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Adibasi in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

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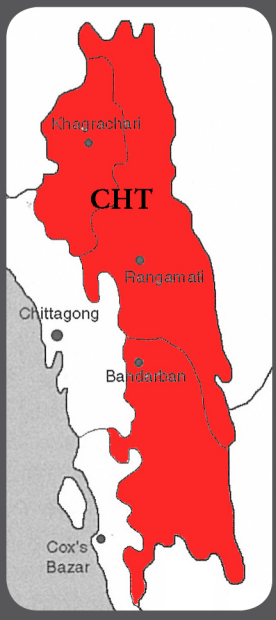
Struggling Against Exclusion

Adibasi in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Md. Mashiur Rahman



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STRUGGLING AGAINST EXCLUSION

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Adibasi in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Md. Mashiur Rahman

Lund Dissertations in Sociology 95

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Dedicated to my father

Md. Tofazzel Hossain

who raised me to have compassion for less fortunate people

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Research is always a hard but thrilling work. It can give one new insights and requires a broad outlook. In most cases, social research takes time. Within this time, the researcher's perspective, the situation or the context of the problem may vary. I experienced this in several ways, which forced me to critically view the research topic right throughout the study period. My supervisor Göran Djurfeldt has been with me all through the journey with his fabulous research skills and extraordinary patience in guiding a student. Perhaps I can best acknowledge his contribution by saying that I would be very proud if I could guide any of my students as he has guided me. I recall his very kind e-mails when I first contacted him regarding my research proposal and admission into the Department of Sociology at Lund University. I must add that Lund University has given me a deeper insight into research as well as a new outlook on the academic world.

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AL	Awami League
BAF	Bangladesh *Adibasi* Forum
BAKSAL	Bangladesh Krishok Sramik Awami League (*Bangladesh Farmers and Workers Awami League*)
BDR	Bangladesh Rifle
BDT	Bangladesh Taka (ISO currency code)
BEC	Bangladesh Election Commission
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CHTDB	Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board
CIPD	Centre for Indigenous People Development
DC	Deputy Commissioner
EIC	East India Company
EPFIDC	East Pakistan Forest Industries Development Corporation
ERP	Electoral Roll with Photographs
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GRF	(RE, in short) Government Reserve Forest
HDC	Hill District Council
HH	Household
HT	Hill Tracts
HWF	Hill Women's Federation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPRSP	Interim-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
JSS	Jana Samhati Samiti
LGC	Local Government Council
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MOCHTA	Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non Governmental Organization

PCJSS	(JSS, in short) *Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti* (Chittagong Hill Tracts United Peoples' Party)
PCP	Pahari Chatro[1] Parishad
PF	Protected Forests
PGP	Pahari *Gono* Parishad (Hill People's Council)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PS	Police Station
SB	Shanti Bahini[2]
SDO	Sub-Divisional Officer
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNO	Upazila[3] *Nirbahi*[4] (executive) Officer
UP	Union *Parishad* (Council)
UPDF	United People's Democratic Front
USA	United States of America
USD	US Dollar
USF	Unclassed State Forests
VDP	Village Defense Police
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

Some Bengali Terms

Adibasi	Indigenous Peoples
Bangabandhu	Friend of the Bengal
Chakma	One of the indigenous groups in the CHT
Jhum	Slash and burn cultivation
Mauza	Group of villages regarded as land administrative unit
Para	Hamlet/Traditional small administrative unit
Sador	Headquarter
Thana	Police Station
Trawler	Engine equipped boat /Motor boat
Union	A local government administrative unit under Upazila
Upazila	Sub-district

1 *Chatro* is Bengali meaning student (Here it indicates the high school, college and university going students).
2 *Shanti Bahini* is an armed wing of JSS who fought for the CHT autonomy.
3 *Upazila* is the Bengali term for sub-district.
4 *Nirbahi* in Bengali denotes "executive".

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Foreword

At the beginning of this dissertation I would like to point out the problem that I have faced, as to how the group that I have studied should collectively be referred. Even after completion of the whole task the same problem still remains and it convinces me that the dilemma of identifying or naming the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh portrays that there are many other related crucial problems of the study area and its inhabitants. From the sociological point of view, the groups whom I have studied are indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities of Bangladesh. They predominately live in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), Bangladesh.

The ethnic minorities of Bangladesh were officially called *"upajati"* in Bengali, meaning a subclass. The CHT Peace Accord, entered between the Government of Bangladesh and the JSS in 1997 used the term "tribal population". Some writers, scholars and activists classify them as indigenous peoples of the CHT; however, the Government of Bangladesh does not officially recognize the term-"indigenous peoples". Some researchers denote them *Jhumiya*, *Jumia* or *Jumma*, which is a term referring to the traditional practice slash and burn agriculture. Some also use the terms *Pahari* or *Paharia* (hill people). In recent times, it has become apparent in various seminars, round table discussions, and formal and informal programs that the ethnic minorities of Bangladesh prefer to be addressed as "Adibasi" meaning aboriginal inhabitants or indigenous peoples. The same term is also spelled as "Adivasi" or "Adibashi". The term derives from Sanskrit words *adi,* meaning 'beginning of' and the word *basi* meaning 'residence'. The members of civil society, intellectuals, NGOs, writers and researchers who support the indigenous demands and the movement for their rights also address them as *Adibasi*.

The CHT ethnic groups whom I have studied also prefer to be collectively identified as "Adibasi,""Pahari "or "Jhumiya". I did not find any reservation from them to these terminologies, as it bestows a sense of collective identity to them. The ethnic minorities of the CHT as well as those residing in other parts of Bangladesh are mainly claiming recognition of their separate identity, dignity and the same rights as the majority Bengali population. These rights have been severely violated in the region since many years and they are still continuing unabated, despite the Peace Accord. A main argument of this thesis is that this is by implication also a struggle against exclusion and deprivation.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The thought behind this study is to assess the ethnic minority situation in Bangladesh, in particular the state of affairs of the *Chakma* people belonging to the *Sonai* and *Mayni* localities in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT, see map 1 on page 35). A major proportion of the ethnic minority population of Bangladesh is living in the CHT, with smaller ethnic minorities living in other plain and hill districts of the country. The Chakma are the largest group among all ethnic minorities in Bangladesh. They are predominantly Buddhist, and largely reside in the central and northern parts of the CHT. More than 90% of them are currently living in the districts of Rangamati and Khagracahari. A small number lives in the district of Cox's Bazar (Van Schendel 2006).

The CHT borders both with India and Burma (Myanmar). It is blessed with beautiful natural settings, hilly topography, gardens, forests, green zones and winding roads. In addition, its cultural assets make the CHT attractive to visitors. The prospect of new economic activities and harvesting of natural resources are also well known. The CHT timber is of the best quality in the country, and many other cash crops including rice, turmeric, pepper, vegetables, and fruits are also cultivated. It is also a major supplier of hydroelectric power to the country. Thus, the CHT is a strategic region for the Government of Bangladesh, both economically and militarily. However, the overall situation of the different ethnic groups of the area is not satisfactory, with a sorry state of human rights, imminent ethnic conflict and political unrest, legal and illegal expropriation of land and a steady influx of Bengali settlers in the region. The Government does not even recognize the minorities as indigenous people. Erni and Nilson write: "The issue of the identity of the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh has led to much debate and controversy, and on occasions has brought indigenous leaders and government officials into sharp disagreement" (2008, p.333). No doubt, the controversy over the identity of the ethnic minorities is intimately linked to Bangladeshi politics and also created by the attitude of majority Bengali population. The majority Bengalis hold hegemonic power over Adibasi in the domain of politics, economics, and administration through various state machineries including constitution, formal and informal laws, and policies. National and local level business enterprises are fully occupied and dominated by the Bengalis.

Ethnic conflict is a recurrent feature in South Asian politics. Bangladesh is no exception in this regard, having already suffered a long drawn conflict in relation to ethnic minorities in the CHT; a conflict which remains contentious. This is manifested in the form of numerous killings, oppression from the Government and settlers and in mistrust among different groups in the region. Such conflicts also form barriers to economic development and upward social mobility. Chakmas are one of the main victims. This study intends to look closely at the conflict and its consequences, as well as into possible strategies of conflict management.

Aims of the Study

The study aims to analyze the social policy of Bangladesh with special emphasis on ethnic minorities in general, and specifically the situation in the study area. The idea of looking at the CHT situation from a social policy point of view was developed from a sociological standpoint. It is clear that as an academic discipline in social sciences, sociology cannot play the roles of practitioners or activists. However, sociology can play a vital role in highlighting the real problems of a particular society, their causes and possible remedies. Sociological inquiry is designed to observe as neutrally as possible the ethnic life, as well as the economics, power issues and political aspects, which are closely linked with social policy. It is important to mention here though that policy formulation for the CHT Adibasi is not the main goal of the study.

The goal of the study is to examine the suitability, supporting capacity and strength of social policy in relation to ethnic minorities in the CHT, Bangladesh. The study aims to closely analyze those aspects of social policy which might already have influenced the Adibasi groups, or which have the potential to do so in the future. This might link social policy with ethnic conflict management and to the handling of extreme poverty among ethnic minorities. In a wider perspective this might also have relevance for similar conflict in other developing countries.

Well designed social policy can foster the upward social mobility of disadvantaged ethnic groups. By providing the services and shelter required by marginalized groups within a nation, an appropriate social policy can ameliorate contemporary ethnic tensions while also fostering if not nationalism, at least loyalty to the country. Contrary to some rhetoric, not all ethnic minority groups around the world are claiming independent nationhood or contesting the boundaries of sovereignty. On the contrary, many of them aim only to minimize their vulnerability within the society and nation in which they exist. Thus, social policy can play a crucial role in defusing tensions by promoting upward mobility of marginalized ethnic groups, thereby promoting sustainable social development.

Moreover, social policy is needed to establish and promote *civic nationalism*, which in my understanding is more liberal and secular than ethnic nationalism. According

to Wolf, "Civic nationalism is deemed to be more virtuous and liberal, whereas ethnic nationalism is generally seen as dangerous and exclusive" (2006, p.52).

In the normative sense of civic nationalism, social policy would ensure that all citizens of the state have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic background. The ideal state would distribute and allocate services and resources to all of its citizens in a neutral and fair manner. However, civic nationalism is not beyond debate. Furthermore, ethnic nationalism does not necessarily always create unrest and conflict in societies. My understanding is that both civic and ethnic nationalism imply multicultural and inclusionary approaches to deal with majority and minority ethnic issues in a nation.

In this study, I will look into whether the ethnic minorities are receiving and are being benefitted from the social policies of Bangladesh and whether any special social policy exists or is implemented for the marginalized ethnic minorities in the CHT. My focus is to observe the situation of social policy and also to look into the process of social exclusion of ethnic minorities in the CHT region. In order to better understand the dynamics of the conflict, I will further look at the implementation or lack of implementation of social policies, and their links to processes of social exclusion and or inclusion in the area.

Rationale for the Study

Bangladesh is a very densely-populated country with a population of nearly 160 million on a landmass of 147,570 square km. The overall economy of Bangladesh is not satisfactory. It is a low-income country, with per capita income of USD 652 (Atlas method) in FY09. Poverty persists at a very high level. Around 40% of total populations live below national poverty line (The World Bank 2010, P.1). 25% of those are classified by governments as 'extreme poor' who cannot afford an adequate diet (Holmes, Farrington et al. 2008). A large section of the majority Muslim Bengali population in the different plain districts of Bangladesh are poverty stricken and so are many of the Bengali settlers in the CHT. However, the ethnic minorities of the CHT are not only living in poverty, but also suffer from additional problems, which are not commonly evident among the Bengali settlers, or the ones residing in the plain districts of the country. The economic condition, political freedom, and the state of human rights are sharply different in the case of the Adibasi.

These aspects raise the issues of citizenship, political identity and the belonging of the Adibasi to the mainstream nationality. This again boils down to their access to social policies and their equal participation in state benefits as well as other welfare activities. Most of the Adibasi of the CHT are deprived of their land rights, for being members of their respective ethnic group, e.g. the Chakma. Furthermore, they do not have equal access to trade in markets and they cannot move freely in the region,

in the same way as the Bengali settlers can[5]. Moreover, the army is not generally deployed in the plain districts to monitor public activities, while a large number of soldiers and officers from the army are deployed in the CHT. They restrict mobility of the Adibasi and also impose their decisions on them in the name of national security and solidarity. Successive governments have allocated large amounts of money every year for military activities in the area. Thus, the army has been deployed in the CHT for decades and they have established many of their training centers, barracks, and other establishments. The military has also appropriated much of Adibasi land for their projects.

A Peace Accord was signed in 1997 between the then Bangladesh Government and JSS (Jana Samhati Samiti), the political organization of the Adibasi. The Accord has improved the CHT situation to some extent, and the quality of life of the ethnic minorities in the area seems to have improved with the implementation of the Peace Accord. Thus, social policy appears to perform its imperative role to enhance social mobility and economic activities, which apparently has made and continue to make Adibasi life in the CHT better.

However, the then government and subsequent ones have failed to more than partially implement the Peace Accord; nearly 13 years after it was signed several aspects of the treaty still remain unimplemented. Thus, the relationship between the Adibasi and the Bangladesh government remains tense. This makes Adibasi life unsafe and vulnerable. Moreover, and as we have noted, high levels of absolute poverty exists among the Adibasi. The report of the CHT Commission[6] in Bangladesh (2009) notes:

> Indigenous peoples in the CHT continue to face human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, torture, rape, attacks, harassments, religious persecution, political harassment, and lack of access to socio–economic rights or to freedom of expression including with respect to cultural activities. This culture of absence of justice and impunity of the offenders pervade the issue of justice in the CHT.

The above statement, pointing to human right violations as well as extrajudicial killing clearly proves the current Adibasi situation and the state of human rights in the region. However, the Adibasi had expected a better life after the independence of Bangladesh and more specifically after singing the Peace Accord. I argue that the ethnic minorities of the CHT potentially could obtain a better life through well-crafted welfare programs. These programs could resolve their long endured vulnerability, which in their turn are essential for maintaining unity and solidarity among the citizens, irrespective of ethnic affiliation and vital for ensuring that Bangladesh remains united. Ethnic violence and ethnic movements are among the main reasons behind the collapse or failure of a state. Social policy can enhance solidarity among its citizens and neighbors. Thus, I argue that a state can receive returns in terms of loyalty by providing services to its population through a proper social policy.

5 Based on Field note.

6 The CHT commission is an international independent body established in1990 to investigate allegations of human rights violations in the region.

My understanding is that an unimplemented, insufficient or inadequate social policy may have a connection to the poverty currently endemic among the Adibasi in the CHT. Poverty and a sense of deprivation that is prevalent among them might also be linked with the ethnic conflict and demands of autonomy by some Adibasi.

Since the circumstances are different, the provision, pattern and programs of social policy for Adibasi groups are different from Western and European concepts of social policy. However, for the survival and betterment of such vulnerable groups, social policy can be useful. I argue; Adibasi should have the right to equal access and benefits as the majority population of the country. Otherwise, they would be discriminated against, excluded and marginalized, which definitely would foster a sense of deprivation among them. Such a sense of deprivation may furthermore, be aggravated due to violations of human rights and poor governance.

From the very beginning of the study it was understood that from a practical viewpoint the whole project might be very difficult to carry through, especially the field research and obtaining data from a research area with restricted entry and occupied by armed forces. However, the field work was possible to conduct, and the results will be presented in the following chapters. Diverse aspects of social policy and the poverty situation among the Adibasi will be discussed more in detail, mainly based on field notes and my active participation in various programs and dialogues held in Dhaka, Chittagong and in the Hill Tracts.

The study provides an overview of social policy and poverty among the Chakma Adibasi in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Exclusion and marginalization among any of the deprived sections in society is an indispensable part of policy studies. The study thus focuses on social exclusion and deprivation, and aims to understand the human rights situation of the mentioned group, based on the background and contemporary situation and life style of the Adibasi Chakma. The study also concentrates on the peace process, and the attempts at creating integration and cohesion in the CHT, initiated by the Bangladesh Government.

Sociological Inquiry

A vital question for sociologists is how far to go in policy studies, analysis, formulation and so on. Marston referring to Jacobs and Manzi holds that the question of maintaining the neutrality and objectivity of the subject has led to:

> An attachment to 'objectivity' within a positivist paradigm has meant that many policy studies have ignored the effects of policy language, particularly the passing of certain words from policy discourse and the introduction of new terms that feature prominently in contemporary debates (Marston 2004, p.11).

In the above statement emphasis is on objectivity and neutrality in policy studies and research and I argue that integrating objectivity and neutrality strengthens policy

research. There are epistemological differences between positivism, critical social theory and post-structuralism, which help to see issues from different perspectives. The legacy of positivism has also changed policy studies and the process of reappraisal challenges, the foundational assumptions of positivism. As Smith comments:

> In the last three decades of the twentieth century, all the disciplines in the social sciences have experienced a fundamental reappraisal of their basic assumptions, theories and methods. The most significant common feature of this reappraisal is the recognition that 'culture' deserves much more serious attention as an object of study in its own right and this has produced a reassessment of the linguistic, discursive and cultural conditions of social research (Smith 1998, p.231).

The statement identifies 'culture' as the central point of social research which I see as the vital aspect of livelihood as well as a crucial force of social and economic strength for any particular groups. Thus, the policy study should also concentrate on culture and society maintaining the neutrality and objectivity as well. Marston has clearly expressed his views in relation to policy studies and the positivist approach. He notes:

> In short, a positivist epistemology is not an adequate position for researchers and policy analysts aiming to explore and understand how policy meanings are discursively constructed, how regulatory functions of the state are being transformed and how policy actors represent and articulate policy problems and solutions (Marston 2004, p.14).

The above statement is used to illustrate some basic factors of how to conceive the positivist epistemology in policy research and how to proceed towards maintaining validity and neutral stance in social research.

The notion and epistemological evolution of critical social theory and post-structuralism allow subjectivity in relation to the study, formulation and discursive analysis of policy. To explore the role of social policy in resolving problems related to ethnic issues of a state, I will provide now a detailed discussion on the concepts of social policy.

Social Policy

The concept of social policy has only recently been considered as an academic issue. It has breached the limits of 'welfare boundaries', and instead denotes the whole social structure through which one can understand a society. In this context, social policy should be considered from sociological perspectives as well. Coffey states:

> Social policy can be conceptualized in terms of broad social structures (through, for example, the state, the market, social institutions, and organizations, and legislative and economic frameworks). Social policy can also be considered in terms of sets of individual, collective and auto/biographical experiences-with/in which social actors actively navigate social policy routes and pathways. Moreover, these pathways are navigated with/in specific temporal and spatial (as well as political and economic) contexts (2004, p.20).

The above quotation gives an overall view on how to conceive the concept of social policy and indicates the range of social policy that covers the whole social structure and connects the people both in individual and collective way.

Many common issues can be studied under several of the different disciplines within the social sciences. However, since the scope of each discipline is not fixed but defined flexibly, one can explore and draw from other areas, resulting in an interdisciplinary approach. Accordingly, the concept of social policy is still evolving; its subject matter, identification as a separate discipline and arena of application are dynamically defined. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to define social policy in the framework of an academic exercise. Alcock, Payne and Sulivan note, "Social policy as an academic field of study is one of those curious items, rather like an elephant, which we recognize when we see it, but which is notoriously difficult to describe" (2004, p.1). Alcock *et al.* note, "There are no text books dealing with the history and development of the discipline of social policy, it is perhaps too boring a topic for a whole book"! (1998, p.12)

As mentioned, social policy has only recently been regarded as a separate discipline. Earlier, it was used as a term to denote the welfare policy taken by the state or government. The term was conventionally used to denote an action orientated program for the well-being of state's citizens. It later metamorphosed into a distinctive field of study, and most recently, it has become even broader than both the conventional explanation and its distinct field of study. Coffey notes:

> It is no longer desirable, or indeed possible, to define social policy in terms of narrow understanding of social welfare or social services. Such understandings have been disrupted, not least by neoliberal and other challenges to the very idea of the welfare state. There has been an increasing recognition of the multiple and plural routes to and of social welfare and well-being. Moreover, in so far as it ever was, it is no longer appropriate to view social policies in isolation from other forms of social organization and social structure (2004, p.3).

In this quotation, the author clearly manifests that social policy possesses a vast area and it is not restricted only within the welfare services. Indeed, social policy has nowadays achieved a shape as a full- fledged discipline that connects many other areas of social sciences. However, the welfare services are a significant part of the study of social policy.

It is worth noting that every single state and society may require different types of services and facilities, depending on their economy, culture, background and even geography. As such, social policies comprise separate characteristics and attributes of varying importance. Spicker (2004.p.8) argued for a reintroduction of the term 'social administration', while, in stark contrast, Sinfield (2004, p.10) suggested a focus on 'a political economy of welfare'. Lowe (2004, p.13) argued for a more multidisciplinary approach, which puts 'political science back into the heart of social policy' (Williams and Mooney 2008, p.490). Williams and Mooney note, "Reflecting these and other different arguments about where now for social policy, it is generally agreed that social policy is highly contested, and the discipline is by its nature malleable, permeable and dynamic" (2008, p.490).

Social policy has evolved from Fabian social administration[7] to social policy. Many contributors, including Mishara (1977), Pinker (1979), Spicker (1995), Fitzpatrick (2001) and others, have added their thoughts to the debate around the main points of the discipline. The multidisciplinary approach is conceived in the social policy arena in such a way that the language of 'policy transfers, policy learning, pathway dependency, policy laboratories, virtuous circles and other political science terms are being adopted uncritically' (Williams and Mooney 2008, p.503) in the literature of social policy. In addition, Williams and Mooney suggested:

> The devolution debate *re-engages* with a number of established social policy issues: for example: territorial equity/justice, subsidiarity versus solidarity, liberty, equality and diversity, universalism, particularism, the questioning of the welfare settlement, and the old welfare state and new welfare state arguments and the citizenship debates (2008, p.504).

In this quotation, the authors mention specific areas of social policy which sharply denotes that social policy could not be defined or limited only within the arena of welfare services. Social policy is more than that and includes some essential aspects of social structure, economy, development, security and individual and collective life.

Social policy also indicates a revisiting of issues of social divisions, social inequality and social justice; of class, ethnicity and race, gender and other exclusionary positioning (Williams and Mooney 2008, p.504).

To me, social policy simply denotes programs for development, cohesion, unity and welfare of the nation and the society. Social policy provides a variety of welfare programs including efforts to improve the current status of human rights issues, ensure a tolerable level of inequality in a society, regulate uncontrolled capitalist expansion and reduce state policies which disproportionately favor selected groups. Social policy provides humanitarian and basic needs support through continuous service oriented programs. In this sense, social policy is connected with nationalism and national security and is able to perform a significant role to strengthen the base for nationalism. The base or foundation for nationalism is considered to be collectivism and national unity. Social policy also has the potential to ensure access to economic opportunities through the market and family. Fiona Williams notes:

> The consolidation of national unity and the national ideal was achieved partly through state social reforms around the first forms of collectivism: education, public health, social insurance, and later, maternity provisions. At the same time, the rights and benefits attached to these provisions marked exclusion from, and inclusion in, the 'nation-welfare state' (2008, p.160).

As we can see, the above quotation emphasizes that some social policies have already contributed to development and social changes and have established the notion of inclusion instead of creating the state of exclusion for a particular group. Indeed, social policy can be considered a prominent tool to uphold multicultural and collective

7 The Fabian society was established in 1884 in the UK. The group was strongly influenced by the work of Sidney Webb, a civil servant who later became a Labour MP. It focuses on the introduction of social protection through the state and was critical to the social and economic problems found in late nineteenth–century British capitalism (Alcock, et al, 2008:4).

sentiments as it connects three main aspects of society: the state, the market and the family (Williams 2008, p.160).

Tools of Social Policy

T.H. Marshall argues, "The conventional approach will tell us which areas of government action are generally accepted as belonging to the 'social' sphere" (1979, p.11). He refers to social security as a major apparatus of social policy. The Convention of the International Labour Organization in 1952 'specified under 'social security,' measures for maintaining income during sickness, unemployment and old age, family allowances and the provision of medical care'(Marshall 1979, p.11). Marshall mentions housing, community services and education as remaining aspects of social policy besides social security. Welfare provisions assure cash income, a healthy body and so on. It might be argued that welfare is in fact the ultimate objective of all policy. Marshall argues for the above mentioned position by saying, "That is why we can speak of individual rights to welfare. Economic policy, on the other hand, is concerned more with the 'common weal' than with individual welfare" (1979, p.15).

The author further added:

> Social policy uses political power to supersede, supplement or modify operations of the economic system in order to achieve results which the economic system would not achieve on its own, and that in doing so it is guided by values other than those determined by open market forces (Marshall 1979, p.15).

By underlining the impact of political power, Marshall expresses the importance of social policy to uphold the economic activity and he also indicated how the social and economic aspects are linked with each other.

A unique feature of social policy thus is that it is guided by values. I argue that social policy works based on the different social aspects of a particular society or nation. Social policy provides services to the individual with the aim of maintaining social cohesion, solidarity and unity among all the citizens. Thus, welfare provisions are assumed to be capable of handling the problems of ethnic minorities, marginalized groups and deprived people in a state. It is an essential task to maintain local, regional and global security, peace and harmony. Without addressing these problems, security and development may not be attained since a section of citizenry remains excluded from the society or nation.

Ethnic Minority, Social Policy, and the Role of the State: Bangladesh Perspective

The Bangladesh region was governed as part of greater India during British rule. Later, in 1947, when British India was divided into India and Pakistan, it was included with Pakistan. Soon after the creation of Pakistan, the East Pakistani people realized that the new national entity created purely on the base of religion could not endure since the physical and cultural distance between the two parts was vast. Under the dominance of West Pakistan, the Bengalis in East Pakistan felt relative deprivation in every sphere of life, including suppression of their political, economic, social and cultural rights. As a result of the exploitation and deprivation of then East Pakistan by West Pakistan, a massive Bengali liberation movement with its own new nationalism sprung up. The goal of establishing a separate Bengali nation was finally achieved through a 9 months freedom fight against the Pakistani ruler, during which a large number of Bengalis lost their lives. In 1971, Bangladesh achieved its independence and was separated from Pakistan.

The cherished dream of establishing a new, democratic state was fulfilled. However, since then the failure of the political process, interventions by the army and lack of policy implementation have had a debilitating impact on the much hoped-for democratic process. In economic policy, Bangladesh has followed its Five Year Plans, Interim-Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) and a full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Between 1973 and 2002, development policies of the country were organized in Five Year Plans with the exception of one special Two Year Plan in 1978-1980. The Fifth Five Year Plan was phased out in 2002. A new model was spelt out in detail in the PRSP (2005) and got established as the national policy framework for poverty reduction in Bangladesh. The new government declared in April 2009 that they will return to a five year planning process in 2011. In the coming years, both the PRSP and five year plans will coexist (Webster, Khan et al. 2009, p.9). However, there is little opportunity for civil society to contribute to policy formulation, which is mainly handled and monitored by bureaucrats, politicians and a few advisors of the party in power. The process has also been heavily influenced by donors and international organizations like the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The above mentioned national policy framework has been mainly followed since independence. Several governments of Bangladesh has introduced and applied their own economic policies to reduce poverty, deprivation and hunger, yet the situation did not improve exactly as per its expectation, though some sectors have shown its progress including education rate, decreased child mortality, women empowerment, health care etc.

However, providing and executing social policy has been relatively neglected in national policies. It would have been fruitful to reduce absolute poverty and exclusion among different deprived and marginalized groups, for example through social policy. National policies were mainly designed with an emphasis on economic as-

pects, while social policy for the marginalized and deprived groups has been relatively ignored. The government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of 2005, an important policy document has clearly admitted 'the indigenous peoples' history of exclusion and their experience of discrimination by the mainstream society' (Erni and Nilsson 2008, p. 336).

It is generally argued that social policies are 'state policies'. But the question arises, how one should define the concept 'state' itself. Both in a welfare state as well as in a democratic state, it is not acceptable that the state is merely a matter of governance and the judiciary. This can also be seen in the context of nation-building, where social policy can help to amalgamate and integrate the members of nations. A 'nation-building process' signifies the national consolidation and integration process which can be seen as an extension of the 'state- building' efforts. Martinussen makes the following comparison:

> State building aims at securing territorial integrity, creating institutional capacity within the state apparatuses to handle both political and economic development task. In comparison, the main purpose of nation building is to integrate the population of a certain territory into a cohesive unit (2004, p.322).

Martinussen refers 'state building' and 'nation building' as two separate aspects. Integrating the whole population of a certain state is purposes of nation building, thus, nationalism achieve a solid ground through the integration of all on some basic issues.

Martinussen further mentions that nation-building projects have not succeeded in all countries of the Third World. In many countries, large population groups are not accepted within the political community, forced upon them by the state. Yet, other population groups may recognize the sovereignty and legitimacy of the state, but at the same time distinguish themselves as disfavored and excluded minorities. Martinussen (2004, p.322) mentioned the Adibasi of the CHT, Bangladesh as belonging to the latter category. During the liberation movement of Bangladesh there was no proper integration and cooperation with other non-Bengali and non-Muslim ethnic communities. The ethnic minorities in Bangladesh were however politicized during the British regime and this politicization continued parallel to the development of Bangladeshi nationalism. I shall further discuss the politicization and the process of exclusion in the historical background chapter of this book.

The nationalist movement initiated was based mainly on the interests of the majority Muslim and Bengali ethnic community of the country. This politicization fostered a sense of deprivation among the several small ethnic groups in Bangladesh. The newly created state was more concerned about protecting its own fledgling nationality in a broader, international perspective. Bengali nationalism has combined administrative, civil and military efforts to assimilate ethnic identities into the mainstream nationality, in the process denying and ignoring many demands and deserving issues of small ethnic groups of Bangladesh.

The politicization of nationalism, in the context of CHT in Bangladesh is an issue that has already been discussed in the literature, for example by Mohsin (2003). She

discussed the historical context and the situation of the CHT, Bangladesh. Many aspects of the situation have changed after her research, however; the claim for separate ethnic nationalism has not fully disappeared.

Moreover, there are contradictions between *Bengali Nationalism* and *Bangladeshi Nationalism*. The contradictory stance in regard to Bangladeshi nationality is mainly a political construction. At the time of the nation's birth there was no debate with Bengali nationalism. Later, during the army regime in 1980s, the then rightist political alliances had raised the issue of Bangladeshi nationalism instead of Bengali nationalism. These two nationalisms diverge in their opinions on the issue of ethnic minorities in the country. Followers and believers of Bengali nationalism seem to be comparatively sympathetic towards the religious minorities, but not wholly towards the ethnic minorities, despite several changes in the constitution of Bangladesh and political and administrative decisions taken by several administrations after independence. One of the two main political parties has been following an agenda of Bengali nationalism (AL alliances), while the other (BNP alliances) is devoted to the cause of Bangladeshi nationalism.

Bangladesh has experienced various forms of government, including military rule by General Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad. A parliamentary system was re-introduced in 1991 after the fall of army regime through a mass movement in 1990. Power has oscillated between the two major political alliances in each of the last four elections (The World Bank 2010, p.1). One is lead by the Bangladesh Awami League and the other is lead by Bangladesh Nationalist Party. In 2006, the political cycle was kaput and a military-backed Caretaker Government was in power for two years and they held national election in December 2008. A functional national parliament, a government controlled by parliament, a free and fair judicial system, efficient legislative and executive bodies did not sufficiently take shape due to various barriers. However, the hope for democracy has not been completely quashed. Social movements in Bangladesh are geared to the cause of establishing democracy and achieving citizens' rights, participation and entitlement. As a result, Bangladesh retains the hope of change and economic development.

The majority ethnic group of Bangladesh is often able to join in the process of participation and entitlement offered by both democratic and non-democratic governments. In contrast, the ethnic minorities have all been treated as non-mainstream groups, creating a marginalized, deprived and exploited 'underclass' in Bangladesh society. Thus, the ethnic minorities of Bangladesh are facing severe hardship and poverty.

There are different types of poverty and also several ways to measure poverty. However, both absolute and relative poverty are seen among the different ethnic groups in Bangladesh. Seasonal hunger and poverty is also a feature of ethnic minorities of Bangladesh. Absolute poverty refers to not having access to basic needs, whereas relative poverty is simply defined as not having access to the same resources as one's peers (Stanley and Vella-Brodrick 2009, p.90). None of the measures are beyond debate. However, the assessment of poverty in terms of income is one of the popular approaches, although expenditure rather than income is the main indicator,

for example in World Bank (WB) definitions. Here, the extent of poverty is commonly viewed as the number of people with income below a certain level. Whatever, the criteria, extreme poverty and social exclusion of various ethnic groups are prevalent in Bangladesh, as we will see in the case of the Chakma in the following discussion.

Content of the Following Chapters

This book is framed concentrating on historical process and ongoing situation of social exclusion, deprivation and poverty among the Adibasi of the CHT, Bangladesh in the light of a conceptual and theoretical discussion. An integral part of the book is an empirical research using both qualitative and quantitative data obtained from mainly two villages, Sonai and Mayni inhabited by ethnic minorities in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. Chapter 2 contains a brief discussion on the different ethnic groups of Bangladesh, the physical settings with main emphasis on the CHT, on demography and also contains a general discussion of the Adibasi population at Sonai and Mayni.

Research tools and methods used in the study have been shaped following a mixed methods approach. Both quantitative and qualitative data have been analyzed and mutually sustain each other, as explained in Chapter 3. The sources of inspiration and barriers of the study will also be discussed, as will the ethical issues raised by this research. Chapter 4 draws on parts of the data collected, with a view to give a broad overview of the setting. So for example, the demographic profile of the study area will be revealed in this discussion. Chapter 5 contains a conceptual discussion of ethnicity and nationalism, and the later part focuses on historical process of Adibasi exclusion while Chapter 6 describes the Adibasi in independent Bangladesh and the political solution to the CHT problem.

Chapter 7 starts with theoretical and conceptual discussion of social exclusion and in its latter part elaborately documents social exclusion by means of quantitative and qualitative analyses of field reports, interviews, focus group discussions, census and survey conducted in Sonai and Mayni villages. Chapter 8 presents a theoretical discussion on ethnic conflict, the role of the state and of the armed forces in the light of data and field reports obtained from the study area.

Chapter 9 is an analysis on ethnic conflict management and the role of social policy to bring forth changes and development and thus to contribute to establishing peace in a society instead of prolonging a conflict situation. This theoretical perspective will be enriched by field data, interview with local residents of Sonai and Mayni, with settlers in the region and with experts. I will also draw on speeches by local, regional and national leaders. Chapter 9 also contains a critical discussion on the Peace Accord signed in 1997. Finally, Chapter 10 contains the overall conclusions from the study.

CHAPTER 2

Ethnic Minorities in Bangladesh

This chapter contains a brief discussion on different ethnic groups in Bangladesh, focusing mainly on the Chakma, the largest ethnic group living in the CHT. It also contains a brief discussion on the general Adibasi population of Sonai and Mayni, the research area.

Although, the majority of the 144 million population of the country are Bengali, Bangladesh is also inhabited by approximately 2 million ethnic minorities (Erni and Nilsson 2008, p.333). The different ethnic groups of Bangladesh reside mostly in remote and border areas. There are many Adibasi groups who number fewer than ten households in Bangladesh, but some are more populous (Rafi 2006). The minorities are thus not very significant in terms of total population, but are highly significant in the context of the CHT. Some *Adibasi* also reside in urban areas such as the capital city of Dhaka and the commercial city of Chittagong, but they are few in number compared to the large numbers of the Muslim Bengali majority.

Background and Demographic Contour

Population

The accuracy of data about the total Adibasi population and the number of Adibasi groups in Bangladesh is subject to doubt, and little has been done to remedy the situation. The Census of 1991 reports that the CHT tribes consist of 501,144 persons – that is 51% of the population of this area, but only 0.5% of the total population of Bangladesh. According to Rahim (1989, p.59), the 'tribal' population of Bangladesh is concentrated in the CHT and in the Mymensingh, Sylhet and Rajshahi regions. The total Adibasi population in Bangladesh was 897,828 in 1981 (Peiris 1998, p.34). Adnan (2004) using this data reports that during the time of the census, the total

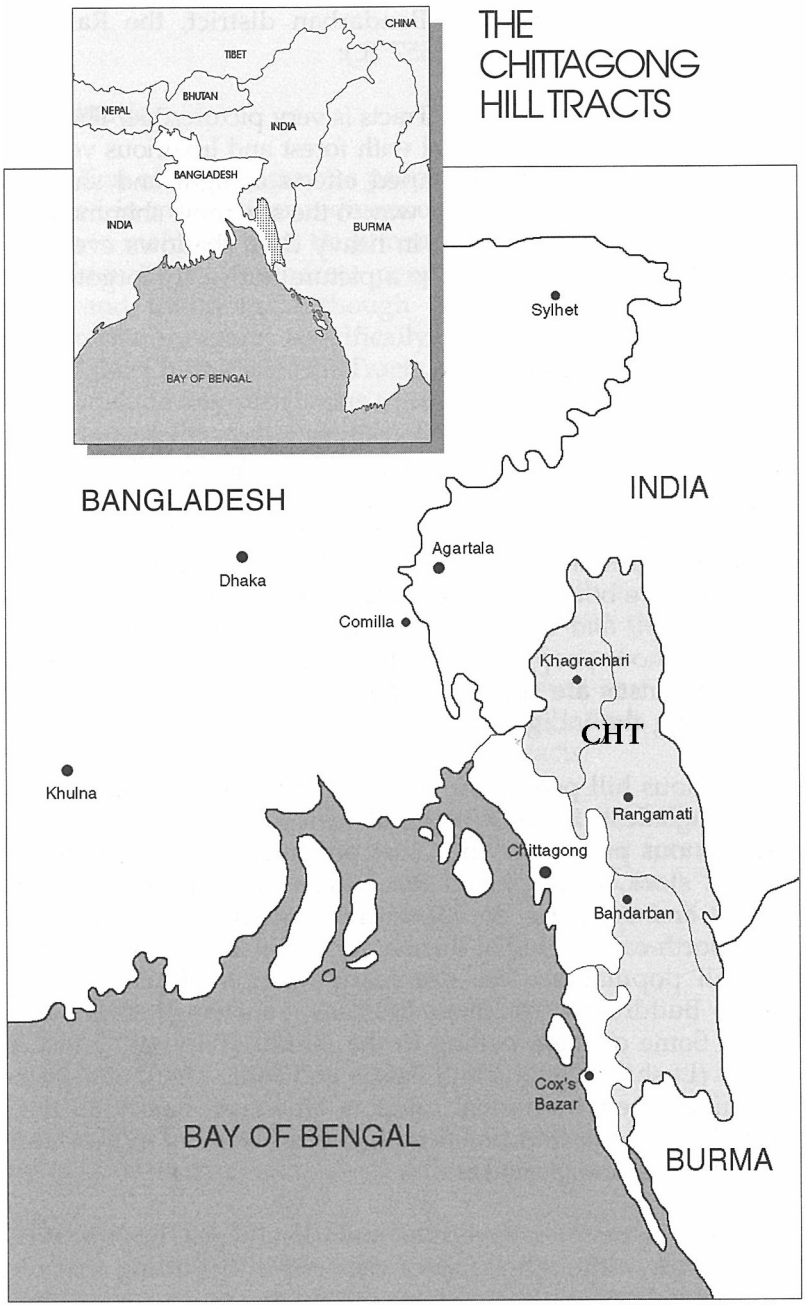
CHT Adibasi, or *Pahari* in his terminology, population was 455,000, or 61.07 % of the total population of the CHT. This estimate indicates that the remaining 442,828 members of the Adibasi population live in the other districts of Bangladesh. In 1991, the total Adibasi population of the CHT had increased in number, but decreased as a percentage to 51.43% of the total population of the area. The reduction in proportion is due to the influx of Bengali settlers. Adnan says,

> The present ethnic composition of the CHT is strikingly different from what it had been around a century earlier. In 1872, the CHT population was almost entirely Pahari (98 percent). In comparison, the non-Pahari (mostly Bengali) accounted for a minuscule minority (2 percent). Even up to 1951-56, the various Pahari groups together accounted for 90 percent of the CHT population, with Bengalis comprising most of the remainder. However, by 1991, the share of all the Hill peoples declined drastically to around half (51.4 percent) of the CHT population. Correlatively, the share of Bengalis rose dramatically from around 9 percent in 1951-56 to 48.5 percent in 1991(2004, p.11).

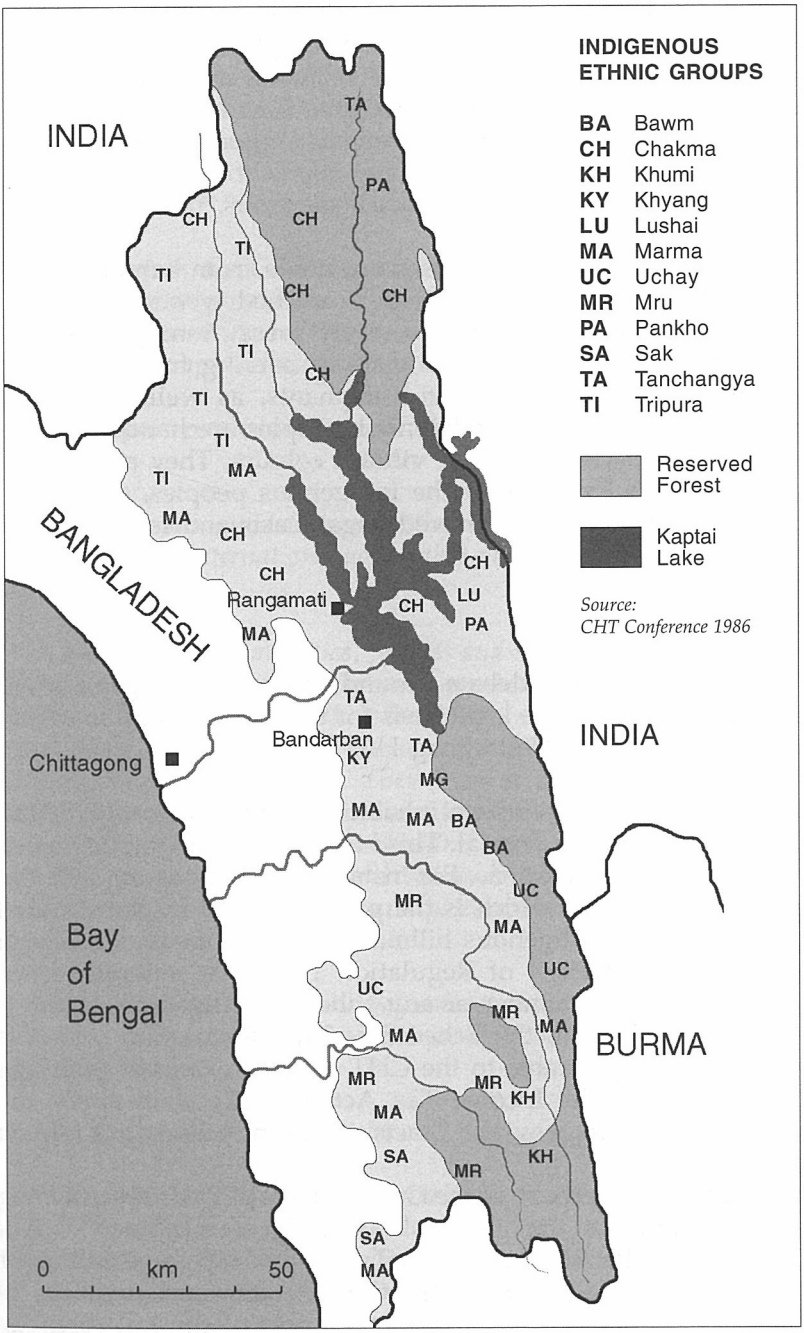
As pointed out by Adnan, this demographic dynamic is part of an evident background to the problems we are discussing in this book.

