backdrop that the present study 'Demand for Dimaraji: A Study of the Movement for Separate State' acquires significance, because it resulted into a unique and complicated situation creating a rift not only between the different ethnic groups but also between Dimasas themselves causing uncertainty and tension in the two hill districts of Assam.

Objectives:

The present study is addressed to understand:

- i) the genesis and nature of the movement;
- ii) the Support-base of the movement; and
- iii) the impact of the movement on the relations between different ethnic groups residing in the districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao (N. C. Hills).

Review of Literature:

There are a number of scholarly works on Dimasas and on autonomy movements in North East India. But most of the works on Dimasas gives a historical account of the Dimasas and the works on autonomy movement are the works on other ethnic groups. So far, there is no known work on the autonomy movement of the Dimasas.

J.B. Bhattacharjee's (1977) 'Cachar Under British Rule in North East India'²⁶ is a comprehensive history of Cachar from 1765 to 1947.

H.K. Barpujari's (1980) 'Assam in the days of the Company (1826-1858)'²⁷ described in detail not merely the successive stages in the establishment of British rule in Assam, but also the period of subsequent reaction leading to the early phase of the Freedom Movement in the North-East Frontier. It further explains the British authorities' administrative systems and how the British authorities responded to the challenge to run their administration.

The book 'Why Separate State of Bodoland'²⁸ (Demand And Justification 1987) contains memorandum to the President of India & Home Minister of India. It also contains political problem of Bodos faced by in Assam.

In 'Tribal Identity and Tension in Northeast India'²⁹ (1989) B. Datta Ray, argued that the tribal identity in North-East India stands by itself because of its unique geopolitical situation and historical background. Many tribes live on international boundaries and share ethnic and cultural affinities with other tribes across the frontier. Tribal institutions are relatively intact. They remain by and large in possession of their land and forests. It is further argued that Christianity has emerged as a strong factor of modernization and has given the tribal a sense of identity. The study gives an insight into the ethno-cultural situation in the region.

B. Pakem's (1990) 'Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North-East India'³⁰ is an edited work. It contains articles by different authors. The authors discussed about the three issues i.e. nationalities, ethnicity and cultural identity which assumed a multidimensional importance in view of the urgent need for

²⁶ J.B. Bhattacharjee, *Cachar Under British Rule in North East India*, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1977.

²⁷ H.K. Barpujari, *Assam in the days of the Company (1826-1858)*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1980.

²⁸ U. G. Brahma and N.R. Boro, *Why Separate State of Bodoland (Demand and Justification)*, Kokrajhar, Date-10 November, 1987.

²⁹ B. Datta Ray, *Tribal Identity and Tension in North-East India*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1989.

³⁰ B. Pakem, *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in Northeast India*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1990.

economic, social, cultural and political development of Northeast India. The main focus of the study is historical background of nationalities and identity movements in Northeast India.

Sajal Nag's (1990) 'Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality Question in North-East India'³¹ held that the emergence of movements for regional autonomy has perhaps been the single most important issue occupying the centre stage of Indian politics during the last decades. These movements have not only challenged the legitimacy of the Indian state and led to serious law and order problems, but they also pose fresh questions relating to the future of Indian social formations and the relevance of the developmental model the Indian state chose to follow during the post-independence period. Assam has been one of the troubled states of India with an extremely complicated structure of contradictions. Sajal Nag's study is an attempt to understand this complexity of contradictions in the region, specifically focusing on the emerging nature of ethnic conflict vis-à-vis the development of Assamese nationality. Nag has tried to combine extensive use of oral history with archival sources in his documentation. Nag in his study focused on the various dimensions of the historical evolution of Assamese society in order to understand the emergence of ethnic conflict during the colonial period.

In 'The Politics of India since Independence' (1990) Paul R. Brass³² argued that the Indian state, society, and economy were in the midst of a systematic crisis produced by the centralizing drives of a national leadership determined to transform the country into a modern, industrialized, militarily strong state. The author in his work also argued that the crisis has intensified, revealing itself in secessionist movements and in increased inter-caste conflicts. The country has witnessed the rise of Hindu nationalism and the worst communal massacres since Independence following the destruction of the mosque in Ayodhya. The issue before the country now is whether or not it can find within its own traditions the

³¹ Sajal Nag, *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality Question in North-East India*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1990.

³² Paul R. Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 2013.

moral and material resources and the leadership to restore a political and communal balance in state and society.

In ‘Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony’ (1990) Manorama Sharma³³ argued that the middle class has been able to establish its hegemony over the Assamese society mainly through the articulation of interests which are relevant to the large majority of the Assamese masses comprising largely the various sections of the peasantry. The author argues that for a clear understanding of the Assamese society it is necessary to examine the social roots of middle class. Despite middle class has popularity in social science, at a conceptual level there is some lacking of clarity about its meaning and usage. To overcome this lacking the author has made an attempt at conceptualizing the middle class in general and its Assamese variant in particular and in so doing has challenged some of the established theories on Assamese Middle class, propounded by such eminent social scientists like Amalendu Guha and Hiren Gohain. Sarma’s analysis of the Assamese middle class is based on a study of social and economic changes in Assam in the period of 1860 to 1910, the period of emergence and growth of the middle class in Assam.

R. Gopalakrishnan’s study ‘The North-East India: Land, Economy and People’³⁴ (1991) is an attempt to develop a geographical perspective for an understanding of the North-Eastern region of India. The author discussed the ‘evolution of territorial and administrative complexes since 1826 to the present time.

The book ‘Ethnicity and Nationalism- Theory and Comparison’³⁵ (1991) is an important work. It is divided in three parts. In Part-I, the author discusses the formation, persistence and transformation of ethnic identities. This section starts with two theoretical essays and concludes with a case study of Muslim

³³ Manorama Sharma, *Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1990.

³⁴ R. Gopalakrishnan, *The North-East India: Land, Economy and People*, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1991.

³⁵ Paul R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism-Theory and Comparison*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991.

identity in pre-independent India. Part-II focuses on the strains in relations between the central and state governments in contemporary Indian politics, especially since the death of Nehru. It contains an overview of center-state relations with emphasis on the Punjab crisis and its implications for the future of Indian unity. In Part III, the author brings together the arguments on the relationship between ethnic groups and the state in a theoretical perspective drawing comparison between India and the Soviet Union, and a critique of the influential consociational solution proposed for ethnic conflicts in deeply divided societies.

G.K. Ghosh's (1992) 'Tribals and their Culture- Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram'³⁶ described the impact of East Bengal and Assamese culture on the tribes and other people of Assam, Mizoram and Meghalaya. It also discussed about traditional culture of different people of those three States, tribal folk songs, folk dances, folk music, musical instruments, the traditional religion, impact of organized religion from outside, their mode of prayer etc. The main focus of the study is tribal culture and traditional practices.

K.M.L. Chhabra's (1992) 'Assam Challenge'³⁷ explains the central issue of Assam agitation in its historical perspective by tracing the genesis of the foreigners' problem to the political, economic and social factors that influenced the course of events over several decades. The failure of both the state government and the centre to appreciate the gravity of the problem posed by post partition migration is examined along with the perceptions of different political parties and how their preconceived notions on the emotive issue complicated the efforts for a negotiated settlement. The author argued that the postaccord scenario, with the central question of preparation of electoral rolls still in dispute, is made grimmer by the rise of ULFA which has escalated its activities beyond the borders of the State. It also describes the foreigner's issue in Assam as a challenge of identity which is important in a state like Assam.

³⁶ G.K. Ghosh, *Tribals and their Culture*, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992.

³⁷ K.M.L. Chhabra, *Assam Challenge*, Konark Publishers, Delhi, 1992.

In 'Regional Movements: Politics of Language, Ethnicity-Identity'³⁸ (1992) S. Basu discusses the regional movements and the rise of identity aspirations. The author examines the issues of linguistic state demands and Dravidaland movement and the demands of sovereign Sikhistan, Gorkhaland etc. The author in his study argued that the identity aspirations and sense of identity have offered a new dimension to the assertiveness of ethnic groups in various parts of India resulting in the rise of tribal consciousness, tribal regionalism, frontier tribalism etc. Sajal Basu in his study gave emphasis on subjects which are of intrinsic interest to many. His work covers a wide range of issues: the legacy of nationalist movement, trade union, language and ethnicity, caste, Bengal renaissance, reform movement, Bhadrakok and Marxism, among others.

P.S. Dutta's (1993) 'Autonomy Movements in Assam'³⁹ is a compilation of memoranda submitted by different groups at different point of time seeking to have autonomy in their own affairs.