CHT: Setting

The CHT occupies a physical area of 13,181 square kilometers (5,089 square miles), constituting 10 percent of the total land area of Bangladesh. The region comprises seven main valleys formed by the Feni, Karnafuli, Chengi, Mayni, Kassalong, Sangu and Matamuhuri rivers and their branches, and plentiful hills, narrow basins and cliffs covered with plants which are in complete contrast to most of the other districts of Bangladesh, predominated by plains rather than hilly tracts. The Chittagong Hills branch off from the Himalayan ranges and continue south through Assam and Tripura in India to Arakan in Myanmar (Burma) (Shelley 1992 , p.35; Mohsin 2002, p.11). The CHT was a single district until early 1980s. In 1983 it was divided into three districts, namely Bandarban, Khagracahari, and Rangamati.



Map 1: Chittagong Hill Tracts
Source: "Land Rights of the Indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh" by Rajkumari Chandra Roy, IWGIA Document No. 99 Copenhagen 2000. Accessed with permission from IWGIA.



Map 2: Indigenous Ethnic Groups
Source: "Land Rights of the Indigenous peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh" by Rajkumari Chandra Roy, IWGIA Document No. 99 Copenhagen 2000. Accessed with permission from IWGIA.

How Many Ethnic Groups are there in the CHT?

There is no accurate and recent governmental data as to how many ethnic groups reside in the CHT region. Reports vary from 10 to 14. Interested parties mainly depend on the census data of 1991, but this report has also come under critical scrutiny regarding its description of the ethnic minorities of the country. Until further studies or censuses are undertaken, this report is the most reliable source available. According to 1991 census, the CHT has a population of 0.97 million, of which the Adibasi comprises 0.50 million and the Bengalis 0.47 million (BBS 1993, p.33; Mohsin 2003,p.16). Mohsin further lists 11 ethnic groups that are found in the CHT: Bawm, Chak, Chakma, Khami, Kheyang, Lushai, Marma, Mrung, Pankho, Tanchangya and Tripura. Based on the same source, Adnan (2004, p.15) analyzed 13 different ethnic groups and 'other' categories in the CHT. The additional two groups mentioned by him are Rakhain and Saotal. However, there were only 70 Rakhain and 253 Saotal recorded which makes for only 0.01% and 0.05% of the total population respectively. Surprisingly, these two indigenous groups were not documented as belonging to the CHT population in any prior census reports. Shelley (1992) did not include the Saotal and Rahkain, although he recorded a total of 13 ethnic groups. According to his account, there were also Riang and Mro tribes in the area, in addition to the generally accepted 11 tribal groups described by Mohsin (2003) and Adnan (2004). Uddin (2008) also included Riang and Mro tribal groups, however, he did not describe these groups in detail. Adnan (2004) states that official sources show there were Riang and Murang/Riang in the CHT until the 1981 census record, but that this group was not documented as present in the 1991 census. This Riang tribal population in the CHT may gradually have been eliminated or possibly migrated to other parts of Bangladesh, or to neighboring countries. To further complicate matters, the Mros/Mru and Murang tribes are sometimes described in literature as comprising a single ethnic group.

How the CHT is Portrayed in Official Sources

The CHT is still unofficially treated as a restricted and administratively unique region. Sometimes, it is portrayed by governmental security forces and officials to people from other districts as an unsafe, dangerous and very remote hilly area. It portrays the hill people as a local majority ethnic group who are unfriendly to the Bengali people. Very recently, this has shown signs of change, due to positive portrayals in daily newspapers in Bangladesh and abroad. Some media news and programs on indigenous people and on the CHT have contributed to a more positive mindset among readers and viewers. The Adibasi student forums are also working to communicate a more accurate portrayal of the CHT and its people. It is noteworthy that

some scholars, NGOs, members of civil society and some politicians are advocating a more sympathetic view towards the indigenous people of the country. In contrast, there is another school which holds that as a densely populated country, Bangladesh cannot allow a separate hilly area only for indigenous inhabitants. Instead, they assert that all Bangladeshis should have the right to settle there, and that no distinction should be made between Adibasi and newer settlers. Based on this thought, the then President Ziaur Rahman approved arrival of plain land Bengali into the CHT region. The rightist political alliances led by BNP which is founded by President Ziaur Rahman in collaboration with Islamic fundamentalists' political organization still hold the same views.

There are two major political alliances in Bangladesh which hold very contrary views. One group is in favor of the Peace Accord while the opposite camp is firmly against it. In fact, these two opposite alliances differ on almost every issue in general. This is also reflected in most of the administrative decisions in relation to the CHT taken by the different political parties during their periods of rule.

Chakma in the CHT

There are two schools of thought as to the origin and background of the Chakma. Most evidence suggests that they came from central Myanmar and Arakan with groups such as the *Sak* (Chak, Thek), and subsequently intermarried with Bengalis. Chakma are known as Thek by the Burmese, and Tui-thek by the Kuki, another aboriginal group in the CHT. Van Schendel (1992) described one interview in detail taken by Francis Buchanan. During his journey to the area in 1790s Buchanan interviewed people and inquired them about their own 'nation' or 'tribe' as well as about others in the hills. Buchanan (1798, p.114) wrote:

> I found that the men, except a few words, understood no other language [than Bengali]. They say that they are the same with the Sak of Roang or Arakan: that originally they came from the country; and that on account of their having lost their native language, and not having properly acquired the Bengalese, they are commonly called in ridicule Doobadse. They call themselves Saksa, which word corrupted has, I suppose, given rise to their Bengalese name Sagma or Chakma (cited by Van Schendel 1992, p. 98).

Indeed, this quotation claims a historical root of the Chakma population in CHT. This source claims Arakan as the place of origin of Chakma population, An alternative theory holds that the Chakma migrated to the Chittagong hills from Champaknagar in northern India (Banglapedia 2006), acquiring their name from their place of origin. The theory claims that the Chakma left Champaknagar for Arakan in Burma where they lived for around a century, before leaving for Bangladesh in or around sixteenth century when Bangladesh was governed by Muslim rulers, i.e. before the arrival of British (Encyclopedia 2008). Whatever their precise origin, it is evident

from both the above mentioned theories that the Chakma lived in Arakan before they migrated to Bangladesh.

At the time of the Burmese wars (1784 A.D.), Chakma were driven out from Arakan by the Mughs and forced to enter into the CHT. Bessaignet (1958) states that, "By the end of the eighteenth century, as a result of Burmese invasions, two-thirds of the population of Arakan is supposed to have fled to Chittagong Hill Tracts" (cited by Ishaq 1971, p.33).They dwell in the central and northern portions, or rather less than half of the district (Ibid 1971, p.33).

Little is known about them until the Mughal period. The Chakma chief made an agreement with the Muslim rulers after their arrival in Bangladesh and paid revenue or tax in cotton in return for being allowed to reside in the hill regions and establish trade and business relations with the larger society as well. Later, the British rulers created an extensive business and commercial agreement with the Chakma people, which gradually turned into political authority.

The Chakma are Buddhists, having followed the teachings of Gautama Buddha for centuries. The vast majority are followers of the Hunyan sect of Theravada Buddhism, which incorporates aspects of Animist and Hindu beliefs, such as worship of Siva and Kali, and indigenous gods and spirits (Parbatya Bouddha Mission 2004; www.nationmaster.com 2009). Some foreign and local missionaries are evangelizing in the CHT. This occasionally leads to tension; misunderstandings and unrest, as the traditional Buddhist Chakma perceive these activities as a threat towards their religion (Ministry of CHT Affairs 2007).

The Chakma language is called *Changma Vaj*. Although, they have their own script known as *Ojhopath*, the language belongs to the Indo-European family of languages and has close links with Pali, Assamese and Bengali, as well as similarities to Mon Khmer and Burmese. It is heavily influenced by neighboring Chittagonian, an Eastern Indo-Aryan language closely related to Bengali. Many elderly Chakma still sign their names in the Chakma script, but most Chakma youths learn only Bengali and English at school, and thus no longer use the script. Not even pre-primary level or house and community-based education offer Chakma language training or education (Parbatya Bouddha Mission 2004; www.nationmaster.com 2009).

There are approximately 300,000 Chakma living in the Rangamati and Khagracahari districts of the Chittagong division. Another 80,000 Chakma live in the Indian State of Mizoram (Chakma Autonomous District Council) and another 20,000 are found in Myanmar. There are further around 100,000 Chakma people in the foothills of the Himalayas in Arunachal *Pradesh* in India. Some Chakma have also migrated to Australia, Canada, Britain and the USA in recent years (www.nationmaster.com 2009).

The following table shows the number of Chakma Population in the CHT:

Table 1: Chakma Population in the CHT, 1872 -1991

Year	Chakma population
1872	28097
1901	44392
1951	124,762
1956	140,000
1981	230,000
1991	239,417

Source: Adnan (2004. p.15)

This table shows the remarkable increase in the population of Chakma. Based on this source, I calculate the following mean yearly rate of Chakma population growth in the CHT.

Table 2: Mean Yearly Rate of Growth

Period	Mean yearly rate of growth
1872-1901	1.54
1901-1951	2.10
1951-1981	2.07
1981-1991	0.40

This figure shows that the mean yearly rate of growth has declined to 0.40 percent in 1980s from 2.07 percent during 1951-1981. Such declining rates in 1980s might have been the consequences of political oppression, unrest, and insurgent during which Bangladesh was under the military government.

The Chakma were originally shifting cultivators, however, nowadays they practice both shifting and permanent agriculture. They grow paddy, millet, corn, vegetables and mustard. They traditionally used hoe cultivation but have recently begun to use the plow (Encyclopedia 2008). The Chakma make many of their household items such as beds, boxes, and storage receptacles using bamboo. The houses themselves are predominantly made of bamboo. Bamboo has so many uses for them that the Chakma lifestyle has been described as a 'bamboo civilization'(Banglapedia 2006).

A general impression is that the young Chakma are well-built, but the elderly Chakma often seem weak and comparatively frail. Chakma women lose their physical fitness at a young age due to their strenuous lives involving both domestic and field labor, as well as childbearing. During the day, most of the Chakma work either in the fields, forests and gardens, or at their small trade centers and shops.

Chakma Population in Sonai and Mayni

The ratio of Adibasi inhabitants to Bengali settlers has decreased sharply in the study area of Sonai and Mayni. Furthermore, governmental reports do not show the current ethnic composition of the population in the CHT. According to my findings, the governmental reports contain unreliable information with respect to the size, composition and even religion of some of the group in the CHT.

According to an official document (collected from the Statistics Section at Langadu Upazila Parishad office[8]) which sources its data from the 2001 census report, the 'tribal' population in Langadu Thana is 17,204 out of a total population of 66,470. The remaining 49,266 individuals belong to the non-tribal, settler Bengali community. The ratio of Bengali to indigenous inhabitants is thus 74: 25. After visiting and talking with several elected union council members and the chairman of the Bengali settlers' community, even this lopsided ratio seems to me to be understated. According to my field data, the current total Bengali population in the Maynimuk Union under Langadu Upazila should be greater than 15,000. The official data source states that the total population in the Maynimuk union is 13,587. I find from my census that the indigenous population in Maynimuk union is around 1200. Comparing this with official data, the ratio of Bengali to tribal people in the union is 91:9. This proportion is not evenly representative of the entire CHT region. There are some remote hilly areas where the proportion of indigenous people might be larger.

In terms of total population of Bangladesh, the ethnic minorities are not a big number, but they are very much significant in the context of their cultural heritage, tradition, strategic setting especially due to border areas of Bangladesh. More specifically, all ethnic groups are very much part of the country and have the right to co-exist with dignity which furnished a democratic and liberal features of a country. A multicultural approach may lead Bangladesh to reach its real goal of development and fulfilling the commitment of independence of the country. I will look into the current situation of Chakma ethnic minority of Sonai and Mayni locality, Langadu, CHT to understand and analyze the State's views towards the ethnic minority of Bangladesh. In the following chapter, I would discuss the methodological approaches of the study.

8 Upazila Parishad is a sub-district level governmental administrative office. A government executive officer called UNO is the head of this office and different administrative sections and units work at Upazila level under his authority. Statistic section is one such sub-office under the Upazila Parishad.

CHAPTER 3

Methodological Discussion

The aim of this chapter is to present the research methods and tools used and also to briefly discuss the sources of inspiration, and the obstacles encountered during the field work. Ethical issues will also be discussed briefly.

Mixed Methods

The study follows a mixed method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The exercise of mixed methods involves the collection, analysis and mixing of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Blaikie 2010, p.218). Several methodological tools were thus used including participant observation, census, survey, interviews, case studies, group discussions, narratives and formal and informal dialogues. Visual documents were used to accumulate data and to gain an accurate idea of the lives of Adibasi in the study area. These methods were selected particularly, to gain a comprehensive understanding of social exclusion and poverty among the Chakma, which constitutes the core objective of the study.

Primary data collection involved field work at grass-root level in Sonai and Mayni. Traditional sources of secondary data included published literature such as academic books, journal articles, development reports, news paper articles and editorials, government documents and electronic resources.

In addition to using fieldwork for gaining firsthand knowledge about the Adibasi situation, the study has also made use of information gathered through attending various seminars, cultural shows, rallies, round table discussions, and conferences held in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. The primary motive behind participating in the above mentioned activities was to gain an understanding of the implicit discriminatory stance inherent in the social policies in the context of the Adibasi.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Understanding the processes of social exclusion and the dynamics of human rights situation are the core aims of this research. The social exclusion process is manifested in various forms such as shifting of household plots and land grabbing. Different forms of violence such as physical torture, rape, and asset grabbing are used as indicators of human rights violations.

Participant observation, case studies, semi-structured and un-structured interviews, informal discussions and other official records collected at the field, generated qualitative data. For quantitative data, a survey with a semi-structured questionnaire and a census were conducted. The quantitative data collected from the census and survey is analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and presented in the form of charts, graphs, cross-tables etc.

Participant Observation

Participant observation has been an oft used method in the study particularly in the context of studying ethnic communities. At the beginning, the aim of the project was to conduct a full-fledged ethnographic study. Later, I found it very hard to conduct ethnographic study mainly due to security reason and also due to the obstacles created by the local administration.

My primarily aim was first, to learn about the existing policies and their specific effects on the Chakma and then endeavor to understand both the governmental and non-governmental projects and programs related to the Adibasis' housing, health services, education, agriculture, finances, resource management, ownership pattern of land, and safety net programs. Moreover, the study also attempted to arrive at an understanding of the religious beliefs and practices, rituals and social relationships, the marriage system, and the Adibasis' multifarious relationship with formal and informal institutions.

Participant observation in the research area provided deep insights into Chakma everyday life and made it possible to look deeper into Adibasi life style, their everyday routines, food habits, the structure of their social organisation, as well as attitudes towards outsiders, their fear of the army and of Bengali settlers and also their attitude towards government, credit programs and NGOs activities in the region and other development works. Field observations give a clear idea on their religious activities, social and cultural festivals and on their physical health, illness, and also on their social networking and organisational efforts and activities. In addition, this approach gives insights into Adibasi's school system, education, water supply, sanitation, medical and health-care, and other social services.

Getting Permission from the Local Administration

Sonai and Mayni communities (mauza) were my study areas. I was warned that it was difficult to enter these Adibasi areas for any non-native researchers. Some decades ago, particularly before the signing of Peace Accord in 1997, the area was unofficially restricted to outsiders. Today the situation has improved. Creating trust is the most difficult aspect, since outsiders are treated as part of the Bengali hegemony against which they have struggled for many decades. Even the local administration did not welcome the entrance of a researcher; they instead tried to de-motivate me and my associates encouraging our exit from the area as soon as possible. An obvious reason for this is the tension between ethnic Chakma and Bengali settlers who dominate the administration.

To establish trust with the group studied was an obvious priority for the research team. We tried to gain trust from the traditional Chakma leaders and seek permission from local officials to allow the team to successfully conduct the field work. Although, we succeeded in gaining trust of the Adibasi Chakma, the civil administration was not fully confident about us. At the same time, it was impossible to work without help from the civil and army administration. A section of administrative officers allowed me to conduct my research in the region and some of them provided me with valuable cooperation in entering into the locality. They also facilitated interaction with Bengali settlers of the nearer region of that particular locality.

However, at one point of my study, the local administration particularly the administrators within the *Upazila* (sub-district) expressed their disapproval of granting me further permission to stay for a prolonged period in that remote region. The administration tried to convey the message that they were worried about my research safety in this remote Adibasi area. They were unwilling to give me permission to enter into the deep hilly areas where the Adibasi populations reside. In-spite of gaining trust of the Adibasi, the officials directly expressed their reservations regarding giving me permission to enter into the area. The officials disliked that I had collected data on ongoing government projects and on general and special policies for the Adibasi of the CHT. The research team was asked to leave the research area as political problems or ethnic tensions had arisen. In some cases, the local police station advised us to restrict our mobility to the sub-district level headquarters rather than venturing too deep into the Adibasi villages, during times of unrest.

Selection of Research Areas

The research team was formed in September 2007 at the University of Chittagong. I initiated different sessions, mostly with Adibasi students who were studying at Chittagong University. These sessions were fruitful, as I was able to select the particular research area from the greater CHT based on various aspects related to the intended research. First, I took care to select an area which was deemed representative of our research context. Secondly, I was concerned about the security of the

research team, especially as the team was comprised of outsiders. Selection of area was; however, quite difficult as there are three districts in the CHT consisting of 25 sub-districts (Upazila) in total. Out of these 25, there are 10 Upazila in Rangamati, 8 in Khagracahari, and 7 in Bandarban District. Rangamati is the largest among the three. I was eager to find an area for field work where both Adibasi and settlers were living, since I aimed at constructing my research around both the majority and minority ethnic groups. A large number of households were needed for the interview schedule. This was predetermined taking into account the available time, budget, and accessibility of interviewees. Considering these aspects I found Sonai and Mayni localities to be ideal for the study.

Research Period and the Journey to the Field

Data was collected in two phases: First in Sonai and Mayni during 2007-08 and again in 2009. The four primary visits in Langadu Upazila were during October-November 2007, January-February 2008, May-June 2008 and June 2009. Occasionally, I was able to talk to settlers and other officials even at night in Langadu town, where the Upazila administration is located. Since one of the research team members belonged to the Chakma community he sometimes stayed at the Adibasis' residences.

We started our first journey from the University of Chittagong. It took about 3 hours by bus to reach Rangamati district headquarters. Thereafter, we continued by boat to Langadu. It took more than 5 hours as it was the dry season, with shallow and waters difficult to navigate. We crossed the Kaptai Dam. It took another few more hours to reach Sonai or Mayni by *baby-taxi* (A three-wheeled scooter). After reaching Sonai, one must walk to visit the different *hamlets (para)*. We crossed many small canals, barriers, hill slopes and muddy roads inside the jungles. Sometimes the paths in the hills were aligned by bamboo and trees. The paths in the hills are different from those in the plains. The Adibasi are of course used to these conditions. They are dependent on forest resources and therefore they move with greater ease in the forest.

Census and Survey

Neither the key representatives of the Adibasi community nor the local administration were sure about the number of Adibasi households in Mayni and Sonai. At the very start of the field work, I spoke with the headman, *karbari* and the elected Adibasi members of the Union Council. After receiving permission from both these authorities, I carried out a household census and survey with the assistance of members of the research team, other university students and local persons to be found among the Chakma of Maynimuk Union. The census and the survey consist of the

same respondents but with a moderate time-space between them. All Adibasi households in Sonai and Mayni communities (mauza) in Langadu Union were covered. In this way basic and vital information on the households was gathered. The census and survey aimed at enriching the understanding of the diverse aspects of Adibasi life, society, economy and processes of change.

The census recorded 251 households whereas the survey counted 230 households. This discrepancy in the data was due to some overlapping cases recorded in the census, which were later eliminated. The total number of households finally stood at 230.

Rationale for the Census

The study started with formal and informal discussion with Adibasi local leaders, dialogue with specific local civil administrators, and also a thorough discussion with a few Adibasi students at Chittagong University who later helped me to form a group of research assistants.

Before starting my fieldwork, I also visited local governments and non-governmental offices to obtain a primary data on the area. However, as it turned out, there were almost no data on the particular area, especially on Sonai and Mayni Mauza of Langadu Upazila, which I had chosen as my research area. I also spoke with some members of the Union Council. It was surprising to me that neither the Upazila headquarter statistics officials, the Adibasi leaders, nor the central persons were certain about the total number of Adibasi households, the total population, the number of voters, not even the number of beneficiaries of various support programs.

For the reasons mentioned, it was very important for me to begin the study with a census in Sonai and Mayni. This census provided me with a preliminary idea on the research area and provided guide lines for further steps towards data collection in the study area. For the census and survey, I used separate questionnaires. The census sheet was comparatively shorter than the survey questionnaire.

Census Sheet

The census was conducted in Sonai and Mayni and I used a separate Identification (ID) number for each question sheet. I further recorded the interview date on the sheet. The respondents were mainly the household heads, both male and female. When the household head was not available, other adult members of the household were chosen. The name of all the members of each household and information about their gender, age, educational qualification, marital status, occupation, income and expenditure were collected. Information was also collected on the respondents' religion, ethnic group, ownership status and duration of stay at the current residence, and former abode, and causes of internal displacement and migration, if any. We

further enquired about participation in governmental or non-governmental support programs, about food security and daily food intake.

Survey Questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was more detailed than the census sheet. However, after completion of the census, I had doubts about the reliability of some parts of census data and decided to cross check a few aspects by means of the survey questionnaire, among others, income, number of households and members (in order to be able to estimate the total population). The survey further aimed to explore the demographic structure and size of households, marital status, income and expenditure, occupation, land and property, sources of drinking water, health and illness, support programs, social security, education and language, loan and deficit, external pressure and dominance, land grabbing, settlers intervention, migration, displacement and some other issues affecting participants.

Interviews

In addition, I conducted face to face interviews, group discussions, held informal conversations with the Adibasi people, arranged meetings with settlers, interviews with elected officials and the acting chairman of the Union Council. I also attended formal and informal meetings with local civil administrators. Several meetings with the security personnel such as the police and Village Development Police (VDP) were organized. We also conducted interviews with some local office bearers of NGOs.

The interviewees consisted of 22 people from the study areas. Out of these 22 people, 18 were Adibasi Chakma and the rest 4 are non-tribal. Totally 12 are Adibasi Chakma male and 6 are women. The Adibasi interviewees were in the age group of 24 to 80 years old. They were also from different hamlets within Sonai and Mayni mauza. They further belonged to different categories; i.e.: headman, karbari, Adibasi local leaders, central leaders, school teachers, elderly experienced persons, internal migrants and displaced persons, refugees returned from India, victims affected by army and/or settler's torture, victims of land grabbing, Jhum cultivators, peasants (Jubin*)*, small traders, day laborers etc. The non-tribal respondents were mainly involved with administrative works in Langadu. 2 interviewees have been working in Langadu Upazila as governmental security person and were closely linked with Sonai and Mayni's affairs. Another 2 Bengali interviewees were allied with Maynimuk union council administration. They were also very influential among Bengali settlers.

I took field notes on a daily basis. Sometimes, the language was a barrier to me, but a member of the research team, an Adibasi student, assisted me in interpreting

the Chakma language. Together, we documented whatever we heard, learnt and understood of the local language.

Group Discussion

I arranged five group discussions conducted in the Sonai and Mayni mauza: four of these were held with Adibasi Chakma and one was held with Bengali settlers. These discussions took place during 20th January 2008 to 10th February 2008. When referring to these, I name the group discussions as follows: AA to EE.

AA was held in Karbari hamlet (*para*) and was attended by seven Adibasi male Chakma, who had gathered for a ritual to celebrate "*Notun Dhaner Utshob*" (to celebrate reaping of the first harvest). The host of that ritual had been a local leader once. He dedicated that occasion to the memory of his parents. I scheduled the group discussion with them after lunch. However, in the middle of our discussion three Adibasi women joined, but they did not have sufficient time to spend with us as they were busy with household works, as well as with entertaining other guests. The participant members in this group discussion were from different age groups ranging from 28 and 61 years old. All participants depended mainly on agriculture for their livelihood.

Group Discussion BB was held with three Adibasi Chakma in Battyapara (a small hamlet). All participants were Adibasi peasants solely dependent on agriculture. They expressed grievances about agricultural land losses and also described the problems with settlers and army intervention in Adibasi daily life.

The third group discussion CC was a secret meeting since it involved torture, kidnapping and other abuses, perpetrated by the army and settlers in recent time. During this group discussion other issues were also discussed such as land problems and the ways and means of civil and army's administrative activities in Sonai and Mayni as well as in other Adibasi communities in Langadu Upazila. The meeting was held in a secret place outside the Sonai and Mayni mauza. I was asked by the participant Group Discussion members not to bring any other person with me except one research assistant whom they trusted. At one point of the discussion, my research assistant also left the meeting to show honor to his seniors.

Group session DD was held with two Adibasi Chakma in Mayni mauza. Both of them were from Tintila hamlet. I arranged this discussion at night when they had more free time than daytime. One of them was a small trader and the other one, a slash and burn (Jhum) cultivator and a day laborer.

Session EE was held with some Bengali settlers who live in Islamabad, a settlement in which they have been living since end of the 1970s. The then president Ziaur Rahman was the initiator of allocating Bengali settlers with land in the region. The settlers during the group discussion recalled that the president himself visited their area when he was in power and advised the local army and civil authority to look after the settlers' problems. The interviewees conveyed their problems in a direct way. During the group discussion issues concerning their livelihoods and their

relation and attitude to the Adibasi were common themes. The data obtained from these group interviews will be analyzed later.

Ethical Consideration: Interviewee Confidentiality

I promised my respondents and interviewees in the preamble of my semi-structured interviews and during other interviews and discussions that their responses and all other data would only be used for research purposes and that their names would be kept secret. To hold my promises, I use only the date and location of the interviews and group discussions in the following.

I talked to some Adibasi leaders who requested me not to disclose their names in writing, but permitted me to use the information given. Sometimes, access to the locality was easy, thanks to team members who were from the community, but it remained very difficult to establish linkages with respondents and interviewees as they would only hesitantly trust me.

Some experiences gained from the field work would not be possible to publish due to privacy and secrecy. One very important person related to the CHT sanctioned me to conduct an interview for a few minutes over the telephone. Finally, he allowed me to talk with him for almost two hours. The discussion was very helpful in generating insight into the Adibasis' problems, but he requested me not to mention his identity in the dissertation as he shared much confidential information. Furthermore, some of interviewees shared information on torture of Adibasi people by the army and settlers, which they both directly experienced and heard from victims. One of the Adibasi boys described how he had been tortured by soldiers. He also requested me not to mention his name anywhere.

CHAPTER 4

An Introduction to the Setting

The study was mainly conducted in two Adibasi Mauza[9] named Sonai and Mayni located in Langadu *Upazila* in Rangamati district of the CHT. Here I briefly discuss the salient features of Rangamati and Langadu with respect to their administrative links with Sonai and Mayni. Some salient feature on demography and culture of Sonai and Mayni is also described. I will discuss other findings from the study in later chapters.

Rangamati

Rangamati is the largest of the three districts in the CHT. The term *'Rangamati'* originated from the reddish soil of the area; '*Ranga*' means red and '*Mati*' means soil. The region is characterized by forested hills, and river valleys.

The district is composed of 10 Upazila (sub-district, local level administrative unit), 48 Unions (of village councils), 159 Mauza (Adibasi revenue unit), 1347 villages and two *Pourashava* (small towns). The 10 Upazilas are- Rangamati *Sador*, Kaptai, Kowkhali, Rajastali, Bilaichari, Langadu, Naniarchar, Juraichari, Barkal and Bagahichori. Each Upazila has a Police Station (PS). These PS are locally named as *Thana.* Various civil and armed police personnel are deployed in these police stations as security forces.

The total area of Rangamati district is 6116.13 sq. km. of which 53.54 sq. km. is river and 4824.63 sq. km. is under forest flora. According to the 2001 census, the total population is 525,100 of which Adibasi make up 288,077 and non-tribal 237,023. The total male and female populations in Rangamati are 287,060 and

9 The Chakma prefer to use the term '*mauza*' to denote their locality. Sonai and Mayni *mauza* are two separate small traditional administrative and revenue units. The mauza consists of several hamlets. There are about 350 mauza within the CHT (Roy 2002).

238,040 accordingly. The population density is 86 per sq. km. The total population is divided into Bengali and seven ethnic minorities: Chakma, Marma, Tanchangya, Tripura, Pankua, Lushai and Khiang. The total number of households is 106,040 with an average household size of 5.2 and a literacy rate 41.81% (RHDC 2007). Most of the ethnic groups in Rangamati are Buddhist, though the large non-tribal Bengali groups are mainly Muslim with a small number of Hindus and Christians.

The Adibasi have their own languages but many can speak Bengali. The local Chittagonian dialect is the lingua franca for Adibasi and Bengali inhabitants. The area is underdeveloped in many terms with poor agricultural productivity, high poverty, lack of sanitation, poor access to education and health services, uneven application of law and order, army occupation, low purchasing power, insurgency, irregular transportation and communication, a contentious land distribution system and overlapping administration and governance. The state's general judiciary is vested in the hands of a Deputy Commissioner following the 1900 British Act.

Langadu

Langadu is an Upazila under Rangamati District in the CHT. It is a remote region in the sense that it has poor transportation and communication facilities. It locates 76 kilometers from Rangamati District headquarters. The only transport from Rangamati to Langadu is by engine-fitted boats or launches which are locally known as *trawlers*. It takes more than three hours to reach Langadu by *trawlers* and even longer in the dry season when it takes more than 5 hours. The township is situated at the bank of the Sonai River adjacent to Kaptai Lake. Langadu is the oldest Thana in the CHT and an administrative unit sorting directly under the Government of Bangladesh. Many Bengali settlers are currently living there following the settlement policy of the previous President Ziaur Rahman and President Husain Muhammad Ershad[10] and other governments. Previously, Langadu was mainly occupied by Adibasi people.

During the British regime, Langadu was considered a holy village to its inhabitants. It was included under the Rangamati subdivision by Notification No. 4669 L.R., dated 12th May, 1924. There were only two unions and twenty one villages in Langadu *Thana*[11] during the 1960s. According to the 1961 Census, the total area of the Langadu Thana was 468.78 sq. km with a population of 147, 64. The earlier Langadu village was submerged after the construction of the hydro-electric Kaptai

10 Ziaur Rahman became the President of Bangladesh in 1978 from his previous position as Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) which he held from November 1976. In 1981, Zia was assassinated by a group of soldiers and officers. In the same manner, Hussain Muhammad Ershad became the President of Bangladesh in December 1983 from the position of CMLA. Ershad was forced to denounce power following a democratic movement in 1990.

11 *Thana* was a local level administrative unit already under British rule. During the Ershad period all Thana were upgraded to Upazila. Nowadays, the Police Station (PS) is also called a Thana.

dam (Ishaq 1971). Initially it was administrated as a village, and then gradually developed into Thana headquarters, eventually being upgraded to a sub-district (Upazila). Now, the Langadu Upazila consists of 7 unions, 25 mauza, and 135 villages. The average population of a union is 9716. Langadu is the third most populous Upazila of Rangamati district. The origin of the name 'Langadu' is not known. There is a myth that an influential man named Langadu lived in the region, and that the Upazila might have derived its name from him (BBS 2005, p.34). The sub-district occupies an area of 388.50 sq.km including 331.91sq.km forest area. It is bounded on the north by Bagahichori and Dhighinala Upazila of Khagracahari District, on the east and on the south by Barkal Upazila, and on the west by Naniarchar Upazila and Mohalchori and Khagracahari Sador Upazila of Khagracahari district (BBS 2005. p.34).

According to the official record of Langadu Upazila headquarters, the total Adibasi population in Langadu Upazila is 17,204 while the non-Adibasi population is 49,266. The percentages of tribal and non-tribal populations in Langadu Upazila are 26 and 74respectively.

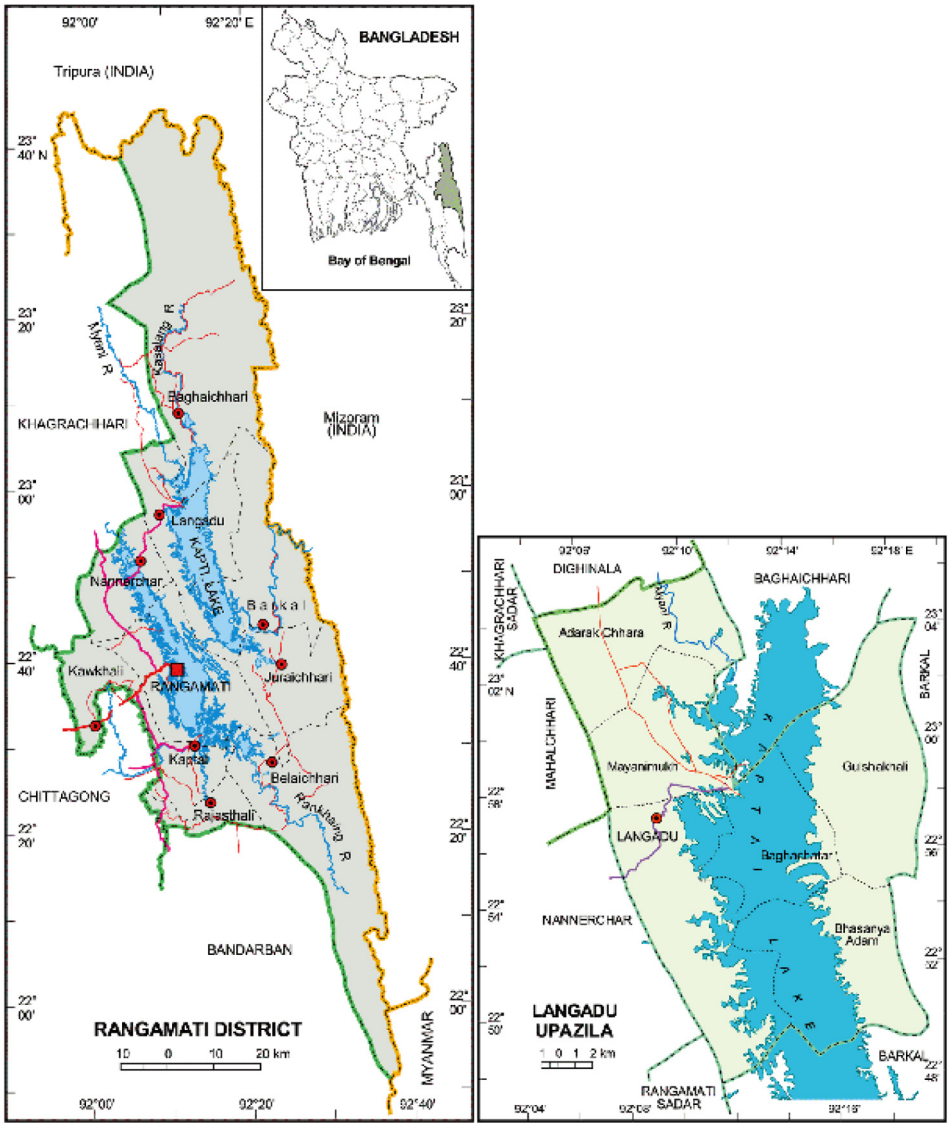
The total land area in Langadu Upazila is 336.7 sq. km (83,212 acres). The amount of cultivable land is 80.21 sq. km (19,822 acres). The government reports show those 14.50 sq. km (3600 acres) are uncultivated. The lake covers 25.64 sq. km (6360 acres). There are 172.13 sq. km (42, 540 acres) forest areas in this Upazila. The amount of unsown land is 49.57 sq.km (12 2, 52 acre). The total revenue land area is 585.33 sq. km (144,802 acres). Irrigation systems cover 13.98 sq. km (3500 acres) of land. The area is divided into 25 separate agricultural blocks. According to the local agricultural office, there are 182 power pumps, 25 power tillers and 250 irrigation schemes in Langadu Upazila. Yearly food production is about 6800 metric tons while the annual food demand is 8760 metric tons, giving an annual food deficit of almost 1960 metric tons. The main crops in the area are rice, potato, tobacco, turmeric, sugar-cane, maize, wheat, jute, and pulses (Statistics Office 2008).

Maynimuk Union

Maynimuk is a Union under Langadu sub-District. It is situated on the bank of the *Mayni* River. The Union is about 51.2 km from Rangamati. It has an area of 20.72 sq. km (5120 acres). There are 7,508 males and 6,377 females, giving a total population of 13,885. The total number of households is 2,766. The literacy rate of this union is 42%. The percentages of literate males and females are 48 and 33 respectively (Statistics Office 2008). It was an important bamboo and timber trading centre until the liberation war of Bangladesh. It also boasts a big fish market (Ishaq 1971).

Maynimuk Union is known as an area where both settlers and Adibasi are residing together with much unrest and mistrust. Most of the local administrators are authoritatively eager to show that communal harmony exists between the Adibasi and settlers. But the reality is quite different, due to the devastating effects of the

policies of leaving out the CHT from development since several decades. This can be seen in the living conditions of the Adibasi of Maynimuk Union, especially in the case of Chakma of Sonai and Mayni area. Historically, Chakma prefer to live on the river bank and settle down on the plain land. However, due to recent insecurity, many Chakma are now forced to live on the tops of hills. Moreover they have lost most of their traditional plain lands due to a wave of settlers from the plain districts of the country.



Map 3: Rangamati District and Langadu Upazila
Source: http://www.myrangamati.info/

Demographic and Cultural Findings on the Settings

As already mentioned, I have conducted my study at *Sonai* and *Mayni*, two Adibasi *mauza*, i.e. traditional administrative and revenue units in *Maynimuk union,* comprising several Adibasi villages. Sonai and Mayni are 6km and 2km from the Langadu headquarters. The census and survey conducted yielded the following estimates of population, household size and age distribution.

Total Population

The census estimates 1138 total Adibasi population in Sonai and Mayni mauza in 2007. Out of these, the census study reveals that there are 558 female and 592 male in the Adibasi households. Fifty-four percent of the total populations are single and 46% of them are married. In the area, the household composition consists of both nuclear and extended families. Yet, extended families with children, parents and grandparents are mostly the common household composition.

Box 1: Statistics on Family size

Mean Family Size= 4.6
Minimum member = 1
Maximum member =10
Standard Deviation=1.62
Standard Error=.107

Source: Census data of the study

Household Distribution

There are nine small hamlets within the two mauza of Sonai and Mayni. The hamlets are colloquially referred to as para. There is seven para in Sonai and two in Mayni mauza. These are Lamapara, Bayddapara, Karbaripara, Headmanpara, Bogapara, Duluchoripara, Memberpara in Sonai Mauza and Byttapara and Tintilapara in Mayni Mauza. The hamlets are located in hilly terrain and surrounded by plains mostly occupied by the Adi-Bengali[12] and Bengali settlers[13].

The following table contains the census and survey findings on the distribution of Adibasi households in Sonai and Mayni.

12 Adi-Bengali denotes the people who have been residing in the CHT Adibasi regions since many decades, especially those who arrived during British and Pakistan regime.

13 Bengali settlers are those non-tribal populations who have been living in the CHT by government sponsored settlement programs starting in the 1980s and continuing till date.

Table 3: Para (hamlet) wise Distribution of Households

Name of Para (hamlet)	Percent household (numbers within brackets)
Memberpara	10.9 (25)
Headmanpara	13.0 (30)
Duluchoripara	13.9 (32)
Bogapara	11.7 (27)
Karbaripara	22.6 (52)
Lamapara	14.8 (34)
Tintilapara	3.0 (07)
Bayddapara	7.8 (18)
Byttapara	2.2 (05)
Total	100 (230)

Source: Own Census and Survey

As we see from the figure above Karbaripara (23%) is the largest and Tintilapara (3%) the smallest unit. The general size of an Adibasi hamlet thus is about 25 to 50 households. The above table shows that there are only seven households in Tintilapara and five households in Byttapara. These Adibasi hamlets are surrounded mainly by the Bengali-settlers' area. Compared to other Adibasi para the latter are closer to Langadu town and the plain areas.

Age Distribution

The following table shows that a large proportion of the study population is young. One fourth are children between the age of 0 and 10, 19% are between the age of 10 to 20, 35% are between 20 and 40 while about 14% are older than 50. The average age is 44 years.

Table 4: Age Distribution of the Household Members

Age Category (Years)	Percent, Respondents (count in brackets)
Less than 10	24.8 (282)
10-20	19.4 (221)
20-30	22.0 (250)
30-40	12.8 (146)
40-50	7.5 (85)
50-60	8.4 (96)
60-70	3.4 (39)
More than 70	1.7 (19)
Total	100 (1138)

Source: Own census

The Origin of Village Names

I was curious to know why the two case study villages (mauza) are named Sonai and Mayni. I wanted to know if the Adibasi are familiar with and concerned about their history and how they learn about it. I started looking in the literature to find the origin of the mauza names. I only found a few lines on Langadu, but nothing detailed on Sonai and Mayni. I posed the same question to many of my interviewees. No one came up with specific answer. A few of them referred to an elderly person in the area who is familiar with and knows local history well. According to him, and regarding *Mayni,* it is the name of a branch of the *Khajlong* River, which in turn originates from the famous river *Karnafuli*. In Bengali, *Mukh* means mouth, and thus the union situated at the mouth of the Mayni River was named *Maynimuk*. Sonai is a small tributary to Mayni River (Interview, 080608, Headmanpara).

There were only two *Mauza* in Maynimuk Union during the Pakistan regime – i.e. Mayni and Sonai Mauza. Sonai and Mayni were once completely forested. Only a few Adibasi families lived in the area during British rule. The Maynimuk was designated a Mauza in 1909, and was classified as a governmental Reserved Forest (RF) during colonial rule. The whole area was exploited for timber by the British Forest Industrial Development Corporation (Interview, 080608, Headmanpara). Later, during the Pakistan regime, there were between 160 and 175 Adibasi families in Mayni. At the time, most of the Adibasi practiced both slash and burn (Jhum) and cultivation of plain land. In those days, there was sufficient land to support them. Only one Bengali family lived in Maynimuk Union at that time of my study (Interview, 080608, Headmanpara).

A third Mauza, *Gathachora* was added later. The Gathachora mauza is fully occupied by Bengali settlers.

Traditional Social System

Adibasis' have a traditional social system, in which the King (*Raja)*, Headman and *Karbari* (sub-headman) are the three different administrative levels. The King is the principal authority in regarding land issues and so on. The king is officially nominated by the Government and crowned by the District Commissioner (DC). The King selects the Headman and the Karbari, but his nominations have to be cleared by administrative head of the concerned districts, the Deputy Commissioner.

The King generally nominates the lower-rank Karbari following the headmen's nominations. Although these posts are not hereditary, the offspring of competent headmen and karbari are more likely to be selected in the future.

The main task of a headman is to distribute land among the Adibasi for settlement, resolving any land disputes within the community, assisting the government in revenue and tax collection, submitting reports on overall situation of the locality

etc. There are some limitations to the headman's authority. He has no judicial power in the event of rape, robbery, murder, kidnapping or entrance of outsiders into the Adibasi houses. According to Act 50 of Hill Tract Manual, the Headman is authorized to allocate some land for each Adibasi family to settle on. However, the land should be outside town areas. The Deputy Commissioner (DC) is also empowered to allocate land for settlement for Adibasi families. It is expected that the DC will allocate the land after discussion with the concerned headman.

According to many of my interviewees, the DCs of the CHT allocated hilly land among the settlers during the 1980s in manners that constituted violations of the Act. They did not bother to consult the headmen.

If an Adibasi family starts Jhum cultivation in any certain place, according to customary rules they are permitted to continue for at least three seasons. They are also allowed to cultivate a fourth term, even for life if they want. To be permitted lifetime occupancy of a piece land, however, they must get permission from the cultivator who was previously using the land. If someone does not follow this convention, the Headman can arrange to return the land to the earlier cultivator. The Headman is not authorized to give any official title deeds to the Adibasi. He simply records the name of receiver, amount of land and other details in his personal register.

There are 105 Karbari in Langadu sub-district. Of these, eight are from Maynimuk Union. Out of these, seven are from the Adibasi Chakma community and one is from the Bengali community. The Raja, headmen and karbari have no authority over the large population of settlers, who are subject to regular Bangladesh law and authority.

Religion

The census respondents are all ethnic Chakma except one family, whose members belong to the Marma group. Both the Chakma and Marma adhere to Buddhism, as well as to their indigenous culture and rituals. In Mayni and Sonai, none of the Adibasi families have converted from Buddhism to Christianity. However, some of respondents stated that there are many of Adibasi in other parts of the CHT who have done so. They think that those people converted mainly for economic, safety and security reasons. They further assert that the army is positively inclined towards the converted Christian Adibasi, which makes them less susceptible to torture (Group Discussion, 080120, Karbaripara).

Religion plays an important role among the Chakma. Most of the Chakma families keep a figurine or picture of Gautama Buddha in their houses. They offer prayers, flowers, candles and water every morning and before meals. Sometimes they dedicate fruits like apples or papayas to the Buddha. Later, they keep those offered items under the base of any flower plant.

There are two Buddhist shrines in Sonai and Mayni. One is *Sonai Doshobol Dhormorotno Buddha Bihar* and the other is *Duluchori Jetbon Bihar.* The latter has several sections: *Upgupta Buddha Shrine* and *the Gautam Buddha Shrine* and

Shiboli Buddha Mondir. The *Vante*[14] is the religious chief or head in these shrines. He maintains a different life from others. He stays at the shrine with his followers. The Adibasi Chakma who come to the temple regularly give food to the Vante and his followers.

Ceremony and Dresses

Adibasi celebrate *Notun Dhaner Utsobh* (an occasion for seasonal new rice) every year. They dedicate this to the memory of their late family members. Generally they invite their neighbors, friends and relatives to the ceremony. In their opinion, the ceremony helps them to attain mental peace and pleasure. They cook new rice, chicken, pork, vegetables, and some appetizers for the guests. Home-made wine is also consumed at the festival (Group Discussion, 080120, Karbaripara).

The Chakma attire resembles that of the Bengalis, but their relative poverty is often visible. The Chakma men wear shirts or *lungi* (a garment worn around the waist) similar to those of Bengalis. Women wear their traditional dresses which resemble Bengali *Saris*. The ankle-length *Phinon* is used by Chakma women to wrap around their waists, and *Khadi* is used to wrap around the torso. Recently and as an indication of social change, I saw many young girls of school-going age who did not wear the traditional Adibasi attire. The Chakma women weave the colorful *Phinon* and *Hadi* at home. The dresses feature intricate designs called *Alam*. This traditional, small industry has the potentials and could become more profitable.

14 *Vante* is a Chakma word which denotes the religious head in a Buddhist Shrine. The *Vante* is unmarried and has generally spent a long time in the deep forest or jungle to achieve religious purity. The *Vante* follows a life different from that of most Adibasi, in that he does not move around. There are a group of followers of the *Vante* who stay with him at the Shrine and work together.

CHAPTER 5

Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Context

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one frames a conceptual and theoretical discussion on ethnicity and nationalism and briefly focuses on liberal nationalism, global democracy and national identity, all in the context of the Adibasi in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Part two elaborates the historical process of deprivation and exclusion of the Adibasi in the CHT.

Part 1: Ethnicity and Nationalism

The discourse of ethnicity has been vibrant in the academia for many years, but various dimensions are still evolving, and new questions continue to be asked in sociological and other social science research.

The term 'ethnicity' first came into view in the English language in the 1950s, and was incorporated into the Oxford English Dictionary in 1953 (Hutchinson and Smith 1996 p.4). Though the root word 'ethnic', however is much more ancient. The term 'ethnic' derived from the Greek *ethnos* (which in turn derived from the word *ethnikos*), which originally meant 'heathen or pagan' (Williams 1976,P.119; Eriksen 2002,p.4). The meaning of the term 'ethnicity' is not unambiguous. The term is used and explained in diverse ways. Chapman et al say that, " 'Ethnicity', as an abstract noun meaning what it is you have if you are an 'ethnic group', followed on behind the adjective 'ethnic'" (Chapman, Mcdonald et al. 1989 p.15). Some scholars refer the meaning of term as 'the essence of an ethnic group' or ' the quality of belonging to an ethnic community or group'(Hutchinson and Smith 1996,p.4).

The term also may refer 'to a field of study: the classification of peoples and the relations between groups, in a context of 'self-other' distinctions' (Hutchinson and Smith 1996, p.4). Indeed, ethnicity reflects and contains the identity of an individual and his/her membership in a group. Ethnicity is a cultural tool of self-identification and, expression of inherited cultural traits and spirits.

Brass mentioned three different ways of defining ethnic groups – "In terms of objective attributes, with reference to subjective feelings, and in relation to behavior" (1991, p.18). His view of a minimum definition is that:

> Though no specific attribute is invariably associated with all ethnic categories, there must be some distinguishing cultural feature that clearly separates one group of people from another, whether that feature or features be language, territory, religion, color, diet, dress or any of them (Brass 1991, p.18).

Nguyen Thi Dieu notes:

> Polities throughout ages and continents, from kingdom to nation-states, in their territorial expansion have always attempted to impose certain socio-cultural values and economic patterns on the various ethnic groups that form their societies. Entering the modern age, most states had evolved national identities determined and defined by the dominant ethnic group(s). This process usually excluded certain ethnic minorities, in particular, the peoples that were variously named "tribal peoples", "savages", "barbarians", "slaves", "original people", or "indigenous people" (1996, p.101).

The above mentioned statement describes how majority groups hold power over minorities so that in many cases, the majority preserves and protects their own interests and well being to the detriment of the minority. Thus minorities often suffer from the negligence of the majority. They are even risk being declared as an extinct group, although they are not. However, these notions vary according to time and place. Eriksen states:

> In the United States, 'ethnics' came to be used around the Second World War as a polite term referring to Jews, Italians, Irish and other people considered inferior to the dominant group of largely British descent. None of the founding fathers of sociology and social anthropology – with the partial exception of Weber – granted ethnicity much attention (2002, p.4).

In this modern era, the implication of the term 'ethnicity' is still reminiscent of the above and in too many places and contexts the ethnic minorities are dominated by majority groups. Brubaker (2002, p.167) emphasizes the consideration of ethnicization, racialization and nationalization as political, social, cultural and psychological processes. He states:

> Ethnicity, race and nation should be conceptualized not as substance or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals – as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded and enduring 'groups' encourages us to do – but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms. This means thinking of ethnicity, race and nation not in terms of substantial groups or entities but in terms of practical categories, cultural idioms, cognitive schemes, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects and contingent events (Brubaker 2002, p.167).

The author takes care to differentiate the entity of a 'group' from the conceptual variable *groupness* and uses the distinction to widen the perspective. Brubaker's groupness avoids treating collective solidarity as constant, enduring or definite. Rather it contains phases of extraordinary cohesion and moments of intensely felt collective solidarity. It allows us to treat groupness as an *event* – something that 'happens', and which conversely may *not* happen (Brubaker 2002). He further states that:

> Ethnicity, race and nationhood exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, categorizations and identifications. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world. These include ethnicized ways of seeing (and ignoring), of construing (and misconstruing), of inferring (and misinferring), of remembering (and forgetting) (Brubaker 2002, p.174-75).

Indeed, ethnic identity should be seen as a naming and categorization for both individuals and groups. This is a crucial aspect of social construction, which can be applied to other species as well. Ethnic identity comes from political, social, economic, and even from academic hegemony and dominance. In this light, ethnicity might be considered as the articulations and forms of relations amongst individuals and groups. Eriksen notes referring to Bulmer (1967):

> The classifications of plants and animals are not objective, but rather social constructions. Thus, while Europeans classify the cassowary as a bird, the Karam of New Guinea do not. For them, it cannot be a bird since birds fly and the cassowary does not. However, bats are classified together with birds (2002, p.60).

Eriksen also suggests that every social community or identity is exclusive (2002, p.62). Groups and collectivities are always comprised in relation to *others*. However, the group may vary according to the context: e.g. geographical location, and period of time. Moreover the group may undergo transition and transformation. Ethnicity is thus a complete set of relations with others which we construct in various forms at global, national and regional levels. The construction of ethnicity contributes to a social structure in which the dominant group benefits from power, dominance and privileges over the dominated or the minority groups. Thus, what some scholars refer to as "othering" indicates and creates a set of relations in an individual's mind, which in turn create a sense of belonging to a particular group (Eriksen 2002). Although it is not always obvious, individual and group sentiments and ideologies are in more less constant flux, since new forms of relations will stimulate new directions of othering and belongingness. Thus, ethnicity and classification do not disappear; they are neither removed nor deleted, rather they take on new forms. Surprisingly, constructions of ethnicity are not limited to a few people; rather they cover and include all of us.

From a global perspective, ethnicity nowadays is deeply involved with the issues of immigration and cultural differences, with the new paradigm of terrorism, and religious backlashes, i.e. what is usually fundamentalism. The global perspective on ethnicity is of a dual nature. Minority–majority issues seem to have been gradually replaced by the challenges of modernity, global capitalism and the politics of

a globalised world. However, at the national level, in Bangladesh and as well as in many other countries, ethnicity, with its relevance for majority-minority issues and debates, remains pertinent. In this way, ethnicity remains related to regional level conflicts, insurgency, unrest, and to the processes of inclusion and exclusion.

All ethnic groups around the world do not harbor the same feeling of powerlessness. Despite the uniqueness of each ethnic group, there are also some common characteristics among them. Eriksen describes several types such as urban ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, proto-nations and ethnic groups in plural societies (2002, p.14-15). Of these, the urban ethnic minorities have integrated into the capitalist system of production and consumption. They have political interests, but they rarely seek political independence or statehood. Non-European immigrants in European cities, Hispanics in the United States, and migrants to industrial towns in Africa belong to this category. In contrast, the indigenous peoples tend to be allied with non-industrial modes of production and are only partly integrated into the dominant nation-state. What Eriksen calls proto-nations are identified as united ethnic forces that are struggling to establish their own rights, claim independent statehood, and are not willing to be ruled by other ethnicities. Kurds, Sikhs, Palestinians and Sri Lankan Tamils belong to this category. Eriksen's fourth category describes ethnic groups whose rights are recognized and do not aim for separate statehood away from a plural society (Eriksen 2002). The level of acceptance of ethnic minorities varies. The very term 'ethnic minority' tends to get political overtones. Governments and officials tend to have a different understanding of the term than scholars and scientists.

Recently we have seen a trend to use term 'indigenous people' instead of 'ethnic group'. However, even the term "indigenous" is not equally accepted all over the world and the term is contested, with different interpretations in Europe and Asia. China has officially denied accepting the term "indigenous" in its Western form. On the other hand, in India, the term 'Adibasi' (most often spelled 'Adivasi') has become popular and is used both by scholars and in political discourse. In Nepal, the term 'tribal' is still acceptable to the most people. Andrew Gray summarizes: "Along with class, ethnicity, culture, and gender, however, the word indigenous is somewhat "incoherent" in the sense that it cannot be used in the same way throughout the world. The meaning shifts according to the context" (Barns, Gray et al. 1995, p.56).

Nationalism

There is no consensus regarding the history origin of the concept of nationalism. Some claims that its origins lie in the seventeenth century after the treaty of Westphalia. Others claim that it evolved only at the beginning of nineteenth century where it was developed and refined before being spread to the rest of the world (Kedourie 1966, p.28; Dahbour and Ishaw 1995; Onwudiwe 2001, p.225). Some scholars claim that, 'In developing countries of Asia and Africa, nationalism was a reaction to colonialism'(Onwudiwe 2001, p.225).

Benedict Anderson defined nation as: "an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1991[1983], p.6). By 'imagined' Anderson does not inevitably mean 'invented', but emphasizes that people who are affiliated and define themselves as members of a nation 'will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson 1991[1983], p.6; Eriksen 2002, p.121).

Nationalism is also conceived of as the sentiment and movement of a nation, which unifies and develops the sense of solidarity amongst the members of a single ethnic group, or even between different ethnic groups who possesses a feeling of belonging together. This sense of belonging together is the foundation of nationhood. Thus, ethnicity encompasses feelings of solidarity, nationalism and statehood.

The naissance of the nation-state has created a new and challenging situation for ethnic groups. Members of small ethnic groups are considered by the state to be citizens of the nation-state regardless of their own wishes. For the most part, nation-states aim to integrate the small ethnic groups into the majority ethnic group. As a consequence and depending upon the context, these groups are now considered 'ethnic minorities' or 'indigenous groups'.

By definition, an ethnic minority group is numerically inferior to the rest of the population in a society, but it tends also to be politically non-dominant, and is being treated as an ethnic category (Minority Rights Group 1990: xiv; Eriksen 2002, p.121). The forms and positioning of minorities exists in terms of the roles, dominance and preferences of the majority group. The systems of a nation-state mostly uphold the primacy and superiority of the majority group(s). In this way, the nation-state distinguishes between national and ethnic identity. Ideally, nationalism is expected to encompass the common expectations and values, demands and aspirations of all ethnic groups, large and small, living within its boundaries. It also encourages all citizens to be entitled to enjoy equal rights and responsibilities. However, this normative ideal is rarely achieved, particularly in the regions where nationalism has evolved in the shadow of long-endured colonial rule. The national identity of such countries may owe much to the after effects of and continuation of colonial culture. The domination of ethnic groups handed down by colonial rule has been cultivated since long back in the post-colonial world. It is also apparent in some regions, that whatever the basis of the nation-state, virtually, as Eriksen states: 'everybody is forced to take on an identity as a citizen'.

However, ethnic groups share the same culture, values and identity. The members of a particular group may live in different corners of the world, but they feel solidarity with one another because of their distinctive heredity, culture and identity, which potentially may form the basis for nationalism and statehood. In the era of globalization, it is challenging to see how the dynamics of ethnic groups affect the construction of statehood and nationalism, as well as how ethnicity is linked with the notions of a country's future, internal conflicts, war, development and economic activities. A decade ago, nationalism and multiculturalism were the two important components of ethnicity. Eriksen stated that, "During the 1980s and 1990s, one could witness

an explosion in the growth of scholarly publications on ethnicity and nationalism, particularly in the fields of political science, history, sociology and social anthropology" (Eriksen 2002, p.1).

Ethnicity and nationalism are diverse expressions of collective public identity. The main differences between these diverse notions lie in their distinctive records and social fundamentals, which even concurrently exist in the same country (Onwudiwe 2001, p.213). According to Onwudiwe after the end of the Cold War, "[c]ompetition between the super powers has now been replaced by ethnic cleavages and hatreds that have led to bloodshed and repression around the world" (Onwudiwe 2001, p.213).

Samuel P. Huntington (1996) in his *Clash of Civilizations* attempted to make ethnicity, nationalism and culture the principle pillars of post-Cold War international politics. The ethnic tensions and civil wars of Rwanda, Burundi, Bosnia, Chechnya, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, and Albania served as turning points in world history, beginning to be written in terms of ethnicity and nationalism (Onwudiwe 2001, p.213-14). Ethno-national conflicts are still plentiful around the world. The world system may become weaker and our grasp on the goal of a unified modern world may slacken, due to the unrest, mistrust, psychological gap and distance between the dominant and dominated groups in various countries. Onwudiwe (2001, p.214) notes that, "Some scholars have warned that one consequence of this type of ethnonationalism is the collapse of some states into smaller and weaker units that will not be able to preserve their sovereignties" and, one may add, grow economically (Kegley and Wittkopf 1999, p.551-52; Sklar 1999, p.175). Onwudiwe further added referring to Kegley and Wittkopf (1999, p.551):

> The impending balkanization of many states by their constituent ethnonational groups may increase the population of nation-states in the world from its current 200-odds states to 500 according to the United Nations. This resultant new "order" will include peoples that belong to "cultural areas" with common historical backgrounds, philosophical beliefs, and religion that may provoke Huntington's *clash of civilizations* (Onwudiwe 2001, p.214).

The above statement reflects the necessity of enhancing trust and confidence among the indigenous population of the world who possess a historical background, solidarity and should be allowed to get equal rights everywhere as like the majority population, Otherwise, there may arise sort of demand for sovereignty from many of ethnic groups all over the world.

National Identity in Liberal Nationalism and the Context of CHT Adibasi

Nationalism is a construction based mainly upon the spirit of ethnicity. However, the construction of ethnicity provides an identity which supports nationalism with

a set of principles safeguarded by the state boundary. This boundary is achieved through the deeper sense of belongingness of citizens of that particular ethnic group(s). Nevertheless, national identity does not always provide equal treatment for members of all ethnic group(s). The gulf between majority and minority ethnic groups may persist. Consequently, discrimination and division are seen within the nation state. This can in turn undermine the sense of belongingness. Disintegration and alienation within the national identity predispose the nation-state to instability and unrest.

Does such unrest indicate the failure of the nation-state itself, or the failure of the process of integration within the system of the nation-state? The measures and processes of integration of all ethnic groups and the attainment of national identity without differences may require giving preferences to the deprived and backward groups in order to uphold national integration and solidarity, which in turn are considered as the base of nationalism. For this reason, it is said that nationalism requires a situation where a nation's citizens are prepared to sacrifice their lives for it. On the other hand, countries which have developed beyond the stage of the nation-state have already overcome their ethnic minority issues through the aforementioned actions. Ivanov notes:

> In a number of European countries where the concept of "political nation" has been adopted, the one-nation principle for the country has been explicitly formulated as a constitutional principle. At the same time the coordination of this principle with the principle of respect for existing ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity has been imposed more and more widely (1998, p.4).

This statement implies that giving dignity and maintaining separate identity for the ethnic minorities are not conflicting with the nation-state system, rather, a set of principle for these group enhance and uphold the spirit of nation-states and nationhood.

The European Commission for Democracy through Law defined the term "minority" in its 1991 proposal for the European Convention for Protection of Minorities as follows:

> The term "minority" shall mean a group which is smaller in number than the rest of population of a State, whose members, who are nationals of that State, have ethnical, religious, or linguistic features different from those of the rest of the population and are guided by the will to safeguard their culture, traditions, religion, or language. Any group coming within the terms of this definition shall be treated as an ethnic, religious, or linguistic minority (European Commission for Democracy Through Law 1993).

Some countries, primarily liberal democracies, have reached further in the integration of minorities into their societies through recognizing the value of their unique identities and individual autonomy. Moreover, individual autonomy and a focus on individuals' fundamental interests as they are cultivated in liberal democracies helps in achieving this. Rights to privacy and security of the person, and rights to expression and freedom of association are also considered of fundamental importance. I believe that the feeling, desiring and demanding of such a distinctive cultural identity

stems from a distinctive societal culture on the part of the minorities. Modern, liberal, and democratic countries have already adopted incorporation practices, which deserve to be widely adopted in other regions to ensure a level playing field for all citizens, including those who claim a distinctive identity. The importance of societal cultures to individual freedom is a normative stand and membership in societal culture is a fundamental interest of every individual. Based on this reality, the national minorities possess the right to self-government. Choudhry states:

> Self-government rights might take the form of federal arrangements that provide that members of a national minority constitute the majority in a federal sub-unit, or the establishment of reserved lands in the case of small indigenous populations. Moreover, these self-governing political entities possess jurisdiction over subject matters relevant to cultural survival (Choudhry 2002, p.60).

Will Kymlicka develops a theory of cultural rights in his renowned work *Multicultural Citizenship*. He concentrates on both national minorities and ethnic immigrants in discussing liberal democracy. Liberal democracy adopted various policies for ethnocultural accommodation. I will focus here only on cultural diversity, which is termed by Kymlicka as *national minorities.* Choudhry (2002, p.57) quotes Kymlicka, where he describes national minorities as previously self-governing peoples who have someway been integrated into states in which they do not comprise the mainstream group. Integration may have occurred involuntarily or voluntarily, for example, through invasion, treaties of cession or alliances. In contrast*, ethnic immigrants* usually come to live in a liberal democratic society through individual or familial immigration. He refers to the incorporation of a national minority as collective voluntarily or not, whereas for an ethnic immigrant, incorporation is individual and voluntarily. Choudhry (2002) says that, "Kymlicka's principal point is that national minorities possess and are capable of possessing societal culture, whereas ethnic immigrants do not or cannot". National minorities comprise cultures; usually occupied a specific territory or homeland. They share a common language and are institutionally complete (Choudhry 2002, p.58-59).

Nationalism may refer both to a political entity and to a political movement. The ambition of separate nationalism can be fulfilled through a political process, which combines political effort and organization, skilled and matured leadership, resources, and massive support from the supposed members of the nation. It is not only inequality in the distribution of resources, benefits and opportunities that can catalyze the movement for separate nationalism. The sense of relative deprivation can also spark its birth. A sense of frustration is a major driving force for the rise of sentiment, support for and solidarity among people in favor of establishing a separate nationalism. It is required to include the sentiments of all people who are willing to establish the new or separate nation or statehood. However, it is also important to ensure impartial treatment for all members of society during the process of establishing a new nation, since only then will the binding effect of nationalism be lasting and strong. Otherwise, a new cycle of frustration and yearning for a new nationalism may arise.

The construction of nationalism should ultimately aim for multiculturalism. Otherwise, there are risks of conflicts, mistrust and lack of bonding among the group or groups. It is evident that globalization-related challenges are continuing all over the world. To respond to them, many contemporary political theorists have argued for the need of democracy beyond the level of the nation-state. These theorists are also known as cosmopolitans. Thomas Pogge, Charles Beitz, David Held (2004), and Jurgen Habermas have contested the negative effects of processes of globalization and defended the global principles of distributive justice and global governance (Schutter and Tinnevelt 2009, p.109), principles which have evolved into the concept of global democracy. Schutter and Tinnevelt come to the defense of nationalism in a globalized world:

> Since the early 1990s, however, normative political theory has also witnessed a renewed normative defense of nationhood. This has led to the emergence of liberal nationalism. Liberal nationalists-Margaret Canovan, Chaim Gans, Will Kymlicka, David Miller, Margaret Moore, and Yael Tamir are essentially committed to the belief that liberalism is compatible with defense of the value of national identity and of national self-determination (Schutter and Tinnevelt 2009, p.109).

Schutter and Tinnevelt summarized this succinctly, saying, "Nationalism need not be inherently illiberal, and liberalism does not have to be inherently antinationalist" (2009, p.111). Tamir states that, " Liberal nationalism fosters national ideals without losing sight of other human values against which national ideals ought to be weighted" (1993, p.79). Schutter and Tinnevelt (2009, p.111) further note that, "Liberal nationalism is very different from race-based and ethnicity-or descent-based forms of nationalism. It is essentially cultural and linguistic in nature (Kymlicka 1995 and 2001)." Can liberal nationalism ensure the distinctiveness and self-identity of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities? Schutter and Tinnevelt argue:

> Liberal nationalism is not an expression of the self-interested desire to retain power of particular nations; it is a political theory that sets out to defend the equal rights to national identity of all nations. In majority-minority disputes over political boundaries in multinational states, for instance, liberal nationalists typically defend the equal rights of national minorities (2009, p.116).

It is an important issue to what extent ethnic minorities in developing countries have achieved official status as national minorities. Only then would there be a chance that all members of minority groups feel that they belong to the nation and that state treats them as citizens with equal rights and opportunities. In the case of many European countries, reality may come closer to this normative expectation, but that is not the case in other regions. It is more or less common that in the process of establishing nationality the minority groups come to be ignored. This is true for several Asian countries, particularly in South Asia including Bangladesh. The cultural identities of minority groups in South Asia are still tenuous. Many groups are still fighting to protect their heritage and culture from the hegemonic majority group. Such struggles often evolve into movements challenging the existing nationality and

statehood and create unrest and mistrust among the various groups within the society. The coexistence of various cultural groups with the preservation of each and every cultural identity would be the ideal solution to this problem. Thus ethnic minorities cannot be termed as national minorities, if the development of national identities did not take into account minority rights and responsibilities. I would claim that this is the case in Bangladesh.

However, the concept of a national minority has the potential to assist in the mainstreaming of ethnic minorities by integrating, and consolidating the ethnic minorities in the country. This would allow the ethnic minorities to achieve treatment equal to that of the majority group. In return the ethnic minority may come to honour their responsibilities with the state. It should be underlined that one of the central reasons for the long-endured unrest among the ethnic minorities of Bangladesh is their sense of not belonging to what they perceive as a Bengali or Bangladeshi nationality – a problem rooted in decades of deprivation and separation. Therefore, use of the national minority concept might be effective in the context of Bangladesh, if combined with equitable and neutral state policies.

Michael Walzer memorably summarized the ideal state as: "nationally, ethnically, racially, and religiously neutral" (Walzer 1996, p.9). Nevertheless, there exists the counter-argument that since neutrality is an 'impossible ideal', liberal neutrality is an illegitimate standard for political decision–making. However, if the state is equally sympathetic towards both mainstream and minority cultures, this may pragmatically be considered as 'neutrality' within the framework of liberalism.

In the following chapter I shall describe the historical process of marginalization and deprivation of the Adibasi of CHT. This historical process has made them into excluded minorities instead of giving them the status of national minorities.

Part II: Historical Process of Adibasi Exclusion

In this part, I will mainly concentrate on the historical background of the CHT. A foray into all political, hegemonic, financial, geo-political and racial aspects would be extensive, but I will concentrate on selected areas. The following is mainly based on reviews of books, published materials, journal articles, newspaper sources, media, various Internet sites etc.

Historiography

In discussing the historiography of the Adibasi its traditions and sources are described first. The Adibasi do not have a written history of their own. This makes for a scarcity of sources on the CHT history. Adibasi themselves rely largely on oral traditions (Mohsin 2002, p.11). Scholars have also attempted to document Adibasi history based on social customs, language and facial characteristics, The findings of this kind of historiography are often doubtful (Mohsin 2002, p.11). Regarding their historiography in general, Shelley comments that, "the history of the CHT is either incomplete or mostly inaccurate. Nevertheless, in the recent past attempts have been made, albeit scattered and piecemeal, to reconstruct the history of the CHT people. The information thus gleaned is comprehensive " (Shelley 1992, p.26).

Historical documents on the CHT grow richer from the late eighteenth century. Before that time, there are scattered references to Adibasi life, mostly in relation to events on the plains, which was a battleground between three centers of power that wanted to expand their areas of control and dominance. These were: Arakan to the south, Tripura to the north, and Bengal to the north-west (Van Schendel 1992, p.97). Mohsin writes: "The first written accounts of the Hill people of Chittagong are found in the revenue documents of the Moghals. British administrators of the region later provided a detailed account of these people"(2002, p.11).

Pre-colonial Situation (590 -1760)

The greater Chittagong and parts of the CHT were a battleground for the power struggles of different power centers' and political alliances at different times. No single party was able to hold the area for a long time without interference, interventions and attacks by others. Indeed, during the 6th and 7th centuries, the Chittagong region was ruled by the Kingdom of Arakan (Harun 2003). *Bira Raja,* also known as *Zuja Rupa* was the founder of Hills Tripura Raj Dynasty in 590 A.D. Bira Raja conquered the CHT and made Rangamati his capital (Ishaq 1971, p.25). In the 8th century, the

CHT was ruled by *Dharmapala* (reign: 770-810) of the Pala Empire for a short time. In 953 A.D.Tsula Tsandra (951-957), a king of Arakan occupied the Chittagong. Again, in 1240 A.D. the king of Tripura conquered the region (Ishaq 1971, p.25).

Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah (1338-1349) of *Sonargaon,* who established the first dynasty of the Sultanate of Bengal. He conquered Chittagong 1340, possibly including parts of the CHT (http://www.enotes.com/topic/Sitakunda_Upazila ; Ishaq 1971). The Ilyas Shahi Sultan, Rukunddin Barak Shah (1459-74) re-established his authority there towards the end of his rule. During the reign of Alauddin Hussain Shah (1493-1519), the king of Arakan recovered the territory for a short time. According to Rajmala, Dhanya Manikya re-established the authority of the Tripura Dynasty in the Chittagong region and also invaded Arakan by 1515 A.D. Arakanese Mugh King Minyaza re-conquered some territories in 1518 (Ishaq 1971, p.26-27). The Tripura Kings played a prominent part in the history of Bengal in the sixteenth century.

The district of Chittagong Hill Tracts remained under Arakanese rule until 1666 A.D. During the Mughal rule in the seventeenth century, the fearsome emperor Aurangzeb, headquartered in Delhi conquered the CHT. Shaista Khan was the Mughal Governor of Bengal under Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. He took the advantage of the dispute between the Portuguese and Arakanese Court to conquer the Chittagong district in 1666. The name of Chatgaon had been changed to Islamabad by the order of the virtuous emperor. During the whole Mughal Period, Chittagong district was ruled by the governors of Bengal. Thus, Muslim governors played key roles in controlling hill peoples (Ishaq 1971, p.28).

Chakmas' Rebellion against the Mughal Emperor

In the fifteenth century, the Chakma, Marma (Mughs) and some other tribal people entered the Chittagong region and settled in different areas. In 1418, The Chakma king Mwan Tsni, was driven out from upper Burma and took shelter at Ali Kadam. The indigenous Kukis were forced to leave Ramu and Teknaf due to the Chakmas' arrival (Azad 2004, p.17).

The Chakma were shocked and dissatisfied with life under the rule of the Mughal emperor, and tried to deny his supremacy. This led to the first rebellion in the CHT history in the form of an armed resistance against the Mughal in seventeenth century. Finally, the Chakma agreed to pay tax to the Mughal occupier in return for the preservation of their geographical territory, autonomy, and self-government and group identity. At that time, settlements of Bengali people from the plains had started to encroach into the CHT(Azad 2004, p.17).

Colonial Annexation: Policy of Exclusion (1760- 1947)

The area presently known as the CHT was part of a wider territory yielded to the British East India Company (EIC) by Mir Qasim Ali Khan, the Nawab of Bengal, in 1760 (Adnan 2004, p.20).

The first few years of British rule in the CHT was neither technically, nor in practice, possessive. One of main reasons for this could be that the EIC did not face any significant obstacles from the CHT in achieving their economic interests. The EIC was concerned with obtaining and holding power only in areas where they faced opposition. Initially, they did not even create any administrative structure to rule over the Adibasi. The relationship began with the tribute which the EIC extracted. The EIC did not deal directly with the population but nominated Bengali commission agents to collect tribute in the form of raw cotton from the various chiefs from the CHT. In this way, Bengali people were put in positions of supremacy over the hill people. Bengali agents were allowed to move freely, establish trade, and build settlements in the CHT, although they were not Government officers.

While acknowledging the dominance of British rule and influence, the headmen of the hill tribes were allowed to retain their authority. The Bengali EIC agents were third parties who had no official control over the hill people, but nevertheless had some sort of authority over the CHT ethnic groups. Hutchinson remarks:

> By the end of eighteenth century, every leading Chief paid to the Chittagong collector a certain tribute or yearly gift, to purchase the privilege of free trade between the inhabitants of the hills and the men of the plains. These sums were at first fluctuating in amount, but gradually brought to specific and fixed limits, eventually taking the shape, not of tribute, but of revenue paid to the state (1909, p.9).

Indeed, the EIC as well as the British ruler employed several strategies to deal with the CHT people. Since one of their main targets was to acquire wealth, they regularly collected revenue in cash or kind. At first, they only concentrated on economic benefits, but gradually, they began to control and halt the tribal insurgencies and rebellions, since these interfered with their profit-making enterprise. The British policy in the CHT was mainly to protect the political, economic and military interests of the British and to keep the indigenous people separate from the Bengalis. Thus the Hill people, and more specifically their chiefs, came to regard the British as their protectors, which permitted them to rule the area with relatively less effort (Mohsin 2002, p.27).

British Act XXII in 1860: Separation of the Hill Tracts (HT)

The year 1860 brought an overall change in the policy of the British government. Following the Sepoy rebellion of 1857, the British took over the direct administration of their Indian colonies from the East India Company. The protests and

rebellions by the hill people in the CHT was not to the satisfaction of the British rulers. The unrest was the result of continued oppression, harassment, threat to the autonomy, and the collection of tax in the form of money instead of as goods, such as part of their cotton crop (Hutchinson 1909, p.9; Ishaq 1971, p.10; Van Schendel 1992, p.108; Mohsin 2002, p.28-29).

The CHT had constantly been subject to hostile invasions from the tribes living to the east. The target of one such raid was a fort situated on *Kaptai Khal*. As a consequence of such attacks, the Commissioner recommended the removal of the Hill Tracts from the Regulation District and the appointment of a Superintendent over the hill tribes in 1859. As a result of this formal annexation, the British could station troops on the eastern borders of the hill district to fend off attacks from the east. These recommendations separating the Hill Tracts from the Regulation District were adopted in Act XXII of 1860, which came into operation on 1 August of that year. An officer with the title of Superintendent of the hill tribes was appointed in July of the same year. At that time, the total area of CHT was 17602 sq. km^2 and the population was 63,054. The headquarters of the district were first established at Chandraghona, but moved to Rangamati in 1868 (Hutchinson 1909, p.9; Ishaq 1971, p.10; Van Schendel 1992, p.108; Mohsin 2002, p.28-29).

British Interference in the CHT Land and Administration

The British annexation of the CHT in 1860 was done to facilitate control of the rebellious tribes in the area and secure economic and political control. However, these actions on the part of the British were devastating to the land rights of the hill peoples. Adnan (2004) describes the assumption of 'ownership' by the British colonial state as "crucial to the history" of changing land rights in the CHT. Large tracts of hilly areas were declared to be 'Reserve Forests'. This denied all cultivators access to what the hill people had always considered as commons.

In 1871 almost all forest areas were designated 'Government Forest'. Some years later, an additional five forest reserves were created where cultivation was not allowed. These covered an area of 3,500 km^2 or 26% of the total area, which covers 13,000 km^2 (Van Schendel1992, p.112). In 1875, government-owned forests were divided into two categories: Reserve Forests (RF), and District Forests, now known as Unclassed State Forests (USF). By 1882-83, nearly one fourth of the total area of the CHT was 'enclosed' as Reserve Forests (Adnan 2004, p.21).

In 1891, the British government annexed the Lushai Hills. By this time, the CHT had lost much of its economic and political importance. Since being designated as a district according to 1860 Act, the area had been reduced to the status of a mere *Subdivision*. The 1860 Act permitted the creation of a post of superintendent for the CHT district. It named the administrative head Deputy Commissioner (DC) in 1867. The Deputy Commissioner was given many powers including the administration of revenue and justice. In 1891, the CHT was again given the status of a

subdivision, with an Assistant Commissioner as its administrative head. As a result of the 1900 Regulation, the CHT again became a district.

1900 Regulation

The CHT Regulation (Act 1 of 1900) came into effect on May 17, 1900. It is well-known to Adibasi as the CHT Manual. This manual has provided the basic legal framework for the civil, revenue and legal administration of the CHT. The original Act of 1900 has however undergone subsequent modification. Major amendments were made in 1920, 1925, 1933 and 1935 (Adnan 2004, p.21).

It was recognized in the 1900 Regulation that the traditional customary laws and local administrative system would be maintained for the convenience of the hill people. However, at the same time, there were also provisions to increase the power of the civil administration. The Deputy Commissioner in CHT was even more powerful than the other DC's of Bengal. The officer was granted special powers by the Governor of Bengal. Under Article 38(a) of Chapter IV, the CHT was divided into three major administrative subdivisions: Rangamati, Ramgarh, and Bandarban. Each subdivision was administratively headed by a Sub-divisional Officer (SDO) (Mohsin, 2002, p.33).There were also several *Thana* which had the function and power for law and order and revenue collection as in other parts of Bengal. The DC had the power to monitor and control the entire CHT at that time, and remains a powerful head of civil administration and a government representative to this day. Mohsin notes that; "The regulation maintained the traditional institutions of the Circle Chiefs and Headman. However, all powers-executive, judiciary, and financial-were vested in the DC" (2002, p.33). Shelley describes:

> An evaluation of the Regulation points to the fact that the Regulation was not all-good so far as the tribal people were concerned. There were humiliating provisions, such as Rule 42, which made it compulsory for the tribals to provide labor when requisitioned by the Deputy Commissioner, other gazetted officers, chiefs, headmen and any other officers authorized by the Deputy Commissioner". …The Regulation (Rule 34) substantially restricted possession of land by outsiders in the hill tracts but did not ban it totally, since an outsider could acquire land for plantation on commercial basis [Rules 34 (b)], industrial purpose [Rule34 (c)], Residential purpose [Rule 34 (d)] and Commercial purpose [Rule34 (e)]. Migration from outside was, however, checked because, under Rule 52, no non-hill man could enter or reside in the CHT without obtaining a permit from the Deputy Commissioner. Apart from that, the Deputy Commissioner could expel anybody out of the CHT if he or she was found to be undesirable (Rule51) (Shelley 1992, p.83-84).

The quotation above portrays that the British rulers vested enormous power to the Government officers to dominate the Adibasi population and strategically ensured their isolated life that restricted their economic and social mobility. However, the 1900 Act prevented undesirable person from residing in the CHT region.

The whole CHT was divided into three circles in the 1900 Act. The Chakma circle was based around the town Rangamati, the Mong circle around the town Khagracahari (formerly Manikchari), and the Bohmong circle around the town of Bandarban. The chief of each of these circles was recognized as the Raja (King) of the respective area, and had control of the local administration. The British rulers thus introduced a special administrative system for the people of the CHT.

The three circles of CHT were comprised of 373 *Mauza* which in turn were each comprised of several Para, the smallest administrative unit in CHT. Each para was overseen by a *Karbari* (sub-Headman) who was appointed by the *Mauza* Headman, after discussion with the Circle chief. The Circle chief, after discussion with the DC, appointed a Circle Headman (previously called a *Dewan*). The Circle Headman was responsible for the proper collection of tax money for the Government. Each administrative level was allowed to keep part of the tax revenue, but the main share went to the colonial power.

When the Regulation of 1900 was first introduced, it decreed that outsiders, particularly Bengali people from the plains, were not allowed to enter and reside in the CHT without permission from the Deputy Commissioner. However, in the amendment of 1933, the British Governor relaxed these restrictions on the Bengali people. The Regulation divided the tribal zones and confirmed their tax collection in the form of money, instead of the traditional tribal form of payment in kind. Thus the administrative separation of the CHT from other districts of Bengal was maintained. In spite of its drawbacks and limitations, to hill people the 1900 Act is still considered favorable and favorite. This Regulation at least, to their minds, secured their autonomy. A report on the CHT remarks:

> The 1900 CHT regulations have played a crucial role in the contemporary debate over the CHT. Hill people constantly invoke the CHT regulations as a source of rights and as a challenge to the legality of the presence of the Bengali settlers who are now in the CHT. …There is a strong analogy between the 1900 Regulations and other historic documents dealing with tribal peoples, such as, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 (in Canada), the treaties with tribes in North America, the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand, the Lapp Codicial of 1753 in Norway and Sweden, the writings of Las Casas in Latin America and the Marshall judgments in the United States (CHT Commission 1991, p.9-10).

The 1900 Regulations referred to above, did not allow full autonomy or sovereignty for the indigenous people of the CHT, however, many people from Chakma who belong to *Sonai* and *Mayni Mauza* told me that the 1900 Regulation was good for them as it prevented the large scale invasion of Bengali settlers. The Act also made provisions for some rights of indigenous people, like creating the position of 'Circle Chief', who had the authority to resolve conflicts, mete out justice in tribal courts and uphold the customary laws of the CHT.

Indeed, through the 1900 Regulation, the people of the CHT were given a special status and the locality was exempted from the authority of the Bengal Presidency (Roy, Bhattachroyo et al. 2008). According to Van Schendel:

> Colonial annexation had far-reaching consequences... Perhaps the most radical change which colonial domination brought about was the abolition of kin-ordered modes of authority… A second crucial change was at first less apparent. Not only did the people of the Chittagong Hills become incorporated in a state for the first time in their history; they also became minorities overnight (1992, p.108-10).

Van Schendel reveals the far-reaching consequences of colonial dominance in the CHT. Indeed, the British rulers were fully aware about their own economic benefits and political dominance over the hill people as well as other parts of the Bengal. However, the British had at least formulated a set of policy for the ethnic population of the CHT which they still acknowledge.

British Rule and the Exclusion of CHT People

It has been shown above that the British rule had long-term consequences and effects in the CHT. Whatever the details of the 1900 Regulation and other Acts, their main target was to exploit the hill people and collect taxes in one form or another. The positions of Chief, Headman and Karbari were created only to uphold their main aim of tax collection. As a result, to the hill people they seemed to be little more than a troop of tax collectors. The ultimate effect of the separation, isolation and exclusion of the hill people from the rest of Bengal was to leave the indigenous people in the political dark. The majority of indigenous people was unable to access education and was thus politically underpowered. This deprivation left the hill people guideless and helpless during the Indian Nationalist Movement against the British dominance. Although Bengal played an important role in that movement, the people of the CHT were unaware and in the dark due to these consequences of British rule and the failure of the chiefs to make their inhabitants more conscious, educated and politically mobilized. Nevertheless, the CHT people were courageous when the British rulers entered into their region. They mobilized raids and protests, rebellions and skirmishes. However, at one point, the same Adibasi populations were unable to fully integrate themselves into nationalist movement and to accommodate with the changing new political environment. This led to several problems later, particularly related to the nature of their role during the anti-British movement and even later during the Bangladeshi movement against Pakistani rule. Mohsin notes:

> There was also no consensus of opinion among the Hill people on the future administration structure of the HT. The chiefs preferred the establishment of pure monarchy in the CHT, the moderates led by Kamini Mohan Dewan (a Chakma notable) preferred a constitutional monarchy on the British model, while the extremists led by Sneha Kumar Chakma preferred a republican form of government. These differences reflected the total unpreparedness of the people of CHT to face the new situation. The British policy of keeping them isolated, as well as the failure of the chiefs to educate and guide their people on this issues were responsible for their unpreparedness (2002, p.35-36).

Above quote points out the far-reaching consequences of the British rule over the CHT population and it explains why the Adibasi were even unaware about the political trends and their future. In other words, the British ruler had been able to keep the ethnic minorities into an unorganized form and into dark about their future. The 1900 Regulation and other rules imposed by the British did not aim to abolish the influence of moneylenders, traders and settlers in the CHT, all of which threatened tribal life. The British rule had also forced the tribal people to resort to the plough as opposed to shifting cultivation for their survival. The British had restricted the available area for slash and burn.

Thus, the Regulation was not a charter of autonomy for the people of the CHT, but was rather an administrative, legal and judicial framework, with the effect of depriving tribal groups of access to the free and modern world of surplus production. The British had created an arrangement which brought all the CHT people under an easily ruled umbrella. It was so successful that later regimes (Pakistan and Bangladesh) as we shall see also made use of its tenets.

Tribal Resistance against British Hegemony

The Chakma protested against the Mughal dominance in the CHT and from the very beginning of the East India Company era, the Chakma protested against British rule. Thus they started a 25 year guerrilla conflict which lasted from 1760 to 1785. In 1777, another ethnic group, the Kuki initiated a failed rebellion against British dominance. Documents from this period show that the rebellion created tension amongst the British rulers. Ishaq describes the situation:

> The Company's chief of Chittagong wrote in April 1777 to Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, that a mountaineer named Rona Khan had committed great violence on the landholders of the Company by exacting various taxes and imposing several claims on them. Rona Khan called to his aid large bodies of Kukimen, who lived far in the interior parts of the hills, who had not the use of firearms and who remained unclothed (1971, p.28).