S. Chatterjee's (1994) 'Making of Mizoram: Role of Laldenga'⁴⁰ is an work that discusses the political history of Mizoram since 1941. This is the modern and the most formative period of Mizo history. How the common man in Mizo hills reacted to the new idea of modernism is a very interesting story. The work chronologically describes the political development of these people and analyses the dates and events. The author compared the Mizo history with the neighboring states. It also examines the influence of geographical proximity of Mizoram with Burma and to some extent with Thailand and China. The author has given emphasis to explain the role of Laldenga in the making of the Mizoram. Laldenga formed the Mizo National Front to establish sovereign Mizoram. He was brainwashed by the colonialist forces. But his revolt plunged Mizoram into a horrible insurgency causing unprecedented blood bath in Northeast India. China and Pakistan interfered in the Mizo issues. The changed international situation, however, compelled the MNF supremo to realize his mistake. Through the signing

³⁸ S. Basu, *Regional Movements-Politics of Language Ethnicity-Identity*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1992.

³⁹ P.S. Datta, *Autonomy Movement in Assam*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1993.

⁴⁰ Suhas Chatterjee, *Making of Mizoram: Role of Laldenga*, M.D. Publications, New Delhi, 1994.

of the Mizo Accord, insurgency came to an end in Mizoram. Laldenga became the chief minister. He was dismissed because of betrayal by his own party men. Despite his failings, Laldenga gave the Mizos self respect, regional identity and modernism breaking the shell of tribal gerontocracy.

B. Datta Ray & S. P. Agrawal's (1994) 'Reorganisation of Northeast India Since 1947'⁴¹ is an edited work. It contains articles written by different authors. The authors argued that no region in India has undergone such fragmentation as North-East has in the four decades after independence of India. The hill regions of Northeast India that were brought under the administrative control of Assam as the eastern frontier of the empire extended, now formed as separate states. While the process of expansion and integration was spread over a century, the disintegration and reorganization has occurred within a relatively short time. The authors also described about the historical background of the problem with special reference to the fragile nature of the administrative unity given to the erstwhile province of Assam by the British; the partition with Independence and the question of ethnic identity including the role of language and the demand for reorganization. The authors further examine the consequences of partition particularly on the social, economic and political development process in the Northeastern region.

Lalan Tiwari's (1995) 'Issues in Indian Politics'⁴² described the complex phenomenon of numerous issues involved in Indian politics. Issues like demand for autonomy, statehood, and the secessionist movements are covered in his discussion. The author in his study tried to find out causes for the movements of Jharkand, Uttarakhand, Bodoland, Gorkhaland, and Mizo movement. The author also discussed the impact of the British rule on tribal way of life and the inner line permit system in Northeast India.

⁴¹ B. Datta Ray & S. P. Agrawal (eds.), *Reorganisation of Northeast India Since 1947*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994.

⁴² Lalan Tiwari, *Issues in Indian Politics*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1995.

‘Movements for Autonomy in India’s North-East’⁴³ by T. Misra and U. Misra (1996) examines the ethnicity based autonomy movements in northeast India. Various tribal groups have adopted different strategies to achieve their goals. Some of these, such as the Naga or the Mizo movements, put forward the demand for complete sovereignty, while those of the Khasi-Jaintias, Karbi-Dimasas, and the Bodos have been limited to achieving autonomous statehood within India. The Assam Movement of 1979-85 was, on the other hand, primarily aimed at ensuring the cultural-linguistic identity of the Assamese people in the face of a massive influx of immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh. It further analyses the causes and courses of three major movements for autonomy in the northeast: the Naga movement, the Karbi-Dimasa movement, and the Bodo movement. In this work the authors attempted to understand the changing concepts of ethnic identity and autonomy.

The book ‘Students Movement in Assam’⁴⁴ (1996) is an attempt at a comprehensive study of student movements in Assam, covering a time span of over a century, 1853-1985. The author in his study argued that Student movements in Assam occupy a unique place in world history. The author in her study particularly examines the issues and causes of student movement in Assam.

In ‘Politics of Regionalism in Northeast India’⁴⁵ (1996) Girin Phukon discussed about the beginnings of the heavy influx of people into Assam during the British period. The central focus of his study lies in finding out the roots of the multi-dimensional problems of the region and the reasons for the growth of various movements of northeast India in post-independent period. It also explains the emergence of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in Assam.

⁴³ T. Misra and U. Misra, ‘Movements for Autonomy in India’s Northeast’, in T.V. Sathyamurthy, (eds.), *Region, Religion, Caste, Gender and Culture in Contemporary India*, Vol. III. Oxford University Press, 1996,

⁴⁴ Meeta Deka, *Students Movements in Assam*, Vikas Publishing house, New Delhi, 1996.

⁴⁵ Girin Phukon, *Politics of Regionalism in Northeast India*, Spectrum publications, Guwahati, 1996.

In 'Re-organisation of North-East India (Facts and Documents,1996) B.B. Kumar⁴⁶ described about the reorganisation of Northeast India in the light of various facts and documents. The existing framework of linguistic and bigger states was challenged for the first time in the Northeast resulting in the formation of Nagaland in 1964. The process further continued and Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were born. The initial attempts to satisfy various ethnic groups by giving district level autonomy could not satisfy them. The need of an additional instrument for regional planning was actually felt after reorganisation of the north-eastern region into smaller states.

In 'India's Northeast Resurgent, Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development' (1996) B.G. Verghese⁴⁷ discusses North-East India's problems of ethnicity, governance, insurgency and development that have marked its evolution. Mongoloid India defines a distinctive ethno-cultural region with hoary external historical, cultural and commercial linkages. The Northeast is more realistically defined as encompassing the entire stretch of territory east of Sikkim and the North Bengal Dooars, bounded by Nepal, China/Tibet, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The hill tracts, home of different tribes, speaking different languages were deliberately isolated as matter of imperial policy and then relegated by partition. The nine units included in this study are Sikkim, the Darjeeling-Gorkha Hills, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

R.N. Prasad's (1997) 'Autonomy Movement in Mizoram'⁴⁸ is an edited work containing articles written by different authors. Most of the authors discussed about the causes and historical background of autonomy movements in Mizoram.

S.K. Barpujari's (1997) 'History of the Dimasas'⁴⁹ (From the earliest time to 1896 A.D.) is a pioneering attempt to present in a comprehensive manner

⁴⁶ B.B. Kumar, *Re-organisation of North-East India (Facts and Documents)*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

⁴⁷ B.G. Verghese, *India's Northeast Resurgent, Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development*, Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1996.

⁴⁸ R.N. Prasad, *Autonomy Movement in Mizoram*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1997.

⁴⁹ S.K. Barpujari, *History of the Dimasas*, Autonomous Council, N.C. Hills District, Haflong, 1997.

the history of the Dimasas covering almost all the aspects from very early times to the fall of their kingdom and its subsequent incorporation to the British colonial administration. The narrative of this work is based on documents and important materials both published and unpublished.

B. Pakem's (1997) study on 'Insurgency in North-East India'⁵⁰ is a collection of papers devoted on the subject of insurgency in North-East India which is not only a burning problem of North Eastern region but also sensitive due to security point of view. The region in recent decades has fallen behind the rest of the country in terms of every yardstick of development, although it was a pioneer in the fields like oil industry, natural gas and tea industry in the country. The economic policies taken by the central government also contributed to regional disparities. As a result, there has been a decline in the working population in the region. The problem of unemployment in the North Eastern region has been increasing in its intensity. Lack of employment opportunities contributed to the growth of hopelessness and frustration among the youths of the region leading to militancy in them. They feel alienated from the rest of the country. In order to remove the sense of alienation from the region, a congenial investment climate is to be created in the field of agriculture and allied sectors and also in industrial fields to accelerate the economic growth of North-East India, thereby creating employment opportunities. The insurgency in North-East India is the result of a total lack of agriculture, industrial and other development works. The authors argues that there is a gap in the perception of government and the people of the region which should be bridged without delay by constant interaction between the two, i.e. government and people.

D. Doley's (1998) 'Tribal Movements in the Northeastern Region'⁵¹ examines the various social movements in northeast India. It categorized the social movements into four categories- (i) Autonomy Movement, (ii) Cultural, Revivalistic and Solidarity Movement, (iii) Language Movement, and (iv) Others.

⁵⁰ B. Pakem (ed.), *Insurgency in North-East India*, Omsons Publication, New Delhi, 1997.

⁵¹ D. Doley, 'Tribal Movements in the Northeastern Region', in K.S. Singh (ed.), *Tribal Studies of India Series T 185- Antiquity to Modernity in Tribal India*, Inter India Publications, New Delhi, 1998.

It also discussed the colonial rule in northeast India and argues that the tribes inhabiting the hills of the northeast India do not consider themselves part of the mainstream India, as there is a remarkable difference in the culture and the lifestyle of the two. D. Doley argued that the British administration socially and culturally isolated the hill tribes from the plains people. Because of the 'Inner Line Regulations' introduced by the British Administration in 1873 people living in the plains could not enter into the hill areas without a pass from the district authorities. This system hampered free and frequent interactions between the hill people and the plains people resulting in the growth of isolation among the tribes. And this played an important role in the emergence of Autonomy Movements among the hill tribes of the region.

In 'Small States Syndrome in India'⁵² (1998) B.B. Kumar discussed the background information about the state's demands in India. It informs about the territorial re-organization of states after independence. The linguistic reorganization of states, formation of small ethnic states and the ever increasing demands for new states are discussed thoroughly. The myths and realities related to new states' demands are also discussed in the book.

In 'Self-Management of Tribal Communities and Parliamentary Democracy' (1998) S.K. Chaube⁵³ discussed the Autonomous District Council in the light of Nehru's vision of integrated India characterized by multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural groups. The author argued that the question of self-management is a question of autonomy. The nation-builders of India who were confronted with the problems of integration of different autonomies, including the tribal autonomy. The author further argued that the Panchayati Raj system is not a proper substitute for the tribals in self-management process. The tribal peoples are interested to have an autonomous council for development of their community.

⁵² B.B. Kumar, *Small States Syndrome in India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1998.

⁵³ S.K. Chaube, 'Self-Management of Tribal Communities and Parliamentary Democracy' in B. Singh (ed.), *Antiquity to Modernity in Tribal India*, Vol. II, Tribal Self-Management in North-East India, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1998, p. 45.

In 'India Against Itself-Assam and the Politics of Nationality' (1999) Sanjib Baruah⁵⁴ analysed the British colonialism in Assam and the rise of Assamese sub-nationalism. The author in his work analyses the Assam's political, economic and demographic transformation that began under British rule. The areas of tension between Assamese and pan-Indian politicians that were apparent even during the political mobilisation of anticolonialism. Some of these tensions became more serious after independence. The Assam's politics in the 1960s and 1970s focusing on two developments- the controversies over Assam's cultural policy and the break up of colonial Assam. The Assam movement (1979-85) and the separatist insurgency that began about the same time. The author in his work further discusses the political mobilisation among the Bodos for cultural and political autonomy and the challenge it presents to the Assamese nationalism.

Sajal Nag's (1999) 'Nationalism, Separatism and Secessionism'⁵⁵ considered the advent of British capitalism in colonial form was not only destructive but also regenerative to the formation of nationalities. At that time several linguistic and cultural communities were in different stages of growth. The Indian freedom struggle coincided with the period of awakening of these communities and their graduation to nationalities. The rise of these nationalities manifested themselves in the form of agitation for recognition to their respective vernaculars, separation from advanced nationalities. After independence, these movements gained intensity and demanded greater regional autonomy. The author argued that the roots of secessionist movement could be traced in the polity formation process of the Indian nation. With the change in the character of Indian state, the marginal status accorded to the smaller nationalities led many of these nationalities to question the legitimacy of Indian rule over them. They appropriated the nationalist discourse and started demanding independent nationhood for themselves. While Pakistan succeeded in seceding from India, many such claims continue to rise and threaten the integration of the nascent Indian nation.

⁵⁴ Sanjib Baruah, *India Against Itself- Assam and the Politics of Nationality*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

⁵⁵ Sajal Nag, *Nationalism, Separatism and Secessionism*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 1999.

S.K. Chaube's (1999) 'Hill Politics in North East India'⁵⁶ described the history of political development in northeast India. The author highlighted the issues of reorganization of Assam, imposition of Assamese language on tribals of Assam. It explained the causes for the rise of autonomy movements in northeast India and the specialized administration of Assam since its annexation to Bengal. The author also examines the impact of British rule on the six major Hinduised states in the eastern region, the Koch, the Tripuri, the Jaintia, the Kachari, the Ahom and the Meithei (Imphal Valley) and also the role of Christian church in the hills and the provisions of six schedules in the northeast. The formation of Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) and the role of All Party Hill Leader's Conference (APHLC) as a party are also examined by the author. It helps in understanding the political history of northeast India in general.

In his study, entitled 'North-East India: The Concept of Autonomy and the Federal Context of India' (2000) S.K. Chaube⁵⁷ analyses the theoretical issues of 'federalism' and 'autonomy' and examines their operational difficulties in the context of India in general and the northeast in particular. He maintains that reorganization of Northeast has shown an infinite possibility of success through a politics of bargain. A large variety of autonomies appeared in the region, is a unique constitutional experiment in the world.

Suhas Chatterjee in his work 'A Socio Economic History of South Assam'⁵⁸ (2000) gave a brief description of the Kachari Kingdom. He explained why the Dimasa Kahcaris had to shift their capital from Dimapur to Maibong, to present North Cachar Hills District and lastly to Khaspur (present Cachar district). In his work he touched upon the Sanskritisation of Dimasa Kacharis, position of women in Dimasa society, agriculture and foods habits of the Barmans and also the revenue administration of Dimasa Kachari kingdom.

⁵⁶ S.K. Chaube, *Hill Politics in North East India*, Orient Longmen, Patna, 1999.

⁵⁷ S.K. Chaube, 'North-East India: The Concept of Autonomy and the Federal Context of India', in Girin Phukon (ed.), *Political Dynamics of North East India*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 1-6.

⁵⁸ S. Chatterjee, *A Socio Economic History of South Assam*, Printwell Publishers, 2000.

In his study, entitled 'Limits of National Identities –A Study of Identity Politics in North East India' (2000) H. Srikanth⁵⁹ analyses the specificity of nationality question in the contest of northeast India and examines the factors that perpetuate the national and ethnic identities in this region. The author argues that uneven economic development, a characteristic feature of capitalism, has complicated the problems of the people living in the northeast and it breeds insecurity and creates a sense of relative deprivation. Unfortunately, the bourgeoisie elements utilize these sentiments and spearhead movements in the name of protecting and promoting national and ethnic interests.

In his study, entitled 'The Bodo Movement: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Role of the Middle Class and the State' (2000) Chandan Kr. Sharma⁶⁰ argues that the protracted movement among the Bodos of Assam for political autonomy is one of the most tumultuous phenomena in the post-independent Assam. He explains the socio-political dynamics of the Bodo movement by delineating its various phases in a historical perspective vis-à-vis the role of the Bodo middle class and also that of the state. The author argues that the Indian state cannot afford to undermine the potency of this movement by projecting it as a mere law and order problem. The Bodo movement is actually a manifestation of the unresolved nationality question within the Indian state.

In his study, entitled 'Construction of Nationhood: Ethnic Minorities Secessionism and legitimization in North East India' (2000) Sajal Nag⁶¹ focuses on the appropriation of the colonial construction of ethnic identity in the northeast under the patronage of the British government. The kind of identity required for constructing separate nationhood, the author argues, was western in character and as such western oriented identity consciousness came to be known as modern

⁵⁹ H. Srikanth, 'Limits of National Identities- A Study of Identity Politics in North East India', in Girin Phukon (ed.), *Political Dynamics of North East India*, South Asia Publishers, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 60-72.

⁶⁰ Chandan Kr. Sharma, 'The Bodo Movement: A Preliminary Enquiry into the Role of the Middle Class and the State', in Girin Phukon (ed.), *Political Dynamics of Northeast India*, South Asia Publishers, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 128-142.

⁶¹ Sajal Nag, 'Construction of Nationhood: Ethnic Minorities Secessionism and Legitimization in North East India', in Girin Phukon (ed.), *Political Dynamics of North East India*, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 23-50.

identity which emerged with the advent of colonial rule and under the initiative of the Christian missionaries who were the agents of westernization in the hills of the northeast. This changed orientation towards identity both in terms of notion and reality, formed the basis of the formulation of national identity of the Nagas, Mizos and Meitheis by their respective leaderships.

U. Phadnis and R. Ganguly's (2001) 'Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia'⁶² described the different approaches to the study of ethnicity such as developmental approach, resource competition approach, etc. It explains how resource competition among elites leads to politicization of ethnicity challenging the process of nation building. It also describes how different ethnic groups in South Asia have mobilized autonomy and secessionist movement in Sri Lanka, and particularly secessionist movement in Northeast India. It gives details of the procedures adopted by the Government of India to tackle these movements. Finally, it suggests that relaxation of the centralizing policy with substantial autonomy to the agitating ethnic groups can usher unity in diversity in South Asian Nation-States.

In 'Land Revenue Administration in Cachar 1832-1900' (2001) Ratna Dey⁶³ discusses that Cachar was a petty independent kingdom, also known as Heramba Rajya. It was annexed to the territory of British India in 1832. The land, a natural extension of Gangetic Bengal' had a long history of social formation, which dates back in the 7th century AD. A number of state powers ruled over the land in close succession, and before finally annexed to the British territory it was ruled by the Dimasa rulers, an offshoot of Bodo ethnicity. The land system and revenue administration system of the land had its own peculiarities. In the Pre-colonial days there was 'Khel' system prevalent in Cachar which was a sort of a guild collectively administered by its members to the royal court. The British rulers however, initially retained the 'Khel' system and introduced innovation gradually. The author in her work also analyses the transition process by which the newly

⁶² Urmila Phadnis and Rajat Ganguly, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2001.

⁶³ Ratna Dey, *Land Revenue Administration in Cachar 1832-1900*, Biswabani Prakashani, Kolkata, 2001.

occupied land was brought under their control by introducing their own system of administration retaining the basic traditional system.