As we can see in the above description, the hill people raised their protest against both the British rule and the superior role of Bengalis, who entered the region as commission agents for the British. To the hill people, both these parties seemed exploitative. The nature of the resistance can be discerned through historical documents, such as the following petition that was made on the 26th of June, 1778, by the Bengali property owners on the plains and the company's rent receivers to the British government. Islam (cited by Mohsin, 2002, p.27-28) writes:

> Jan Bakhsh, Chief of the Chakma tribe and Ranu Khan, his Deputy dispatch Pulwans (warriors) to seize and lay hold of our Talokdars (tenants) and Reyotts (cultivators) and exert from them Nuzzirs (tributes)...They have erected Neeshans (flag of independence) on the former cultivated and Jummabundy Land whose situation in adjacent to the sides of the mountains and will not permit the Reiotts to bring the same into cultivation requiring of the Reiotts to take Pottahs from them and to pay revenue to them …. They make a practice of sending pulwauns who

> seizing and confining our people and extorting from them sum of money, have established a jurisdiction, and inflict punishment in matters, which are only cognizable by the Huzzoor (Islam 1978, p.83-84).

Some scholars state that the rebellion and protest against the British East India Company was initiated by the hill people when the EIC first arrived. The formal declaration of the rebellion was made in 1777 by Rono Khan, and the protests lasted for approximately the next ten years. The outcome was the surrender of the Chakma chief Jan Bakhsh Khan. The British had imposed an economic blockade on the hill people, and thus forced them to negotiate and accept terms which benefited the British rulers. In return, the hill people preserved their autonomy and the migration of Bengalis into the hill regions was prevented. The chief accepted British paramount authority and agreed to pay regular tribute to the British rulers in the form of cotton. However, in 1789, the company began to take cash instead of cotton. This transformation posed new challenges for the hill people, because it forced them to contact and depend upon Bengali moneylenders and others.

This shift also drove the hill people towards the commercialization of their mode of subsistence. The British traders disliked Jhum (slash and burn) cultivation due to the difficulties involved in collecting the maximum possible benefit from it. The widely dispersed areas under cultivation made it difficult to measure and control production. The British traders would have preferred the hill people to engage in more familiar plough cultivation, so that they could more easily measure and acquire and the maximum product from their labor. Thus, the rebellion was contained, but the exploitation continued. The hill people had to adjust to a life with what little autonomy they were allowed. This situation lasted only until 1860.

During the British regime raids by the Kuki, one of Adibasi groups, were recorded in 1859, 1866, 1869, 1888 and 1892. Reports of several murders of British subjects were a source of anxiety for the British Government. This prompted them to create stringent rules and regulations for the tribal people. The raids and protests against the British dominance did not form only within this regional level; instead it had spread over the subcontinent later lead by a political platform namely Indian National Congress. However, at the later form, the role and participation of the ethnic minorities did not take into account properly and thus their voices have been ignored and their demands remained unimplemented. In the following discussion I briefly discuss the nationalist movement and the position of the CHT at that period.

Nationalist Movement and the CHT Positioning

Rajan (1969, p.89) states that, "There is a story that when an Indian politician in the course of his electioneering campaign in a rural area claimed that his party had

driven out the British and achieved independence for India, a lowly peasant innocently asked: 'But when did the British come to India?"

Rajan describes the above tale "as apocryphal and is only meant to underline the fact that in India's long history, British rule was but one episode, and one which did not affect or concern every Indian" (Rajan 1969, p.89). India came under British clout only about 1850, and this power lasted less than 100 years, as India became independent on August 15, 1947. Although British rule was relatively short-lived, the British East India Company had arrived in India long before the transformation of official power to British Government or Parliament. The influence of the British traders as well as rulers was extremely strong in some areas.

However, a strong anti-colonial movement was also formed led by the Indian National Congress. The Indian National Congress came into being in 1885. Indeed, The National Congress was formed upon a comprehension that a foreign force from thousands of miles away was ruling a country. Some politically influential new Indian elite and thinkers contributed to form such political platform. They came to an indulgent that India rundown for centuries of political dominance. India had lost its moorings which had an ancient empire and civilization of its own. However, they had lost their dominance of its affairs due to the arrival of British East Indian Company (Rajan 1969, p.92). They felt that the cause of dissatisfaction had to be eradicated, and an Indian forum must be established. Thus, The Indian National Congress was formed. In the twentieth century, this organization came into a powerful instrument for ending British rule in India (Rajan 1969, p.92). The anti-colonial movement spread all over the India, including Bengal, Pakistan and other areas which had been under British hegemony, but it took time to develop. In lots of places opposition materialized only after many years of British Rule. Religious differences were not an issue at the birth of the Independence movement, but it soon fragmented due to religious differences among the leadership and as a result of power struggles among the leadership.

One group of people tried to incorporate the CHT into the Indian state while others wanted to join Burma. However, the area ended up as part of Pakistan, which was partitioned from India at Independence for reasons of religion. At that time, 95 percent of the CHT populations were from non-Muslim tribal groups, but the area was absorbed into Muslim Pakistan regardless of this. The power supply from the Karnafuli River was one rationale behind this. In addition, the Indian National Congress' policy on the CHT was not clearly in favor of its ethnic groups. Moreover, the CHT inhabitants themselves and their local leadership were severely confused and less than unified. The three Chiefs demanded the recognition of each of their circles as 'native states', distinct from the British, the Congress and the Muslim League. Later they demanded a confederation with the Indian states of Tripura, Cooch Bihar and Khasia. The Marma Chief by contrast, suggested a union with Burma. Eventually, the Bengal Boundary commission headed by Cyril Radcliffe, granted the CHT to Pakistan (Chakma 1986, p.3-13; Mohsin 2002, p.35). As a case in point, Hodson describes Mountbatten's clarification as follows:

> The whole economic life of the people of the Hill Tracts depends upon East Bengal … There are only one or two indifferent tracts through the jungle into Assam, and it would be disastrous for the people themselves to be cut off from East Bengal… In Chittagong, the only port of East Bengal also depends upon the Hill Tracts (Hodson 1969, p.350).

As we can see from this citation, the CHT is strategically significant place in terms of relation between India and Bangladesh. However, during and after the British rule in India has created a long-term affect on Indian culture, education, administration, regulation, rules and reforms. The effects of British presence are still palpable in the CHT; this can be easily discovered if one talks to and mixes with the indigenous people. The people of the CHT are still familiar with the Regulation of 1900 and various Acts promulgated by the British rulers during their direct and indirect rules in the region. The 1900 Act belongs to these. At the time of its creation, many indigenous people were not aware of the British rule and role in the CHT life. Awareness came only later, when they found and traced the British legacy in the history of their region.

Partition and the Chittagong Hill Tracts

The position of the CHT people during and after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 was not clear to them; though it seems that the CHT people did take the opportunity to play a role at that time, although the period was dominated by macro level national politics. The main issues at the time were on the one hand the technicalities of a smooth departure of the British and on the other hand the religious differences which became the main issue at the of partition of British India. With such momentous events, the concerns of the subaltern and minority populations were far from the forefront. The partition of Pakistan from India was nominally on the basis of religion, but it seems contradictory, since an area dominated by the non-Muslim tribes, like the CHT were awarded to Pakistan. The minority issues were not taken into account during the construction of two nations, and this indicated how little value the subaltern and minorities were during the construction of Indian and Pakistan nationalism. Later, India adopted a secular approach to run their economy, society and its politics. In contrast, Pakistan concentrated on other issues which further deepened divisions within the country. The reasons for inclusion of the CHT in Pakistan were by no means clear, as shown by the following quotation:

> Pakistan was to be comprised of the Muslim majority areas of India. By this logic, the CHT with a 97% non-Muslim population would have been included in India. Delegation of hill people went to New Delhi from the CHT prior to independence and received assurances from [Indian Congress leaders, my addition] Patel and Nehru that the CHT would be included in India. The Radcliffe boundary commission worked in secret and no reasons were given for its decisions. It reported after independence celebrations in both Pakistan (August 14) and India (August15). On August 15, 1947, the Indian flag was hoisted in Rangamati and the Burmese flag hoisted

in Bandarban. On August 17 the Radcliffe awards were published. CHT had been included in Pakistan. On August 21, the Pakistan military took down the flags (CHT Commission 1991, p.12).

As mentioned, the people of CHT were much confused, especially the Chakma community. The confusion spanned both the elite and non-elite groups. Partition seemed suddenly emerged to them as they were not engaged or involved with the macro level national politics and the newly arisen politics of nationalism. The elite Chakma were concerned with the partition and the conflict between Hindu and Muslim leaders. Some of the Chakma elite wanted to be included with the new state of Pakistan, but a significant group among them preferred union with India. The main argument for union with India was the non-Muslim majority in the CHT region. Those in favor of union with India included the Chakma notables Kamini Mohan Dewan and Sneha Kumar Chakma. As a delegation to the Congress Party of India, they proposed the inclusion of the CHT with India to Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Kripalini, Rajendra Prasad, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Sarder Ballav Bhai Patel. Records show that these congress leaders were sympathetic. However, despite this last ditch effort the CHT was awarded to Pakistan. In 1946, the Adibasi chiefs formed the "The Hillman Association", and proposed a significant status for the CHT like that of adjacent Tripura, Cooch Bihar and Khasia. This would have allowed them to be part of a confederation under the administrative control of the central government of India. However, this move also failed (Shelley 1992 , p.29). It is further noticeable that during the partition, the province of East Bengal was formed under the new state of Pakistan and constituted the East Pakistan. Significantly, however, CHT was placed under Pakistan's central government, rather than the provincial government of East Bengal (Adnan 2004, p.23).

Despite the actions of Chakma leaders to obtain incorporation of the CHT into India, the Chakma chiefs did not contest joining Pakistan. The tribal leaders from Bandarban, as already mentioned even advocated union with Burma. The general subaltern populace was mostly unaware of the contentious issues during the partition India.

Pakistan Period

Pakistan is a Muslim state built upon a religious ideology, though there are many questions as to the strength of this ideology. The polity of Pakistan did not facilitate East Pakistan to mobilize and strengthen its economy. The economic deprivation and political exploitation, starting from language movement in1952, 6-points movements in1966, false cases by the Government against the political leaders of East Pakistan became severe enough to precipitate the war of Liberation in 1971 between East and West Pakistan. Through long term political mobilization, leadership and,

later, by a 9 month liberation war, Bangladesh was established as a separate country. This happened despite the fact that 10% of the population in East Pakistan was non-Muslim Bengali at that time – contradicting the idea that Pakistan was created solely to be a Muslim nation. Thus, the Bengali people, Muslims as well as non-Muslims and the non-Bengali tribal people suffered during the Pakistan regime. The tribal people suffered in more ways, including alienation from the state and the rest of society.

The CHT was granted to Pakistan for economic reasons. The region was to provide as a vicinity to the port city of Chittagong. Succeeding policies adopted by the Pakistani rulers reaffirmed this position (Mohsin 2002, p.93). The Pakistan regime mostly exploited the natural resources of the CHT, and exhibited little concern about the probable impacts and damages on the Adibasi people or on the environment. Such an attitude was typically justified by invoking the discourse of 'development in the national interest' (Adnan 2004, p.23). In addition to this during the Pakistani period legal and administrative changes were undertaken. Most of those initiatives harmed Adibasi interests, as the following section will show.

Administrative and Legal Changes

The first administrative act of the Pakistan government was to cancel the CHT Frontier Police Regulation of 1881 and thereby absorb the local police force into the East Pakistan Police. In 1955, just 9 years after the creation of Pakistan, the central government initiated the repeal of the special status of CHT which was assured in the regulation of 1900 during British rule. Finally, due to tribal protests, this repeal was postponed and finally thwarted. In the first constitution of Pakistan in 1965, the status of CHT as an "excluded area" was retained and the Regulation of 1900 was almost unchanged. However, the provision relating to the powers of the High Court was amended. This time the CHT people were granted suffrage. These moves stabilized the CHT for some time. However, within a few years, the old problems resurfaced under President Ayub Khan from 1958 to 1969. In 1962, he declared the change of the status of the CHT from "excluded area" to "tribal area". One year after that declaration, he fully withdrew the special status of the CHT through a constitutional amendment, which came into effect 1964. Thus, the regulation of 1900 was effectively set aside (Shelley 1992 , p.30). Ayub Khan also promulgated the cancellation of the provisions of special status of the CHT people, which had been established earlier. This time he gradually modified the legislation, ostensibly to enable the indigenous people to benefit from modern projects and participate in the new life and developments of the Pakistani nation. However, the real effects of planning and design had the opposite effect. All changes were made to exploit the assets of the CHT for so-called national development. These actions reflect the extent to which the government disregarded the development projects' effects on the tribal people. It is thus of interest to analyze the detailed impact of some of the development programs initiated by the Pakistani government in the CHT.

Establishment of the Karnafuli Paper Mill Ltd

From 1949 to 1950, the government planned the establishment of the Karnafuli Paper Mill Ltd. with a daily production capacity of 100 tons. The mill was completed in October 1953 at a total cost of Rs. 65.90 million including a World Bank loan of Rs. 4.20 million dollars (Ishaq 1971, p.155-56). It was hailed as one of the first major development interventions in the CHT by the Pakistani government. The mill utilized as raw materials the bamboo and softwood extracted from the hill forest of the area (Adnan 2004, p.23), but all the direct and indirect benefits of this project went to others, thus depriving the hill people further. The mill created many jobs, very few of which were given to the Adibasi people. Moreover, the project forced the relocation of many Marma tribes from areas near the mill, despite the fact that the area was designated for indigenous people and was supposedly under their jurisdiction (Mohsin 2002, p.106). As of today, there are no longer any indigenous families near the mill. In addition to Karnafuli Paper Mill Ltd, Karnafuli Rayon and Chemicals Ltd. set up a factory at Chandraghona in cooperation with M/S Dawood Corporation Ltd in 1966. Their main productions were viscose rayon yarn and cellophane paper (Mohsin 2002, p.156). This mill also extracted most of its raw material from the CHT region.

Extracting the CHT Forest Resources

According to 1961 census, the total area of CHT was 13241.8 km^2 (5, 093 sq. mile). Of this, an area of 11395.8 km^2 (4,383 square miles) or 85.3 percent of the land in the district was forested. The East Pakistan Forest Industries Development Corporation (EPFIDC) implemented the Mechanical Logging Project in the forests of the CHT. According to official documents, the project logs trees up to 200 feet in height with a girth of over 18 feet. The project aims at harvesting about 2.5 million cubic feet of timber per annum. The EPFIDC set up a modern automated sawmill at Kaptai to handle the large quantity of logs. The EPFIDC also established extensive plantations of rubber in the province, starting in 1961. Under Pakistani direction, these extended over an area of 4047 km^2 (1,000 acres) in CHT. Based on forest resources, the Eastern Pakistan Timber and Plywood Industries, the Sterling Plywood Products Ltd., the Satter Match Factory and the Royal Textile Mills extracted raw material from the area (Ishaq 1971, p.156-57). In 1962, The Pakistani government established a new category of Protected Forests in the CHT. The Pakistani government also proscribed Jhum cultivation within the Protected Forest areas. The government instead plans to establish a 'softwood working circle' and 'fruit tree working circle'(Adnan 2004, p.23).

Karnafuli Multipurpose Project

Described by Adnan (2004, p.23), as the most ambitious and controversial 'development' intervention in the CHT during the Pakistan period, the Kaptai dam or Karnafuli Multipurpose Project built in 1963 damaged ethnic settlements and cultivable land, destroyed the dream of Adibasi life, and forced them to flee to a neighboring country. The project was begun in October 1957 and was fully completed by 1963. The government of Pakistan requested to the government of the United States of America (USA) to provide financial aid for this project. USA agreed to provide the necessary assistance. Accordingly, contracts were drawn up and finalized with the International Engineering Company Inc. The initial studies of the project were conducted in 1954 and later, in 1956, the engineering works were begun. Utah International Inc. was selected as the firm to build the Kaptai dam and started their construction work in 1957 (Ishaq 1971, p.155). It was the first hydro-electric development project in East Pakistan. The multipurpose project aimed to improve flood control, navigation benefits and the power supply. The Kaptai dam was constructed at a cost of about Rs. 490 million at that period (Ishaq 1971, p.155). The length of the dam is 670.6 meters and height is 45.7 meters. Initially, the Kaptai dam had two hydropower units with a total capacity of 80 MW and later it has developed to five units with a total capacity of 230MW. This hydropower project provides approximately 5% of the electricity consumed in Bangladesh (Parveen and Faisal 2002).

To explore the consequences and impact of the Kaptai dam, one can take as a starting point the views of the government towards the project. Pakistan government described the dam site as 'a Reserve Forest area, which was inhabited by numerous wild animals' (Ishaq 1971, p.154). In contrast, the Report of the CHT commission says:

> The hydro-electric project created the huge Kaptai Lake roughly in the centre of the CHT. 100,000 hill people lost their lands, 40% of the arable valley lands of CHT were inundated. 40,000 people left for India and today live in Arunachal Pradesh. They have never gained Indian citizenship for themselves or even for children born in India. Some 20,000 are said to have gone to Arakan in Burma. Others were dispersed within CHT (1991, p.13).

As described above by the CHT commission, the construction of hydro-electric project in Kaptai, CHT has led to enormous losses of the Adibasi population and many of them were bound to leave their homeland and became refugees in India. Adnan describes:

> While estimates vary, an area approximately 1036 sq.km (400 sq. miles) was submerged, including 'old' Rangamati town, the principal urban centre of the CHT. Crucially, 54,000 acres of the highly–prized plough lands in the river valleys went under water, amounting to a loss of 40 percent of such lands. The lake also submerged Jhum lands and Reserve Forests (more than 70 square miles) (2004, p.23-24).

Indeed, there are different dimensions of losses in Adibasi life for establishing Kaptai dam in the CHT. It has short-term and long -term consequences on Adibasi life and

one can say that the psychological stress and loss of faith on the State and on other component are beyond the measurement. An impact assessment was conducted by then government in 1954 before starting the construction work on the Kaptai dam, but it totally ignored the social impact of the project and focused only on the engineering aspects, whether intentionally or not. Thus, the basic right of people to live on their own land was severely violated through the establishment of the dam project. In addition, most of the affected people were from ethnic minorities. The discriminatory legacy of the British was perpetuated when the Pakistan government had decided to compensate some of those affected by the project, but excluded indigenous people. They were not resettled properly and did not receive good quality land, which was instead distributed among the evacuated Bengali settlers. The hill people on the other hand were given low quality land and little of it, causing huge frustration among them. To their shock, the hill people found themselves helpless in their ancestral lands, having lost their homes, lands, forests, gardens, and a sense of trust and belongingness to a place. In this way, Kaptai dam not only submerged the land of the hills, but also destroyed many things which were dear to the hill people. The project effectively and as it seemed definitely broke the trust between the hill people and the state.[15] Mohsin notes, "The government hastily drew up a rehabilitation plan that was neither envisaged earlier nor properly executed. A portion of Kassalong Reserve Forest (RF) was unreserved and the government rehabilitated 5,633 families who received three acres of inferior land which on average was half of their original holding" (2002, p.103).

The Kaptai dam had severe effects on the slash and burn (Jhum) cultivation of the hill people, echoing the British policy of forcing their ancestors to change from Jhum to plough cultivation so that the British and their agents could better control them. This time, the Pakistani government constructed the Kaptai dam which inundated vast areas of land, causing many people to flee. A huge number of displaced tribal people were forced to gather and resettle within a limited area, resulting in heavy pressure on their Jhum land. Prior to the construction of the dam, the tribal people let the land lie fallow for ten to fifteen years between cultivations. After the dam construction, the affected people were forced to cultivate the same hills after three to five years resulting in declining soil fertility, low yields from Jhum land and lack of interest among farmers (Samad 1991, p.6; Mohsin 2002, p.104).

It must be said here that the hydro-electric project in East Bengal had benefits in terms of generating power for East Bengal. But considering the poorly compensated suffering it caused for the displaced hill people, it is either viewed as a "white elephant" (Roy 1992, p.9) or a "death trap" (Srijagdish 1991, p.141) by the hill people (Mohsin 2002, p.104). Mohsin further added that from her interviews, it is clear that the government had promised the hill people free electricity supply, but only one percent of the local population has access to electricity (2002, p.105). I found more evidence of the lack of electricity from the Sonai Mauza under Langadu Thana which was directly affected by the Kaptai dam. None of the families in Sonai Mauza enjoys electrification. The very few families who have the capacity to buy a television

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or tape recorder use batteries or generators to enjoy the music or news broadcasts, but this is costly. Most families do not have the capacity to buy a new television. They still expect the power supply in their areas as they are the people who were displaced by the Kaptai dam. However, almost four decades have passed since the dam's construction, and their nights are lit only by kerosene lamps[16]. Even kerosene is used sparingly, since it is expensive and they must restock every week or month from the bazar.

Policies of Pakistan and the Marginalized Indigenous Group

Pakistan's establishment of the Kaptai dam in the CHT not only displaced hill people but created a sense of alienation among them. The evacuees who did not flee were resettled, but inappropriately. This displacement, dislocation and destitution created alienation but at the same time, solidarity among the different tribal groups. Previously, they had not succeeded in creating a political platform from which to oppose the state. This time, after the construction of the Dam the deprived and alienated hill people understood the need to organize and to raise their voice. They formed underground parties, as they were not entitled to do so according to the 1900 Regulation, which was kept almost unchanged throughout the Pakistan period. In stark opposition to the rather passive Adibasi, large numbers of more active Bengalis had entered the CHT during the Pakistani period. These settlers were deeply engaged within trade, industry, extraction of hill and forest resources, occupying land for long term settlements, controlling the local markets, administrative jobs etc. These activities made the hill people feel even more threatened. Multiple sources domination thus overburdened the hill people. This continued during the liberation war of Bangladesh and into its aftermath. The hill people suffered psychological as well as physical damage during Pakistan regime. They claimed that despite the allegiance of their chiefs, the general hill people wanted independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan. However, trust did not develop with the Bengali leadership of the liberation movement, causing the hill people to be ignored during the liberation war. A group of hill people took up the fight against the Pakistani rulers, but most of them were silent. No doubt the confusion was added to by the unclear or pro-Pakistan positions of some of the chiefs.

Conclusion

The above discussion clearly shows the process of deprivation of the Adibasi since centuries. The British East Indian Company extracted their regional wealth and segregated them from the rest of Bengal. The Pakistan governments behaved in the same manner with the CHT Adibasi. At that period, the demand for separate identity and

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nationhood by the Adibasi were not taken into account by the Pakistan government. Instead, the majority of the CHT population was deprived and excluded from the decisions that determined their identity and nationhood. It is furthermore clear that the Adibasi were disenfranchised even by their own leaders. Most Adibasi had less access to modern culture, education, lifestyles and the opportunity to change with the mainstream social structure. Thus, the common Adibasi faced troubles from several sources. The traditional feudal social system often distorted Adibasi dreams and desires of social change. The Adibasi were deprived and marginalized by the state machineries and as well as within the traditional social system which had often failed to prevent and uphold the common demands of Adibasi which could have been played a vital role to change their own society. In the following Chapter, I will concentrate on discussing several governments of independent Bangladesh and their policies towards the CHT and the Adibasi. The chapter also briefly discusses recent features and trends in the traditional 'feudal' social system of the Adibasi.

CHAPTER 6

The CHT Adibasi in Independent Bangladesh

This chapter contains a discussion on the treatment of Adibasi in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) by various governments or administrations of independent Bangladesh. They include both military and (more or less) democratically elected governments. I will focus on the major initiatives by various administrations towards the Adibasi and their ways and means of handling these marginalized groups, excluded from mainstream society, both during Pakistani period as well as by the British rulers. I will also briefly dwell on the dynamics and weaknesses of the traditional social system that have been pointed out by the interviewees, by few key persons as well as by some scholars.

Birth of Bangladesh as an Independent State

During the sixties, the people of the Plains of East Pakistan were preparing to fight against Pakistani rule and suppression and for self determination and freedom. At the same time, the hill people were preparing to struggle for *their* rights and against the settlement policy of the Pakistani government, as the realization spread that the Pakistani government intended to create a Bengali Muslim colony in the CHT (Roy, Bhattachroyo et al. 2008). The hill people were highly unsatisfied with the Pakistani rule. Moreover, West Pakistan was dominating over East Pakistan from beginning to end. *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the architect of Bangladesh, declared Bangladesh's independence on 26 March 1971, which catalyzed a nine month long freedom war. In the early hours of the same day, the Pakistan army had arrested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Moments before his arrest he declared the independence of Bangladesh in the following words:

> This may be my last message. From today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved (Swadhinata 1982, p.1; Mohsin 2002, p.54).

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's call for declaration of independence clearly manifests that the leader of the nation invited every section of his population to join the fight to achieve the freedom of the country. The freedom movement ended with the liberation of Bangladesh on 16 December 1971. At the time of independence, Bangladesh's 'tribal problem had a long historical genesis' (Shelley 1992, p.33). Afterwards, the Adibasi have faced several political, social and economic barriers. Their situation was not made better by the widespread distrust of their role in the independence movement.

Liberation War of Bangladesh and the Role of the Adibasi

There are different opinions about the role of the hill people in the freedom movement. My own impression is that during that time the hill people were leaderless and confused about their role. Their limited participation may have been due to failures of both the party leading the freedom movement, the Awami League, and the local commanders to incorporate the hill people into the liberation fight[17]. During the previous decades the Adibasi had been at best neglected, at worst discriminated against by Pakistani rule. As a consequence, it seems they did not look upon the Pakistani regime kindly. Still, it is true that not all the hill tribe chiefs were against the Liberation war. Among the three Chiefs the Mong King, Prue Chai Chowdhury had joined and played a pro-liberation role. The Bohmong King, Sohi Prue Chowdhury remained reticent about his role, while the Chakma King, Tri Dev Roy supported the Pakistan army (Mohsin 2002, p.55). The Chakma king, seen as a traitor by the freedom fighters led some to stamp whole sections of tribal society as anti-liberation (Shelley 1992 , p.33).

My observations suggest that during the liberation war, the majority of the hill people were hostile to Pakistan, but mainstream politics and politicians did not pay much attention to role of the hill people in the freedom fight. Other dynamics may have been at play, but these are beyond the subject of this study. Be that as it may, the historical outcome of the armed struggle and extensive participation of the people was the emergence of a sovereign Bangladesh on 16 December, 1971.

The newly-gained freedom of the country stirred the ambitions of the Adibasi. The hill people anticipated that they would be able to benefit from and establish their rights to self-determination, dignity and their rights to land and other resources in what they regarded as their own country (Roy, Bhattachroyo et al. 2008, p.7). However, the Adibasi soon grew frustrated. Although Bengali nationalism had achieved its goal, the Adibasi were uncertain as to their place in the newly established

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state. They sought an acceptable solution by submitting their demands to the newly formed government. The then Member of Parliament, the late Manobendra Narayan Larma raised the demand of autonomy for the Jumma people in Parliament. His demand did not gain support from the Bengali leaders. Bangabandhu (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) instead invited the Adibasi to become Bengali (Roy, Bhattachroyo et al. 2008, p.7).

It was expected by the Adibasi that an important and sensitive area as the CHT would have been given priority by the leaders of the freedom movement. At the very least, the situation of the CHT people should have been considered during the drafting of the Bangladeshi constitution. This did not happen, causing frustration and uncertainty among the Adibasi regarding their future in Bangladesh.

Formation of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhiti Samiti (PCJSS)

During the constitution of the country no special status was bestowed on the hill people, and thus they felt ignored and deprived. Independent Bangladesh seemed to be running another strategy of exclusion vis-à-vis them. For this reason, the hill people's political party, the *Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhiti Samiti* (PCJSS) was formed in 1972. It did not arise suddenly and resentment over their exploitation and lack of empowerment had brewed for long. The PCJSS was formed under the leadership of Manobendra Narayan Larma in March of 1972. He was a school teacher as well as a lawyer, and most of the leaders of PCJSS were also school teachers. Therefore, the CHT rebellion is sometimes called the 'rebellion of head teachers'. Manobendra was elected as a member of parliament in 1973 as an independent candidate. He was a Marxist during his student life, as well as a member of the 'East Pakistan Student Union' during his studies at the University of Dhaka. In 1966, he formed '*Upajation Chattro Samiti*' (hill student union) in Dhaka and Chittagong. The office of the hill student union was established in Rangamati in 1969.

Indeed, The Larma family is one of the main political families in the CHT. Two brothers -Manobendra Narayan Larma and Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma (Santu Larma) initiated the rebellion among the hill people. Both of them took up leadership roles, also in the armed rebellion. From 1973 to 1974, the military wing of the PCJSS, the *Shanti Bahini* (SB) was formed under the leadership of Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, nicknamed Shantu Larma (CHT Commission 1991, p.16). The brothers initiated the training of Shanti Bahini, which was solely concerned with armed resistance. The Shanti Bahini was officially established on 7th January, 1973 in the *Itchari* Forest of Khagracahari district. The name Shanti Bahini (Peace Forces) was inspired by the soubriquet of the leader Manudendra or Santu Larma. Santu or *Santi* means peace (Azad 2004, p.23). During 1974, Shanti Bahini asked for cooperation and assistance from India, but the Indians instead informed the Bangladesh government about their move.

Indeed, to establish a separate identity and to achieve a dignified life in the Hills was the top demand of the Adibasi. This claim was raised soon after the independ-

ence of Bangladesh. It had been placed in the national parliament of Bangladesh; it was not in earnest supported by the government. However, a political discussion had started. A dialogue between the Hill leaders and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made some progress towards resolving the problems of the CHT. According to Roy, Bhattachroyo et al referring to Bhattycharya (2007, p.13):

> It was known that in 1975, just before his assassination the Bangabandhu had a very deep amicable discussion with Manobendra Narayan Larma in which Bangabandhu expressed his solidarity to the fundamental rights of the indigenous people of CHT; on the condition that Manobendra would participate in the implementation of Government policy and join the political party, BAKSAL. It was learnt, firstly, he respectfully disagreed to the proposal, however, he agreed to join the latter (Roy, Bhattachroyo et al. 2008, p.7).

Manobendra Narayan Larma joined *Bangladesh Krishok Sramik Awami League* (BAKSAL) in 1975, hoping that by joining the ruling party, he would be able to effectively change and improve the situation in CHT. But reactionary forces killed the Bangabandhu, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The killing also killed the potential political solution to the CHT problem (Roy, Bhattachroyo et al. 2008 ,p.7). Hopes for improvements and changes turned into deep frustration. After the assassination of Bangabandhu, Manobendra retreated into the forest, foregoing all other activities in favor of armed rebellion.

In November 1975, Manobendra communicated with General Ziaur Rahman, the head of the military government. He also was in touch with India and after some discussion, India agreed to assist Shanti Bahini (Azad 2004, p.23-24). The SB conducted many operations in the CHT. Its first formal hit was targeted on a police force in 1976. Several days after that operation, Santu Larma and Chobri Marma were captured and arrested by the Army. Santu Larma was sent to jail and held there until 1981 when he was released from jail in order to participate in the dialogue between Shanti Bahini and the government, the same year. In May 1981, General Ziaur Rahman was killed in Chittagong by the Army. The formal dialogue was once again cancelled (Azad 2004, p.23).

Different Political Regimes in Bangladesh and Their Handlings

Two army chiefs consecutively took over state power in the late 70s and 80s, after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. The army generals remained in power until 1990. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), formed by General Ziaur Rahman, was in power for two, five-year terms beginning in 1991 and 2001. The Awami League (AL) returned to power after more than twenty years, between 1996 and 2009.

Besides Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the third important party is the *Jatiyo Party* (JP), formed by General Ershad when he was in power during 1982-1990. The BNP, AL and JP have dominated since independence. Jamat-e-Islami, which is a rightist political party held power in the form of an alliance with the BNP. The smaller leftist parties have not had the opportunity to hold power directly, but some of their leaders were elected as members of parliament.

The following table shows the different army and political government regime until the fall of President Ershad in Bangladesh. It shows both the frequency and duration of the army's interventions in politics:

Table 5: Governments of Bangladesh (1970 –1990)

Starting Time	**Continued**	**Form of Govt.**	**Head of the Govt.**
10 April 1970	10 January 1972	Presidential (exile government)	Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
10 January 1972	15 August 1975	Perliamnetary	Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
15 August 1975	6 November 1975	Presidential	Khondaker Mostaq Ahmed
7 November 1975	19 November 1976	Martial Law	Justice Sayem
21 April 1977	30 May 1981	Presidentail	General Ziaur Rahamn
30 May 1981	24 March 1982	Presdential	Abdus Sattar
24 march 1982	6 December 1990	Presidential	General Hossain Mohammad Ershad

This table shows that Bangladesh had an elected political government led by Bangladesh Awami League for a short period after achieving the independence of the country. After that the army personnel ruled for a longer period that has stopped the democratic prospers. The Army General was forced to leave power due to a mass movement in 1990. Through this movement, a constitutional provision for a non-party caretaker government emerged whose main responsibility is to conduct national elections after the completion of five year term of government. According to the constitution, the duration of the caretaker government's term is only three months. However, a non-party caretaker government was in power for about 2 years (11th January 2007 to 29th December 2008), having declared a state of emergency, with army backing.

From the above description the influence of the army on Bangladeshi politics can be observed. There is a large, constant military presence in the CHT, the reasons for which are many including local and international factors. I would contend that whenever a military government or army-backed government is in power in the country, the Adibasi of the CHT experience resurgence, land occupation, military dominance and interventions in their social, political and economic life. Comparatively, democratic situations seem to be favorable to the CHT people, since this at least allows them to make their demands known, combat ignorance and hold

dialogue with the government and administrators. A peace Accord was signed in 1997, twenty-one years after the assassination of Bangabandhu and after his daughter came into power in 1996. Although, the implementation and effectiveness of the Peace Accord remains controversial, it cannot be claimed that these initiatives have solved all the problems in the CHT, but some progress has been made. I will concentrate on analyzing the impact of the army and army-backed governments on the CHT people after the independence of Bangladesh, in the following discussion.

General Ziaur Rahman Period

On 15 August 1975, the then President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated and a military government took over Bangladesh. The killing altered the political landscape, including that of the CHT. The hill leaders attempted to resolve issues through dialogue with the democratic government after independence. However, when the army took control of the state, the situation radically altered. According to the CHT Commission report:

> The hill people continued to try to deal with the government of Bangladesh. A delegation of 67 hill people met with President Justice A. S. Sayem on 19, November 1975, renewing their demands for autonomy. Mr. Ashok Dewan presented similar proposals to President Ziaur Rahman in 1976. The President Zia responded to the SB insurgent activity with a sharply increased military presence in the CHT. He also began sponsored migration of Bengali settlers into the CHT, providing land grants, cash and rations (1991, p.16).

Gautam Dewan, the former Chairman of the Rangamati District Council referred to a "conspiracy" in the President Ziaur Rahman period to make the hill peoples a minority in the CHT. His government established the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) with the funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Despite a pre-existing civil administration, the first Chairman of CHTDB was the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Chittagong Division, revealing the leading role and vital positioning of the army. The CHT commission report notes, "Military have increasingly taken over civilian government roles in building roads, supplying electricity, constructing schools, funding students, building temples and promoting local cottage industries" (CHT Commission 1991, p.17).

On the night of 30 May, 1981, President Ziaur Rahman was assassinated in Chittagong circuit house by a faction of officers of Bangladesh army led by General Abul Monjur, the regional commander of Chittagong cantonment. President Zia was in Chittagong on that same day to resolve some clashes between the local leaders of his party – Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). General Monjur was a long time colleague of General Zia. On the night when he was shot dead, General Zia was staying in the Chittagong Circuit House, a government-owned residence. Alternative theories suggest that General Abul Monjur was falsely accused for the assassination of General Ziaur Rahman. The authors of these claim that the assassination was undertaken by then Chief of Staff General Ershad, who later became president, and

that Ershad framed Monjur as the leader of the operation. The issue has not been sorted out and the identity of the actual murderer of General Zia remains unclear. Nevertheless, the assassination happened, and a power struggle between power-hungry army officers ensued, resulting in many feuds among themselves, both bloody and bloodless. The macabre tradition of ambitious army officers capturing power, which has since then plagued the country began with the assassination of *Bangabandhu,* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and continued throughout the rule of General Zia and General Ershad. For Mascarenhass:

> Opportunism is the motive for most of the participants in the events of 1975 and after. He is especially concerned to apply this analysis to the career of Ziaur Rahman, whom he portrays as cold, calculating and ambitious throughout his military and political career (Cited by Taylor 1986, p.705).

The characterization of Ziaur Rahman as evident in the above quotation comes mostly from ambitious army personnel that look for opportunities to hold state power unconstitutionally. The same pattern was followed by General Ershad during his nine years in power. Ershad also founded a party and participated in the national elections, and he is still active in Bangladesh politics. Both of these generals handled the CHT so as to benefit the army and strengthen their own political position. Thus, the real issues of land, rebellion, plantations, and settlers in the hill areas, have all been avoided by the government, allowing the perpetuation of exclusion and marginalization of the hill people. Many harsh counter-insurgency operations occurred during Zia's regime, and less brutal versions continued during Ershad's rule, as detailed in the following section.

General Ershad Regime

After the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman, the experienced and loyal colleague of General Ziaur Rahman, former Justice Abdus Sattar became acting President of Bangladesh. Justice Sattar had persuaded General Zia to form a new party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) which performed well in the 1981 election, but after the killing of Zia, General Ershad was waiting for his moment (Banglapedia 2006). He toppled President Sattar on 24 March 1982, and proclaimed himself as chief martial law administrator. Ershad took over as President on 11th December 1983. General Ershad took a fresh look at the CHT problems. He began with a 'soft and technical' approach, which included attempts to minimize the cost of the massive army deployment there.

The Ershad regime also encouraged dialogue with the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS)/ Shanti Bahini (SB) leaders and tried to convince them to avoid outright conflict with the army. The regime declared that the government was willing to halt any further entrance of Bengalis into the CHT region. In October 1983, the Ershad government announced a package deal including suspension of Bengali settlement, granting of amnesty, and a proposal for direct dialogue with the PCJSS leadership (Shelley 1992

,p.139). In August 1985, the government declared the CHT as a Special Economic Area (SEA). Shelley (1992, p.135) describes, "The objectives were to integrate tribals and non-tribals with mainstream economic activities, create employment opportunities, and promote trade, commerce and industries, as well as the overall agro-economic development of the area". The declaration offered some incentives for the CHT people, including tax relief for small and cottage industries, exemption of fees for import of machinery and spares, low interest rates, reduction of power and gas rates, encouragement of joint-ventures by tribal and non-tribal inhabitants; tax holiday for twelve years and exemption of all cinema houses from payment of excise and amusement taxes (Shelley 1992 ,p.135-36; Adnan 2004,p.31). The government of Ershad also offered some special privileges with regard to the employment of tribal peoples. Shelley (1992, p.136) holds, "5% of all government jobs have been reserved for all the tribes of Bangladesh including those of CHT. In 1988, the government reserved 1,877 vacancies in various government departments and scheduled banks to be filled by the tribal. This was a special allocation over and above the 5% quota". Moreover, seats in various educational institutions including medical colleges, engineering university and the institutes of technology, technical schools, agricultural university and colleges, cadet colleges, and Rangamati para-medical school were reserved for tribal students. Such quotas were later expanded to include the other public universities of Bangladesh. This opportunity was enthusiastically welcomed by the tribal students. It remains a challenge for them to meet the costs of residence and education, and it is difficult for them to adjust to academic and Bengali culture, but still many tribal students are willing to enroll in higher education.

Ershad was further able to bring under his control a faction of hill leaders who were involved in the rebellion aiming for full autonomy of the CHT. His government initiated several meetings with JSS and SB leaders as well as other factions of hill organizations. The approaches of these incentives were assimilationist as well as softer and more technical. One participant of my Group Discussions opined:

> Thousands of the young Adibasi became members of *Santi Bahini (SB)* after Zia; Ershad government adopted a more hegemonic policy. His government provided jobs to young Adibasi people so that they should not join Santi Bahini (Group Discussion, 080210, Tintilapara).

This quotation shows that the army rulers have formulated different technique and strategy as per their own benefits that ensure prolongation of power as the head of the state. Ershad's strategy was to reduce the strength and popularity of JSS and SB through development programs and cash and kind benefits for the hill people in CHT. His strategy kept the region more peaceful, helped to make progress on CHT issues, and also increased awareness of the CHT problems and his policies in the rest of the country and indeed the rest of the world. Ershad's handling of the issues helped to convince donor countries that his government was much concerned and attentive to human rights issues and dialogue with secessionist groups. Adnan says:

> From mid-1980s, there was a distinct shift in the counter-insurgency strategy toward 'softer' approaches aimed at co-option of Paharis, as well as weakening the social base of their resist-

> ance. This shift in emphasis within the counter – insurgency strategy was initiated by the Ershad regime, based on several critical considerations (2004, p.31).

Ershad aimed to make the CHT Adibasi people have a stable relationship with the settlers so that he could use his armed forces in other regions and sectors of the country as to establish his political dominance and vision. At the beginning of his time in power, he was mainly dependant on the political power of the armed forces. Later he formed a separate political party. Although he never fully withdrew the armed forces from the CHT, he introduced softer forms of counter-insurgency.

Border Security and the Army's Attitude towards the Adibasi

It is often suggested that Pakistan and later Bangladesh were uneasy about the majority of the hill peoples on the borders with India and Burma (CHT Commission 1991, p.16-17). I found the same opinions during my field work in the CHT. Many Adibasi respondents and interviewees stated that it was a plan to make the hill people a minority in the CHT to facilitate control of the region by the army and the government. The respondents were unsure as to why the army and government did not trust the hill people, since they do not believe themselves to be a threat to the country in any sense – the Adibasi people don't see themselves as involved in any anti-state activities in CHT or anywhere else in the country. Nevertheless, mistrust remains pervasive. The difference in treatment of the settlers and of the hill people is marked. If any incident occurs in the region, the army battalions immediately target the areas inhabited by the hill people for searches. The hill peoples have borne such treatment and suspicion towards them for decades. While they find this bias highly offensive, they do not have the political status to challenge this domination, since the army and governmental forces hold much more power than they.

When the hill people report attacks, they allege army involvement. In contrast, none of settlers interviewed claim that the army has been favoring the hill peoples during such incidents. This clearly shows that the armed forces do not play a neutral role in the CHT, but instead have been promoting and provoking the settlers' attacks on hill peoples. Among such numerous allegations of attacks, a major incident was the killing at *Kaukhali* on March 25th 1980. According to a personal report by a team of Members of Parliament members investigating the incident:

> After visiting the place of occurrence, we found the evidence of the killing and atrocities committed by one unit of the Army at Kaukhali Bazar of Kalampati union under Betbunia Police Station of Chittagong Hill Tracts on 25th March, 1980. The newly arrived settlers also took part in the act of killing and looting the tribal people. Even after one month of the incident a reign of terror is prevailing in the entire area. In spite of all-out efforts by the local administration and tribal leaders, the evicted poor tribal people do not dare come back to their destroyed and de-

molished villages. Because arrest, harassment, man-slaughtering, arson, looting and threats from the settlers continue (CHT Commission 1991, p.17-18).

The description above by the CHT commission reveals an inhuman situation and very hard life for the Adibasi. Rape, torture, harassment, army dominance and settler's attack on the Adibasi, filing false police cases, arresting and violation of human rights are a common feature in the CHT. Moreover, Bangladesh army conceived the CHT issue as one of border security, as an insurgency and formal rebellion against the country. Moreover, the hill people's case has been taken up as an army action program, which allows large-scale army deployment and provides an opportunity to showcase the importance of the army to the nation. This conceptualization has created a new, militaristic paradigm for dealing with the inhabitants of the CHT, despite the fact that the issues could be handled in many other alternative ways which would cause less harm to the region, the hill people, and indeed the rest of the country. The army deployment in such a hilly region is expensive and difficult, since the soldiers and officers are largely from the plains, and therefore unfamiliar with the terrain.

The army deployment in CHT, under the guise of border security seems to be little more than a cover. Diplomatically, Bangladesh's relations with India and Burma have changed dramatically according to which regime is in power. Contentious issues were always related to politics and business, as opposed to border issues, which were generally unproblematic. Even when border issues arose with India, these were mainly concerned with borders of the plain areas of Bangladesh.

Today the army possesses the highest authority in the CHT, and renders it impossible to enter the region without passing through army checkpoints and barriers, along with those maintained by other local and national security forces. It is even more remarkable that elected governments must accommodate the army's views and demands. Thus, progress on the CHT issues has been set back several times due to the intervention and interest of the armed forces. Predictably, the army claims that it is working to establish peace and prosperity in the CHT, and that their presence is very important for the country as well as for the border security of Bangladesh. On the other hand, the Adibasi perceive the role of the army in the CHT as hegemonic and dominating.[18] The army is responsible for prolonging the settlement issues since they occupy vast areas of land and consistently favor the settlers, which creates further unrest. The Adibasi are angry with the army due to torture and grabbing of their *khas* (personal) lands for use by several army brigades. Many Adibasi are of the opinion that most of the CHT problems would be easily resolved if the army withdraws from the area. This is still one of the major demands of the Adibasi on the Government.

The Ershad government initiated a discussion in the national parliament on 15th February, 1989 on Hill District Local Government Councils Bill. Ostentatiously a move for political and administrative decentralization, the Bill did not bring about any reduction worth mentioning in the power or presence of the government or of armed forces in the CHT. The Bill had value, however, in publicizing the good inten-

18 Field note.

tions of the Ershad regime towards CHT issues. The President tried to handle many of the other issues in the same way, but ultimately his government collapsed due to a widespread political movement in 1990. In December of that year he was bound to resign from power and he was later accused of a long list of criminal offences. Recently, he has become active in politics again, proving the resilience of influential networks of army officers in Bangladeshi politics. Some differences remain between the rule of a military dictator and a democratically elected government. After 1990, Bangladesh moved towards a more democratic culture, although the process has suffered many setbacks including corruption, administrative irregularities and misuse of power. All these factors affected the CHT region.

Moreover, in most case the major political parties prefer to keep their political dominance over the hill people instead of preferring Adibasi's benefits, welfare and political freedom. Besides these internal political agendas, the relations with neighboring countries, i.e. India and Myanmar are also relevant. The relation to India is always a sensitive issue in Bangladesh's economy and politics. The main parties always take stands on relations to India considering their own party interests.

India was and still is very much linked to the conflict in and over the CHT, since the area is related to the States of Mizoram, Tripura and others. Through its handling of the CHT problem, India attempts to deal with both Bangladesh and its own conflict-ridden North-Eastern States. Thus, the two main parties Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh National Party (BNP) played influential roles with respect to the CHT during their respective regimes. The important influence of the armed forces cannot be disregarded even during democratically elected governments, since parties in power tend to be attentive to the army's views and their suggestions related to the border and sensitive areas. It is generally considered that after the fall of the Ershad government, the democratic political culture has again begun to deteriorate which was expected by the people to flourish properly. The following table presents the different regimes in Bangladesh starting from after fall of Ershad in December 1990.

Table 6: Governments of Bangladesh (1991- 2010)

Starting Time	**Continued**	**Form of Govt.**	**Head of the Govt.**
6 December 1990	20 March 1991	First Caretaker	Shahabuddin Ahmed
20 March 1991	30 March 1996	Parliamentary	Khaleda Zia
31 March 1996	23 June 1996	Second Caretaker	Muhammud Habibur Rahman
23June 1996	15 July 2001	Parliamentary	Sheikh Hasina
15 july 2001	10 October 2001	Third Caretaker	Latifur Rahman
10 October2001	27 October 2006	Parlimentary	Khaleda Zia
29 October 2006	11January 2007	Interim Caretaker chief	Iajuddin Ahmed
12 January 2007	6 January 2009	Army-backed caretaker	Fakrauddin Ahmed
6 January 2009	Suppose to be continued for next five years	Parliamentary	Sheikh Hasina

The table shows that a parliamentary form of government has developed once again in Bangladesh. The parliamentary form of government was a main agenda in 1990

mass movement which had ensured the collapse of army dominance in politics. The two opposite political alliances lead by Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was in power at different regime after the fall of Ershad. Both of these alliances held power after wining national elections. It is expected that elected governments will handle sensitive issues democratically instead of complicating the situation by including a military dimension. The following discussion will focus on the role of different democratic regimes including the four caretaker governments towards the CHT people after the fall of President Ershad.

Political Solution to the CHT Problem

The military or quasi military government of General Ershad was brought down by the mass movement of 1990 and a short-lived, the first Caretaker Government of Bangladesh, led by President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, was in power till March 1991. This created the opportunity for a more democratic approach to the regional and national issues facing Bangladesh. The Adibasi students formed the Pahari Chatro Parishad (Hill Student's Union, PCP). Adibasi students in Dhaka demanded a democratic approach from the caretaker government. They held press conferences and rallies in support of their demands on the upcoming national election. The PCP claimed the suspension of the three local government councils mentioned above, adjustment of the voter lists of the three hill districts, and rescheduling of the proposed parliamentary election until the return of all refugees from India (Shelley 1992, p.147).

Caretaker Governments and Their Role

As per the constitution, the main responsibility of Caretaker Government is to hold the national election and hand over power to the elected government. Based on these regulations, the Caretaker Government is not expected to initiate or formulate new policies or any great change.

The President of the Caretaker Government visited Rangamati on 30th December 1990 and there he categorically rejected the demand for the suspension of local government councils. He did, however, give due attention to the other matters brought up by the students and local people. The Government of Bangladesh made a proposal to India for a district level bipartite meeting for the smooth return of refugees before the scheduled national election. The Caretaker Government also tried to revive the discussion with PCJSS, although this finally occurred when the newly elected government had taken over (Shelley 1992, p.147).

The second Caretaker Government of Bangladesh was formed in 1996. Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman was the chief advisor to oversee the seventh national

parliament election of Bangladesh. His government was in power from 31st March 1996 to 23rd June 1996. The third Caretaker Government was led by former Justice Latifur Rahman. His government oversaw the Eight National Parliament election in 2001. He held office from 15th July 2001 to 10th October 2001. The fourth Caretaker Government held in power on 29th October 2006 and continued for two years with the backing from Bangladesh Army. This government held the national election and handed over power to the elected government on 6th January 2008. An alliance led by the Awami League (AL) came into power and at the moment of writing they are still holding office.

The above mentioned four Caretaker Governments operated and oversaw the four different National Parliament elections in 1991, 1996, 2001 and 2008. These elections mainly saw the two major political parties alternate in power. BNP was in power for two; it formed a government of its own in 1991, and later in a four party coalition in 2001. AL formed a government in 1996 and 2008. Both the BNP and the AL governments attempted political solutions to the CHT problems. However, the many ideological and political differences between the two parties stifled progress on the issue.

BNP Alliances Regime

BNP was formed by General Ziaur Rahman and came into power in 1991 and again in 2001, led by his wife Khaleda Zia. She first took office in March 1991. On an official visit to Khagracahari on the 12th of May, 1992, Khaleda Zia declared, "I think it is possible to find a political solution only through the constitutional process and within the constitutional framework of the country." In July 1992, her government formed a parliamentary committee to assess the CHT issue. The single most significant initiative of this government was the declaration of a general amnesty for the insurgents. Besides this, her government implemented some relief and rehabilitation programs (Shelley 1992, p.149). In August 1992, JSS declared a unilateral cease-fire. It was, however, an informal ceasefire, due to many factors not least the counter-insurgency measures. The government did not question the authority of the army in CHT and sanctioned several programs implemented by the army. Pacification remained a central tenet of all its activities.

AL Alliances Regime

Awami League (AL) was formed mainly by Maulana Abdul Hameed Khan Bhashani, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Shamsul Hoq on 23rd June 1949**.** AL was in power after the independence of Bangladesh. After assassination of Sheikh Mujib in 1975, AL came to power once again in 1996, led by Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Following elections in 2008, AL once again came to power. The crowning achievement during Sheikh Hasina's first period in power was to reach an

agreement with leaders of JSS which culminated in the signing of the Peace Accord in December 1997. The government promised immediate political solutions for the CHT issues and a parliamentary committee was formed to develop long-lasting and acceptable solutions. The Accord was widely hailed by the international community as a step towards consolidating the rights of minorities. Aminuzzaman and Kabir commented, "The Accord has been hailed internationally as a successful case of conflict resolution; it involved no third-party mediations or direct interventions by international actors, nor was civil society incorporated within the peace process" (Aminuzzaman and Kabir 2005, p.1). UNESCO conferred on Sheikh Hasina, the international Felix Houphouet–Boigny in 2000, in recognition of her contribution to establishing peace in the CHT.

During the process of democratization described above, the Adibasi groups expected progress on their issues and problems. They tried to bring attention to their inhuman and marginalized life, through meetings, protests, rallies, seminars, round tables, press conferences, official and unofficial dialogue etc. However, the division of central politics and the differences in the ideology, practices and political bases among the main parties also affected the development of the CHT, largely perpetuating problems and failing to implement good solutions. Moreover, the Adibasi of the CHT are no longer unified, rather they are politically divided into several subgroups causing mistrust, weakening of their solidarity and claims for autonomy of the CHT. Such a situation can be an indication of further unrest in the region. At the same time, the traditional social system has been questioned by some Adibasi leaders who have raised their voices, to bring about a process of democratic change among the Adibasi, aiming to dismount their traditional feudal social system. In the following section, I will briefly discuss recent trends in Adibasi political and social organization. I will also try to briefly describe widespread views among them on the traditional social system, especially their attitude to their kings and the political elite.

Current Adibasi Political Organizations: JSS, UPDF, JSS Reformist

During the period of armed struggle (1976-1996), most of the Adibasi were unified on a single platform. However, this has changed mostly out of frustration with the improper implementation of the Peace Accord. Now, the Adibasi are divided into at least three different groups, namely Jana Samhiti Samiti (JSS), United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and Jana Samhiti Samiti (JSS) reformist group. At first there was only JSS, which organized most of the Adibasi under a single umbrella. They have gradually lost much of their influence.

Sub-Groupings and Internal Clashes

It is common that when a region or group rises in rebellion against an oppressor, many internal clashes also take place. The struggle in the CHT is no exception. In the CHT, there arose two main factions, the *Larma* group and the *Priti* group. The leader of the latter, *Amretoi Lal Chakma* developed the philosophy of armed rebellion for the Priti group. He was killed by the Larma group in 1983. In retaliation, on November 10th, 1983, *Manobendra* Larma, the chief of PCJSS was assassinated along with few of his fellows by their rivals. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma (called Santu Larma), after the killing of his elder brother became the chief of PCJSS and guerilla group Shanti Bahini (Azad 2004, p.24).

Santu Larma guided the rebellion through its many phases and achieved the signing of the Peace Accord in 1997 between SB and the Government of Bangladesh. Currently, he is the Chairman of the CHT Regional Council. The Priti group is no longer active in the CHT. Amretoi Lal Chakma's extremism was not accepted by many hill people, and he eventually left the CHT to settle in India, where he is no longer active in the rebellion (Azad 2004, p.24).

There are still multiple parties active in the CHT. One group, the JSS reformist, evolved from PCJSS and differs little from their predecessor. Another group is the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), headed by Proshit Khisha. According to various sources including key persons, the UPDF opposes PCJSS activities. UPDF is almost opposite to JSS. They stand against the Peace Accord and claim autonomy for the CHT. Recently, the JSS Reformist group has formed. The most senior participant in the group discussion at Byttapara said:

> We have lost our capacity to be organized and have simply agreed to the government's preferences. The minimum demands of the Peace Accord are still unimplemented. For that reason some other organizations are emerging as platforms for the Adibasi people. We do not want war in the CHT anymore. We are waiting for peace in the CHT. But we do not find any positive and wise decisions (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

The statement above reveals that they are betrayed by the government, army and settlers. They trusted the government, politicians and officials and agreed to the Peace Accord but subsequent governments did not keep their promises. In the process, the Adibasi lost both their organizational strength and bargaining capacity. Today, Adibasi consider themselves to be more helpless, unorganized and divided than ever before. Moreover, the army and other security officials portray Adibasi in various negative ways. Some interviewees also argued that the army personnel are working to divide the Adibasi and make them dependent on the government and army.

I found that many Adibasi were frustrated with the division among themselves. Once they had good leadership and were united in the fight against irregularities and oppression. However, they lost their organizational strength. They consider this situation as a well planned design by the Government of Bangladesh and the Armed forces aiming to establish their dominance over the CHT region. On the one hand, the Adibasi are excluded from services; on the other hand they are becoming weaker

in terms of organizational strength, which is making them more frustrated and alienated from the state and nationhood. It makes the Adibasi more suspicious towards the existing state machineries. Another participant from the same group discussion explained that:

> We heard that the UPDF was created to embarrass and confuse the Adibasi people. The army and some other political agents may be involved with this organization, but they are also supported by a portion of the Adibasi. On the other hand, we heard recently that there are new organizations evolving, such as *JSS songesker dol* (reformist group) (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

This quotation shows the links between army and UPDF or with other Adibasi organization. It is observed that the Adibasi's political strength has been weakened and there are many agencies that are trying to make it weaker and complicated as well. One participant in the group discussion held in Tintilapara remarked, "We have heard that the UPDF is backed by the army. It is now easy to handle the hilly people since they are divided. The JSS is working for the Peace Accord but on the other hand the UPDF is working against both the JSS and the Peace Accord" (Group Discussion, 080210, Tintilapara). The discussants heard that independent statehood is the motto of UPDF. They assumed that if the Peace Accord does not work out properly, a minority of the Adibasi may shift their support to UPDF. One of my interviewees said that in Sonai and Mayni, most of the Adibasi support JSS. Recently, however, support for JSS reformist group has been growing (Interview, 080622, Duluchoripara). The participants in the group discussion expressed their concern about recent trends of the Adibasi organizations and politics, and the interference of external forces in their life and social organization. A governmental security officer working in Langadu also shared his views regarding this issue. He elaborates:

> In most cases, the settlers and Adibasi are willing to live peacefully. But the army always influences and provokes conflicts with the Adibasi. Even the two different groups among the Adibasi, which is – JSS and UPDF – are also influenced by the army. The army wants an unstable situation here so that they can rule and get allocations of money every year from the government (Interview, 071115, Langadu town).

This excerpt from an interview indentifies the role of army as a major cause behind the worse situation in the CHT and blames them of destroying the peaceful solution and co-existence. As a consequence, the Adibasi are seriously concerned about their future life in the region, especially since they are not as unified as they have been. The internal divisions and frustration may provoke them to join underground activities that might lead to further unrest and mistrust between the civil administration, settlers, Adibasi and the army.

Consequences of Divisions and Groupings

The Adibasi are divided. They have separate groups which are linked with several external forces and leaders both in the country and abroad. Recently, the main problem in the CHT has been kidnapping. Some interviewees also perceived that the army has played a role in creating sharp political division among the Adibasi. The army also patronized some political groups in order to further their own agenda. I interviewed a policeman at Langadu. He said, "There are many Adibasi who are really nice. But it is true that there are some Adibasi who are involved with these kidnappings. There is no political ideology behind these activities. They are doing so only for money" (Interview, 071116, Langadu)

These Adibasi live in remote areas and rarely come to open areas and public places. They kidnap newcomers or small traders, farmers or fishermen for money. They demand ransom and in most cases the issue is resolved with a cash deal. Sometimes when a case becomes widely known, unrest spreads and it becomes very tough to handle those cases for the police and local administration. Naturally rumors spread within moments of such kidnappings. Sometimes the Adibasi leaders, Karbari, Headmen and others help the Police to catch these perpetrators. The Police have rescued many victims of kidnappings. But sometimes it takes a long time and it is also risky for police forces. The Police accept help from the army when necessary. The kidnappers tend to hide in remote areas in Langadu, which even the Police cannot enter easily. They need special troops and vehicles and the risk of counterattacks is high. The Policeman whom I interviewed added that,

> In fact, we need to establish trust between all groups and establish confidence in the authorities and the government. There are many drawbacks here to establish such an environment in Langadu, as well as in other parts of the CHT. But it is true that the situation has improved compared to the past. But we still need to change our attitude towards Adibasi (Interview, 071116, Langadu).

In this thesis I argue that, it is essential to establish trust between the government of Bangladesh and the Adibasi and to enhance the social development for the region as asked for by many Adibasi. To make CHT as a peaceful region, the human rights situation must be improved and democratic rights implemented. This could be an alternative approach to soften the consequences of frustration, clashes between Bengali settlers and Adibasi, mistrust towards the army and the internal clashes among the political factions. The following discussion aims to locate or identify the dysfunctionality of traditional feudal mode of Adibasi society and the role of kings and elites within their social system.

Dysfunctionality of Traditional Feudal System and a Call for Social Change

In the CHT, concern has been growing recently among the *Adibasi* regarding their traditional social system. Many have different opinions about their king, headmen and *karbari*. Such concern was expressed by different interviewees as well as by some Adibasi leaders. They called for change in Adibasi society at several formal meetings, round table discussions and other occasions. Interviewees provide different views in this regard. During my field work in Sonai, one of my interviewees, an elderly Chakma woman, reveals that she is not concerned at all with the activities of the Chakma *Raja* (King). She does not even know the exact name of the present king, although she remembered the name of the previous one, Trivid Roy. Neither is she concerned about the CHT Peace Accord. Her only concern is, "If Adibasi people work hard, if they do good gardening and farming, then they will bring more financial stability. They need to concentrate more on the limited land they have. So they can produce rice, turmeric, pepper etc" (Interview, 080604, Bogapara).

Some interviewees stated that the Adibasi feudal social system is not effective for developing the society as a whole, and that the king and elites are more focused on their own benefit and personal well-being. For these reasons, some respondents and interviewees seek societal change. They yearn for a democratic society and dream of a better life which honors their human rights and gives them rights equal to other citizens of Bangladesh, while keeping their cultural identity intact.

An elderly interviewee expresses his frustration with the performance of their king. He states that it was Chakma *Raja Nalinakho* Roy who could have played a strong role to prevent the huge losses of Chakma families in the conflict over the CHT. If he had made a strong stand, he and his many supporters could have prevented the unplanned and devastating dam project in the CHT. However, he did not live up to what was expected of him at the time. Later his son helped to establish the Kaptai dam. He was a young, energetic circle chief at the time. The interviewee says, "We were all at his command, but he also performed very weakly then. He was silent and on good terms with the government. Even in 1971, when East Pakistan was fighting against West Pakistani hegemony, Raja Trivid left this country. He is still alive and staying in Pakistan as far as we know" (Interview, 080604, Bogapara). At that time the government sent him on a foreign mission as a diplomat of the Pakistani Republic. The government tried to keep him favorable to the Pakistani Republic and he also agreed to support the regime. According to one of my interviewees:

> Raja Nalinakho Roy was the grandfather of the present Chakma chief Raja Debasish Roy. The Kaptai Dam planning was approved under the Pakistani Regime while Nalinakho Roy was the chief of the Chakma. It was constructed while his son Raja Trivid Roy was the circle chief. The Pakistani government had decided to construct two dams for power generation. The Pakistani government had been considering one location in East Pakistan and another in West Pakistan. It was decided to construct the *Mangla* Dam in West Pakistan, but the search for a suitable place to construct a Dam in East Pakistan, specifically in the CHT continued throughout the 1950s.

> At that time the government communicated with the Chakma chief Raja Trivid Roy. He had several meetings with governmental officials on this matter, during which they tried to convince him to release land for the construction of a dam. Finally, the Chakma chief agreed to the construction of the dam, which turned out to be so disastrous for the Chakma people (Interview, 080604, Bogapara).

Excerpts of this interview reveal that the then Chakma king had failed or was unwilling to perform his expected role to prevent the establishment of Kaptai dam in the CHT. The king could have played a strong role to prevent or shift the dam project but he was rather obliged to the Government for continuing his personal benefits and ensuring his well-being. The interviewee further adds:

> Our present Raja is somewhat concerned about our issues. He is a literate person and very polite. We like him. But he also likes to maintain power. He is our king, but most of the time he stays in Dhaka. Nothing is wrong with that, but we expect more from him. He recently became a special assistant to the chief of the caretaker government of Bangladesh. We do not know how much he will be able to do for the security and well being of Chakma people as well as for other Adibasi people of the CHT and other parts of Bangladesh (Interview, 080604, Bogapara).

Evident from the excerpt above, the current Chakma king possesses good mindset to achieve betterment for the Adibasi if the king works positively and fight for the real causes instead of looking at his personal benefits.

The interviewee is worried because the Ziaur Rahman government promoted the Bengali settlement when the same person was their King. The interviewee rhetorically asks, "What did the king do when the government started to bring huge numbers of Bengali settlers to the CHT?" He was their King since 1977 and Bengali settlers started to flood CHT at the beginning of the 80s. The Adibasi expected their king to take a strong stand, but he failed to strongly oppose the government policy regarding settlements and land issues (Interview, 080604, Bogapara).

Such role and failure of the king was also noticed during the British regime, when the king seemed definite to have looked after his own interests first. Due to the injustices perpetrated by the British traders, rulers and their agents, resistance by local tribal people, particularly the Chakma and the Tripura, against British hegemony began as soon as the EIC arrived in the CHT. However, at that time, the role of the chiefs was somewhat controversial and not always favorable to the local hill people they were supposed to represent. There were, of course, exceptions. Mohsin notes:

> After the death of Rani Kalindi, however, the British were able to secure the loyalty of the local chiefs by conferring upon them powers hitherto unknown to them, in order to establish their own hegemony. The local people however resisted the new autocratic powers of the chiefs. It created a situation where the interests of the chiefs and the people often ran opposed to each other, while the interests of the British and the chiefs were parallel to each other. It marked the beginning of the alienation of the Hill people from their chiefs. British hegemony in the CHT had now been established. The local chiefs had been turned into instruments of British policy (Mohsin 2002, p. 30-31).

The citation above claims that the Adibasi kings have played a controversial role even during British regime. Some of them were much more concerned about their

own benefits than creating well-being for the general Adibasi populations. However, I found alternative opinions in other interviews and group discussions. I arranged a group discussion at Byttapara, in Mayni. It was a session with seven Adibasi Chakma from various age groups. Their views on the role of their traditional social structure follow:

> Chakma society is sort of feudal. We have our *raja* (king). We acknowledge him. We honor him. He is our chief. We have Karbari and Headmen. It is our tradition. A Headman looks after our problems and opportunities. But he has few resources to provide us help. Nevertheless, we respect this traditional system and we are continuing to uphold our traditional culture and system. But if the government starts to implement a democratic system all over the area we are not going to prevent that. We would be happy about a democratic development. The only thing is that we do not want to abolish our traditions (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

The above excerpt of an interview reveals Adibasi's interest in democracy, but also contains a tie in the traditional social system. However, they have also frustration and do not expect something revolutionary from their king, headman and karbari seeing their pervious role at different critical moments when they could have played a vital role to keep up Adibasi's interest as a whole. Another interviewee from Bogapara says:

> The Chakma chief did not show interest in the welfare of the general Chakma population in the CHT. He should have been much more concerned with our issues and interests, but he was not. He was instead much more concerned with his own well-being and interest. Otherwise the Kaptai dam plan would have been built elsewhere, or better planned, so that Chakma people would have been able to avoid such serious losses (Interview, 080604, Bogapara).

Though there is a counter- argument that it was very hard to take a stand against the state hegemonic decision in this regard. However, the Adibasi were fully depended on their king and most Adibasi did not foresee the full impact of the Kaptai dam on their land.

I interviewed a very influential person among the Adibasi. He insists on strict confidentiality regarding his participation in my study and was extremely careful in expressing his personal views during the interview. However, he discussed many aspects of the CHT problems and expressed his views on the Peace Accord. He mentions:

> We fought for the CHT autonomy during the 20 years prior to the signing of the Peace Accord. It is now around 11 years after the Accord was signed. We received very few of the promised benefits. Most of the clauses are still unimplemented. Our education is not improving, land is limited, freedom has been kidnapped, and we are under constant stress. This is not the way to show and execute the agreement. This is born out of political issues. The big political parties of the country are playing with us. We do not deserve being treated so badly. Many Adibasi are now landless. There is no policy for land settlement for the Adibasi. However, many outsiders and newcomers received their land deeds from the government (Interview, 080712, Dhaka).

Indeed, this statement contains the Adibasi's dream prior to Peace Accord, frustration after signing the agreement and the discrimination which is going recently in

the region. I agree that the political parties are playing with the CHT problems and making it more complicated. May be from this view point he further added:

> We need to change our values as well. To establish peace in the CHT, we need comprehensive change in our societal structure. The feudalistic mode needs to be changed. Establishing a democratic culture is essential for our change and development (Interview, 080712, Dhaka).

To me, this seems to be a new call for social change in the Adibasi life. Many Adibasi think that democratic practices may bring a new era for their society, but many are quite attached to their traditional social organization. They are willing and thirsty to establish their land rights, their right to free movement and keen to get access to education, health services etc. The Adibasi people demand that their voting rights are properly implemented and want to elect their leader and representatives democratically. Some of them advocate that headmen and *karbari* be elected. These are significant positive signs of an ongoing democratic process as is the awareness of many Adibasi of their right to equal access to social services and an improved quality of life that can reverse the ongoing process of social exclusion of the Adibasi of the CHT region.

Conclusion

At the moment of creation of Independent Bangladesh, the separate identity of Adibasi has been totally ignored. Moreover, the Adibasi leadership, specially the kings and some of their follower rather failed to protect the Adibasi interests. Thus, the claim of separate nationhood and demand of dignified identity for Adibasi population has been severely ignored by several political governments of Bangladesh.

The famous Bangladeshi writer and poet Humayon Azad (2004) was pessimistic about the possibility of establishing a separate CHT Jumma nationalism due to the lack of leadership and external efforts, as well as the limitations of the traditional Adibasi social structure, with its feudal-like characteristics. He argued for changing their social structure so as to establish equal rights and status for every single Adibasi within their own societies as well. The chief of the JSS, Santu Larma also called upon his people to democratize their own Adibasi society, as well the national one.

I argue that the failure to establish separate nationalism for Adibasi or Jumma people adds to the historical process of exclusion, deprivation and marginalization. Several Bangladesh governments have taken the same stance toward the Adibasi. The concept of national minority or the approach of multiculturalism or inclusion was not respected by the government, except occasionally, like in the CHT Peace Accord. However, the Adibasi claim that the Accord is still not fully implemented, though the 14th anniversary of the Peace Accord is due in 2011.

In the following Chapter, I shall discuss my field work in two Adibasi villages, i.e. Sonai and Mayni. The current life situation of the Adibasi is more fully portrayed in this discussion.

CHAPTER 7

Exclusion and Marginalization in the CHT

This chapter starts out with a theoretical discussion of social exclusion followed by a presentation of empirical material that illustrates the present state of affairs in relation to social exclusion in Sonai and Mayni, CHT. The aim of this chapter is to highlight the real facts in relation to social exclusion and deprivation, which I argue is an ongoing process for the Adibasi of the CHT. I have already illuminated the historical process of social exclusion in the background chapters of this book; now, I will look into the present features of exclusion in terms of land grabbing, deprivation of basic human needs and shelter, economic constraints, lack of social policies and the situation for human rights etc. The discussion begins with a brief conceptual and theoretical argument.

Social exclusion refers to the situation or status of a group of people who do not belong to the mainstream society, but are marginalized and deprived in terms of economic benefits, social status, housing facilities, social power and access to social privileges. Social exclusion has been also defined as a 'condition of multi-dimensional cumulative disadvantage' (Daly and Silver 2008, p.549).

Many definitions of social exclusion derive from the perspectives in advanced welfare states (Seckinelgin 2009, p.207). Referring to Glaister's (2002) perspective, Preston notes; "Some commentators argue that the social exclusion concept itself, which has proved notoriously difficult to define, is the problem, having provided obfuscation rather than clarity" (2009, p.140). Instead of weighing this debate, I claim that the concept, although the context is another than a Western welfare state, is useful for elucidating the Adibasi problem in the context of social policy and social capital in the CHT.

Social policy has emerged as an academic term from European social policy debate that first appeared in French in the 1970s. The discussion and debate rapidly expanded in the other parts of the world, especially in Latin America. The term

has gradually taken shape in the academic arena 'as an extension of the study of 'marginalization'(Daly and Silver 2008, p.539; Seckinelgin 2009, p.207).

Social exclusion does not merely constitute an individual's lack of access to a resource; rather it focuses on the citizen's participation in the distribution of resources and allotments. Silver and Miller note that," Poverty is a distributional outcome, whereas exclusion is a relational process of declining participation, solidarity and access" (Silver and Miller 2003, p.3). The state needs to restore and install rights and benefits for its underprivileged and poor citizens to strengthen familial, group and social ties and obligations. Thus, the underprivileged section of a society may fulfill their basic needs to survive and might feel sort of attachment with the state that can enhance the social ties and commitment towards the State. Otherwise the deprived section might be alienated that cause unrest, distance and lack of confidence towards State's machineries and governance. Modern capitalist societies have already experienced such problems and any kind of social transformation may need to be careful about its marginalized citizens. Otherwise, the situation causes diverse socio-political problems.

The social transformation from an agrarian to an industrial society has created social stratification among people and spawned different groups in new societal orders. Pressing new social problems have thus arisen in the wake of social transformation, including 'othering'. This has occurred where a specific group of people are defined as 'other' by their gender, race and an underprivileged class position.

Polayni (1957) expressed concern about the consequences of the market economy in his work, *The Great Transformation*. He noted that in pre-modern societies, reciprocity or redistribution was the main economic principles. The economic system was only one purpose of social organization. Custom and law, magic, and religion synergistically combined to compel the individual to comply with rules of behavior, which ensured his functioning in the economic system. When the market economy is no longer regulated by social institutions, the ideology of the market becomes the dominating principle of society (Polanyi 1957; Bernburg 2002, p.733) Thus, the market economy even with its full-fledged expansion often causes poverty and hardship for a section of underprivileged people due to labor exploitation and monopoly dominance over the market. Such socio-economic situation further creates sharp differences and discrimination. Social Policy could play a vital role to dissolve such problems by ensuring welfare and social benefits.

Ideally, social policy is supposed to bring about development to ensure better social services and to bring the marginalized into the mainstream. All groups should develop mutual ties, trust, understanding and social relationships, thus enhancing social capital among the citizens. Appropriate policy is necessary for the establishment of tolerance, equity and impartial treatment of all citizens – qualities, which pave the way for poverty reduction. This is why the promotion of entitlement and social capital for the marginalized is essential in relation to social policy and development.

Social exclusion is a consequence of systematic negligence towards a group of people by the state. Due to state failure, a segment of the population is marginalized and

deprived when its component members are not identified as part of the mainstream. Obviously, these issues are linked to politics and policy and social exclusion is often the outcome of a political process. In this regard Heinz Steinert says:

> We believed that the main task of the state is to expand its supportive role- if necessary at the cost of others, ideally the military and other 'security' components of state expenditure. This capacity to serve the needs of its inhabitants, we maintained, is the *raison d'etre* of a democratic state and its primacy claim to legitimacy (2003, p.3).

In the above citation, Steinert talks about giving priority to supportive role of the state even at the cost of military expenditure. In other words, the author prioritizes social policy and welfare programs for the people, which is a suitable way to minimize social inequality and discrimination. Charles Tilly (1998, p.10) describes his position in this regard by coining the term '*durable inequality*'. Seckinelgen remarks:

> Tilly's position allows one to understand not only the sources of exclusion but also its persistence in people's lives independently of policies that are trying to include them. The concept of 'durable inequality' makes clear that the issue is not simply to include those who are seen to be excluded, or to make them able. It argues that the problem is structural; it is constructed and reproduced within social relations that maintain structural distinctions (Seckinelgin 2009, p. 211).

Tilly conceives 'social exclusion' as a structural problem which is constructed and reproduced within social relations. Steinert also expresses his views very critically on social exclusion. He asserts that, "We require a dynamic understanding of 'social exclusion' in which the unit is not the person but the resource to which access is sought" (Steinert 2003, p.51). Steinert (2003) proposes a list of situations of social exclusion and a list of resources that can be mobilized to overcome it. Considering the current economic paradigm's focus on production, and from the perspective of the individual's desires, he endows his framework with the following categories: wage labor, subsistence, official existence and personal qualifications. I assert that CHT ethnic groups belong to his *subsistence* category, for which he gives the following as indicators of social exclusion: earning too little money for an extended period; losing property**;** not getting informal work and losing or not finding an affordable place to live (Steinert 2003, p.52).

I shall focus on these indicators in the rest of this chapter and onwards and base my analysis on the findings obtained from the study areas. Steninert further asserts that welfare and exclusion are a question of culture. A minimum standard of living and entitlement are considered as basic components of approaches of inclusion and cohesiveness. It is applicable even in the view of materialism (Steninert 2003). According to him, "It may be possible to define the base line of exclusion in-almost exclusively – material terms: food and shelter and minimum of health care conditions *sine qua non*. But usually we expect more from a society" (Steinert 2003, p.5). Thus, in context of the above noted conceptual and theoretical paradigm, now we will look into the CHT as a test case.

Are Adibasi Excluded in Sonai and Mayni?

In the following sections, I focus on the current features of Adibasi life, their economy, administration and on few other issues closely related with their livelihood. The aim is to examine the paradigm of social exclusion of Adibasi in the context of current situation in the CHT. The major part of the discussion draws on my field work, census and survey in Sonai and Mayni, Langadu.

The qualitative and quantitative findings are used to show how Adibasi have lost their land, emphasizing in particular, arrival of settlers, army occupation, and government projects under different administrations. In addition, I also include the after effects of conflictual land use such as forced migration, displacement, refugee life, environmental degradation and so forth.

Land Grabbing, Land Losses and Social Exclusion

Land loss without remedy is an essential way of excluding poor people. At the beginning of the 1980s, the government invited settlers to come into the CHT, through methods such as announcements over loudspeakers in the local plain areas. At that time the armed forces were in armed conflict with the JSS and Adibasi. Following the advice of the military, the then government agreed to bring a huge number of settlers from then 61 different plain districts of the country. The settlers captured government-owned forest as well as Adibasi customary land. As a result of this state sponsored population transfer, Adibasi are now becoming a minority in the CHT, especially in the study area.

The Adibasi are deprived and excluded from their land not only due to settlers, but also because of government schemes and projects. Two major events have resulted in widespread land losses. The first one was the construction of the Kaptai dam in 1963 when huge tracts of land were flooded, causing many Adibasi families to flee to Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Mizoram in India. Other Adibasi became internally displaced and refugees due to unrest and oppression by the army and by settlers.

One interviewee said that he and his relatives had to leave their homes due to dam construction. The project caused enormous suffering as they lost their land and shelter. He relocated from the Kaptai area to Tintilapara in 1980 but fled his home between 1989 and 1991 out of fear of attacks by settlers and the army.

Most of the Adibasi were not even informed about the dam construction. They were astounded when they saw that the dam was under construction and that huge areas of plain land had been inundated. They watched their houses, land, forests, and assets disappear as a result of the dam project. Consequently, thousands of Chakma families were forced to leave their homeland.

The establishment of army camps and training centers has caused further land losses. The Adibasi claim that these occupied areas were once their forests, gardens, cultivated areas and their ancestors' house plots. Land losses have severely disrupted the Adibasi's life and their economy as a whole. A 61 year old man in a group discussion at Karbaripara states:

> We lost our assets once during the Kaptai dam construction and again later after the settlers and army arrival. Many of our relatives left the CHT for these two main reasons. Most of them did not come back again in the CHT. How would they return? Where would they live and how would they survive? It is very tough for us even to stay here (Group Discussion, 080120, Karbaripara).

The above excerpt makes evident, land loss as a crucial problem in Adibasi life. Kaptai dam project during Pakistan regime and Bengali settlement policy in the CHT during Bangladesh period are identified as two main causes of land losses. Moreover, there are official declarations by the Government on the hilly land of Bangladesh.

The CHT land is divided into three different classes by the government: reserved forest, restricted forest and unclassified state forest. The reserved forests are fully under government control, and the forest department operates plantation programs in them. In restricted forests, which the government has slated for plantation development, Adibasi do not even have any legal access for plantations or settlements. The remaining unclassified state forest areas are for the settlements and plantations of Adibasi, settlers, and army camps and so on. The declaration of forest and other land as restricted has also severely constrained Adibasi land ownership and use. Land reservations have resulted in land disputes, mistrust, and losses of forest and hill resources. Land disputes are the root cause for the conflict between Bengali settlers and Adibasi in Sonai and Mayni, as well as in many other parts of the CHT.

During British rule, land was sanctioned by the headman following customary rules and the 1900 Act. Later during the Pakistani regime the very same lands were partially redistributed by the Government through the so-called B-form, as compensation for land losses due to the Kaptai dam. On top of it, the same land was re-allocated by the Government of Bangladesh to settlers. This overlapping allocation of the same land has created severe confusion regarding ownership of the land.

One interviewee said that during the Pakistan regime, when the Kaptai Dam was built in Rangamati, many Adibasi families got into severe crisis. In 1965, the government had decided to create the "B-form Settlement" or "General Settlement" whereby each Adibasi family displaced by the project was allocated a fixed amount of land. In most cases, land was granted for house settlement and cultivable land. Many of the affected Adibasi families applied for B-form settlement, but only a few were allocated land (Interview, 080608, Headmanpara). Such cases of land disputes and the flow of settlers into the CHT caused massive displacement and forced migration for the Adibasi. The Chakma of the study areas tend to live at the top of the hills, whereas previously, they lived in the plain lands or alongside rivers and canals. The latter areas have been taken over by the settlers and army. The Adibasi claim that they occupy marginal and deep hilly lands where the settlers could not survive.

Prior to settler's arrival in the 1970s, there were at least 200 Adibasi families living in Gathachora mauza but none of them live there now since settlers entirely occupy the region. The Adibasi have been forced out of these areas since 1979 and became refugees (Interview, 080623, Memberpara). The Adibasi expressed their helplessness by saying:

> What can we say? Settlers have occupied land that legally belongs to us. There were many people who had the official papers to prove their ownership of land. In spite of these papers, many settlers illegally occupied *Pahari* land. They just held and captured the land after their arrival wherever they found land, forests and plain spaces (Group Discussion, 080120, Karbaripara).

The interviewee here described a large number of incidents of land grabbing by the settlers in the study areas. The survey data from the study reveals that about 86% of the respondents faced problems such as land grabbing, disturbance and oppression by the settlers. In the Sonai and Mayni regions, such problems peaked in 1979-80 and 1989-90. More than 30% cases happened in 1979-80 and 31% happened in 1989-90. About 63% of respondents stated that settlers have grabbed their cultivable land. According to their responses, 43% of the total land grabbing cases occurred during 1979 to 1983 and 9% cases happened during 1989 to 90. Only 37% of the respondents said that they had not lost all of their cultivable land. Some of them had lost their original house plots.

Bengalis once were even not permitted to enter the CHT without the permission of King (*Raja*). This was maintained until 1947-48. The greatest influx of settlers occurred in the CHT during 1981-82. A participant in a group discussion described the situation:

> Look at Bagahichori. Pahari people are severely tortured there by both the army and settlers. Army personnel frequently conduct their operations in that place. Settlers' frequently burn Adibasi houses. The army inspires such acts and supports and allows the settlers to do so. They have already burnt many Adibasi ancestral para in Bagahichori. The main target is to force the Adibasi to vacate that area so that they can occupy the land. What an attitude! (Group Discussion, 080120, Karbaripara)

The above passage describes forceful inhuman activities along with land grabbing by the settlers and armed forces have also been reported in different daily newspapers and other media including several internet sources, but proper initiatives are not taken by the government and thus the incidents are gradually spreading. The Adibasi are powerless to oppose the settlers. A local Adibasi leader described how he himself had become an internally displaced person (IDP). He had been forced to leave his original house and cultivable lands and was now living in Bogapara. Another Adibasi local leader I interviewed was elected at a very young age and gained immense popularity due to his leadership. He claims:

> Personally we have lost much of our lands both in the plains and hills. We are also refugees here. Our main land has been grabbed by the settlers. We cannot go to that place. The settlers have built their houses in our original ancestral home. We do not go there; we do not even try to reclaim that land. We have abandoned our hopes for that land and are now living in these small

houses as internal refugees. Even if we had the land documents in our possession, the situation would not change, as the settlers have occupied those areas – how would we be able to return? It would create another war situation for us. Instead, we acknowledge our losses and abandon our hopes for those lands (Interview, 080623, Memberpara).

We can see in this interview that even the Adibasi local leaders are helpless and have become internal refugees. He has abandoned his hope to get back his ancestral land which has already been grabbed by the settlers. The panicked Adibasi are now bound to live and move within very limited areas. One interviewee from Sonai stated, "The army will enter into this village and they will beat us if we protest against anything regarding the settlers' activity. They have very good connections. We cannot go to the army" (Interview, 080621, Lamapara). One of participants of the group discussion mentioned, "Recently we are a minority in the CHT. Settlers are the majority now and they control money, trade, and the local administration. We do not have any life, any right to our lands even in the hills and forests" (Group Discussion 080210, Tintila para)

Settlers Have Changed the Original Names of the Areas

Settlers changed the names of localities which were originally in Adibasi languages. In most cases, settlers have imposed a new name in Bengali as a symbol of their settlement and claim over the Adibasi territory. The following table shows some of the changes:

Table 7: New Names of Different Place Imposed by the Settlers

Old name of the Adibasi area	**New name imposed by settlers**
Bhai-Bon Chora	Islamabad, Kalo Majhir Tila
Sunduk Chori	Dhakaia Tila, Aziz Tila, Majid Tila, FIDC Tila etc.
Haza Chora	5 no, Block, Uttor (North) Sonai
Gatha Chora	Mohammadia Para, Dewani Tila, Mistri Tila, Majid Member Para, Sheikh Para, Jalalabad Para, Nobabpur Tila, Kutob Tila, Dowder Tila, Sondip Tila, Lokman Tila.
Uluchori	Uttor (north) Sonai
Maladip	Molladip

Source: Field Notes

As we can see in the above table, most of the new names have been inspired by religion, districts of origin of the settlers in a particular area, influential people and so on. These changes were not initiated by any administrative body, but they are generally accepted and used by the local administration and Union Councils. I conducted a group discussion with settlers in Islamabad regarding the name, which they had bestowed upon that area. They said that they had been living there since 1979, and explained that, "The name of that area is *Islamabad*. We chose this name. We do not know the earlier name of this place" (Group Discussion, 080206, Islamabad, Gathachora).

The interviewees and respondents of the study elaborated upon how Adibasi people felt a great connection to the hilly landscape on which the deep, green forests flourished. But the settlers cut so many roadside trees and green areas, which causes the Adibasi pain. One of them expressed their frustration as follows:

> We have nothing to do. We do not voice our thoughts. The settlers are doing so and they have power and influence. The government allows them to do so. We are helpless. We see everything but we say nothing about it. There was once deep forest and now it is empty in some places. They are destroying the environment. What can we do? (Interview, 080604, Bogapara)

As the citation describes, the settlers are destroying the hilly forests, jungles and trees. Adibasi also cut the trees and use forest assets, but they preserve it as well. They claim they do not cut trees for the timber trade while settlers including government officers and local entrepreneurs clear the forest to make money. Recently deforestation has slowed down a little bit, but huge losses have already occurred. Adibasi have lost many deep forests, which they once possessed. The Adibasi say: "We are preservers. It is our homeland; we love to preserve forests and jungles" (Group Discussion, 080120, Karbaripara). A 33 year old Adibasi man also claims:

> Settlers do not have a real attachment to hill life. That is why they always prefer economic benefits that can easily be gained from cutting down many trees and destroying forest assets. But we think several times before cutting a tree from forest areas. I feel that is not their fault. They cannot feel like us. We have been in this region since long back. But the settlers came here in the 1970s (Interview 080622, Duluchoripara).