Bhupen Sarmah in his 'The Question of Autonomy for the Plain Tribes of Assam'⁶⁴ (2002) discussed the issue of autonomy for the plain tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley, more particularly for the Bodos. It explains the historical context of the Sixth Schedule and the problems faced by the district councils. It also made an attempt to understand the opportunities provided by the 73rd Amendment to ensure economic development with social justice in the tribal areas of Assam through the panchayats.

B. Singh in his work 'Autonomy Movements and Federal India'⁶⁵ (2002) discussed about the urges and aspirations of some ethnic communities to acquire, through movements, some measure of control over societal resources like political power, economic endowment and social status. Their goals vary from total independence to degrees of autonomy within the constitutional federal framework. Some movements have arrived at their consummation, the Mizo settling for a state when they had aimed at independence and the Jharkhand movement winning a state of the same name. A few others are still struggling for autonomy, for the Naga movement some light is visible at the end of the tunnel, the Bodo movement remains tied in knots and the Indian constitution is visualized as an architecturally multifaceted modern edifice of accommodative versatility. Given the will and capability of political management, the multiplying demands of a tumultuous polity are not difficult of being lodged therein. The author also examines the panchayat system for a comprehensive harmony of the total architectural design of a federal India.

In 'Ethnic Politics and Land Use Genesis of Conflicts in India's North-East'⁶⁶ (2002) Sanjoy Barbora discussed the ethnic issues in Northeast India

⁶⁴ Bhupen Sarmah, 'The Question of Autonomy for the Plain Tribes of Assam', *Social Change and Development*, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, Oct-2002.

⁶⁵ Bupinder Singh, *Autonomy Movements and in Federal India*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2002.

⁶⁶ Sanjoy Barbora, 'Ethnic Politics and Land Use Genesis of Conflicts in India's North-East', *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 30, 2002, pp.1285-1292.

particularly the North Cachar Hills. The author focused on the study of changes in land use patterns and social control over land in North Cachar Hills. It also describes the social control over land in North Cachar Hills. Barбора argued that during the first 20 years of the District Council the Dimasas could not make much progress in the field of cultural assertion and protection of Dimasa identity and culture. It further explains the provisions of six schedules and social structure of North Cachar Hills.

Gnashyam Shah's (2002) 'Social Movements and the State'⁶⁷ is an edited work. It contains articles written by different authors. The authors discussed about the contemporary problems of Indian government and politics. The relationships between state and society, formulation of public policy and its implementation and also the case study of some movements in India.

Sajal Nag's (2002) 'Contesting Marginality – Ethnicity, Insurgency and Sub-nationalism in North-East India'⁶⁸ discusses the ethnicity, insurgency and sub-nationalism in north-east India. The author argued that over the years, northeast India has become synonymous with secessionism, insurgency, violence and turbulence. Gateway for the migratory waves from South-East and East Asia, the region is inhabited by a number of tribal communities-some relatively advanced while others proto-historic. The years under the British caused upheaval in their socio-cultural life. They experienced momentous changes in every aspect of their life from food to faith, dress to discourses. But the abrupt withdrawal of the British compelled these 'apolitical' people to be drawn into bourgeois political system. Neither sure of their true identity, nor the nation state they would like to belong to; confused by the prevalent nationalist discourses and frightened by the prospect of being submerged by a numerical majority, they faced a massive existential crisis. The main focus of the study is about this crisis and how such a crisis led these communities to organize and equip themselves, debate and decide their future course of action and confront the colonial and post-colonial Indian States and the

⁶⁷ Gnashyam Shah (ed.), *Social Movements and the State*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2002.

⁶⁸ Sajal Nag, *Contesting Marginality- Ethnicity, Insurgency and Subnationalism in North-East India*, Monohar Publishers, New Delhi, 2002.

process through which this confrontation led to the growth of secessionism and insurgency.

R.M. Lahiri's (2003) 'The Annexation of Assam (1824-1854)'⁶⁹ deals with the story of the annexation of the hill states and the policy adopted by the British government in dealing with the tribes.

In 'Sub-Regional Movement in India'⁷⁰ (2004) Snehamoy Chaklader discussed the Sub-Regional Movement in India in a sequence of regional movement for reorganization of state on linguistic basis. After the reorganization of most of the federal units primarily on linguistic consideration the minorities felt insecure. The author argued that the minorities faced ever increasing difficulties due to the assimilation policy of the state government. In order to preserve their cultural identity the minority groups launched vigorous movement for political autonomy. It focuses on ethnic based sub-regional movement. Sub-regional movements, namely, Gorkhaland movement in West Bengal and Bodoland movement in Assam.

In 'The Bodo Movement and Women Participation' (2004) Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri⁷¹ discusses about the women participation in Bodoland movement. She argues that the women has a significant role to play in the Bodo movement but their role is perceived to be secondary by both men and women respondents because they mainly participated in facilitating the meetings, doing errands and nursing the injured. She also analyses the different social problems of women and family responsibility which did not allow them to participate actively in the movement.

Tanmay Bhattacharjee's (2004) 'Political Economy of Northeast India'⁷² examines the nature of underdevelopment in North East India and the rise of middle class in North East India. Apart from these the author also discussed the

⁶⁹ R.M. Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam (1824-1854)*, Firma KLM Private Limited, Kolkata, 2003.

⁷⁰ Snehamoy Chaklader: *Sub-Regional Movement in India*, K P Bagchi & Company, Kolkata, 2004.

⁷¹ Sucheta Sen Chaudhuri, *The Bodo Movement and Women Participation*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

⁷² Tanmay Bhattacharjee, *Political Economy of North-East India*, T. Bhattacharjee, Silchar, 2004.

ethnic strife in Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills of Assam. Migration issue, border trade with neighbouring countries, tea industry are also covered in the discussion. It also examines the role of North Eastern Council in the development of northeast India.

N. Joykumar Singh's (2005) 'Social Movements in Manipur'⁷³ is a significant historical study of social movement in Manipur. The author explains the concept of social movement, their characteristic features and typology. The author also explained the scope of the definition of social movements during the past two centuries. The social movements applicable to Manipur were classified by the author into revolutionary movement, women's movement and tribal movement. Under these types of the social movements the author discussed the various movements in Manipur during the colonial period and post-colonial period.

Sanjib Baruah's (2005) 'Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India'⁷⁴ is an insightful work which offers new and old observations of North Eastern Region. Baruah divides the book into five major sections. In his introduction he outlines one of the major arguments that run throughout the entire book. He sticks to the idea of the importance of colonial structures within Indian society and the failure to deal with these experiences appropriately, but he also emphasizes that the Northeast as a frontier region, underlines its exceptional role, and its obsession with security, as a part of the mindset of Indian society or Indian officials. The author mentions that the insurgency problem is the major issue the region is facing and one reason why the Northeast is treated as a special fraction of the Indian state. Baruah's argument that the region faces persistent political confrontation, violence and conflict, runs throughout the book, and suggests that the political system and the democratic fabric of the region have been tremendously affected, weakening the area further.

Baruah's work provides a clearly written account on the history of the Northeast. The author have expanded his work and gone more into depth on recent

⁷³ N. Joykumar Singh, *Social Movements in Manipur*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

⁷⁴ Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005

issues confronting the Northeast, especially since he mentions the significance of globalization and its impact on Asia in general. A major problem Baruah mentions is the dissonance between the ethnic homeland model and the actually existing political economy of the region. He brings into this discussion on the concept of nationalizing space, speaking of frontier space, which creates further conflicts between the ethnicities living in the Northeast and the Indian government in New Delhi. It appears the region has been neglected for long and has never made it into an Indian national mindset. It has therefore, been isolated and now the Indian government is showing a greater interest in making the Northeast a part of the Indian political and economic system. The author repeatedly emphasizes this point throughout the book.

The second chapter investigates the structures of governance and today's cosmetic federalism as Baruah calls it. He uses the example of Arunachal Pradesh to describe the concept of nationalizing frontier space which, in the case of the Northeast, creates more difficulties between states and the central government in New Delhi. Moreover, he emphasizes that the nationalizing process which the government pushes for is based on security matters following a couple of border conflicts which India has faced over the years. In chapter three, the author explores the situation of insurgents in the state of Manipur which appears to be a shift in theme, since he is concentrating on political and military aspects that influence daily life in Manipur. Section three of the book, which constitutes chapters four and five, deal with the colonial regime in Assam and the naga war. Again these sometimes feel slightly out of context since the author skips through many different themes trying to combine them under one broad theme.