As described in the above citations, the settlers, governmental officers and armed forces are destroying the Adibasi's natural setting including hilly trees, jungles and deep forests as they do not have deep attachment with such natural settings. They rather prefer financial gain and benefits from cutting trees and doing timber trades. Instead, the Adibasi claims that they are the preserver of the hills and forest, as they conceive those as very much part of their life.

Economic Freedoms Are Becoming Constricted

This part illustrates how social exclusion and deprivations are manifested in the living conditions and economic activities of the Adibasi.

Most Adibasi remain dependent on agriculture and do not have the opportunity to diversify their livelihoods. The main occupation of the Adibasi in the study area is plain land cultivation. Some of them also cultivate small plots in the hills as well as practice slash and burn cultivation (Jhum). The survey data findings show that almost 78% of the total respondents grow their products on the plain or valley bottom land, with 19% using a combination of plain and Jhum lands. Only 3.6% were found to depend solely on Jhum cultivation. However, there are some areas in the

CHT where the Adibasi are involved in Jhum cultivation to a larger extent than in the study area, but there is a growing trend among the Adibasi to abandon their traditional Jhum cultivation mainly due to land loss and insecurity.

Though agriculture is their main occupation, some Adibasi have recently diversified into small-scale agricultural trade, selling cash crops such as bamboo and turmeric, but also other crops and fruits. Both male and female Adibasi have been engaging in non-farm work. At the time of my study, the Adibasi were encountering problems when trying to scale up these livelihood activities. A few are working in government institutions as school teachers or policemen, while others are employed as village-level workers by UNICEF or NGOs.

Adibasi Chakma, both men and women also work as laborers in agricultural fields on the plains or in Jhum lands, when not cultivating their own gardens. They provide their labor for the sowing, cleaning, and harvesting of others' agricultural products. Yet, due to various economic and socio-political barriers and the seasonal character of such work, this is a precarious way for Adibasi to make a living. One of interviewees described the difficulties of not having social support or savings to help with living expenses. Her children work as day laborers nearby. Sometimes her elderly husband tries to find work as a wage laborer, but this is not always available. Agricultural work is seasonal and other jobs depend on the various development programs run by the government. For him, the only opportunity to work comes with road development or construction in the locality. Occasionally work is available at other Adibasi' homes (Interview, 080202, Bogapara), but on the whole the Adibasi remain poor. In the words of one of the interviewees, a 70 year old man:

> We cannot grow sufficient food anymore for ourselves due to land losses. A large part of our cultivable plain and hilly lands are out of our hands now. Large portions of land have been grabbed by the army and settlers were submerged into water due to the Kaptai Dam. Moreover, floods often attack this area… We cannot purchase our daily needs from the market. Where we will get the cash money for doing that? (Interview, 080605, Karbaripara)

As can be seen from the quote above, life in the hills is perceived to become harder for Adibasi day after day. They claim that their economic situation has deteriorated in recent years. They used to hold social and cultural gatherings, but now many of them cannot afford such programs. Sometimes they can still arrange such events, but they are forced to do with very limited funds. Thus, they feel helpless and poor. They estimate that almost two-thirds of their land has been occupied by settlers. When they had all that land their economy was much better. In the group discussions, the loss of land and the consequences of this were a topic of constant debate:

> We had good lives earlier; we used to arrange several social events each year. But now, we cannot afford to. Pahari people love to sit together at various social and cultural gatherings, but we cannot implement or organize these because of our financial condition. Who would pay for them? (Group Discussion, 080603, Karbaripara)

The life style of huge majority of Adibasi in Sonai and Mayni is utterly poor. There has been no apparent economic progress for decades. Rather the economy accord-

ing to them is declining (Interview 080623, Memberpara). The poverty among the Adibasi can be further illustrated by some of my quantitative results.

Income

The census and the survey investigated income, expenditure, loans and debt status. In the survey area, the average household monthly income is 2333 BDT (33 USD)[19], with a range minimum from 300 BDT (4.28 USD) to maximum 26500 BDT (378 USD). Compare this with the annual household net income of rural Bangladesh which is 84,000 BDT (1200USD) (Barkat, Halim et al. 2009). It means that the monthly net income is that of 7,000 BDT (100 USD) and that my respondents on the average have only a third of that. A socio-economic, baseline Survey of CHT conducted in 2009 by UNDP reveals that the household annual net income of the Bengali is approximately 71,000BDT (1014 USD) and the corresponding for Adibasi approximately 62000BDT (885USD) which is equivalent to monthly income of 5166 BDT (73 USD) (Barkat, Halim et al. 2009). There is a remarkable difference between the income data of my study and the UNDP that might have been due to the Baseline survey all over the CHT conducted by UNDP and my study was in two remote hilly villages.

Indeed, the survey data of the study reveals that more than 40% of the respondents end up in debt and economic hardship every year. The data also show the different strata of income groups among the Adibasi.

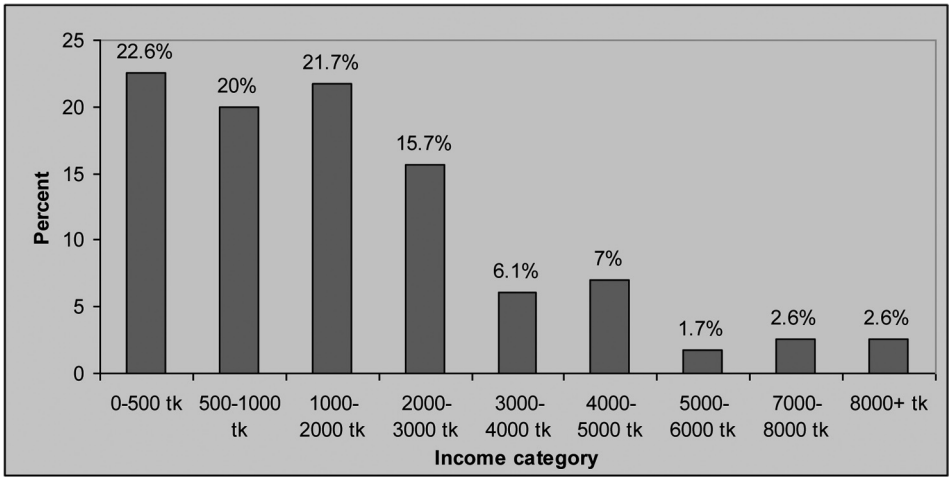

Figure 1: Income Distribution of the Surveyed Households
Source: Own Survey

As we can see in the above figure, most of the Adibasi are in the lowest income groups and very few in relatively higher income strata. Almost 80% of all the house-

19 1 USD= 70 BDT

holds' monthly income is less than 3000 BDT (43 USD). 43% of them earn an amount of around 1000 BDT (15 USD) per month. These people can be considered the poorest of the poor. Only 13% households earn from 3000 BDT to 5000 BDT per month, and an even smaller 7% of total households earn more than 5000 BDT (71 USD) per month. Thus, the absolute poverty of the Adibasi cannot be doubted, neither their relative poverty compared to the rural population in the rest of the country. Note, however, that according to evidence brought forward the settlers also are poor relative to the rest of rural Bangladesh.

Agriculture

Permanent agriculture on plain or valley bottom land and slash and burn (jhum) on hilly land is the main source of income of the Adibasi in the study area. The Adibasi cultivate two crops of rice a year. The first crop is during *Asahar-Srabon* (rainy season) and the second is during the months of *Ograhaon* and *Paush* (end of fall and beginning of winter). The main crops are *boro*, *aush, amon, hira* and *biyire* rice. They have recently begun to cultivate the varieties of *Dhupchi, Hiradhan* and *company dhan*. Some interviewees mentioned that they cultivate rice just once a year due to its high cost. They would plant seeds during *Paush* and *Magh* (December, January) and harvest their rice in *Falgun* and *Chitro* (April, May). The monsoon season is particularly risky for crop cultivation, since much of the cultivable land gets submerged in the accumulated rain water.

Interviews revealed that the Adibasi often face various obstacles, such as floods and rat invasion, etc. Every few years the low lands are flooded, creating severe problems, and sometimes pests harm the paddy fields and other vegetables and fruits.

In 2007 and 2008, the CHT people suffered greatly due to a rat population boom. It affected the Sonai and Mayni as well. Such disasters normally occur every 40 or 50 years, in connection with a large bloom of bamboo flowers. The rats destroy the crops and food, not only in the fields but also in the homes, creating food shortages for the Adibasi families. The rats are extremely difficult to catch or destroy. The interviewees informed me that they had tried unsuccessfully to save crops and food from the rats using a small machine and some chemicals. In the words of one of my interviewees:

> Every morning I find a few dead rats at my home, but I am unable to make a dent in the huge rat population that ravages my crops in the fields. I expected that the government or local administration would take action to control the rat population boom, but they did not. A small compensation has been distributed among some of Adibasi by some NGOs, but they did not touch Sonai or Mayni. I did not get any compensation from anyone for my losses, but I heard that Centre for Indigenous People Development (CIPD) and World Food Programme (WFP) distributed donations among the Adibasi who had lost their crops (Interview 080622, Duluchoripara).

As mentioned in the above extract, in most crisis periods, Adibasi attempt to solve their own problems; they cannot wait for governmental or non-governmental assistance as these are limited in scope and distribution. In most cases, the donors' help does not reach the remote regions. During my field work, I saw banners of NGOs in market places where they had been distributing chemicals to control the rat population boom, but those projects did not enter any villages of my study area.

To control crop damage, the Adibasi usually need to buy fertilizer and insecticide, and they also need to rent power tillers and sometimes hire day laborers, all of which are extremely expensive. The total cost of this is hard to estimate, but in my interviews we discussed market price of their product and average monthly income from the land cultivation. We also discussed the role that rice and other crops play in meeting their needs. These discussions showed that often they cannot produce sufficient rice and other crops from their cultivable land for the whole year. Their harvests only meet six or seven months of the typical family's needs and during the rest of the year they survive on loans. A 30 year old Adibasi Chakma woman in Bogapara explained: "My expenses in a year are around 4000 BDT (57USD) for cultivating 1 acre (0.404 hectares) of land. We cultivate 2.5 acres land that has an expense of around 10000 BDT (143USD). In return, we harvest around 2000 to 2400 kilograms of rice" (Interview 080127, Bogapara).

The average market price of paddy is 550 BDT (8 USD)/maund, giving a gross value of the crop of 550 x 60 = 33000BDT. After deducting the expenses, the market value of that paddy is a maximum of 23000 BDT (328 USD) yearly from their land, making the monthly average value of her rice cultivation 1916 BDT (27USD). She needs this rice for family consumption, and does not sell it. Another interviewee estimated their average monthly income from land to be 3000BDT (43 USD). When the season is good and high quality production is possible, they can grow around 800 kilograms of rice on each of their three acres (Interview, 080604, Bogapara). The local market price of this amount of rice (paddy form) is about 11000BDT (157 USD).

I interviewed a 50 year old Chakma woman who has four sons and four daughters. Three of her daughters and one of her sons got married, while the rest remained with their parents. Three years ago, the unmarried sons saved a little money from work and one of their neighbors pledged 5 *Kani* of his land to the respondents for 10,000BDT (143USD). When the neighbor returns the cash, they will have to return the land to him. They cultivate *Hiradhan* (hira rice) each winter. Normally they use a cow-plough, but if the land is waterlogged then they use a spade (*Kodal*) for digging the land. They also bought fertilizer and insecticide for rice crop. In 2006, they bought 30 kilogram of urea, which cost 180BDT (2.5USD), insecticide 200BDT (2.8USD), and seeds 300BDT (4.2USD). The total cost was approximately 680 BDT (9.7USD) without the labor cost. They got at most 280 kilograms rice from that land, which had a market value of around 3500BDT (50USD). This is only enough to meet their family's need for 4 to 5 months; there is no excess to sell. The rest of the time, the whole family depends on income they earn as day laborers. If work is scarce, they struggle a great deal.

I interviewed a 70 year old Adibasi woman who reported some positive changes in her crop cultivation. Recently, she has been cultivating hybrid rice, which yields more than traditional varieties under appropriate conditions. However, she does not have enough land to cultivate. If she did, she could increase her food security. She is also using a power tiller to cultivate the land, as opposed to a bullocks-drawn plough, which she says is more expensive and labor intensive. The use of power tillers instead of cow-ploughs, and hybrid seeds along with traditional seeds, are viewed as positive developments by her. (Interview 080202, Bayddapara).

Adibasi mostly use power tillers to cultivate land. They use cow-drawn ploughs only when power tillers are not available, because cow-drawn ploughing is more expensive. Combined with the money spent on fertilizer, insecticide and day laborers, the use of a power tiller costs around 2400 BDT per Kani[20] compared to around 3100 BDT if a bullocks-drawn plough is used. However, their agricultural output is decreasing due to such diverse causes as land loss, political crisis, lack of credit, restrictions on free movement and lack of resources and information on agriculture.

Small Scale Trade and Projects

Some of the Adibasi are engaged in small-scale trading. One of my interviewees operates a tea shop. He also engages in seasonal bamboo trade in Mayni. He plants bamboo in gardens and earns 8,000 to 10,000 BDT per year from this. The area in which he works is hilly and is located one mile from Langadu headquarters. He has been doing this for at least 10 years. He claims to be the owner of the land since 1975, although he does not have any official documents to prove it. Since he did not face any land disputes, neither with the army nor with settlers after 1989, he did not apply for land registration to get official recognition of ownership. Today the tea-shop and bamboo trade are his sole sources of income. His son has recently become involved in a local NGO, receiving very low pay. The family income on an average is 4,000 BDT (57 USD) per month (Interview, 080127, Tintilapara).

Another example is a 33 year old Chakma young man who has a small fishing project. He has recently started this in his own pond, where he raises *rui*, *katla, mrigel*, *tilapia*, *silver carp* etc. He is doing this only for his family's consumption. Although he cannot earn his living from this small project, he is able to fulfill the minimum food needs of the family (Interview 080622, Duluchoripara).

Interviewing a 50 year old Adibasi woman engaged in small scale "napi" production[21] and whose husband runs a small business, shed further light on the situation of the Adibasi. This woman and her husband prepare dried fish and sell it at various nearby markets. Her husband has been doing this business for the last 13 years. He normally sells his products at the Mayni and Korolachori markets. They also culti-

20 1 Kani = 1.32 acres or 0.54 ha (http://www.odi.org.uk/work/projects/00-03-livelihood-options/resources/book/chapter1/rdch1-2.pdf)

21 *Napi or sidol are* local terms, referring to a crushed form of *sukti* (dried fish).

vate 2.5 acres of land. They grow rice, vegetables and fruits, but do not practice Jhum cultivation. She says:

> We work hard. We work for our children to attend school. I and my husband wish to educate our children well, but it is costly. Education costs more than 3000 BDT per month for our two children. We earn at best total 6000BDT a month from three sources. We have a shop, *napi* trade and some cultivable lands. In fact the scope and sources of income here are few. They are very small-scale activities. We do not have much capital to invest further and we cannot go outside to expand our business. We do not feel safe outside this area. So whatever we are doing is within this area and is very limited in scope (Interview 080202, Bogapara).

The above mentioned family makes a little more money in December and January (*Paush Magh*) when they are able to trade turmeric, pepper and oranges. She and her husband buy turmeric, pepper and orange from people at *Dozor* (near the border) and re-sell it in Mayni bazar or in Rangamati headquarter market. She and her husband carry these products either by small trawler (motor boat) or boat from *Dozor* to Mayni or Rangamati market (Interview 080202, Bogapara).

Indebtedness

Generally, the Adibasi do not like to take loans. The study revealed that about 80% of the respondents did not do so, even to cope with contingencies, instead preferring to combat poverty and hardship using their local resources. Traditionally the indigenous people help each other within their communities and households. The credit programs operated by several NGOs are not very popular or acceptable among the Chakma. Only 13.5% of the respondents have received loans from various NGOs, and even fewer (6.5%) relied on the banking sector. They consider microcredit programs to be more beneficial for the loan provider than the recipient, but most of them try to pay the installments in a timely fashion. Ten percent are still in the process of paying off all their loan installments. However, when they face severe hardship they may be forced to sell their household utensils to meet the contingency. Almost 13% of all respondents answered that they were bound to sell some of their possessions for contingency needs. The basic reasons for selling some of their utensils included to meet emergency medical treatment costs, education expenses for children, household expenses, loan installments, and costs for resolving land related disputes.

Jhum Cultivation is an Inadequate Livelihood

Jhum cultivation once was the main occupation in the CHT economy. The Adibasi cultivate mainly the following rice varieties in Jhum land: *Galongdhan, Pattikidhan, Vatiadhan, Kobrokdhan, Buppoidhan, Hamarangdhan, Turkidhan*. The other crops in Jhum cultivation include pepper, turmeric, aubergine, ginger, *til* (an annual herbaceous plant, the seeds of which yield a fine oil) arum (*kochu*), hilly potato, banana

etc. There are various types of banana in hilly areas: *Toinna Kola, Kattoli kola, Zet kola, Thunne kola, Adbori kola, chompakola* etc.

However, growing pressure on land resources most Adibasi can no longer survive on Jhum cultivation alone. For that reason, the Adibasi Chakma have begun to do other non-farm work. They have lost much of their hill land due to land grabbing, through governmental expropriation and through the activities of private enterprises. Other reasons for abandoning Jhum cultivation were uncovered during interviews. A 55 year old Adibasi Chakma man has recently started a small enterprise (tea shop) in Sonai. His father and grandfather were Jhum cultivators, but since the Pakistani regime, neither he nor his children are engaging in this, since they believe the lifestyle is too fraught with difficulties (Interview 080127, Tintilapara). A 50 year old woman living in Sonai *mauza* spent more than 10 years in the jungle, subsisting on Jhum cultivation. Three years ago she and her family returned to Sonai due to health problems. She has recently become sick, and her 60 year old husband cannot perform the arduous physical work any longer, and for these reasons they abandoned Jhum cultivation. The Headman allocated them a piece of land in Sonai to build a house where she now stays with her husband and children (Interview 080202, Bogapara). An Adibasi leader expressed his views on agriculture and Jhum cultivation as follows:

> We need to bring change to the life of Jhum cultivators. We also need to bring change to the occupational life of Jhum cultivators. We can grow more fruits in the CHT. We can concentrate on horticulture. Afforestation is a must here. We need short-term, mid-term and long-term agricultural and other policies. Most importantly, it should be ensured that each Adibasi family has land for cultivation and settlement. The whole of CHT is dominated by outsiders. It has created lots of problems in Jhumiya life (Interview 080712, Dhaka).

The Adibasi leader emphasizes on modern techniques in agriculture instead of depending only on the Jhum cultivation. The Adibasi do not have sufficient hills and land to live on. Moreover, only the Jhum cultivation cannot afford their whole population in any ways. As consequences of diverse effects, the Adibasi now needs to explore new ideas and alternative techniques to produce food on limited lands.

Women's Hardship

Adibasi women are intimately involved with agriculture, gardening, weaving, and small-scale businesses as well as in household work. They work hard for their survival and contribute to agricultural activities. Many Adibasi women have a small corner as a weaver's workshop inside or beside their houses, from which they engage in small scale commercial weaving. They aim to produce enough to earn a living from their production. The survey data of the study reveals that 90% of the households are engaged in handloom weaving.

Chakma women themselves wear the cloth they produce – it is a part of their culture. Cotton produced from their Jhum cultivation is the main material for weaving.

The women weave mainly the following items: Borgi (sheet for women's dresses), Pinon (lower part of Adibasi women's dresses), Khadi (modesty scarf for women), Alam, Subgi etc. It takes around 15 days to weave a Borgi. The Adibasi women can weave these items only in between their numerous other tasks. When they are able to weave excess items, they sometimes sell their products. The weavers sell a Borgi for 300 to 400 BDT (4 to 5.5USD) per piece. The production cost is around 150 to 200 BDT without the labor cost. Respondents believed that weaving could be a profitable small industry for Adibasi women if they received sufficient and appropriate funding and marketing support.

Adibasi women are also responsible for the household work like cooking, childcare, washing, animal care etc. Most of the men do none of the household work. Some Adibasi engage in small-scale trade or run shops. Women are more active in trading than men. In spite of women's massive contribution to agriculture, household work and in other sectors, wages remain different for males and females. A male day laborer can expect to receive 100 to 120 BDT (1.5 USD) as daily wage, whereas a woman earns only 70 BDT (1USD) (Group Discussion 080122, Byttapara).

Livelihoods of Bengali Settlers

On the way to Sonai, I talked to a few settlers and interviewed two of them, who explained how the Bengali settlers were mainly involved in agriculture, fishing, timber and bamboo trading etc. They described most of the settlers as poor. They take loans from various NGOs, but struggled to pay their debts regularly. Thus, the Bengali settlers also experience hardship. There are very limited economic opportunities in the CHT. Nowadays it is even tougher than it used to be. They do not see any good future for the next generations in the CHT. They stated that, "We do not have any good options for survival. Otherwise we would leave this place" (Group Discussion 080206, Islamabad).

They said that they had come to the CHT from the different plain districts of Bangladesh in search of a better life, but they found life very tough, insecure and difficult there.

Barriers to Adibasi Businesses

Most Adibasi farmers have the opportunity to sell their products only in local markets at the village or union level. The survey data shows that almost two thirds of the respondents (69%) sell their products in the nearby local and Mayni weekly market. Only 3% of the Chakma from Mayni and Sonai directly sell their products in the district market. About 23% of the respondents do not at all sell their products because they need them for their own subsistence. Almost 80% of the respondents said that they did not receive the expected price for their products. A majority (93%) of the Chakma replied that they are not able to sell their crops in the district level

market individually due to various barriers, identifying the lack of proper communication and transportation as the main factors. The other challenges mentioned included settlers' interventions, lack of security, intervention by armed forces and police, and obstacles from middlemen, amongst others.

Turmeric Profits go into Bengali Hands

Turmeric is one of the common and popular products among the Adibasi, as it grows well both in Jhum plots and gardens. Adibasi women use turmeric in their daily cooking in a similar manner as saffron, since it gives their food a deep yellow colour. They use turmeric for cooking vegetables, fish, meat etc. The rest of Bangladesh also uses turmeric, thus demand is high all over the country. Farmers in the plain lands also grow turmeric seasonally. The Adibasi people normally grow surplus turmeric, which they carry on their shoulders or heads to sell at nearby markets. If they go to a more distant market, they use boats. Most of the Adibasi of Sonai and Mayni sell their surplus products in Mayni or the nearby Suvolong Bazar. At the farthest they go to Rangamati *sador*. However, since the Adibasi are unable to directly access large markets in cities such as Chittagong, they are obliged to depend upon Bengali middlemen who sell the turmeric with a very high mark-up. I talked with a Bengali turmeric trader at Maynimuk *Bazar*, who buys turmeric from the Adibasi at around 40 BDT per kilogram.

The price per maund (40 kilograms) of turmeric from the Adibasi costs the Bengali middleman only 1600 BDT. The Bengali middleman sells the same amount of turmeric in Chittagong or Dhaka city at a wholesale price of around 3200 BDT per maund. The retail price in cities and other plain districts of Bangladesh is around 100 BDT/kg. Thus, the Adibasi farmers receive less than half of the final price of their product. It is important to mention that many of the hill Adibasi farmers do not even know about the retail price of their products in other districts of Bangladesh. For the Adibasi of the CHT, access to markets is restricted. In the words of one of my interviewees:

> I had no option but to sell my turmeric to Bengali middlemen. I could have got the benefits that the settler traders are achieving from their turmeric and other local products, but I lack access to these markets. The Bengali settlers do not allow us to do so, and the army and settlers hinder us. They establish technical barriers and stop us from travelling to Rangamati for trade reasons… We get lower price for our own products. We are not free traders like Bengali settlers. Army and civil administrators always favor settlers, not us. We are the ignored and deprived people in this society (Interview 080202, Bogapara).

As it is stated above, the Adibasi are bound to sell their own product within the CHT market, leaving the larger, more lucrative markets to the settlers and middlemen. Adibasi do not have sufficient capital to expand their small businesses. One of my interviewees expressed the opinion that they did not have access to good trade

and business opportunities, and also that they were not efficient enough to compete with others.

As described above, Adibasi are bound to maintain a hard and tough life in the CHT due to diverse socio-economic problems; for example; land shortage, land grabbing and losses, barriers in trades and markets, dominance of settlers and army on their daily life. Adibasi do not have the opportunity to explore diverse alternative economic activities; rather most of them are dependent only on the agricultural work. However, the arrival of a large number of settlers into the CHT has further added economic constraints which the Adibasi had been facing since several decades. Now, the situation turns more complicated and worsens than prior to the arrival of settlers. Furthermore, the dominating role by the military and the lack of implementation of social policies for the indigenous people have added some extra features of deprivation and exclusion from the development and economic freedom. In the following sub-section I would focus on the situation of basic human needs for the Adibasi of the CHT.

Lack of Social Policy to Ensure Basic Human Needs

Both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that the Adibasi are unable to fulfill basic human needs; they have to endure food shortages and poor housing. They lack access to adequate health services and medicine, get sick from poor water and sanitation, lack access to education etc. This clearly shows both their vulnerability and the lack of proper policies to make up for this. In the following discussion the above mentioned themes are explored in details.

Food Insecurity

The census data reveals that only 19.5% households' have meals three times a day. A significant portion (80%) of the household was found to have two meals a day. Although they used to have three meals a day, most can no longer afford this. The study showed that rice was the staple food of the Adibasi. The poor Adibasi have one meal at around 9 or 10 a.m. and have dinner at 7 to 8 at night. Adibasi generally only eat meat such as pork, chicken, snake, frog etc. at festivals.

Even those who can afford three meals a day consume insufficiently nutritious food. 10 households reported that most of the time they are restricted to low-calorie items. A significant proportion of Adibasi families eat only rice and salt. Fifty-one households mainly survive on rice and vegetable. Some can occasionally afford pi-

geon peas with rice and vegetables. Only 11 households said that they often can afford some fish. Only 8 households said that they can afford some meat.

These findings were consistent with data from interviews and group discussions regarding their daily meals and food habits. I interviewed a 26 year old Adibasi Chakma woman at Karbaripara, Sonai in mid 2008. At that time, she told me that generally, her family eats rice twice a day. Most of the time, they only eat rice and greens. They try to buy fish one or two days a month. Normally, they get *Gura* (small) and *Tilapia* fishes from the local market. Sometimes, she collects bamboo shoots to add to their rice. When she does not manage to find anything, they eat rice with salt.

The participants in group discussions also mentioned their poor meals and food shortage. They expressed their helplessness to provide sufficient food for their children. In the words of one of the participants in group discussion: "Often an Adibasi mother offers her children only salt and rice as the main meal in daytime as she does not have other items to offer her kids (Group Discussion 080122, Byttapara)". Another interviewee expressed her struggle to meet their daily minimum needs. The extract from her interviews says:

> For family consumption, I need at least 2kg cooked rice every day, that is, around 60 kg rice in a month. The market price of 60kg rice is around 1800 BDT. Additional monthly costs are around 1300 BDT for salt, oil, and *kerosene*, and around 500 BDT for dry fish and vegetables. When on an extremely tight budget I buy only these essentials. We take meat or fresh fish not even once a month. I cannot provide good or new clothes for my children, and can hardly afford healthcare if they become ill. I am also worried about how I will bear the educational costs of my children (Interview 080604, Bogapara).

The above statement clearly shows their vulnerability to food shortage and similar statements were made by other interviewees from different para of the studied areas. One interviewee from Memberpara, claimed that a budget of 100 BDT (1.5 USD) per day for a family is difficult for them to maintain. However, this amount is the bare minimum required by each family for their meals. When the families cannot manage this minimum they are forced to taking formal and informal loans from banks, NGOs or other people. They fall deeper into poverty when they are unable to repay their loans.

I learned more about their hardship and loans for food shortages from another interviewee from Karbaripara, who was a 26 year old Chakma woman. At a time of extreme need she borrowed money from BRAC and ASA, a microfinance institution – without those loans, she would have starved. She is repaying her debts with the money she earns as a day laborer.

The evidence given above clearly shows that the Adibasi Chakma of the study areas suffer hardship with respect to food shortage and hunger. They do not access sufficient food, do not have the possibility to grow more food and do not have the finances to purchase more. Adequate social policy could have alleviated their problems, or at least provided them the minimum necessary food by addressing land issues and by supplying seed and other minimum assistance to increase production in

the hilly lands. Social policy is exceedingly important then, for the well-being of the Adibasi groups, especially in connection with land issues and cultivation.

Adibasi Houses and Household Materials

Housing is a common problem for Adibasi of the study areas. Most of them live in what in Bengali would be called *Jhupri* houses which are in very poor conditions. By definition, *jhupri* houses have earthen or mud built floors, mud or wooden walls, and roofs thatched with *Chon* (a kind of tall grass) or on occasion, tin. I visited inside and around the houses of many of my respondents and interviewees. Inside their houses, I observed that they all lived in almost exactly the same conditions. They possess very few household resources. Inside, they generally have a bed (some planks on a bamboo stand), pillows, some pots, earthenware (*Hari – Patil)*, plates, *dhurum* (to keep rice/paddy), some sacks (*Bosta*), a pitcher (Kolsi, i.e. a water jar), some clothes, *hookah* (pipe for smoking tobacco), and a mud-built chula (stove for cooking) etc.

Health and Illness

The study finds that the Adibasi have a high incidence of malaria. Mosquitoes in the area are very dangerous and spread fever among the inhabitants. About 80% of respondents said that at least one of their family members had suffered from malaria. People also often mentioned water borne diseases like diarrhea, dysentery, cold and skin diseases. Mostly, Adibasi families use dug-well, ponds and canals water for drinking and cooking. The canals and other sources of water are comparatively dry during *Falgun-Chotro* (name of Bengali months, during February and March). The canal water contains decaying plant material during summer. This causes growth of micro-organisms and stomach problems and diarrhea for Adibasi people when they drink it. Drinking pit water also predisposes their children to other contagious diseases.

Adibasi are accustomed to waiting for normal, minor health problems to run their natural course. In severe cases, they go to the hospital or medical camps operated by the army, to *Rabeta* hospital, the pharmacy, or a folk healer for treatment. Fifty-seven percent of them prefer to go to the government hospital situated in Langadu *Sador* and 39% go to the pharmacy to seek treatment. Many of them first try to use their indigenous knowledge for recovery from illness and diseases.

Forty-three percent of the respondents clearly stated that they cannot afford the medical expenses if someone in their family becomes sick. They need to take loans from others or sell household materials or land to bear the medical expenses. Otherwise they seek treatment from free medical clinics. Only 2% of the respondents reported that they received free medicine from NGOs, while 20% received medicine

from the government hospital. One respondent said he needed to sell household items to buy medicine or meet the doctor if any of his family members fall gravely ill. He once sold his hen and rice to bear the cost of treatment for someone in his family. If someone is very sick and needs a large sum of money for medical treatment, they are forced to sell or mortgage their land.

Aging also brings health challenges, since the elderly people lack assistance, treatment facilities, or support either from the state or from their community. I personally met with some elderly sick persons. One of them was 71 years old at the time. He is an ex-headman. Recently, he has come to need help from others to walk. He cannot recognize people well and is unable to express himself fully. He is bodily fit, but has lost most of his memories. His only son and his wife take care of him at home when they can manage extra time for him. The family is unable to bear expenses for his proper treatment and cannot hospitalize him due to high expenses for treatment, medical tests and medicine. One of my interviewees, a 50 year old Adibasi female described her health problems:

> I often feel dizziness and drowsiness and thus assume that I might have some disease. I went to folk-healer for my treatment and took some indigenous medicine, which did not cure me. Later I went to local pharmacy, which made me a little better, but did not completely resolve the problem. I had to cease taking the medicine, as it is so costly and did not help fully (Interview 080202, Bogapara).

I interviewed a young mother and she has two kids. She prefers breastfeeding at least for three years to maintain her children's good health. Sometimes her children fall sick due to cold and cough. If it gets more serious, she goes to Mayni hospital or the local pharmacy for medicine and treatment. Most of the deliveries are attended by a local midwife. If a complication arises people go to the hospital in Langadu. During pregnancy, most of the hill women stay active and work in the fields, taking some medicine and herbal treatments to keep themselves well. They maintain some indigenous methods which help them to deliver at home. Recently, they realized that mothers, in particular the pregnant women suffer from lack of vitamins, and for that reason the children also suffer after birth.

Water and Sanitation

The Adibasi mainly use shallow dug-well *(Kua*) water for drinking, cooking and other household activities. The pit is around 6 to 8 feet deep. This water is not really safe for drinking. The following photo has been taken from Sonai locality. The Chakma collect water from such dug-well to drink and for household uses as well.

Photo 1: Local Source of Water: Dug-well (Kua)

This dug-well is situated in a field very close to small hills. It is an open place and small plant, insects, and other dirty things can easily be placed into this dug-well. However, the Adibasi are sometime bound to drink this water as and when there are no other alternatives. They preserve this collected water into mud- jar and use indigenous methods to purify this water. Recently some households use purifying tablets that make them confident to drink water.

The supply of drinking water from earthen pits or wells is available for only 7 to 8 months a year. If the weather is normal, they are able to obtain water in the remaining 4 to 5 months by digging these pits a little deeper. If this is not possible, they must resort to other options like, ponds, canals, tube wells or springs. They need to go further into a field to collect drinking water in these difficult seasons. Many of my interviewees and respondents mentioned that their family members including children have no other option but to drink water from *Kua.* Some also drink tube well water, though tube well is not available for all. Local government has provided some tube wells, but most of them are already broken and dysfunctional. Some Adibasi households in Tintilapara, near Langadu *sador,* have safe drinking water from a cement-lined well which is around 40 to 50 feet deep. The Government has allocated such wells for many poor people, with joint sponsorship by Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) and the CHT District Council. The same households also have access to a slab-covered latrine, which also was allocated by the government through the District Council. In spite of these facilities, they

sometimes still need to drink water from traditional wells when the ring well runs dry and dysfunctional.

Most of the Chakma are using unhygienic latrines. Their concept of a hygienic latrine is simply a toilet made by slab on a cement-lined pit with a thatch superstructure. Some Chakma are aware of the health benefits of a sanitary latrine, but they cannot afford the cost of building one. Recently some NGOs have been working to provide sanitary latrines in the area, but due to their limited scope of action, only a few families have benefited from this project.

Education

The Adibasi Chakma have keen interest in being educated, in sending their children at school and thus to explore other formal and informal work for their survival. The respondents and interviewees expressed such ambition when I talked with them. However, they have lack of opportunity to receive quality education in the region due to limited school in the areas and most importantly due to financial problem and insecurity.

Significantly, the literacy rate among the Chakma community of the CHT is higher than that of rural Bangladesh, at least in the context of primary education. Indeed, literacy rate among the Chakma community was historically much better than the overall rate in Bangladesh. In 2001, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS 2001) estimated the literacy rate to be 89% in Chakma community while the Primary and Public Education Department (2001) revealed the literacy rate to be 65% in Bangladesh (Mondol, Khan et al. 2009). A study shows that during 2001 -2005, the youth literacy rate in Bangladesh has been 72.73% with 75.03% of them males and 70.36% females. For the same group the literacy rate was 25.8% in 1974 and it has risen to 47.5% by 2001 (Sirajuddin, Khan et al. 2008).

Alarmingly, the literacy rate is decreasing among the Chakma community while the rate is improving in the rest of the country. A study conducted exhibits that the literacy rate is 76% among the Chakma community (Mondol, Khan et al. 2009) and my own survey finds 72% literacy rate in Sonai and Mayni in 2007 whereas according to the BBS report the rate was 89% in 2001.

A study exhibits that, "The dropout scenario among the CHT students is highly unacceptable, 65% children discontinue their education before completion of primary schooling and 19% after completion of the same. Financial problem is the main reason for school dropouts" (Barkat, Halim et al. 2009). The decreasing rate of Chakma literacy presents a picture of the frustratingly limited prospects for education especially at the tertiary level and financial barriers, security problems among the Adibasi.

Pre-primary and Primary Education

There are five non-governmental pre-primary and two government primary schools in Sonai and Mayni. Recently, the five pre-primary schools started to operate in different Adibasi Para in Sonai and Mayni, financed by the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Adibasi children go to these pre-schools when they are 3 to 5 year old. After completion, children enter the Sonai Government Primary School.

There are two government primary schools in Maynimuk Union for the Adibasi community; one is situated in Karbaripara and the other in Hazachora. There is still a government primary school in Hazachora, but the Adibasi children do not study there. On the other hand, all students in the Sonai primary school are from the Adibasi Chakma community. At the high school level, both settlers and Adibasi students study together. However, the Adibasi students have less access to education compared with other plain districts of Bangladesh. A study conducted by UNDP in July 2006 reveals that 'only one in five villages had a primary school in the CHT region, compared with two schools for three villages in the rest of the country (Nasreen and Tate 2007 p.30). The UNICEF report in 2007 reveals that "The percentage of working in the agricultural sector is higher for ethnic minority boys (48 percent) and girls (41 percent) than the majority Bengali population – boys (31 percent) girls (18 percent)" (Nasreen and Tate 2007 p.30).

The Sonai Government primary school was established as a private school in 1952. It was incorporated into a government scheme in 1972. There were only two male teachers in the school during my field period in 2008 and one female teacher who was on deputation. However, the school has three vacant posts for teachers. The male teachers are from the Adibasi society. The total number of students is 126, of which 72 are boys and 54 girls. The school provides primary education from class one to five. One of the interviewees claims that most of the students who attend primary school complete their primary education. Both boys and girls attend, and the Adibasi girls are performing well compared to the boys. Of those who complete primary school, however, only 80% enter high school. However, for the estimated 10% who are able to finish their high school education and enter college (Interview 080622, Karbaripara).

High School Education

In Sonai and Mayni *mauza* there are no high schools. Students who complete their high school education are mainly admitted into the Langadu Government High School situated in Langadu headquarters. Some of the Adibasi students go to a non-government high school in Korolachori. At high school level, the Adibasi students study with Bengali students. Unfortunately, most drop out before starting class eight or nine. The main reason for such drop out is poverty. The parents cannot afford the education expenses for so long.

A local Adibasi leader has expressed his concern about the Adibasi education and suggested that changes and development are needed in the curriculum, facilities and general structure of education. He argues that there are too few schools for their children. Some children must walk around 3 to 4 hours to reach their school. He hypothesized that education may change the whole lifestyle of the Adibasi, since their children would be able to explore new economic activities to improve their livelihoods (Interviewee 080608, Headmanpara). He also added that, "The children whose parents are involved in Jhum cultivation are deprived of education facilities. They are moving from one hill to another."

The same concern was expressed by a senior Adibasi leader who is much involved in the policy formulation for the Adibasi and holds a vital position in the CHT local government system. He explains that the children of Jhumiya cannot remain in school during the Jhum season. They need to either stay at home or go with their parents to assist in Jhum cultivation. Therefore, it is crucial that Adibasi children are given time off during the Jhum harvest time. They cannot follow the same schedule as in ordinary schools. He says "We need more Adibasi teachers at hilly schools. The rules and qualifications to appoint school teachers should not be same as those for the schools in the plain districts" (Interview, 080712, Dhaka). He further remarked: "To establish a new school for Adibasi children, we first need suitable land in the areas. It is hard to obtain such land for Adibasi children. Moreover, most of the *para* are situated on the top of hills" (Interview, 080712, Dhaka).

The Chakma parents are very willing to send their children to school for education, if they could afford the expenses. Most of them appreciate the importance of primary education both for boys and girls. Withdrawal of children from primary and secondary level education is mostly happening due to financial pressures. For the same reason, many of them are unable to undertake tertiary education.

Chakma Language

The survey reports that only 2% of the respondents said that their children can read and write a little of the Chakma script. At the Primary level, Sonai Govt. Schools offer nothing in the Chakma language. Moreover, there are no books in Chakma language for the children. The medium of instruction of teaching in school is Bengali, like in other schools in Bangladesh. The Adibasi children can speak the Chakma language well, but they cannot read nor write it. Before 1970 children used to go to Chakma classes in their hamlets. At that time there were also some books on Chakma language available. After 1970, this system has collapsed. The head teacher of Sonai Government Primary School personally believes that the Adibasi children should learn Chakma language beside Bengali at least at primary level. He personally can only read Chakma; he has forgotten how to write it.

Excluded from Local Governance and Development

Most of my interviewees clearly mentioned that they are discriminated against and do not benefit from development programs and other facilities. They think that in many cases it is intentional, because government officials and local administration favor Muslim Bengali settlers. Both the Union level local administration and Upazila level administration have the same bias against the Adibasi. They further tend to think that the Upazila administration reflects the government's attitudes towards the ethnic groups. The interviewees further pointed to the dominance of settlers in the Union Council, the location of government projects by the local administrative authority and even programs operated by non-governmental organizations.

Excluded from Infra-structure Development and Communication

Roads, transport and communication within the Adibasi para are of poor quality and old-fashioned. There is no metallic road within para. The various para are situated mainly in hilly areas. There are no good roads connecting one para to another. Instead, people must pass through canals, waterlogged fields to *Pahari* (hilly) neighboring paras. An 80 year old Adibasi male interviewee described how there was only the *Pahari Jungles* before 1965. In 1965-66, during the Pakistani regime, the government planned and built a dirt road from Sonai to Langadu *sador* (sub-district headquarters). In 2003, this road was developed to a semi-metalled state (Interview, 080605, Karbaripara).

There is no telecommunication system in the Sonai and Mayni mauza. Only a few land phones are available in Langadu headquarters and nearby areas, but these connections are in a poor condition. Besides, they are mostly in government offices. Only a few private users have access to land lines. In March 2008, the then Caretaker Government of Bangladesh had declared that they would bring the CHT areas under mobile network (Phone.com.bd 2009), but this had not been achieved in the Sonai and Mayni locality at the time of the field work. One of Interviewees bemoans the lack of a mobile network in the Sonai and Mayni areas:

> In the CHT we do not have a mobile network, unlike every other district in the country. The army does not want to provide this facility. When we raised the matter, the army and other governmental offices blamed the security issue. They assert that the CHT is a sensitive area and that a mobile network connection may create a security problem in region. (Interview, 080127, Bogapara)

The interviewees also pointed to the role of local administration and their bias in favour of the Muslim settlers. One of the interviewees described:

> Government officials have much power and always favor settlers over us. They regularly meet with the Upazila Nirbahi (executive) Officer (UNO). Naturally, most of the allocation and budgets goes for the development of settlers. Most of the time, the UNO is Bengali and tries

to help the settlers. We are discriminated against by the administration (Interview, 080622, Memberpara).

I personally observed the fact and that has convinced me that the Adibasi do not have equal access to the local civil and army administration as the Bengali settlers. However, poor Bengali settlers have the same obstacle but their elected representative and local leaders always work for them. The Adibasi local leaders do not have that same access to administration.

Muslim Settlers Dominate the Union Council Office

The Union Council is comprised of 11 elected members and an elected chairman, who are elected by the voters of the union for five years. Out of these 12 members, 3 members must be women. The union is divided into 9 wards. Maynimuk is no. 6 union under Langadu Upazila. There are altogether 12 members in Maynimuk union council. Debo Kumar, representative of ward no. 6, is the sole elected member in the Union Council who comes from an Adibasi group. There are no female Adibasi representatives in the council. All remaining 11 members are from the Bengali community.