Section five of Baruah's work containing chapters six, seven and eight are exclusively dedicated to the state of Assam and the United Liberation Front of Assam. In this section he discusses the concept of nationalism and sub-nationalism and tries to highlight its significance within the Northeast as a region and within Indian society. He explains that the idea of sub-nationalism is essential since different ethnicities built up their own sense of nationhood, not bounded by physical, national or state borders. These ideologies contribute to the persistent

ethnic and communal conflicts in the Northeast and in India. Baruah describes it in the following way: most states can be described as nation-provinces in the sense that particular nationalities constitute majorities and they define the public identity of these states. As long as this kind of thing persists, the Indian government will be unable to nationalize the frontier states within a strong federalist system. Section five of *Durable Disorder* deals with the policies of the Indian state and its attempts to include all of the northeast into a general Indian political mindset, but also shows that the policies enacted are rather treated as an invitation to violence as Baruah calls it.

The epilogue establishes some excellent ideas on the imperative concept of 'Look East Policy'. This theme might have been better run throughout the entire book and not attached just to the epilogue since this seems to be a major concern in recent times when researching the Northeast and India. Throughout his work Baruah establishes the Northeast as a backward region which is economically, politically and socially underdeveloped but only in the epilogue does he offer resolutions. He accentuates that the Look East Policy has the potential of becoming Northeast India's road to peace and prosperity, which is questionable if the Indian government is not capable of providing security and peace within its own country.

In 'Conflicting Nations in North-East India'⁷⁵ (2005) Sanjoy K. Roy discussed about the autonomy movements in northeast India. The author argued that the tribes inhabiting the hills of the northeast India do not consider themselves part of mainstream India, as there is a remarkable difference in the culture and the lifestyle of the people living in plains and hills. In fact, they feel colonized as they no longer exercise control over their land and forests. Moreover, the constitutional laws have largely replaced their customary laws. Under such circumstances ethnicity based autonomy movements are on rise in the northeast India.

⁷⁵ S. K. Roy, 'Conflicting Nations in North-East India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Volume 40, No. 21, May 21, 2005.

In 'Challenge of Ethnicity to Federalism: Discourse on the North-East India' (2005) Jagpal Singh⁷⁶ discusses the challenge of ethnicity to federalism finds its expression in the form of autonomy movements, insurgency and ethnic conflict. Most of the states in India especially, located in the periphery of the country; Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and North-East India are facing one or the other form of these challenges. The author in his work argues that perspective of discourse on the North-East India is marked by a fissure, with opposite points of view regarding the interpretation of issues in the ethnic movements, i.e., meaning of exploitation, insurgency, conflict, nationality question, nature and functioning of the state institutions, customs, etc.

Upendrachandra Guha's (2006) 'Cacharer Itibritta'⁷⁷ (A History of Cachar), dealt with the history of Cachar. In his study, Guha narrated the language and oral tradition of Dimasa Kacharis and also the practices followed by the Kachari Kings.

In his study, entitled 'Ideological Aspects of Bodo Separatism in Assam' (2006) Dhruva Pratim Sharma⁷⁸ described that amongst the plains tribals in the state of Assam, the Bodos are the largest group, their population being concentrated mostly on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river, with some of them staying on the south bank as well. In the late 1980s, the Bodos started a massive agitation demanding establishment of a separate Bodo state north of the Brahmaputra river, comprising nearly half the area of Assam, the creation of Autonomous District Council for the Bodos living on the south bank, and the addition of the Bodo-Kacharis living in the hill district of Karbi Anglong to the list of Scheduled Tribes in the Indian Constitution, entitling them to certain privileges and safeguards. The author argues that due to the tactics adopted by the movement leaders, the violence it generated, and the strategic location of the Bodo-inhabited areas, the movement attracted nationwide attention. The author analyses that the

⁷⁶ Jagpal Singh, 'Challenge of Ethnicity to Federalism: Discourse on the North-East India', in Akhtar Majeed (ed.), *Federal India: A Design for Good Governance*, Manak Publications, Delhi, 2005. pp. 76-91.

⁷⁷ Upendrachandra Guha, *Cacharer Itibritta, (A History of Cachar)*, Parul Prakashani, Agartala, 2006.

⁷⁸ Dhruva Pratim Sharma, 'Ideological Aspects of Bodo Separatism in Assam', in Bimal J. Deb (ed.), *Ethnic Issues Secularism and Conflict Resolution in North East India*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 143-150.

separatist ideology that the leadership of the Bodoland Movement articulated with a powerful impact among the Bodos is rooted in a deep sense of alienation in relation to the Assamese society of which they had been considered to be a peripheral part. The author argues that the ideology of the Bodo Movement is based on the assumption that Bodos constitute a nationality distinct from the Assamese nationality.

In 'British Colonialism and the Hill Tribes of Composite Assam'⁷⁹ (2006) H. Srikanth argued that the British had no knowledge of the different hill communities inhabiting the region. It was only in the second decade of the 19th century, when the company sent David Scott, the magistrate of Rangpur, to investigate the causes for the tribal revolt against the Zamindars (landlords) of Goalpara that the British came in touch with the hill tribes. The author also discussed the impact of British Rule on the Hill tribes of the North East. It argued that the British understood from their experience that the methods adopted to deal with native resistance elsewhere in India would not be of much use in dealing with the resistance offered by the hill tribes in Northeast.

In his study, entitled 'Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements in North-East India' (2006) B.R. Rizvi⁸⁰ discusses about ethnic movements in North-East India which involve the assertion of identity around certain social problems, historic-cultural legacies and political exigencies by way of organizing themselves into an ethnic body to concretize their identity. Subsequently they raise a demand for a separate administrative unit comprising the areas where a distinct ethno- cultural group forms a majority. The author argues that some of the ethnic groups of North-East India adopted the methods to achieve their goals range from peaceful persuasion to militant tactics, extortions, kidnapping, indiscriminate homicide and ethnic-cleansing for creation of a homogenous land of their dreams.

⁷⁹ H. Srikanth, 'British Colonialism and the Hill Tribes of Composite Assam', *Man and Society*, A journal of North Eastern Studies, ICSSR, North Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong, Vol.-III, 2006,

⁸⁰ B.R. Rizvi, 'Ethnicity and Ethnic Movements in North-East India', in Bimal J. Deb (ed.), *Ethnic Issues Secularism and Conflict Resolution in North East India*, Concept publishing Company, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 17-26.

In 'Identity and Violence-The Illusion of Destiny' (2006) Amartya Sen⁸¹ argues that conflict and violence are sustained today, no less than in the past, by the illusion of a unique identity. Indeed, the world is increasingly taken to be divided between religions ignoring the relevance of other ways in which people see themselves through class, gender, profession, language, literature, science, music, morals or practices, and denying the real possibilities of reasoned choices. When good relations among different human beings are identified in this way, human beings are deeply miniaturised and deposited into little boxes. Here Amartya Sen overturns such stereotypes as the monolithic Middle East or the multiculturalism, fundamentalism, terrorism and globalization; he brings out the need for a clear-headed understanding of human freedom and a constructive public voice in global civil society.

H.K. Barpujari's (2007) 'Comprehensive History of Assam'⁸² is an edited work. The author in his study covers the period of 1826-1919, which is a significant and formative epoch in the history of Assam. It witnessed the end of the independent Ahom monarchy that had ruled the valley, the British sovereignty in Assam, the effects of which can be felt even in our times. The author in his study attempt to describe the successive stages in the extension and consolidation of the British rule over the plains and hills in Assam.

In 'Ethnic Autonomy: A Challenge to Indian Democracy (North-Eastern Experience)' (2007) Niru Hazarika⁸³ argues that cultural pluralism is one of the basic features of North-East India. While enjoying the colourful social life, the people of this region are also experiencing the adverse affects of it due to the appearance of ethnic-oriented discords in the fields of politics and administration. The Ethnic Autonomy question remains unanswered even today. The policies of the Government are merely changing the colour of the problems and shifting them from one place to the other. The whole issue of ethnic autonomy centres around

⁸¹ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence – The Illusion of Destiny*, Penguin Group, London, 2006.

⁸² H.K. Barpujari, *Comprehensive History of Assam, Modern Period: Yandabo to Diarchy 1826-1919 A.D.*, Vol. IV, Publications Board Assam, Guwahai, 2007.

⁸³ Niru Hazarika, 'Ethnic Autonomy: A Challenge to Indian Democracy (North-Eastern Experience)', in B.B. Kumar (ed.), *Problems of Ethnicity in the North-East India*, Concept publishing Company, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 111-124.

three concepts- autonomy, integration and development. These concepts do not have similar dimensions, but they have very close relationship with the administration of a democratic state.

In independent India social and cultural values, customs and traditions of the society influenced the whole political and administrative processes. North-East India is the typical example of it. In spite of strong system of British administration for long time the people of this region could preserve their own culture and traditions. India being a developing country in the third world comprising Asia, Africa and Latin America had to begin with development administration, i.e. Rural Development Administration. It was a serious challenge to the leaders of modern India because the development invites changes and modernization of the traditional way of life. Conflict and confusion began in the minds of the people of this region, but these were nurtured tacitly by them for a decade. Since 1960 the conflict and dissatisfactions became prominent and ethnic assertion with political flavour started amongst tribal communities of this region in both the hills and the plains. The smaller tribes lived in the remote areas being isolated from the rest of the people. Visit of the politicians and administrators to those areas were very rare, naturally, the feeling of being neglected was intensified with the impact of science and technology. The author in her work also argued that the tribal communities of the plains of Assam started comparing their status with that of the hill communities which were administered by the District Councils under Sixth Schedule.

‘Roots of Insurgency in Northeast India’⁸⁴ (2007) is an edited book. It is edited by J.B. Bhattacharjee. It contains number of articles. The authors in their works bring into focus that there is nothing like a northeastern insurgency. There are several autonomous or isolated cases of insurgent activities and other movements in different parts and ethnic areas of the region which have created an atmosphere of turmoil or an insurgent situation for the entire region. The roots of the problem vary from secessionism to demands for state or sub-state within India, or regional autonomy for ethnic areas within the states, or protection of ethnic areas

⁸⁴ J.B. Bhattacharjee (ed.), *Roots of Insurgency in Northeast India*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2007.

within the states or protection of ethnic and cultural identities. The authors argued that the economic and infrastructural backwardness, unemployment and lack of opportunities seemed to be common causes in almost all cases. The single common cause that is emphasized most is the indifferent attitude of the central government and its failure to tackle the problem at the initial stage has resulted to the present state of being. The study recommends that each case of insurgency or militancy should be taken up separately and its root causes should be identified to uproot those problems and to usher a dawn peace in the region.

Narayan Konwar's (2007) 'Society and Politics in Assam'⁸⁵ provides a background study about the society and politics of Assam. The author discussed the society in Pre-colonial Assam, Society in colonial Assam and Society in Post-colonial Assam. The author argued that India is not free from linguistic politics. Linguistic politics was one of the challenging issues that India had to face immediately after the achievement of Independence. Emergence of successive language movements, in different parts of the country, formation of political parties around linguistic identity and re-organization of state are some examples which indicate political dimension of language or linguistic politics in India. It further explained the political assertions of plains tribes. Like the Hill tribes, the plain tribes of Assam also demanded for autonomy, which is sought to be realised through separate state, separate territorial arrangement and even through separate independent state.

'Insurgency and Economic Development in North-East India'⁸⁶ (2007) is an edited book by P. Sonowal. The book contains a number of articles. The authors in their study tried to explain the causes for the growth of insurgency and its impact on economic development in Northeast India.

⁸⁵ Narayan Konwar, *Society and Politics in Assam*, Book Land, Guwahati, 2007.

⁸⁶ P. Sonowal, *Insurgency and Economic Development in North-East India*, DVS Publishers, Guwahati, 2007.

‘Genesis of Conflict and Peace - Understanding Northeast India, views and reviews’⁸⁷ (2007) is an edited work by A. Dutta and R. Bhuyan. It has been divided into two volumes and contains a number of scholarly articles on the issues of genesis of conflict in northeast India. It also deals with the peace initiative taken by the government of India. The book also contains documents related to peace accords, ceasefire agreements, constitutions of different insurgent outfits and memorandums submitted by different conflicting parties to the concerned state governments and Central government to look into their problems and grievances.

The work ‘The Queens of Cachar or Herambo and the History of the Kachari’⁸⁸ (2007) has three part. The first part deals with the treatise on the origin of the term Kachari, Dimasa, Koch and such other groups and subgroups of the Assamese people. This part also discusses about the names of Assam and Ahom and about the origin of the Assamese language and Assamese culture. The second part included chapters II and III and covered chronological description of the rule of the Hidimbacha or the Dimasa people from Dimapur down to the district of Cachar. The anthropological feature of the Dimasa has also been touched in these chapters, presenting glimpses of the social picture. The last part contains narratives of the Queens of Cachar. The author also discusses about the last Herambo ruler, Raja Govinda Chandra and the transformation of Cachar district and former sub-division of North Cachar Hills after the end of the rule of the Herambo monarchs.

In ‘Violence and Search for Peace in Karbi Anglong, Assam’ Tom Mangattuthazhe⁸⁹ (2008) discusses ethnic violence in Karbi Anglong and the background of the conflict between the Dimasa and Karbi in 2005. The author in his work argues that the Northeast of India is known as a region of conflicts. His work is an effort to understand the reasons for violence, ethnic conflicts in particular and their impact on the life of the people. It examines the impacts of the

⁸⁷ A Dutta and R Bhuyan (eds.), *Genesis of Conflict and Peace-Understanding Northeast India, Views and Reviews*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2007.

⁸⁸ N.K. Barman, *The Queens of Cachar or Herambo and The History of the Kachari*, N.K. Barman, Cachar, 2007.(3rd edition)

⁸⁹ Tom Mangattuthazhe, *Violence and Search for Peace in Karbi Anglong*, Assam, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, 2008.

2005 Dimasa-Karbi conflict with special reference to its social, political, cultural and economic effects.

Chandrika Singh's (2009) 'North-East India: Politics & Insurgency'⁹⁰ discusses the insurgency problem of northeast India. The author conceives that it has great strategic significance due to external boundary lines with China, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Its history remained under the dark shadow of mysteries for long, till it got a jolt from the British. Both the plains and hill areas of the region has a conglomerate population divided into a number of tribes and sub-tribes. The British rulers subjugated these tribes mainly because of their land faced international boundary lines. As a policy of appeasement the British Government excluded these tribal people from the main stream of the country. In the post independent phase also, the political history of northeast India is full of turmoil, conflicts and bloody clashes between the Government of India and the tribal people. The author further argues that in the present day also the region is insurgent prone where numerous militant and anti-national organizations are causing serious threat to national integrity. All these militant organizations have their hideouts in the neighbouring countries. The guerrilla warfares have created chaotic and anarchic situation in the region.

'Language and Politics in India' (2009) is an edited work by Asha Sarangi.⁹¹ It has been divided into three parts and contains different articles on the issues of language and politics in India, language and constitution. The authors discuss the factors responsible in the linguistic reorganisation of Indian states. The authors also focus on elite interests, social power in the language politics in India and the historical formation of identities in India.

T.T. Haokip in his 'Northeast India: Linguistic Diversity and Language Politics'⁹² (2009) described the linguistic diversity of the region. The author argued that linguistic diversity of the region indicates not only the spatial distribution of

⁹⁰ Chandrika Singh, *North-East India : Politics & Insurgency*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2009.

⁹¹ Asha Sarangi (ed.), *Language and Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009.

⁹² T.T. Haokip, *Northeast India-Linguistic Diversity and Language Politics*, IDSA (Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis, New Delhi, 2009.

various linguistic groups but also reflects the variegated ethno-cultural mosaic of the region. The region presents a mixed and varied population of diverse linguistic groups, each group having a distinct life-style and heritage, and even aspiring for a separate political identity.

In 'The Talking Guns North East India' Nirendra Dev⁹³ (2009) describes the insurgency problems of Northeast India. He analyses the decisions taken by the central government to stop the insurgency problem in Northeast India. The author in his work also examines the problems faced by the youth in Northeast India.

In 'Troubled Periphery – Crisis of India's North East'⁹⁴ (2009) Subir Bhaumik discusses the evolution of India's North East into a constituent region since independence. It highlights how land, language and leadership issues have been the seed of contention in the North East and how factors like ethnicity, ideology and religion have shaped the conflicts. The author also deals with the major insurgencies, internal displacements, protest movements and the regional drug and weapons trade in the region.

'Land, People and Politics: Contest over Tribal Land in Northeast India'⁹⁵ (2009) is an edited work by Walter Fernandes and Sanjay Barbora. It contains different articles on the issues of tribal land alienation in the Northeast. It also deals with the privatization of communal land of the tribes of Northeast India, land ownership among the Khasis of Meghalaya, alienation of land among the Garos, and changing land relations among the Karbis in Karbi Anglong District.

In 'Violence and Identity in North-East India Naga-Kuki Conflict'⁹⁶ (2010) S.R. Tohring discusses the identity issues in northeast India. He argues that the ethnic clashes in North-East after India's independence are, at times, worse than any of the clashes in the rest of the country in terms of brutality, heavy toll on

⁹³ Nirendra Dev, *The Talking Guns North East India*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2009.

⁹⁴ Subir Bhaumik, *Troubled Periphery- Crisis of India's North East*, Sage publications, New Delhi, 2009.

⁹⁵ Walter Fernandes and Sanjay Barbora, *Land, People and Politics: Contest over Tribal Land in Northeast India*, North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati, 2009.

⁹⁶ S.R. Tohring, *Violence and Identity in North-East India Naga-Kuki Conflict*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2010.

innocent human lives, properties and span of conflict but mostly they went unnoticed. The main focus of the book is on the Naga and the Kuki ethnic identities and their mutual relation in North-East India.

In 'State and Wealth: The Early States in Northeast India' (2010) J.B. Bhattacharjee⁹⁷ described in detail the early history of Northeast India. He analyses how the princely state used to rule in the North Eastern part of India before the British rule.