I visited Maynimuk Union Council office, which is situated very near to the *Mayni Market* at the bank of the Mayni River. The council building seems to be in very poor condition. The elected Chairman of Mayni union died on 5th August 2007. Recently a Bengali Muslim local leader is working as acting chairman. He is also an elected member in the union council. The interviewees claim that the chairman who is in charge of the development of the Adibasi areas is always unwilling to allocate a proportionate amount to the Adibasi-dominated wards. The Union Council allocated only 2 metric tons of rice in the last 3 years in total for the Adibasi area and that was for the infrastructure development work of the school. This allocation required bribing from the Adibasi.

An interviewee from Duluchoripara has tried several times to build a tube well at his home or near their para, but has so far failed. He went to the Union Council chairman to ask for a tube well to be allocated to his para, but the Chairman prefers to give them to Bengali para. "It is our bad luck," he complained (Interview, 080622, Duluchoripara).

There are no specific policies in the Union Council to provide services for the Adibasi people, and it is difficult for them to voice their needs due to the very low number of Adibasi representatives in the Union Council. Adibasi representatives are not elected to the councils due to the inclusion of newly arrived settlers in voters' lists in the area.

Representatives of the Adibasi agreed in the Peace Accord that only permanent citizens, whether Adibasi or Bengali, would be eligible to vote in the CHT elections.

They agreed to that the *adi Bengali* (i.e. long-time settlers) should have voting rights, but the settlers who came during and after president Zia's regime should be denied such rights, because then settlers could overpower Adibasi interests due to sheer force of numbers. This matter is still unresolved. That is the basic reason for the dominance of settlers in the elected bodies. Adibasi claimed that,

> We have a few elected members or chairmen in Langadu. Settlers normally vote for other settlers and we lose our representation in the Union Council, Upazila Parishad. Most of these posts are occupied by the settlers' leaders although this is our soil, our area (Interview, 080127, Bogapara).

I have already noted that the Adibasi leaders do not have equal access to the local administration as Bengali leaders. Moreover, they cannot be elected as Bengali settlers are higher number in the voter list than the Adibasi. In most cases, Settlers vote for settlers, not for the Adibasi.

Social Security

Poorer Adibasi are mostly excluded from social security programs given by the Government. Many of them do not even have adequate information about the support programs. The survey reported that only 5% of the respondents had received monthly government allowances for the elderly and widows.

Table 8: Types of Government Support Received by the Respondents (Percent)

Types of Support	**Respondents**
Elderly allowance	3.9%
Widow allowance	0.9%
Indigenous allowance	0.4 %
Not received	94.8 %
Total	100 %

Source: Own Survey

Interviewees reported that the annual budget for the union council was insufficient. Food for Work *(Kabikha – Kajer Binimoye Khaddo)* and Test Relief (TR) are regular programs of the union council. TR is larger. It allocates around 17 metric tons of rice per year for each union council.

The interviewees deplored the deprivation of the Adibasi people. The settlers regularly receive rations from the government office. They possess documents which legitimize their ownership of land, and are grabbing even more land than what the government allocated to them. The armed forces help them to establish and run their businesses. In contrast, the fertility of the land belonging to the Adibasi is decreasing due to over use and decreased sustainability from Jhum cultivation. The *Paharis*

are being forced to abandon *Jhum* cultivation as it does not meet their subsistence requirements.

As I mentioned in the previous section, one of my interviewees is an influential person in the CHT who has a wealth of experience on various issues gained from his direct and prominent involvement in the Adibasi struggles. He now realizes that change of social norms and practices is also needed among the Adibasi. According to his view:

> We have to build up a representative local government system in the CHT. It is essential to strengthen local government so that it can protect citizens' rights and build good relations with the central administration. However, the development policies should be formulated based on local needs and desires. It is not fair to follow all the decisions made from the capital city, which fails to understand grassroots' needs (Interview, 080712, Dhaka).

As described above, the Adibasi leader emphasizes on decentralization of power for the development of Adibasi population. He also refers to the importance of democratic practices into their society which would enhance their freedom and ensure proper distribution of several supportive programs.

NGO Activities

Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and ASA, Bangladesh and other NGOs are implementing programs, for example micro-credit schemes among the Adibasi people of Sonai and Mayni Mauza. Some interviewees alleged that they are mainly interested in their own profits, since they give loans to poor people with huge interest rates. Interviewees feel that these are for the well being of the NGOs, but not for the poor Adibasi. The Adibasi people seek out these loans only when they are in dire need and do not have any food or cash. One of the respondents borrowed 5000 BDT from BRAC one year ago. She was supposed to pay 300 BDT as monthly installment. BRAC will recoup 6300 BDT in total, meaning a 1300 BDT profit. A similar situation exists regarding their 4000 BDT loan from ASA, which they pay through 130 BDT monthly installments (Interview 080605, Bogapara).

They said that they face problems with repaying the money and with service charges. Those who take large loans can run a small enterprise and make their payments without too much trouble. However those who take very small amounts around 4000 to 5000 BDT as loans actually take this amount to buy rice; they borrow this money only for survival, and paying the installments causes another cycle of suffering and poverty (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

The interviewees stated that only UNICEF and BRAC field workers visit and work there on health issues, education, and population control programs. These help the Adibasi people a little and Adibasi women work with them. There are some other NGOs who have recently started to work on slab-covered toilets.

I talked with the project organizer of UNICEF's Langadu Upazila office to learn about their recent programs in Maynimuk Union. He informed me that they were

focusing on water and sanitation for poor people. They provide the following facilities for the Adibasi people: ring wells, Gravity Flow System (GFS) of drinking water, water supply from springs using pipes, rain water harvesting in jars**,** and sanitary latrines. They also focus on informal pre-primary education for children under 6 years of age under the Early Childhood Development Program (ECD). In food and nutrition, they have Vitamin A provision for pregnant women, small scale meetings with women on health and nutrition, and vaccinations for women and children. UNICEF is operating a credit program among the Adibasi people in association with Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP) and with Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB).

A local UNICEF employee said that they do not have sufficient manpower to successfully implement these programs. UNICEF only provides a part of project cost and logistic supports. The programs are neither fully funded by UNICEF. The Government of Bangladesh pays the salary of the project director and other employees. UNICEF provides the salary for village-level workers and logistical support for various projects. They sometimes arrange training programs for the village-level workers. Each village-level worker draws a salary of only 1000 BDT (14USD) per month and only around 1 USD for monthly travel costs. This is clearly insufficient and a reason why most of the programs are only running part time. My informant added that they start many things and gain few outcomes or results from the projects due to lack of financial support and monitoring of the programs.

Rabeta Hospital

There is a private health service centre and Muslim missionary NGO called *Rabeta* in Maynimuk Union. They built an expensive establishment in Mayni valley, and started many activities and social services for the local people. However, the organization has changed, and according to my interviewees they are now working only for the development of a selected few people; their mission is not clear to all. They own a huge amount of land in Mayni under their project and operating programs. Respondents claimed that Rabeta mainly support the settlers and try to further the political motives of their financers – from Middle Eastern Muslim countries.

Consequences of Land Losses and Social Exclusion

Migration and internal displacement are widespread problems in the study area. The survey revealed that about 93% of the households studied had migrated or been displaced. Many of them fled to the deep forest. Some of them also migrated

temporarily for Jhum cultivation. The following table shows findings on the causes of migration.

Table 9: Causes of Migration and Displacement

Reasons behind migration	**Respondents, percent (count in brackets)**
For Jhum cultivation	1.4 (3)
Army intervention	63.0 (136)
Ethnic conflict	1.4 (3)
Settlers' intervention and land grabbing	34.2 (74)
Total	100 (216)

Source: Own Survey

The survey also revealed that almost 84% household members of the area were forced to leave from their permanent houses. This kind of incidents occurred repeatedly for some families. Some fled for long periods of time and others for short periods. The following table shows the yearly incidents of forced evacuation of Adibasi houses.

Table 10: Experiences of Forced Leaving from Own House

Year	**Percent (count in brackets)**
1979	26.4 (48)
1989	69.2 (126)
1990	1.6 (3)
1996	1.6 (3)
1997	0.5 (1)
1998	0.5 (1)
Total	100 (182)

Source: Own Survey

I interviewed an elderly Adibasi who has witnessed many things happening in the area. He specifically mentioned the forced migration of approximately 200 Adibasi families from *Maladip, Ulluchori* and *Hazachora* in Maynimuk Union due to the loss of their houses, assets, cultivable land and because of lack of security. These areas were fully Adibasi areas, but are now completely dominated by settlers. The Adibasi cannot even go into those areas. Some families retreated into deep forest for Jhum cultivation, some became refugees, and others became internal migrants. Only 10 to 12 families came back after a shorter or longer period. They were not able to retrieve any of their grabbed land though. He remembered the names of the following people whose families who left Hazachora due to settlers attack: Kalikumar Chakma, Bipulashor Chakma, Rojoni Kumar Chakma, Sil Kumar Chakma, Kirshno Chondro Chakma, Nolini Chakma, Lakkhi Kumar Chakma, Sheille Chakma, Kala Ram Chakma, and Kala Chan Chakma (Interview, 080608, Byttapara).

Internal Displaced Population (IDP)

It is difficult to estimate the exact number of displaced and migrant Adibasi households in Sonai or Mayni Mauza. Firstly, the local administration and the Upazila statistical bureau do not have up-to-date data. Their estimates are still based on the census held in 1991 which was also controversial. Secondly, there are internal refugee cases, migrations cases, and permanent and temporary displacement cases happening every year due to various reasons. One interviewee from Headmanpara reported that there might be around 200 families in Sonai *Mauza* and rest 15 in Mayni Mauza who had been forced to leave their living place. He added that around 150 Adibasi families were internally displaced i.e. moved from one *mauza* to another within Maynimuk Union, since 1979. Most cases happened in the 1980s (Interview, 080608, Headmanpara).

One of my interviewees described life as full of hardship for the past 20 years. She has been living on a small piece of land provided by the headman, whereas earlier she and her husband had more than 2.5 acres land, a house and a garden in *Uluchori.* Settlers seized all the land and property on which she and her husband, who is now 60 years old, had been living. She first moved to her father's home 20 years ago but stayed only one year because her father and other relations were not able to give them shelter. She then decided to leave Sonai and move to Dadipara (one of the remote hilly areas) to eke out a subsistence living (Interview, 080202, Bogapara).

I interviewed an elderly Adibasi man who lived in a small house atop a hill in Karbaripara. He is more than 70 year old. His father and grandfather also lived in the same place. His maternal grandfather was a headman once. He faced many obstacles in his life, but he did not permanently leave his home. His house was twice burnt by settlers and the army, forcing him to leave, but both times he came back to his homeland. When the attacks occurred, he fled to a more remote hilly region and lived as a refugee, but returned to Karbaripara after 5 or 6 months to rebuild his burnt house at the same place. Although none of his family members were ever physically tortured, raped or kidnapped by settlers or army, the burning of his house twice made him distraught and helpless (Interview, 080605, Karbaripara). Another interviewee from Duluchoripara states:

> It is really painful that we had to leave our ancestor's land due to fear of torture by the army and settlers. It is so shocking and painful to us. Hundreds of Adibasi family of our areas were bound to leave their ancestral homes and never came back (Interview 080622, Duluchoripara).

The first blow came to the Adibasi of the CHT in around 1960 when the Kaptai Dam was built. At that time many Adibasi families went to Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Mizoram in India. The second massive blow came in 1979-80 when many Adibasi became refugees due to attacks by settlers and the army. Some families passed the border and entered Tripura. Many were unable to pass the border due to security and various difficulties in crossing it. That was very deep forest then. But it was impossible to return to this area. They then decided to stay in Bagahichori,

Sazek and other jungles and more remote areas so that the army and settlers could not reach them. The last massive incident was in 1989 when the Langadu genocide occurred. At that time the Shanti Bahini was also most active. It was a *de facto* war situation and many Adibasi were forced to leave the area. It was a long and painful exodus and they lost many of their neighbors (Interview 080622, Duluchoripara).

Case Study: A Refugee in Tripura Camp

A 55 year old Adibasi man who lives in Lamapara, Sonai introduced himself as a refugee. He was at a sanctuary in South Tripura, India in 1987. He was forced to leave his homeland due to endless torture by army and settlers. He says:

> That was a tough time for us. It was unbearable to tolerate that torture. Finally we decided to leave our homeland. I left with my whole family, which included my wife, two sons and four daughters. We went to South Tripura. My wife and I suffered many days without eating. We could not freely walk during the day; we had to walk at night, because it was safer. We passed the border at midnight. The security forces could not trace us. This journey through deep forest and across the border was very risky (Interview, 080621, Lamapara).

It was during President Ershad's regime. The army was so powerful at that time. They had control over the whole area. At that time the army burnt many of the Adibasi houses in Sonai. There were even more serious persecutions of the Adibasi. The army and settlers used to file false cases against the Adibasi, forcing people to leave the area so that they could easily grab their lands and forest. That was the plan. Many Adibasi were sent to jail without any reason. The army would enter the area and beat and arrest the people. That was almost their routine work. After many such cases people started to leave the area since they were totally helpless. Adibasi made great efforts to stay in their homeland. But finally many of them decided to leave altogether. It took one month to reach Tripura from Sonai. They went to Tripura by walking through hilly jungles. That one month was difficult to survive. They did not have sufficient food with them. They did not have enough money. This period was painful and pathetic. They almost starved during this month. Whatever they were able to collect, they mostly gave to their hungry children.

Life in Tripura Refugee Camp

I interviewed another refugee in Karbaripara, Sonai, who described the hardship of life in a Tripura refugee camp, where he stayed for a long time. He said:

> We thought that we might get some work and facilities in India. But the reality was different. There was no job or regular daily labour for us. We were there just as refugees. That was our status. We did not enjoy that. We monitored the situation back home; I planned to go back to my homeland with my family when the situation improved a little bit. Camp life was very hard.

> We had insufficient food. There were no facilities. In fact it was too difficult to give safe and sufficient shelter for such a huge number of people (Interview, 080605, Karbaripara).

They were at least 60,000 refugees in Tripura from the CHT. The Indian government provided some rations for them in the refugee camps. They subsisted on that, although it was very little. In the Tripura camp, they would get 400 grams of rice per day per individual, doled out every 10 days. They also provided the refugees with some pigeon peas *(dal*), molasses (*gur*), salt and *chira*[22] (Interview, 080605, Karbaripara).

He went to South Tripura in 1987 where he lived in a refugee camp for 7 years with his family. He found life as a refugee more or less meaningless, as well as unpleasant and uncomfortable. His only aim was survival. However, life in the refugee camp was at least better than the uncertainty in CHT. He came back to CHT in 1994, through a deal between the Bangladeshi and Indian Governments regarding the return of refugees from Tripura. He explained how he is passing life in the CHT as a returned refugee and receiving a very meager amount of rations from the Bangladeshi Government. A participant in the group discussion at Tintilapara commented that:

> If government is really interested in the betterment of the Adibasi people they need to at least solve the land problems; land should be distributed properly, and there are still many refugees who are landless after coming back from the refugee camp in India. The government should reallocate land to them. At least some of the land and shelters should be returned to the refugees who came back from India during and after the signing of Peace Accord in 1997 (Group Discussion, 080210, Tintilapara).

Many Adibasi refugees are in an extremely vulnerable position. They are unable even to meet their daily food needs; they do not have shelter, security, home, or land. They just pass the days hoping there might be something better. Once they had their own land, home, trades and good economic situation, now they are landless and homeless due to the settlers and the army.

Case Study: An Elderly Adibasi Woman

I have studied a few families in Sonai and Mayni to learn about Adibasi lives and lifestyles. I met with some of these interviewees more than two or three times. Among them was a Chakma woman in Bayddapara, Sonai, who knows a lot about hill life. We found her home very clean and organized. She did not own many things, but she kept all her possessions in a neat and tidy manner. Situated very remotely, on a comparatively bigger and higher hill than other habitations, she has a clean yard around her house and a beautiful green garden. She came to this place after the 1989 attacks because she hoped that settlers would not be able to easily enter the place. She remains very afraid of the settlers. This self-imposed isolation means she cannot visit

22 *Chira* – a food item prepared by frying and flattening wet paddy.

her other relatives whom she misses a lot. She is a lonely woman with only one of her daughter-in-laws for company. She expressed her fears of how she is at the mercy of the army and settlers – if they come and loot her things, she cannot do anything. She remains fearful that the settlers may damage or capture even the remote area in which she lives. She does not trust the settlers and army any more, due to her negative experiences with them.

Her husband died in 2000 from injuries inflicted by settlers in 1989. They burnt Adibasi houses, plundered their cash and looted their belongings. Her husband fled to save his life, but he fell down from a hill and was severely injured. His life was saved, but he developed a long term illness characterized by pain and suffering. He died after 10 years of suffering. She described the incident as follows:

> All of our family members left our home at that time. We left with only the clothes on our backs, and we lived on plantain trees (*kola gach*), creepers and herbs (*lota-pata*) for around a week. We had almost no water to drink. We survived on very little amount of water from *Kalapahar* during the months of *choitrro – boisakh*. Our youngest daughter was around 15 years old. She was taken away by the settlers and was released after one night. That was painful, it is indescribable…., we got her back after one night, but she was so sick, helpless and upset with the events. She was raped by settlers and was at death's door. One Bengali woman settler saved her life and saw to it that she was released by the settlers. She could have died on that night.

When her daughter was kidnapped, her husband was almost mad with anxiety, and they both searched desperately for their daughter. She went to Kalapahar, some settlers' areas, even remote areas, but was unable to find her anywhere. Finally, a woman settler saved her daughter's life. However, by this time she had already been raped by her captors. Her eyes were swollen and inflamed due to torture inflicted on her. She had skull injuries and was bleeding from her head.

She reflects that the situation has changed recently. Some aspects have improved, but many problems still exist. They do not have the freedom to go where they please, to visit their relations, and they feel they cannot go outside safely. Her land in *Hazachora* is occupied by the settlers. She did not file any complaints against this land grabbing as she knows that the government has allowed the settlers to do so. No land would be returned to her, and thus she dropped the matter and abandoned her expectations. She is now living on top of an isolated hill where she is unable to get the plain land she requires for cultivation. In spite of this situation she feels that her situation is far better than it was in the 1980s, when there was fear everywhere and Adibasi families were totally unsafe.

Conclusion

The qualitative and quantitative data of the study along with other comparative sources clearly exhibit social exclusion and economic deprivation and political and military dominance over the Adibasi of the CHT. The discussion also indicates the belongingness of the Adibasi into the subsistence economy and that is also being

severely disturbed due to exclusionary process which is still ongoing into the regions. I have focused on Steninert's (2003) indicators of social exclusion to analyze the situation of the Adibasi of the CHT. Those indicators unexpectedly exist and applicable for the study areas as the Adibasi earn too little money almost for the whole year. The fact and data presented prove that the Adibasi are facing land grabbing, land losses and land occupation by both the settlers and the armed forces. Adibasi have already lost many of their traditional plain and hilly lands and the situation made them severely incapacitated. It is also evident from the above that the Adibasi have severe problems in securing basic human needs for survival. They suffer from food insecurity, poor housing, poor sanitation and inaccessibility to safe drinking water. Adibasi children are deprived from quality education even at primary level. They also do not have access to adequate health services.

Moreover, the Adibasi do not have easy access into informal work. Their movements are restricted and they cannot trade their products unhindered. Thus, they are suffering from exclusion, and deprivation, which in turn gives rise to anxieties and irritation.

These exclusionary processes need to be brought to an end. The notion of declaring them a national minority or application of multiculturalism by the State might be the suitable approaches to handle the problems of ethnic minorities of the CHT. Otherwise, the current situation may turn more conflictive and even violent again. In the following chapter, I concentrate on a conceptual and theoretical discussion on ethnic conflict, violation of human rights and the role of armed forces. The discussion also illustrates some further findings from my field work in Sonai and Mayni.

CHAPTER 8

Ethnic Conflict, Militarism and Violations of Human Rights

This chapter sets out from a conceptual discussion of ethnic conflict followed by a short discussion of South Asian perspectives on such conflicts, especially on enduring conflicts in the region. I will not discuss this issue in detail, however, but it must be touched upon when discussing the challenges to harmony in the region. After these introductory perspectives, the chapter continues with a discussion on the role of the armed forces and violations of human rights and its aftermath in the study area.

Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict has severe consequences including war, regional unrest, forced migration, short and long term refugees and many other mental and physical health hazards. It has political aspects and is related to economic and social development. Ethnic conflict moreover includes several dimensions: religious, racial, linguistic, tribal, and sectarian conflicts and movements can be included under this heading. Finally, it is a relative term and depends on the context and situation of the concerned groups and region.

Ethnic conflict in many cases ultimately takes a global shape, since such conflicts can no longer be kept local. As a consequence, negotiation, peacemaking and ethnic conflict management agreements are usually brokered with the assistance or mediation of international organizations or by other countries. However, agreement between the main parties and enlightened leadership is essential to promote humanity and minimize human suffering. According to Jentoft, Mindey and Nilsen:

> At the end of the International decade, perhaps the most worrying concern is that indigenous peoples continue to be under heavy pressure from the global market forces that are not under indigenous, national or international control. Indigenous peoples are increasingly affected by the impact of the demand for natural resources, industrialization and modernization, trade, and migration. Examples may be drawn from many parts of the world: the extraction of oil in the Northern territories of Canada and Alaska, the interests of pharmaceutical companies in exploiting indigenous ecological knowledge, logging and de-forestation in Finland and Nicaragua, the over-extraction of marine resources in Norway and Canada and New Zealand water-powered mega-projects, such as in Norway and the planning of an inter-oceanic railway in Nicaragua (Jentoft, Mindey et al. 2005).

The above citation points to common patterns in different types of ethnic conflicts all over the world and it also clearly states that the indigenous peoples are being forced to part with their assets and natural resources for the development of majority groups, while the indigenous peoples themselves are often deprived from the benefits of the same development programs, as well as from other projects initiated by the same government or state.

Ethnic conflict has various dimensions in South Asia, and these are not uniform over all areas. However, the root causes of all ethnic conflicts in South Asia lie in the deprivation and violation of human rights of the different ethnic groups. In the following section I describe some features of South Asian ethnic conflicts and its aftermath.

South Asian Features of Ethnic Conflict

South Asia consists of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives. The economies of South Asian countries are poor in terms of GDP per capita, although growing quite fast, with many people continuing to struggle against poverty. There has been some progress towards democratic political practices in the region. A significant change has occurred in some countries in relation to national elections, democratic culture, and education and health services. Both India and Sri Lanka have well developed democratic traditions. Nepal was ruled by a monarchy for many years, but has recently become a democratic regime. The army ruled Pakistan for many years and the country still has many problems with security, fundamentalist and radical movements and political clashes tending to turn violent. Bangladesh also experienced military rule, but since 1990 the country has been advancing towards democratic rule. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan all have ethnic problems which have been continuing for decades.

In the post-colonial era, the ethnic minorities in South Asia tend to be treated as more dependent on the majority groups. Their territorial rights have been undermined by boundary settings following the colonial 'divide and rule' policy. Most

grievances among the ethnic minorities in South Asia are deeply rooted in historical processes. According to Barns et al:

> "Indigenous peoples" is a category that first came into existence as a reaction to the legacy of western European colonialism. It has proven especially problematic in postcolonial Asia, where many governments refuse to recognize the distinction sometimes advanced by dissident ethnic groups between indigenous and non-indigenous populations (Barns, Gray et al. 1995, p.2).

In most cases, ethnic groups perceive that they have been deprived of political and geographical freedom by the boundary settings carried out on the eve of de-colonization. They believe that this was unjust and arbitrary as they had been *autonomous political entities* in the pre-colonial period. In some parts they have attempted to achieve separate state-hood based on their autonomous political entities in the pre-colonial period. India's ethnic problems have multiplied and become more complicated over the years (Chatterjee 2005). Sahadevan remarks that,

> In India, as many as five ethnic movements- in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam and Kashmir- are rooted in what may be called a 'feeling of betrayal' or the legacy of colonial rule. The mainstream Naga, Mizo, Meitei and Assamese nationalists have questioned the coercive or manipulated integration of their ethnic territories into the Indian union, and made strong claims for separate statehood (1999, p.3).

Similar feelings and protests have arisen among the *Baluch* minority in Pakistan, seeking independence from Punjab domination. The CHT minority groups in Bangladesh and the Tamils in Sri Lanka have also demanded the same right to establish their own state. Additionally, cultural domination also plays an important role in increasing the gaps between the majority and minority groups in South Asia. The dominant culture or the majority culture appears oppressive to the minority culture and their economies.

Religion and language are the two most important elements in analyzing and understanding the dynamics of the South Asian ethnic conflict. These two components play vital roles in dividing as well as integrating diverse groups. However, their nature and functions vary from country to country depending on the situation, culture, background, pattern of deprivation and on the view of the ruling class or majority group towards the minorities.

The Tamil-Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka is a linguistic-cum-religious ethnic conflict. Shia-Sunni troubles in Pakistan are considered as a sectarian conflict as these two opposite groups belong to two separate sects within the Muslim religious community. The CHT problems in Bangladesh are considered as a tribal conflict. Kashmiri problems in India have been identified as part of a religious-ethnic conflict, which also has serious political dimensions between the two-neighboring countries of India and Pakistan, additionally serious since both these countries maintain a nuclear arsenal (Sahadevan 1999, p.1-3).

The Role of the State: Militarism Against South Asian Ethnic Conflict

The constructivist approach holds that identities are constructed, and thus the term ethnicity is also socially constructed, but it is deeply connected with statehood. Wendt (1992,1994) is renowned as a constructivist as well as a state centric academic (Chatterjee 2005, p.79). As Chatterjee pointed out, referring to Wendt's work: "States are unitary actors bearing anthropomorphic attributes such as identities, interests and internationality with a certain capacity for institutionalized collective action. States articulate and define their interests on the basis of identities that are endogenous and changeable" (Chatterjee 2005, p.81). Zehfuss says that, "When states define others in exclusion of themselves, the result is conflict based on the definition of that identity itself. When others are a part of an actor's definition of the self, cooperation and peace become possible, being predicated again in the qualities of the definition (of identity) itself" (Zehfuss 2002, p.40).

The above statements reveal that the state plays an important role in constructing the identity of its inhabitants whether they are indigenous, non-indigenous, ethnic, tribal, aboriginal, majority or minority. Institutions further play an important role in constructing these phenomena. It can be concluded that the state can build harmony and peace or the ingredients of conflict depending on its desires and plans of action towards the multiple identities within its framework.

There is a trend in South Asian countries to perceive their ethnic groups as a threat to the sovereignty of the state. On that basis, states deploy a huge military force in the name of peace and border security. In most of the cases in the sub-continent, the governments have deployed the army to solve conflicts, which leads to widespread bloodshed and the deaths of civilians. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan have followed this formula. Andrew Gray notes:

> Militarization is a fundamental problem affecting indigenous peoples throughout Asia. Where the indigenous peoples hold large areas, the military occupation force organizes its attack in waves or 'operations' …. The effect frequently leads to a high civilian death-rate from the military counterinsurgency operations (Barns, Gray et al. 1995, p.46).

I have observed similar consequences in the CHT region; however, the military approach has not yielded any lasting solutions. Instead it has exacerbated ethnic problem in the region. These ethnic issues were not always widely known due to censorship by the governments of the concerned country. The problem has become comparatively less sensitive, but some powers are still working to hide information regarding ethnic cleansing, conflicts, rebellion, and inhumane treatment in some regions of South Asia.

States are spending a huge portion of their annual budget to prevent ethnic insurgency. In contrast, the indigenous peoples feel alienated and separated from the mainstream nationality. Thus, the majority that rules the country dominates the minority groups. These circumstances bring mistrust and deprivation, and develop a

sense of separateness of the minority groups. At some point this may lead the minority groups to demand separate statehood. The majority group and the nation-state do not allow this freedom so easily. Rather the state puts all their effort into resolving the problem and countering the insurgency. On the one hand, the nation-state spends a huge amount to prevent the operation of criminal gangs, but on the other hand ethnic or indigenous groups still feel insecure and separated from the majority group and the mainstream activities of the country. Anthropologist Eder (1987, p.106) called this situation *'detribalization'*. Dieu here added, "The indigenous peoples, because of their numerical weakness, their material poverty, and in some cases, their lack of political experience, cannot hope to preserve their identity, culture, and mode of subsistence" (1996, p.126). Indeed, the state possesses the strength and power to handle the problems of ethnic minorities and also can assure their separate identity, distinctiveness and can uphold their dignity within the approaches of cohesion and multiculturalism instead of deploying the army to prevent insurgency. In this context, I argue that a suitable provision of social policies can further contribute to peace, harmony and humanity.

Military Dominance over the Adibasi of the CHT

At the time of the study there were two army quarters in Maynimuk Union. One was situated near Maynimuk Market (*Bazar*). It was an army zonal head office. It contained a full battalion, known as the F Battalion. The battalion consists of around 1000 soldiers and officers. The name of the army camp in Mayni itself is '*Mirtunjoyi*' (code name: overcoming death). This larger camp is situated beside the Mayni River, and is part of the 25th Regiment. Many soldiers and officers are supposed to be there throughout the year as part of their duties. They patrol the area during both day and nighttime. Patrols include Adibasi hamlets, roads, and marketplaces and the surroundings of the hamlets. The soldiers and officers mainly use army patrol cars, jeeps, speed boats and other vehicles to move around. They also have modern equipment to communicate with the Chittagong regional head office and also with the Dhaka cantonment headquarters. For internal communication, soldiers and officers use handsets with wireless capabilities. The army occupied a large portion of the valley bottom land for their Mayni camp. The civil administration of Langadu Upazila is largely controlled by the army presence at the camp. The head of Village Defense Police (VDP), Officer in Charge (OC) of Langadu police station, and even the Upazila Nirbahi (executive) Officer (UNO) are unofficially answerable and loyal to the camp. Generally, the army sends the Village Defense Police (VDP)[23] and police forces as an advance team for any formal operation against the Adibasi, before

23 VDP is a governmental security force established in 1976. It is a rural based security force. In most of the plain districts, VDP jointly works with Thana police and Upazila civil administration. But all over the CHT, the VDP is also associated with the Army.

they themselves get involved. However, camp staffs monitor the daily events via the civil administration, VDP, Police, the Special Branch and the Detective Branch (DB), as well as the Directorate General of Force Intelligence (DGFI) etc.

Another small camp is situated in Horokumar Karbaripara. This camp is manned by 20 to 25 soldiers under an officer. In addition to the army there are also other armed and security forces working in the area, including the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), 5th Armed Police Battalion, *Ansar* Battalion. The head office of the armed police battalion is in *Barbunia*. Each force has their regional head office and base camp or sub-zone office in the CHT. Moreover, there are army check points at different locations in Mayni and Sonai as well as all over Langadu Upazila.

The interviewees as well as participants in group discussions frequently mentioned the dominant role of army personnel in the CHT affairs and their heavy-handed occupation of the land, their swollen administration, inflated budget and discriminatory policies. Many of them claimed that the army initiated and managed the settlers' entry into the CHT in order to strengthen their own influence over the Adibasi people.

According to my sources the army always had strategic interests in the area, and it continues to this day. Although they have changed their strategy often, they consistently act to weaken the Adibasi. The army influences the Government to hold huge land assets under their control. Moreover, they can earn more money from this issue. They always convince the Government that there are serious security issues in the CHT (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara). As summarized in a group discussion: "We do not see any big problems or threats towards the state or government from the CHT Adibasi people. Once there were some insurgents who had a strong organizational framework. But what is the recent crime of the Adibasi? We cannot understand" (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

The participants in the same group discussion also focused on the interference and dominance of armed forces in the CHT civil administration, in public projects and their influence on public spending. Some of them comment as follows:

> We do not know why government does not trust the Adibasi people. The government always neglects us. They prefer the army and settlers, but we are the sons of this soil. Where should we go? We want to live here peacefully. We agreed on the CHT Peace Accord. We have stopped. We never claimed sovereignty. We acknowledged the Peace Accord. But it has not been implemented properly. Now we are unsure whether the government will implement the CHT Peace Accord or the army will continue to rule the CHT unofficially. They are everywhere. They do not even care about the civil administration. We heard that there are many divisions between the civil and army administrations (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

The above described statement reveals a state of helplessness and insecure situation of Adibasi population in the region. The statement also shows that the CHT is not like the other plain districts of Bangladesh. Elsewhere in the country, the civil administration is powerful. In the CHT, it is the opposite. Many interviewees say that they went several times to the civil administration with their legal documents to claim land ownership. The civil administration cannot decide anything. It actions

depends on the army's decisions. They follow the directions they receive from the army (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

An Adibasi leader expressed his very critical views about the army presence in the CHT, particularly after the signing of the Peace Accord. He raised questions about the huge budget allocated for the Bangladesh army in the CHT. He said:

> The whole CHT is practically under army dominance. The army is the deciding authority. The army holds more power than the civil administration. It should be stopped. A democratic country can't be smoothly run like this. The army spends 450 million BDT per month in the CHT. They distribute rations for 500,000 settlers. The army does not allow the settlers to leave the CHT. The army forces the settlers to stay in the CHT (Interview 080712, Dhaka).

The expressed view by this interviewees seems to me a full reality of the CHT and I heard some story from army soldiers that some of their officers became financially well to do and rich after their posting in the CHT region as they handle a large budget every year and the officers are not accountable to civil administration or local elected leaders. The soldiers possess anger on the officers as the officers are highly privileged. However, the soldiers never speak or protest against this to save their job and to avoid severe departmental punishment. Indeed, almost every year incidents are happening in the CHT resulting from land grabbing, army deployment and settlers' interventions. After my field work, on 20th February 2010, a killing operation by the armed forces occurred in a village in Rangamati district. It has again spread tension and unrest in the whole area. The Daily Star reports:

> Tension ran high in Rangamati and Khagracahari as indigenous people and Bengali settlers brought out procession and held rallies blaming each other for violence that claimed two lives at Rangamati village. Around 7,000 indigenous people, led by Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) leaders, marched in procession to the Rangamati deputy commissioner's office. The PCJSS leaders at the rally in Rangamati blamed Bangalee setters for arson attacks and violence in nine Bagahichori villages and alleged that army abetted the settlers. They said the incident would have never happened if the army had played a neutral role. Army men shot the indigenous people and instigated settlers to set fire to the houses of indigenous people (23rd February 2010).

This report reveals that the situation in the CHT still is much tense and the law enforcement agencies do no play neutral role to the Adibasi, rather the armed forces are often purposefully biased towards the Bengali settlers that further worsen the situation. The CHT problems are still not fully resolved. Moreover, the army has expropriated even more hilly land in CHT for their activities. This is forcing the hill people to migrate from their own land once again. The hill peoples protested in vain against these army activities in their region.

Ethnic organizations in the CHT demand a free and safe life within a democratic framework and seek to establish their full right to their own land. They want to preserve their heritage and sovereignty, but they claim the military occupation and activities as one of the major obstacles to establish peace in the CHT.

During my fieldwork in Langadu, I talked with some security people and administrators. I interviewed some of them under conditions of strict confidentiality. One

of them stated that generally the local police were not staunch supporters of the open genocide or killing of Adibasi. The police authority was not even willing to provide arms to the VDP to conduct a massive operation towards the general Adibasi population in 1989. Nevertheless, the army forced a local police station to supply arms to the VDP, enabling them to conduct a brutal series of killings and arson in the Adibasi areas. Encouraged and inspired by the army, the settlers were also ready to launch a massive attack on Adibasi and loot their belongings. An interviewee was working in the Village Defense Police (VDP) in Langadu Upazila. He described, "In most cases of operations against the Adibasi, the army always sends VDP forces ahead, and for that reason they often face the first strikes". They are bound to follow the army's command and to take risks. He further claims, "The army receives a huge allowance every year from the government. They do not share these sums of money for the promotion of VDP. The army is exploiting the VDP" (Interview, 071115, Langadu town).

Role of Bangladesh Army after Signing the Peace Accord

The Bangladesh Army in the CHT has changed its mode of operations and its handling of issues, particularly after the signing of the Peace Accord in 1997. There was *Operation Dabanol* (conflagration) from 1979 until 1997. The army has since launched *Operation Uttoron* (act of reaching the destination) after signing the Peace Accord. They have started a project entitled *Santokorn* (pacification) in the CHT areas. An interviewee heard that under this pacification project, each zone of the army camp receives 84 metric tons of food grains to distribute among the Adibasi people. They provide some free medicine for settlers and Adibasi. However, they are not accountable to local people or even to the civil administration, and the respondents claimed there was widespread corruption within this allocation program. The youngest member in the group discussion at Byttapara added:

> The army is grabbing our lands in the name of their camps, brigades and troops. They are handling all of the major development programs and budgets. We do not hear anything about the total budget and allocation. We just hear that the yearly government allocation is very high for the CHT development. The army handles all of our development programs. It never ensures our participation (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

I heard the similar complaint from many of respondents and interviewees of the study. The others added:

> We heard that many of the army officers became rich men after their postings in the CHT. We do not know to what extent it is true, but we heard the rumors. We only know that they have a huge budget for the CHT. There are many army projects to bring peace in the CHT and they spend that money, but are not fulfilling their responsibility towards us at all. We do not know where they spend the state's money in the name of the CHT peace (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara).

An interviewee from Tintilapara was very close to an army camp. He told me that the army troops frequently visit the main road and monitor the Adibasi activities. Sometimes the army troops enter into the areas and ask many things, particularly about the young Adibasi. The army is very suspicious of Pahari youth. He also commented that recently the army interference has decreased a little. The army was much more aggressive earlier. After signing the Peace Accord the army has changed the style of its operations and even the nomenclature of their activities. Their approach has evolved from a hard to a softer style. Nevertheless, they retain full control over the Adibasi.

An 80 year old Adibasi whom I interviewed feels that the situation in terms of security and army intervention has improved somewhat in comparison to in the 1980s. The same opinion was expressed in group discussions as well. A participant in the group discussion explained:

> The army camps are still working everywhere, but in the Accord it was declared that only a few camps would be here and others would be withdrawn. The Accord has not been executed; instead they are holding much power here and operating malicious activities against Adibasi people. We do not know what we have done wrong (Group Discussion, 080210, Tintilapara).

Human Rights Situation in Sonai and Mayni

This sub-section deal with situation of human rights in the study area, but before coming to the subject matter, some remarks about concepts and doctrines of human rights need to be made. The doctrine of Universal Human Rights charges us with protecting and providing basic individual rights for all, thereby enabling one to have a unique, individual identity while still maintaining collectivity with others. However, it is also true that traditional human rights standards are unable to resolve some of the most important and controversial questions relating to cultural minorities. Human rights standards need to be reviewed or judged in different ways. Local autonomy, language right, access to education, local boundaries, regional administration and access to administration, immigration, communication, level of cultural integration, proportionate distribution of resources, refugee issues, land ownership, settler issues, voting rights, the right to mobility and naturalization policies are often inadequately handled by the traditional human rights doctrine. Kymlicka states in this regard, "To resolve these questions fairly, we need to supplement traditional human rights principles with a theory of minority rights" (1996, p.5).

Liberal theory of minority rights focuses on the coexistence of human rights and minority issues. It also attempts to explain 'how minority rights are limited by principles of individual liberty, democracy and social justice'(Kymlicka 1996, p.6).

The doctrine of human rights is a highly discussed issue in the context of Bangladesh society, especially in relation to ethnic and religious minorities that are extremely poor and vulnerable groups. It has also been used as a political issue.

However, politicians, members of civil society, NGO activists and donor organizations often express their concern about the human rights situation in the country. Some also recognize human rights issues in the CHT. They organize various discussions and round table sessions to demonstrate their stance and unity through processions, publication material, placards and campaigns. However, political parties tend to deliver speeches relating to human rights issues to attack their opposition rather than actively resolving those problems by working together. There have also been some conventions on human rights issues where the CHT problems had been brought up and discussed, but unfortunately, little action was taken and the situation did not improve. All these observations indicate that the doctrine of traditional human rights needs to be analyzed from a new perspective. A modified liberal human rights approach or indeed perhaps a completely different approach is needed to treat the existing problems and stimulate progress in ensuring both group and individual rights and interests. Violation of human rights set in motion the processes of social exclusion in the CHT. I begin with the following statement:

> Very frankly speaking- Pahari lives are full of pain. We have many woeful tales, many pathetic realities. There is sorrow everywhere for Adibasi in the CHT. Sometimes our children cannot bear it. Our children's lives are even more disheartening. They are afraid to go outside of this area. If they go outside, sometimes the army will catch them and ask them many questions. If the army becomes suspicious, even without any valid reason, they torture our boys, sometimes beyond endurance. Our sons become panicked and afraid. We ask them not to go there. It is a tragedy. We cannot move freely in our ancestral area. It was once our land and now we can do nothing to reduce the pain of our children (Group discussion, 080120, Karbaripara).

The participants in the group discussion held in Karbaripara gave the above statement, and told me of their recent insecurity, fear and frustration that paint a dire picture of the human rights situation in the CHT. They also expressed that they had expected better situation after the signing of the Peace Accord, but that did not happen, rather they have been facing tough situations day after day. The Adibasi have experienced, misconduct, torture, rapes and war situations with army and settlers. Sometimes there were massive attacks on Adibasi and killings took place. The participants in one of my group discussion reported the following types of torture as having been inflicted on Adibasi people by the armed forces during their various operations:

- Massive thrashing or beating
- Electric shock while fastened to a chair with a cord
- Forced feeding with earth-worms
- Mixing salt and pepper in new knife-inflicted and bleeding cut wounds
- Putting the victim into a water tank with leeches
- Putting the victim in a pit and pouring hot water into the nose (Group Discussion 080210, Tintilapara)

Survey findings on Different Types of Intervention and Harassment

One of the structured questions in the survey was intended to explore the prevalence of harassment and torture on after the independence of Bangladesh. The survey data reveals that most of the respondents (96%) had faced harassment or torture during this period:

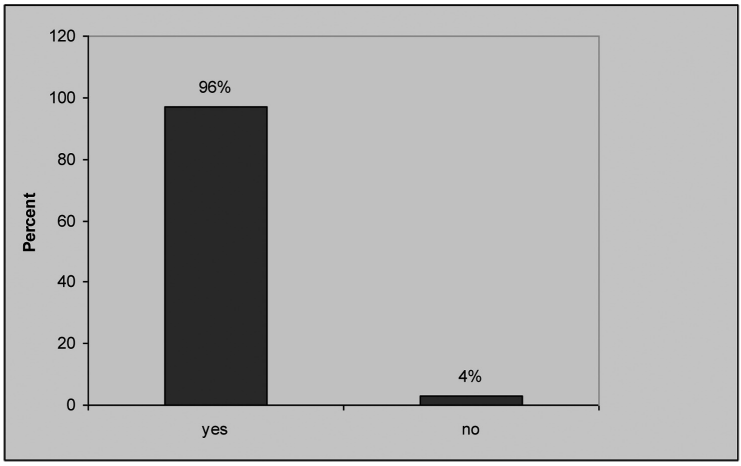

Figure 2: Faced Harassment since Independence
Source: Own survey

House burning, forced eviction, harassment and torture, land grabbing, rape, kidnapping and political oppression were widely observed in Sonai and Mayni region. As a consequence mistrust between Adibasi and settlers increased and tension grew in the CHT. The following table shows different types of suffering recorded from surveys conducted in the study area:

Table 11: Types and Frequency of the Sufferings Faced *

Rank	Sufferings	Response (Frequency)
1.	Feeling of insecurity (1971-2008)	228
2.	Arson	219
3.	Army torture	200
4.	Tortured by settlers	197
5.	Forced to leave own land	193
6.	Violence against women	178
7.	Land grabbing	144
8.	Promoted and patronized ethnic conflicts	131
9.	Political suppression	115
10.	Kidnapping and robbery	71

* Multiple responses counted
Source: Own Survey

Most of the respondents experienced the army intervention (42.6% in 1979, 23.9% in 1989 and 24.4% in 1990 respectively) and torture during this period. About 84% of the respondents mentioned that at least one of their family members had been tortured, usually before the signing of the Peace Accord. The following figure shows information about the effects of the army intervention on Adibasi Chakma in Sonai and Mayni:

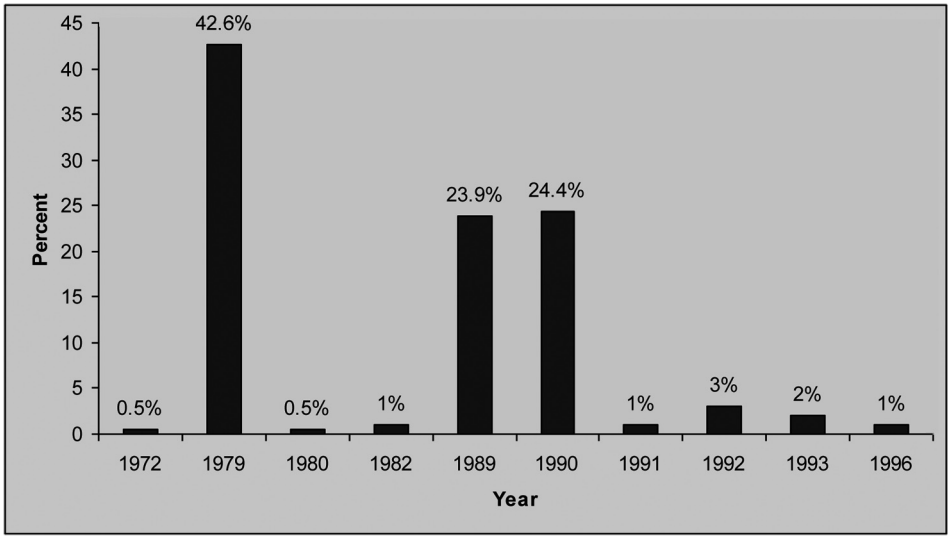

Figure 3: Experiences of Army Tortures in Different Years
Source: Own Survey

Arson

Most of the respondents (95%) had their houses burnt down by the army and settlers. In Sonai and Mayni areas, this occurred on a regular basis. The following table shows the incidents of house arson in the study areas:

Table 12: Experiences of Arson

Year	Incidences, percent (counts within brackets)
1978	0.9 (2)
1979	24.8 (54)
1989	72.9 (159)
1998	1.4 (3)
Total	100 (218)

Source: Own Survey

1979 and 1989 were two particularly dangerous years for Adibasi in Sonai and Mayni mauza. In 1979, then President Ziaur Rahman initiated and permitted large numbers of settlers to enter the CHT. The flow of settlers was so massive that they even began to settle on the hilltops. The settlers inevitably usurped Adibasi land and resources. In those years there was a war and genocide situation in Sonai and Mayni resulting from the large scale land grabbing, torture and mishandling of the CHT issues.