'Tribal Politics in the Assam: 1933-1947'⁹⁸ (2010) Suryasikha Pathak discussed the structure of bourgeois politics introduced by the colonial state in India. She argued that it was limited and restrictive. Despite the hegemony of large nationalities in it, a number of marginal groups could squeeze a space for themselves in this politics. While the hill tribes of northeast India were constrained by colonial laws barring them from active politics, the plain tribes were not. Taking advantage of this, the tribes of the Brahmaputra valley activated themselves in the political arena. The author argued that these tribes initially united into a conglomerate group to struggle for socio-political empowerment as well as fight the hegemony of caste Hindus. The focus of their politics was around issues of defining and constructing a "tribal" identity, refusal to be absorbed into the Hindu caste society, temple entry, access to land, displacement from traditional habitation areas and general backwardness. Pathak's study particularly focuses on how the tribal leadership constructed a united platform based on a generic identity to fight for these issues in the colonial period, before disintegrating into individual autonomy movements of each tribe in the post colonial period.

In 'Regionalism and Secessionism' (2010), Sanjib Baruah⁹⁹ argues that regional or self-determination movements in India are said to have followed an inverse 'U' curve. Heightened mobilization of group identities are followed by

⁹⁷ J.B. Bhattacharjee, *State and Wealth: The Early States in Northeast India*, DVS Publishers, Guwahati, 2010.

⁹⁸ Suryasikha Pathak, 'Tribal Politics in the Assam: 1933-1947', *Economic & Political Weekly*, March 6, 2010, pp. 61-69.

⁹⁹ Sanjib Baruah, 'Regionalism and Secessionism', in N.G. Jayal and P.B. Mehta (eds.), *Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 181-191.

negotiations, and eventually such movements decline as exhaustion sets in, some leaders are repressed, others are co-opted, and a modicum of genuine power sharing and mutual accommodation between the movement and the central state authorities is reached. Whether particular regional movements have gone through these inverse 'U' curve has been a function of the level of institutionalization of the authority of the state, and whether leaders have been secure enough to seek accommodation and compromise. The different trajectories of the Tamil, Sikh, and Kashmiri movements- the first being accommodated, and the latter two turning into violent confrontations between the state and militant regionalists.

Haren Ch. Kalita's 'Regional Politics: The Role of Asom Gana Parishad'¹⁰⁰ (2011) is an attempt to analysis the role of Asom Gana Parishad in state as well as national politics. It emphasizes on the organization, ideological position as well as the performance of the Asom Gana Parishad in the electoral politics of Assam. The rise of the state as the political battleground along with the changes in the field of representation and regional ideology have brought into sharp focus of leadership and organization as well. The author also deals with the socio-economic background of Asom Gana Parishad leaders who represent the whole social fabric of the society of Assam. The author also analyzed the electoral performance of Asom Gana Parishad in the state as well as national level since 1985.

In 'Students Movement in Barak Valley-With Special Reference to Language Movement' (2011) Arunima Bhattacharjee¹⁰¹ analyses the student movement in valley. In her work, she argued that students in the contemporary world, through their active involvement in socio-political affairs constitute an important field of study for the modern social scientists. India has been an open ground for students politics since the beginning of the 20th century. Recently Assam has occupied a notable position in India for some important student activism. The author in her work emphasizes on the language movement of Barak Valley. She discusses about the linguistic diversity between two valleys of Assam

¹⁰⁰ Haren Ch. Kalita, *Regional Politics: The Role of Asom Gana Parishad*, EBH Publishers, Guwahati, 2011.

¹⁰¹ Arunima Bhattacharjee, *Student Movement in Barak Valley-With Special Reference to Language Movement*, Sahitya Prakashani, Hailakandi, (Assam), 2011.

viz. the Barak Valley and the Brahmaputra Valley and also between the two predominant communities of the state, viz. the Assamese and the Bengalis. According to the author, the linguistic diversity provided a background for a number of social and political issues which gave rise to the large scale student movements in Assam after 1947. The author also argues that out of the linguistic diversity there grew the two very important issues, viz. the official language issue in 1961 and the medium of instruction issue in 1972. In both the movements students appeared to play a very important role in the Barak Valley.

In 'Ethnicity, Regionalism and Sub-Regionalism: A Reflection on the Boro Movement for a Separate political entity' (2011) Bijoy Daimary¹⁰² argues that the Northeastern region of India has a long and obdurate history of movements for autonomy. Some of these movements began even prior to the Independence of India and are still going on. Post-Independence Assam was made to house a large number of ethno-linguistic and cultural groups. Apart from the Assamese and indigenous inhabitants, this province was made to accommodate the tea-garden labourers, Muslim immigrants, and other settlers from the Indian mainland. Such a region, with large ethno-linguistic and religious groups is bound to have ethnic cleavages and agitations of all kinds. The author in his work also argues that like any other ethnic groups, having undergone social awakening and self-consciousness, the Boro intellectuals also began mobilizing the community for the separateness of their identity. Boro intellectuals selected language as the most viable objective symbol for the mobilization.

H.N. Das in his work 'Beyond North-East Insurgency-History-Development'¹⁰³ (2011) describes about the socio-political history of North-East and he analyses the present scenario of North-East India. The author argues that at present the region is insurgency prone where numerous anti-national elements are causing serious threats to its development and national integrity. Because of a

¹⁰² Bijoy Daimary, 'Ethnicity, Regionalism and Sub-Regionalism: A Reflection on the Boro Movement for a separate political entity', in M. Mitri & D. Kharmawphlang (eds.), *The North East Umbrella: Cultural-Historical Interaction and Isolation of the Tribes in the Region (Pre-History to 21st Century)*, DBCIC Publications, Shillong, 2011, pp.120-135.

¹⁰³ H.N. Das, *Beyond North-East Insurgency-History-Development*, Manas Publications, New Delhi, 2011.

variety of tribes and sub-tribes and their cultural and social diversities, there is very little common among them except their wilderness and profound distrust and antipathy towards outsiders. Moreover, international borders have caused large-scale infiltration disturbing the regional demographic pattern and cultural mix.

In her study, entitled 'Ethnic Mobilisation and Violence in Northeast India' (2011) Pahi Saikia¹⁰⁴ brings forward an interesting combination of case studies of ethnic mobilisation and violence. The speciality of her work flows from its uniqueness, as we see that much research has been done on the ethnic mobilisation and violence of these tribal groups separately, but Saikia emphasize in her work an intricate comparative context for us to visualize and understand a larger picture, one of interconnected mosaic of ethnic aspirations. Insurgent contestations in Northeast India date back to before India's independence from British colonial rule, and have continued over the six decades of India's processes that come into focus in Saikia's Book in many ways.

D.F. Marbaniang and A. L. Warjri in their work 'Impact of Globalisation and Modernity on the Indigenous Tribal Youth of North East India: A Comparative Study of Indigenous Values as a Whole and What Globalisation and Modernity Offer'¹⁰⁵ (2011) argue that the North East India has always been known as a land with diverse and rich cultures. It is a region known for the co-existence of extreme forms of both tradition and modernity. The youth of the eight states of northeast India are caught in a situation of social and political unrest. In the largest democracy of the world they are known to be a force to reckon with. Unfortunately, their potential and competence as individuals and as a group have not been fully noticed and properly tapped. Their participation in the process of dialogue and nation building is negligible. The author in their work also argue that as a result of the rapid transformations of technology and social culture, the tribal youth living in

¹⁰⁴ Pahi Saikia, *Ethnic Mobilisation and Violence in Northeast India*, New Delhi, Routledge, New Delhi, 2011.

¹⁰⁵ D.F. Marbaniang & A.L. Warjri, *Impact of Globalization and Modernity on the Indigenous Tribal Youth of North East India: A Comparative Study of Indigenous Values as Whole and What Globalization and Modernity Offer*, Don Bosco Centre for Indigenous Cultures, Shillong, 2011.

a globalised and modern world are in danger of being lured away from their customs and forced to embrace another set of values and adopt western culture.

Priyam Goswami, in his book (2012) ‘The History of Assam from Yandabo to Partition, 1826-1947’¹⁰⁶ described the polity, society and economy of colonial Assam. The author in his study covers an important period in the history of modern northeast India, from the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 that marked the beginning of British expansion in the region, till partition in 1947. The author discusses the history of the colonial province of Assam, which included most of modern Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The author analyses the social, cultural and economic changes during the British period. The author also examines the growth of political consciousness in the region and the impact of the pan-Indian national movement on the society and politics of the region

In ‘Question of Identity in Assam: Location, Migration, Hybridity’ (2012) Nandana Dutta¹⁰⁷ discusses the identity problem in Assam, keenly affected as it is, by the realities of migration and hybridity. The author in her work analyses an overview of these issues as reflected in the region, and encompasses the period from the conclusion of the Assam Movement to the present.

In ‘Security and Development in India’s Northeast’ (2012) Gurudas Das argues¹⁰⁸ Security and development are intricately related. A secure environment promotes development and development, in turn, reduces threat to security. Economic underdevelopment breeds conflict and violence as it provides limited livelihood opportunities to people and denies basic human needs. Similarly, insecurity negatively affects economic development as it raises the level of risks for investment and encourages flight of capital. The author also argues that insecurity and underdevelopment are both cause and consequence to each other. The author

¹⁰⁶ Priyam Goswami, *The History of Assam from Yandabo to Partition, 182-1947*, Orient Blackswan Private Limited, New Delhi, 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Nandana Dutta, *Questions of Identity in Assam: Location, Migration, Hybridity*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2012.

¹⁰⁸ Gurudas Das, *Security and Development in Northeast India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012.

argues in favour of cross-border cooperation as a way out of grievance-based ethnic militancy arising out of peripheral underdevelopment. The author in his work suggests a three pronged approach for breaking the conflict trap- integrating the North Eastern Region economy with that of South and Southeast Asia through active economic diplomacy; adopting a community-based organization led development model for conflict zones; and improving governance through the practice of politics of accommodation as opposed to politics of identity.

In his study, entitled 'Need to think before dividing Assam' (2013) Jyoti Prasad Das¹⁰⁹ argues that we live in a region that is among the most volatile and least developed. And it is a region that for all its potential, gets bogged down by unsettled identity issues. Social harmony and progress fall victim to competing identity politics and exclusive homeland demands. Politics of ethno-exclusivism harps on the aspiration to weave ethnicity with territory. But ethnicity like religion, is not a safe ground for the creation of a state in this century. With the passage of time, sentiments for language and culture are swamped by aspirations for faster economic development. It is the popular will, and not linguistic differences per se, that creates new states. The author also argues that if every ethnic group were to break away with a slice of territory invoking the controversial ideals of self-determination, then a disparate state like Assam would descend into chaos with regular clashes over the common resources. Self-determination was coined to inspire emancipation of the repressed races. It was not meant to liberate them with balkanized homelands.

In his article, entitled 'Separate states, separate thinking' (2013) Arijit Bhattacharjee¹¹⁰ described that the demand for creation of separate states is not new in India. The claims for creation of separate states comprising the economically backward Telangana region from Andhra Pradesh and formation of a Union Territory covering three districts of the Barak Valley of Assam led by the Union Territory Demand Committee are in existence for almost five decades.

¹⁰⁹ Jyoti Prasad Das, 'Need to think before dividing Assam', *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, October 31, 2013, p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Arijit Bhattacharjee, 'Separate states, Separate Thinking', *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, September 25, 2013, p. 6.

Similarly, the demands for creation of separate states of Bodoland, Kamatapur and Karbiland from Assam, Garoland from Meghalya, and Gorkhaland from West Bengal are also surfacing from time to time and occurrences of disturbances all over these regions have become classic event or order of the day. The author also examines that the formation of smaller and more compact states based on their mineral and forest resources, agricultural potentialities, infrastructure facilities, number of population would have been better for delivery of service and administration of the country and would have reduced regional and ethnic tensions. But ironically, the states have been formed on the basis of language without requiring the states to be self-sufficient in revenue generation. As a result, considering the number of different tribes, sub-tribes, non-tribes and linguistic groups living in India, it would not be surprising that the Indian states would be fragmented to hundred and thousands of smaller states equal to each district, block or village in course of time to satisfy the growing political aspirations of each of such linguistic groups or tribes.

In 'Development disparity and unrest in Assam' (2013) Jayanta Kumar Sarma¹¹¹ describes that Assam the gateway to the north-eastern part of India, is situated on a strategic location of the country interfacing international borders and geo-ecological regions. The developmental exercise practiced in the State in the post-Independence period has been unable to facilitate the uniform spatial development of the State and its people. These unequal development and over all negligence of the small social groups by the so-called developed social groups are the key reason behind the present unrest and fragmentation of the socio-cultural fabric of the State. The author argues that it has happened because important indigenous people, mainly the tribal population of the region, being unable to get proper scope and space in tune with their aspirations to develop.

¹¹¹ Jayanta Kumar Sarma, 'Development disparity and unrest in Assam', *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, August 23, 2013, p. 6.

In his article, entitled 'The labyrinth of statehood demands' (2013) Ranen Kumar Goswami¹¹² argues that those who think violence is the best available way to draw attention to what they champion, overlook the fact that it also invites repression, creates misunderstandings, turns friends into foes and leads to more problems than solve them. The recent Karbi Anglong rocked Assam and shocked its population, but hardly changed the dominant public opinion that there should be no further division of the State. Violence is also a clear threat to the fragile ethnic balance in the district. The author also argues that on July 30, 2013, the Congress Working Committee pronounced in a unanimous resolution that Telangana would be a reality and it will be India's 29th State. As if a disaster was waiting to happen, demands for separate provinces found new wings and reluctant state government were suddenly confronted with new fires.

In 'The Spectre of Identity Crisis' (2013) Anubhav Dutta¹¹³ held that the Article 3 of the Indian constitution has empowered the Parliament to form a new state by uniting two or more states or part of states etc., on the recommendation of the President of India, after getting a nod from the State Legislative Assembly concerned. The author argues that there is no any provision in the Constitution that empowers a party in power or in opposition the power to declare the creation of a new state without following the prescribed constitutional provision. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) has declared the creation of the new state of Telengana. It has opened the Pandora's box containing many a demand for new states that have been in hibernation for all these years. The CWC's move has stirred the minds of the major indigenous ethnic groups of Assam agitating for homelands.

It is, thus, clear that there are number of works dealing with the history of Assam, language issue, identity consciousness and ethnic process that led to the formation of groups and social movements. Many of these works analyse the process of internal colonialism as a breeding ground of such movements. In fact,

¹¹² Ranen Kumar Goswami, 'The labyrinth of statehood demands', *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, August 31, 2013, p. 6.

¹¹³ Anubhav Dutta, 'The Spectre of Identity Crisis', *The Assam Tribune*, Guwahati, September 11, 2013, p. 6.

most authors viewed that ethnic identity issue is being overplayed by the elites so as to capture maximum power and economic benefits. The demands for autonomy are only a means to achieve a greater share of power in the administrative machinery. To what extent are these true in case of the movement for a separate state of Dimaraji? This is not easy to answer, for there is hardly any work. Herein lies the significance of present study which seeks to understand the genesis of the movement, social bases of the demand, courses and consequences of the movement for a separate state of 'Dimaraji'.

Hypotheses:

The study is conducted with the hypotheses that:

- i) the movement for Dimaraji is rooted in the politics of expediency;
- ii) the movement is organized and led by the middle class; and
- iii) the movement resulted in the intensification of conflict between different ethnic groups residing in the two hill districts of Assam, namely, the districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao (erstwhile N.C. Hills district).

Theoretical Framework:

The autonomy movements in independent India in general and Northeast India in particular may be looked at from two broad angles-

1. *Sub-Nationalism*
2. *Internal Colonialism*

Sub-Nationalism

After independence, various cultural and linguistic groups began to reassert themselves and raised the demand for autonomy or statehood or in some cases secession from India. The agitations and movements of such groups to recognize

their respective vernaculars and to break away from big nationalities may be termed as sub-national in character.

Internal Colonialism

The term ‘internal colonialism’ has come to be used in recent years by social scientists in explaining the ‘colonial type’ situation within the geographical boundaries of a country. Thus, if a region or a part of India is continuously neglected and deprived of the facilities not doing justice to the requirements of the region or area and the contribution made by the area is not properly counted then such type of a situation may be referred to as ‘internal colonialism’.¹¹⁴ This type of situation compels the people of the area to organize themselves and raise the demand for self-rule or autonomy for their democratic existence.

The Dimaraji movement can be explained both from the perspectives of sub-nationalism and internal colonialism.

Concept:

The English word ‘movement’ derives from the old French verb *Movior*, which means to move, stir, or impel. The Oxford dictionary defines it as a series of actions and endeavours of a body of persons for a special object.¹¹⁵ This is regarded as the most widely accepted usage of the word ‘movement’ as applied to social phenomenon. For the present study, however, the term movement will be taken to mean a collective endeavour on the part of a group of people to achieve a goal guided by a well-formulated strategy based on an ideology. The goal may be either to promote a change or to resist a change.

Sources of Data and Methodology:

The required information for the study was collected from books, memoranda, pamphlets and other archival records both official and non –

¹¹⁴ S. Basu, *Regional Movements-Politics of Language Ethnicity-Identity*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1992, p. 7.

¹¹⁵ Jonathan Crowther, (ed.), *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, UK, 1999, p. 761.

official. Besides, some persons having knowledge of the subject were also interviewed. The method of historical analysis was employed to test the hypothesis.

Organisation: The study is organised in five chapters.

Chapter- I	Introduction
Chapter-II	Demand for Dimaraji: Nature and Genesis
Chapter-III	Social base of the Demand
Chapter-IV	Courses and Consequences
Chapter-V	Conclusion