Battle at Korolachori in 1979

There was fight between the army and *Shanti Bahini* (SB) in 1979 at Korolachori, 7 kilometers from Sonai. At that time the SB was a powerful wing of the JSS. In that fight both army and SB members were killed. The Adibasi interviewees alleged,

> A few army soldiers also died in that war, and in retaliation, they started severe and inhuman torture on innocent Adibasi families. They burned most of the Adibasi houses in these areas. Taking this opportunity, a large number of settlers arrived in *Maynimuk* union and grabbed most of our land (Interview, 080623, Memberpara).

One of my interviewees was a little boy at that time. He described how the settlers burnt their houses in 1979. He heard from his parents that the whole family had fled away during the attack in 1979. They entered into the jungles and lived there for about 3 years. They made a temporary settlement in the jungle for that period, along with many other families. After 2 or 3 years, the situation had improved and the Adibasi people returned to their original homes. Not a great deal was left, as most of the Adibasi houses had been completely burnt. The Adibasi people rebuilt their burnt houses, but they have not yet recovered the financial and land losses. The recovery of their land is quite impossible now, as the settlers have got established there and are now the owners of the Adibasi's customary lands.

Interview with a Victim

A victim in 1979 occurrence shared his experiences with me during my field work in Lamapara. Others in the community had informed me that he had suffered torture at the hands of the army in 1979, but had survived. When I asked him about this event he was very emotional, still afraid and reluctant to describe the traumatic event. However, he eventually described what he experienced. The victim has forgotten the exact date, but he remembers the year of the incident. It was in 1979. He was in the field with his cows to plough the land. There were 5 to 6 other Adibasi people in a nearby field at the same time. They were surprised by the sudden approach of

army personnel. Most other cultivators were able to flee but he was unable to flee far. He just entered a nearby jungle and tried to hide himself. Later he came out from the deep jungle, thinking that the army had left the place, that he was safe. But that was wrong. The army was waiting. Two soldiers lay in ambush and caught him. Probably they had followed him when he entered into the jungle. The soldier aimed their guns at him and forced him to go with them. The troops went around the whole *Bogapara* area and kept the victim with them. They were looking for more Adibasi, but at that time they did not find anyone at home. Most had fled when they heard about the troops' entrance. When the army failed to apprehend the other Adibasi people, they started to ask him where the other people had gone. He replied, "How I would know about them? I was in the field and you caught me. I am with you." But the troop became very rude with him and suddenly began to beat him with their guns. He was helpless. They beat him massively. He became unconscious and excreted on the spot. After a while, they left the victim in an empty Adibasi house. He regained consciousness after a while and did not find anyone to help him as all had fled. The troops had left him to die (Interview, 080621, Lamapara).

He further added:

> It was a war-like situation then, but now the problems are different. The army still rules us, but the torture is less pervasive than before. At that time, the settlers entered in a massive, invasive program, which the army implemented so that the Adibasi would be forced to leave their land and allow settlers to build their houses and start their agricultural program (Interview, 080621, Lamapara).

The key persons and interviewees further reveal that the war situation in the CHT had been made according to army design, since they wanted to establish their full dominance in the region, capture land and establish army camps, training centers and barracks. Moreover, according to what my respondents allege, the army uses the CHT unrest to get more financial means every fiscal year. In the late 70s, many settlers appeared in these areas. They were grabbing Adibasi land and the army was helping them to do so. The government had started to allot land that the Adibasi had been cultivating as their common property.

The unrest, war situation and mistrust between the Adibasi, settlers and armed forces continued. The problem had been ignored by successive governments. As a consequence, violation of human rights frequently occurred in the CHT. Those incidents have also been depicted as a 'civil war' situation by the Adibasi leaders and by many daily newspapers at the time. The Adibasi of the Langadu area again faced a massive killing and unrest in 1989 which some of them call "the Langadu Genocide of 1989".

The Langadu Genocide of 1989: Effects in Sonai and Mayni

On the evening of the 4th of May 1989, Abdur Rashid Sikder, the then Langadu Upazila Chairman, was killed. The local authorities and Bengali settlers suspected that he was murdered by the Shanti Bahini (SB) as he was involved in providing inequitable privileges for settlers and in preventing SB activities in the region. However, the SB denies these allegations. As a reprisal for the murder, a massacre was inflicted on the Adibasi families which lasted for two days. The operation was jointly conducted by the army, settlers, Village defense police (VDP) and other forces. More than 1000 Adibasi houses were looted and burnt all over the Langadu Upazila on the 4th and 5th May 1989. Around 50 Adibasi people were killed and many others were wounded.

In Sonai and Mayni, the settlers and army jointly burnt around 150 Adibasi houses. Many Adibasi families fled and stayed either in deep forest areas or crossed the border to Indian Tripura. It was a long time before the situation improved. An interviewee explained how his small shop was burnt down by settlers, with the support of the army. He was able to save himself by fleeing because he had an early warning of the attack. However, in fleeing, he lost his money saved from the business. As a result, he was unable to re-enter Tintilapara for nearly two years. Later he returned and settled down with his wife and children (Interview, 080127, Tintilapara).

I interviewed another victim who described his experiences of the attacks. He and his family fled to the deep hilly area of Mohalchori and took shelter there for 4 years, living in extremely difficult conditions. He said that from 1989 to 1992 a quasi-war between the Army and SB prevailed in Sonai and Mayni. Opportunist settlers grabbed Adibasi land. Four Adibasi people were killed in Karbaripara alone during the army and settlers attack in 1989. He remembered that one was named Bolo Ram Chakma, and that the other three were female, but he cannot remember their names (Interview, 080622, Duluchoripara).

Killings on 4th May 1989

I interviewed an Adibasi person who lost his mother on the 4th of May 1989. His family lives near to Langadu town. He described a traumatic event which occurred on that night. The Adibasi were afraid and panicked about the reprisal attacks by the settlers and the armed forces, and thus some Adibasi women, children and youths took shelter at his house, as they thought that it was the safest place for them. He personally claimed that he is on very good terms with the Bengali settlers, the police, and the Upazila civil administration. He insisted, "We do not have any secrets in our lives. Why should we be afraid of them? We are clean. We do not have any attachment or networking with any underground or Special Forces. Why should we hide ourselves from others" (Interview 080608, Headmanpara).

Nevertheless, on that night an army officer entered the house and ordered his soldiers to burn the houses to ashes. 11 Adibasi people, including his mother, were killed, all of whom were innocent, he alleged. His father was not at home at that time, and therefore survived the massacre. His father maintained good relations with most of the neighboring Bengalis. The interviewee recalled his mother as someone who was on good terms with all their neighbors, Bengali and Adibasi alike, but even she was not spared. In this incident, the armed forces and settlers killed Surjomoni Chakma, Muroti Mohon Chakma, Sojol Chakma, Jagoron Chakma, Soyondorjo Chakma, Ompola Chakma, Ompola, and Susoma Ronjon Chakma among others.

Torture and Rape: Interview with a Victim

I Interviewed an Adibasi woman who experienced an attack on her person in 1989. She describes the inhuman event thus:

> It was in 1989. I cannot remember the exact date at this moment. However, I clearly remember that it was around 8 o'clock on a Tuesday morning. The sun had risen, and some settlers and Village Defense Police (VDP) suddenly took me from *Boradham* village to Islamabad, a Muslim Bengali Para. At first, they fastened my hands behind my back and beat me; they took off my gold necklace and nose pin. They slapped me in the face and ears. They kicked my back so brutally that I was almost unable to breathe. I lost consciousness when they hit my head. After the first blow, I agreed to do whatever they wanted. When I regained consciousness I found that they had seized around 20 to 25 Adibasi women. The settlers threatened the Adibasi women to chop them up on a piece of timber. There were all characterless people with many ill motives. At that point, they were awfully brutal and crazy towards us, Adibasi women. I was blindfolded when they seized me form the *Boradham* village. There were only a few of them. I only recognized one settler. The settlers and VDP entered the Jungle with some of the young Adibasi women. They raped at least 12 to 15 Adibasi women there. They kept us in between two hills in the jungle. I was only a 16 or 17 year old girl at the time, unmarried and attending school. They shifted me from the jungle to a Bengali's house at night. It was the residence of an elected member in union council. His wife was nice to me. She helped me to escape from that house early the next morning. I was hospitalized in Langadu *sador* after that disastrous incident. I am still suffering. They had slapped my ear so brutally that I still cannot hear properly. My parents were highly shocked by the event. I went to the army camp at that time to inform them of the brutal attack and demanded a real investigation and judgment. The Commanding Officer of the army camp was not willing to investigate or punish the criminals. He instead promised me to give me a government job somewhere so that I would forget my grievances. As of yet, I have not been given a job, nor has any investigation or punishment been brought against those criminals (Interview, 080609, Duluchoripara).

However, her Adibasi neighbors are always very nice to her, which is a great comfort to her. She is now married, and her husband knows the details of this case, which he considers to be inhuman torture. All of her friends are kind to her. Otherwise after that brutal rape, it would have been very difficult for her to survive.

She has recently become a landless woman in Duluchoripara, Sonai. She has two sons and one daughter. Her mother-in-law also stays with them. Her husband had land in *Bogachottor*, but it was entirely grabbed by settlers. Finally they decided to

leave *Bogachottor* and move to her parent's home in Duluchori. She works hard as a day laborer and the rest of her time is spent on childcare and household work. She struggles to make ends meet. Her family cannot grow more due to land losses, so she needs to buy rice, oil, potatoes and other items from the shops. She added:

> Our day-to-day life is hard. We live in small houses. We Adibasi are poor and helpless. We are always low profile people. We do not bargain with the Bengali settlers and police or army. They may suddenly attack us. The army camp is very near from here. We never feel safe. However, I do not have the options to go anywhere else. The situation improved slightly after the peace accord, but it has not been implemented properly. We have been looking forward to CHT peace, but do not know when it will come into our lives (Interview, 080609, Duluchoripara).

Many Adibasi also mentioned the case of Kalpana Chakma who was kidnapped by the armed forces and their associations. This case occurred in Bagahichori after the signing of the Peace Accord. Kalpana Chakma was a 24 or 25 year old Adibasi woman and a vocal leader. She had been working as the Secretary of the Hill Women's Federation and a human rights activist. She was kidnapped in the early morning of 12 June 1997. They alleged that an army Lieutenant raped Kalpana Chakma and she was thereafter kidnapped by his associates. She is still missing. The Army propagated much misleading information about her disappearance (Group Discussion, 080210, Tintilapara).

The role the state and the military in relation to the Adibasi population clearly reveals the rival position between them and that the trust building between the military and the Adibasi seems to be impossible within the existing framework. On the contrary it seems that the situation of human rights are being worsened, which is making the CHT problem even more complicated.

Indeed, the expansion of army activities, their training camps and barracks and the motive to dominate the CHT has gradually become evident to the Adibasi and thus the arrival of large numbers of Bengali settlers in the region is also seen by many as a strategy to make the Adibasi forces weaker. Many Adibasi suppose that in one sense the army strategy has succeeded and now they have again changed their strategy and adopted new programs to maintain the dominance in another form. However, the anxiety and threats to their political and social movements are still alive among the Adibasi. This situation claims political initiatives and further dialogues to solve the major CHT problems, including the land issues, settlers' issues, the number of army camps and the autonomy of the CHT people. A democratic attitude toward the Adibasi, a mindset of cohesion and multiculturalism and of ethnic conflict management could be fruitful tools to improve the CHT situation.

In the following chapter, I focus on ethnic conflict management, school of multiculturalism and cohesion and the responses of social policies to develop and ensure the human rights for the deprived sections of population in a society.

CHAPTER 9

Ethnic Conflict Management

In this chapter I will discuss the issue of ethnic conflict management, at first generally and thereafter its potential contribution to the CHT issue.

Armed conflict leads to killings, unlawful activities, unrest, socio-political destruction, and inhumane treatment, and sometimes gets repercussions all over the world. Armed conflict is liable to add new forms of vulnerability and exclusion, which in turn may shape future outbursts of violence even after the initial conflict has been settled. Justino noted:

> Individuals and households in developing countries face severe economic risks even in the absence of armed conflict. Insecure socio-economic environments force vulnerable people into deprivation and distress. Outbreaks of armed conflicts are likely to increase insecurity further (2009, p.5).

Thus, the armed conflict also negatively affects confidence, and destroys social networks, trust and social capital among civilians. It is tightly linked with the economic development of the country. Proper social policy and establishing and ensuring social capital might be much more effective and fruitful instead of traditional post-conflict policies.

Stefan Wolff distinguishes between conflict management and conflict settlement. The massive ethnic problems present worldwide seem impossible to settle easily. Under such circumstances, conflict management is one way to bring relevant parties to the discussion table. Wolff mentions a few cases of conflict management which have facilitated peace. The conflict management in Northern Ireland is a prominent example (Wolff 2006, p. 123-134). In 1998, Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble and the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) in Northern Ireland, John Hume, were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their successful effort to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Northern Ireland (Wolff 2006, p.123). The peace process had collapsed several times before the deal in 1998. More than 3,000 people had died during this conflict and the problems had endured for more than 30 years. Finally, the three main relevant parties – communities in

Northern Ireland, the government of the United Kingdom (UK) and the Republic of Ireland agreed on a comprehensive peace deal. The deal is known as the Belfast agreement, after the capital of Northern Ireland. It is also known as the *Good Friday Deal* due to the date of agreement: 11April 1998. There were at least two earlier settlements in 1973-74 and 1985; but those deals did not last. The post 1998 situation has been comparatively successful.

Ethnic conflict management is a complicated issue when there are many interest groups involved. As Wolf puts it: "Other cases, like Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, or Bougainville in Papua New Guinea show, however, that resolving ethnic conflicts is not impossible either, but rather that is depends on the timing of initiatives and the skill and determination with which they are pursued" (Wolff 2006, p.135). According to Wolff, "Conflict management is primarily a strategy that is chosen when the settlement of a conflict is impossible" (2006, p.134). It is relevant to mention here that peace agreements seldom totally resolve conflicts. An agreement, at best provides a framework within which conflicting goals can be accommodated (Ibid 2006, p.155). Often it seems hard to uphold the promises which have been mutually agreed upon.

Mutual trust, which is the foundation of social capital, is one of the important aspects of a successful peace deal. Thus, through promoting social capital and allocating human rights and welfare policies, the ethnic conflict can potentially be solved, or at least managed or minimized. Monitoring of the post-conflict reconstruction should be an important part of the peace deals. Failure of the agreement may create vast new problems within the same region. It that sense, skillful mediation and enlightened leadership are essential components of the peace deal. The signing of a peace accord, reaching an agreement focusing on conflict management and post conflict reconstruction potentially improves the situation of ethnic conflict all over the world. The agreement on Northern Ireland in 1998 and the Dayton Accords for Bosnia in 1995 to some degree succeeded, and their implementation has helped those problems to be solved or at least diminished. On the other hand, the 1994 agreement between Hutu and Tutsi political parties in Burundi was never fully implemented and thus did not contribute to preventing inter-ethnic conflict (Wolff 2006, p.155-56). As I will show, social policy is able to play a significant role in the process of conflict management and more explicitly in the post-conflict management period as social policy aims to enhance social services and trust among underprivileged section in a society.

Social Policy Response

Since the inception of the concept of the welfare state, there has been an intimate and reciprocal relationship between the individual and the state. The state must provide facilities, security and other social assurances for its citizens. In return, individuals

fortify the state with their solidarity in return for having gained the fruits of development and upward mobility. When citizens are secure, cared for, and recognized under the dominant nationality, there are improved chances for the state to remain unified and peaceful, and continue on its development trajectory. The notions of liberal economy and social democracy are concerned with providing services to the state's citizens, regardless of ethnic differences, racial approaches, immigration and so on. Smooth functioning of the state is difficult and unsustainable if citizens do not receive at least minimal public services. Such a situation is exacerbated when specific sectors of society are privileged over others, by preferentially receiving benefits, economic aid, social status and social capital. Consequently, the concept of 'social policy' is taking on a new importance in various countries. However, developed and developing countries face different socio-political problems. For this reason, social policies must be region-specific and take into account the unique economy, political culture, structure and institutions of the country in question. Despite the deep rooted, seemingly intractable questions of ethnicity, such issues must be addressed in the arena of social policy.

Ethnic problems are not only regional issues; they also have international and global aspects. Deep seated and unresolved ethnic issues have already created much tension in many parts of the world and have played central roles in wars, separatist movements, and fights for regional freedom and sovereignty. Although some regions have seen changes for the better in their ethnic situations, many ethnic groups are still exposed to anxiety, pressure and vulnerability. As Kymlicka notes:

> Many people hoped that the end of the Cold War would lead to a more peaceful world. Instead, the ideological conflict between capitalism and communism has been replaced with an upsurge in conflicts between ethnic and national groups. Throughout the world, minorities and majorities clash over such issues as language rights, federalism and regional autonomy, political representation, religious freedom, education curriculum, land claims, immigration and naturalization policy, even national symbols such as the choice of national anthem or public holidays (1997, p.1).

Kymlicka pointed out language rights, regional autonomy, land claims and some other issues as basic apparatus for minority-majority clash all over world. To establish bridge between ethnic and national groups, these issues need to be settled down properly which would help to minimize the forthcoming crisis between groups in future. He further notes, "Resolving these disputes is perhaps the greatest challenge facing democracies today"(Kymlicka 1997, p.3). Minority movements have challenged the traditional, dominant understanding of liberty, parity, democracy, impartiality and justice. Kymlicka says,

> Needless to say, in many parts of the world, minority groups face enormous discrimination and persecution, even genocide or 'ethnic cleansing, and so are fighting for a minimal set of basic civil and political rights which are at the heart of traditional liberal-democratic theory (1997, p.3).

Indeed, the accommodation of cultural differences within the framework of multicultural approaches is proving difficult. It is logical that in the west, more empowered minority groups will seek more recognition and accommodation compared to their

counterparts in developing countries. However, in the developing world, minority groups aspire to establish their rights and accommodation of their culture into the mainstream, while maintaining their distinctive identities. If their aspirations cannot be met within the existing state, they may even seek to secede (Kymlicka 1997, p.3).

Adequate social policy depends to a large extent on the local situation, political context, historical background, economic status etc. A poor country is not able to provide welfare services comparable to those provided in the developed world. Nevertheless, exclusion of certain portions of peoples is unacceptable. The new liberal era of nationalism must do more to achieve individual autonomy and ensure human rights for all. Modernity, democracy and industrialization may seem suitable to subaltern Adibasi when the real liberal approaches are reachable or at hand with equity, freedom and participation. Martinussen said:

> In many cases, what emerged in the Third World were state-nations, rather than nation-states, similarly, the kind of ideology that came to dominate in many countries could be referred to as state nationalism rather than popular nationalism with a strong foundation in civil society and the political community (2004, p.320).

As we can see above, Martinussen refers to two different terms 'state-nations' and 'state-nationalism' instead of 'nation-state and 'nationalism. In many cases, the South Asian developing countries are nourishing 'state-nation' policy which generally inspire the ideology of 'state-nationalism'. These approaches create mistrust and discrimination among the groups and thus bring an unrest and unexpected situation. In this thesis, I argue minimization of large scale discrimination can be facilitated by ensuring welfare services and social policies for all citizens. To do so, the disadvantaged groups must be offered priority programs to close the gap between them and the relatively privileged groups. The issues are not only financial or economic; socio-political aspects are equally important. For the Adibasi of the CHT, a more open, liberal, and broad Bengali nationalism is necessary to resolve their current ethnic-rooted dissatisfaction. Alternatively, they may seek the creation of their own state to achieve individual autonomy as well as a unique, community identity which they have been seeking for decades. The notion of multiculturalism and its implication by the state is a good way to handle the unrest situation to minimize deprivation and marginalization in a society.

The Approaches of Multiculturalism

Multicultural citizenship is one of the most discussed issues in the contemporary sociology paradigm. It is considered as a potential solution in diverse societies where people live with different views, culture, norms and traditions, but nevertheless prefer to be identified as a members of a nation along with other groups with whom

they also have much in common. Under a multicultural system, the majority and minority groups share a bond as a result of their shared nationality or citizenship and in spite of the variety of views, mindsets and cultural heritages. Multiculturalism is a policy tool which can be utilized to manage diversity and advantageously integrate minorities. Diversity is now commonplace and can confer strength on a society. The process and strategy of integrating diverse groups is a complex and important issue for policy makers. Integration should not be assimilation of minority groups and their cultures within the comparatively dominant groups.

David Blunkett, the home secretary in England delivered the following speech at the launching of the Northern Ireland consultation strategy in May 2004: "Integration in Britain does not mean assimilation into a common culture so that original identities are lost. Our approach is pragmatic, based on common sense, allowing people to express their identity within a common framework of rights and responsibilities" (Blunkett 2004, p.6). However, In Britain, 'multiculturalism' as an ideology has not existed for at least two decades (Gilroy 2004; 2005; McGhee 2008, p.4). Anthony Giddens (2006) considered multiculturalism differently, claiming 'it has been a successful policy for managing diversity' (McGhee 2008, p.5).There are many different types of multiculturalism, and multiculturalism means different things in different countries, as McGhee notes (Bonnett 2000, p.90; McGhee 2008, p.4).

The meaning of multiculturalism has changed over time, just as the meaning of the term 'integration' has evolved. Kalra (2002) captures some of the meaning of cohesion as a *social policy category* when he argues that it refers to communities where:

- There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- The diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and
- Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighborhoods (Local Government Association 2002; Shukra, Back et al. 2004, p.188).

On the other hand, Trevor Phillips, as chair of the Community Cohesion Review, has been one of the most vocal opponents of multiculturalism in the recent years. In September 2005, Phillips remarked:

> In recent years we've focused far too much on the 'multi' and not enough on common culture. We've emphasized what divides us over what unites us. We have allowed tolerance of diversity to harden into the effective isolation of communities, in which some people think special separate values ought to apply (2005, p.8).

Phillips denounced both primordial and Universalist multiculturalism. The primordial multiculturalism (Tempelman 1999, p.18) 'over-privileges identity and culture' while the latter concentrates on 'special separate values' of minorities (Werbner 2005, p.21; McGhee 2008, p.88). Phillips opposed the above model and suggested that 'old fashioned types' think of integration as an alternative word for assimilation.

Phillips' intention was not to abolish the model and morality of multiculturalism. Rather, we find the three essential features in his model of integration: equality, participation and interaction (Phillips 2005, p.10; McGhee 2008, p.88).

David Blunkett (2004, p.7) also presented the integrative concept of 'active citizenship' which emphasizes shared ground between diverse communities. This model does not appreciate forced assimilation but welcomes civic assimilation and integration strategies (Blunkett 2002, p.6; McGhee 2008, p.88). Harvey Siegel states:

> Multiculturalism refers to that movement in contemporary social /political/ educational thought- and claims, theses and values which characterize it- [that] celebrates cultural difference; insists upon the just, respectful treatment of members of all cultures, especially those which have historically been the victims of dominations and oppression; and emphasizes the integrity of historically marginalized culture (Siegel 1999, p.389).

Siegel (2007, p.206) also explained and analyzed Stanley Fish's (1998) view in this regard and his stance on the impossibility of multiculturalism. From the above debate, one can see that like many other philosophical notions, multiculturalism is still a contested terminology, with thinkers from diverse fields conceptualizing it in equally diverse ways. Some also want to distinguish European and Asian multiculturalism. Kymlicka and He Baogang (2005) recently edited a book titled *Multiculturalism in Asia* in which they sought to explore how the issues of ethno-cultural diversity, citizenship, human rights and the relationships between minorities and nation-states are understood, constructed and debated in Asia. In a review, Hassan observes:

> Drawing on multiple country case studies, the contributors argue that western models of multiculturalism – based on liberal constitutional democracy and the federal principle – may not be the best fit for Asian countries. They claim that Asian societies have histories and circumstances that are significantly different from their western counterparts and attempts to use western concepts to explore issues of minority rights in those countries could prove misleading. Rather, the argument goes, the focus should be on understanding traditional practices – privilege the communitarian perspective – to facilitate peaceful coexistence among linguistic and religious groups in Asia (2007, p.170).

Hassan emphasizes in the above statement on the regional and local distinctiveness of social problems and thus it claims to solve the situation maintaining 'communitarian perspective'. However, he concentrates on peaceful coexistence among different groups in Asia. From the South Asian conflict analysis it could be argued that it might be more effective to handle ethnic conflicts using a multiculturalist approach within the state rather than military action. Ethnic minorities do not appreciate the military forces' hegemonic administrative role. The social assimilation of ethnic groups within the mainstream nationality and statehood framework would help by establishing and enlarging multiculturalism and allocating and sponsoring pluralism in socio-political life and the economy. Establishing democracy, ensuring security, dissolving mistrust, decreasing ethnic discrimination, upholding promises, elimination of fear from ethnic life and establishing the land and citizen rights of ethnic groups in South Asia can establish a multicultural societal base -which would lead these regions to a more humanitarian and pluralistic society.

The CHT Peace Accord is a cohesive attempt from the part of the Governments of Bangladesh (GOB). This attempt has taken the initiatives of dialogue with the Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS). By the Adibasi leaders it was considered as a political initiative to solve the CHT problems instead of army dominance. The Adibasi population had responded positively to this initiative from the part of the government towards ethnic conflict management. However, the aims of these initiatives are not fully achieved yet, on the contrary, in some areas the patterns of political problems have gained another form. The following sub-section deals with the CHT Peace Accord and its achievements and shortcomings.

The CHT Peace Accord: Initiatives for Ethnic Conflict Management

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord was signed in Dhaka on the 2nd of December, 1997. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, President of PCJSS, on behalf of the Adibasi of the CHT and Abul Hasanat Abdullah, Convener, Hill Tracts Affairs, on behalf of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh signed the Peace Accord in the presence of Sheikh Hasina, then the Prime Minister. A 23 year old struggle for autonomy of the Adibasi people of the CHT came to a close with signing of the Peace Accord (Acharya 2000, p.1).

Role of Members of Parliament in the Management of the CHT Conflict

Prior to the Accord, the CHT conflict was handled by the Government of Bangladesh and its military in a manner which prolonged and complicated the process of conflict resolution, due to long lasting mistrust, doubt and suspicion amongst the parties involved. Finally, a political solution was reached which improved the mutual trust amongst all parties. Whatever the weaknesses and limitations of the political process, it had facilitated a combined declaration and mutual trust through the SB's surrendering of arms, and then governmental assurance of amnesty for the SB and JSS members. The political process which led to these positive steps started during the democratic regime after the fall of General Ershad in 1990. Aminuzzaman and Kabir note:

> The involvement of the Members of Parliament (MPs) in the negotiation process has considerably changed the character and mode of the negotiation process. The PCJSS, in fact, demanded the involvement of the MPs or political leaders in the peace negotiation – which indicates the broader social and political acceptability. It signifies the value of political settlement for a vexed political problem of constitutional significance (Aminuzzaman and Kabir 2005).

The above described statement shows that JSS, the then Adibasi's main political organization had shown their confidence upon the political solution of the CHT problems and the JSS participated in several rounds of negotiations with the elected representative in Bangladesh Parliament.

During the BNP regime, a committee was formed on 9th July 1992, which aimed at finding solutions to the problems of the CHT and was composed of members of parliament, headed by the then communication Minister, Colonel Oli Ahmed. The regime also formed a parliamentary sub-committee led by Rashed Khan Menon, a left wing MP, to further negotiate the details of rehabilitation and political accommodation. This initiative impacted positively on the dialogue.

The Awami League (AL) came to power in 1996. As she had promised during her election campaign in the CHT in 1996, the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formed a national committee to create an enduring political solution within the framework of the state sovereignty of Bangladesh. The national committee was formed by 11 members headed by the then chief whip of the national parliament, Abul Hasanat Abdullah. The committee conducted several meetings with the JSS leaders, which created a sound foundation for political solutions. The committee went to Khagracahari to sit with the JSS leaders, and conducted several meetings with them in Dhaka and the CHT from the 11th to the 14th of May, 1997 and from the 26th November to the 2nd December, 1997. Subsequently the Peace Accord was signed on 2nd December and the Cabinet approved the historical treaty (Aminuzzaman and Kabir 2005).

The National Parliament of Bangladesh has played the most significant role in rectifying the long-endured ethnic minority problems and the armed insurgency in the CHT. The use of a democratic approach to solve the problem was initiated by political leaders and the parliament. It reveals that they did not always have sufficient freedom in their roles, because they were dependent on the civil administration, the military and their intelligence bureaucracies. Nevertheless, through the process, the National Parliament and its members demonstrated their willingness and capability in creating efficient initiatives, building trust and confidence, and minimizing demands through dialogue – to the effect that they were able to resolve conflict peacefully instead of military action and protracted counter-insurgency measures. It is noteworthy that the Peace Accord could have been more fully implemented if the political forces had stood together and concentrated on the issue. The tragedy of the democratic process lies here. If parties are not unified, it can result in delays in problem resolution. The CHT issues are treated by the politicians and beneficiary groups in such a way that the Peace Accord implementation has become contentious and extremely difficult.

Although the Peace Accord is widely accepted, Begum Khaleda Zia, the leader of the opposition in Parliament and Chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), opposed the Accord in 1997. The BNP which had itself initiated 13 rounds of peace talks, called the Accord a 'sell out'. The Accord was thus caught in the political crossfire with the ruling Awami League (AL) making partisan capital of it and with the BNP denouncing it.

However, the Adibasi were optimistic about the process, and the Shanti Bahini (SB) surrendered their arms. Intense publicity of the dialogue process and signing of the Accord provoked praise from many national and international organizations and diplomatic missions. Indeed, the Peace Accord remains a much-publicized issue in Bangladesh, not out of concern for the hill people, but because it is something of a political football game for the two major opposing political parties and their various allies. Although more than a decade has passed since its signing, and both the main political parties – AL and BNP – have been in power, real implementation of the Accord in CHT is scant. Before the present AL government, an interim caretaker government had been ruling Bangladesh in association with the army; under a state of emergency which had lasted about two years. The Caretaker Government did not care to implement the Peace Accord. Despite the existence of a Ministry of CHT Affairs, the Peace Accord is thus not being fully executed and peace in CHT is beyond the reach of the hill people themselves. As consequences of the non-implementation of the Peace Accord, there still exists much frustration among the Adibasi. In the following sub-section I shortly describe what has been implemented and what is still unimplemented in the Accord.

Achievements and Shortcomings of the Peace Accord

The Peace Accord was signed between the two parties to facilitate and uphold political, social, cultural and economic rights in the CHT region. It contains the following four main parts: General, Hill District Local Government Council/Hill District Council, Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council and Rehabilitation, General Amnesty and Other Matters.

Under the heading "General", the CHT is recognized as a 'tribal inhabited area'. Raja Debasish Roy, the Chakma Chief in CHT remarks, "It was treated as a fundamental issue by recognition of the CHT as a 'tribal inhabited area' in the Peace Accord" (Roy 2003, p.8). He reveals:

> The measures included the reservation of a specified number of seats for particular ethnic groups in the regional and district councils, the proposed introduction of primary education in the mother tongues of the indigenous peoples, granting jurisdiction to the CHT councils over customary law, the recognition of customary land rights through the Land Commission law, and the reinforcement of the traditional chiefs' advisory, judicial and residential certificate-granting prerogatives (Roy 2003, p 8).

The statement above reveals that there were some constructive aspects in the Peace Accord that could have brought a significant positive change among the CHT Adibasi population if it would have been implemented properly. The Adibasi kept promises by surrendering their Arms.

On February 10th, 1998, the Shanti Bahini (SB) formally surrendered their arms to the Government of Bangladesh. The chief of SB, J. B Larma (Santu Larma) was present at the ceremony. It was held at *Khagracahari* stadium in the CHT. About two thousand insurgents surrendered their arms and returned to their normal lives. The surrendering of arms was completed in four phases.

Return of Refugees

A large number of Adibasi refugees who had fled to India returned to the CHT after the signing of the Peace Accord. Totally 12,222 *Jumma* refugee families comprising 64,609 people returned from Tripura, India. The state of Bangladesh constitutionally guarantees the safety of life and property of all the returnees and their family members. The following were assured to the returnees:

- Cash grant of Taka 15,000 (US $ 335) per family;
- Free rations at the following rate of entitlement: Adult members: 5 kilogram of soybean oil, 4 kilogram of lentils, 2 kilogram of salt;
- Two bundles of corrugated sheets per family;
- For those families owning arable land, Taka 8,000 per family of cash transfers and a pair of bullock for tilling;
- For landless returnees, a land grant and a cash transfer of Taka 3,000 per family;
- Debt forgiveness of up to Taka 5,000 per family for agricultural loans;
- Similar loan forgiveness considered on a case by case basis for non-agricultural loans;
- Writing off of pre-existing loans from the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board;
- Continuation of the general amnesty for insurgents, applicable for cases registered during the insurgency; and
- Return of land to their original owners, and a guarantee that they would not be rehabilitated in the cluster villages [24](Acharya 2000, p.4-5).

The rehabilitation program began soon after the Peace Accord. However, the process did not follow the agreed-upon process, resulting in many complaints from the Adibasi. Of the 64,609 refugees who returned, nearly 50% were unable to return their own homesteads and native villages because they remain 'occupied' by Bengali settlers (Acharya 2000, p.5).

24 Cluster village is part of a settlement program to rehabilitate landless, vulnerable and poor people. Generally, the cluster villages in the plain districts are not monitored by the armed forces or police. However, the JSS claims that, the Adibasi villagers were forcibly settled down in the cluster villages in order to detach them from the movement for self-determination. The armed force kept vigilance around the Adibasi's cluster villages (Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti. (2005). "Brief History and Struggle of the CHT " Retrieved 10th March 2011,http://pcjss-cht.org/cht_history&struggle.php.)

CHT Regional Council Passed in the Parliament

After the signing of the Peace Accord, the CHT Regional Council was formed for co-ordination with local government in the three hill districts. Santu Larma was selected by the Government as the chairman of the Regional Council, which aimed to make the 3 Hill District Local Government Councils more influential. The Regional Council, the head office of which is in Rangamati, is considered as the centerpiece of the Accord. It has 22 elected members whose tenure is five years. The Chairman shall be an Adibasi with the status of a minister of state[25]. Fourteen other members should be Adibasi, including two women. The objective of having a Regional Council is to make the CHT into a single political and administrative unit. The council has powers of supervision and coordination on subjects such as law and order, general administration, development, traditional laws and social justice, as well as the power to give licenses for heavy industry (Acharya 2000). However, the Regional Council needs more empowerment and authority to function properly. Some aspects which should be under the control of the Regional Council remain under the jurisdiction of the deputy commissioners of the Hill Districts, which creates confusion and potential conflict.

Establishment of the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MOCHT)

In accordance with the agreement, the MOCHT was formed on the 15th of July, 1998. The following organizations are affiliated sort under the Ministry: Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (Rangamati), Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (Rangamati), Rangamati Hill Tracts District Council (Rangamati), Khagracahari Hill Tracts District Council (Khagracahari), Bandarban Hill Tracts District Council and Civil Affairs Office, Chittagong Cantonment (mochta.gov.bd/faq.php 2007).

Amnesty and Rehabilitation

The Awami League (AL) confirms that after the signing of the Peace Accord, amnesty was granted to members of the approximately 2000 Shanti Bahini who surrendered arms and ammunition within the agreed deadline. The Government then took steps to withdraw the listed cases against them. The Ministry of Establishment, Bangladesh took steps to prioritize recruitment of permanent residents of the CHT for jobs in government, semi-government and autonomous bodies (Bangladesh Awami League 2003). To assist the rehabilitation of these members, BDT 50,000 (US $1136) was given to 1947 returnees. 19 other JSS members who were in jail have been granted the same amount per person. 677 JSS members have been appointed as police constables and 10 have become traffic sergeants. Some former JSS members have also been reinstated in their previous government jobs (Acharya 2000, p.4).

25 In Bangladesh, Minister of State is a junior minister who is assigned to assist a cabinet minister.

Development Program

The Awami League (AL) was in power during the Peace Accord, and the party thus emphasizes the good intentions with which they brokered the Peace Accord. They wanted to expedite socio-economic development in the CHT and to enhance the political, social, economic and cultural rights of the citizens. They inaugurated a massive development program after the signing of the Peace Accord. AL claims that more than 20,000 million BDT[26] was earmarked to be spent in the development plan in phases (Bangladesh Awami League 2003).

Unimplemented and Partially Implemented Promises

Analysis of the survey data of the study revealed different problems related to the Peace Accord. Most of the respondents (56%) considered the non-implementation of the Peace Accord as the main problem in the region. Lack of administrative support (35%), political instability (33.5%), land grabbing by settlers and army (31%, 27%) were also identified as vital problems. The respondents of the study reveals following recommendations for solving the problems in the CHT:

Table 13: Ranking of Recommendations for Solving the Problems in the CHT*

Rank	Recommendations	Percent
1.	Implementation of the Peace Accord	89.4
2.	Restore Land Commission	27.0
3.	Withdraw the settlers	27.0
4.	Withdraw army camps	24.3
5.	The ownership of land to the indigenous people	20.4
6.	Recognition of indigenous languages	18.1
7.	Control of Islamic terrorism	16.8
8.	Ensure security to indigenous people under UN	8.4
9.	Ensure political rights	7.5

* Multiple responses counted.
Source: Own Survey

As we can see in the above table, the respondents suggested diverse recommendations to overcome the CHT problems. Among the recommendations, implementation of the Peace Accord was backed by the vast majority (89.4%), indicating that this should be considered fundamental to peace in the CHT. The establishment of a separate land commission to solve land disputes was another popular way to solve

26 1USD= 71.68 BDT in April 2011.

the problems (27%). A reverse population transfer project (27%) and withdrawal of army camps (24.3%) from hill areas also ranked highly[27].

Qualitative Findings: Frustration after the Peace Accord

A group discussion was conducted at Byttapara mainly with three Adibasi Chakma men from different age groups. The most senior was nearly 80 years old; one was around 70 and the third 26 years of age. I discussed with them their perceptions, experiences, and expectations of the implementation of the CHT Peace Accord. They agree about the failure of the Governments to implement the Peace Accord and they feel betrayed. The Peace Accord has been treated as a political football game where one political party supports it and the other one opposes it. Thus, they feel victimized, and do not know how this problem can be solved. They commented that if the situation is not ameliorated soon, the Adibasi people would become more frustrated and upset (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara). Another group discussion was held in Tintilapara in Mayni Mauza. There were two Adibasi respondents who shared their views in a forthright way. One respondent was a 63 year old Chakma man and the other was 54 years old. The older of the two Adibasi men stated:

> There were many things hidden in the CHT Peace Accord. We expected that the Accord would be implemented properly, but this did not happen. Many things are still undecided and we are without hope. JSS surrendered all of their arms to the Government, but what did we receive in return? (Group Discussion, 080210, Tintilapara).

This same question of what did the Adibasi received in return surrendering their arms and stopping fight to achieve autonomy for the CHT have been raised by many other Adibasi whom I have interviewed and studied. This low voice question possesses anger, frustration and a sort of regret that may take another shape later.

Land ownership

Land is the main issue for Adibasi. They are less interested in private ownership of land and prefer a common property regime and are willing to cultivate their traditional lands in collective ways. It is an enjoyable way of living for them (Interview, 080622, Duluchoripara). The hill people demand free lands in the CHT, but recently this has seemed impossible. That is the reason behind the frustration among the Adibasi.

According to the CHT Act of 1900, traditional land rights are protected for Adibasi and they do not require evidence or land title deeds to prove their ownership. However, the de-facto situation is completely different. Interviewees and respond-

27 Restoring of the land commission and withdrawal of army camps are also the part of the CHT Peace Accord.

ents of the study expressed their deep concern about land issues, and highlighted their traditional land rights. One interviewee from Headmanpara explained:

> The Adibasi are satisfied with the customary land distribution system. No one felt deprived within that system. Each Adibasi family got a minimum land allocation, which enabled them to survive well. It maintained a more or less equal distribution of land, which ensured good relations among the Adibasi. It confirmed their land rights at a grassroots level. The deputy commissioners allotted land for settlers without any consultation with the headmen. This made the whole system complicated, complex and corrupt (Interview, 080608, Headmanpara).

An interviewee from Duluchoripara expressed his views and frustration about land issues very firmly. He explained how the hilly lands in the CHT were traditionally allocated. It was Adibasi land and it should remain so. He says, "It is our sorrow that we cannot stay in our land peacefully" (Interview, 080622, Duluchoripara).

Adibasi usually lack legal evidence of their land ownership. The Chakma of Sonai and Mayni locality used to live there without any record of settlement as there was no need to do so. Recently some of them have been trying to prepare legal documentation out of fear of land grabbing by settlers and army occupation. Nevertheless, many Adibasi still do not recognize the urgent need for them to do this. The survey of the study reveals the following:

Table 14: Type of Land Tenure

Type of tenure	**Percent (count within brackets)**
Recorded	19.6 (45)
Allocated by Headman	3.5 (8)
No ownership	19.9 (46)
Customary ownership	57.0 (131)
Total	100.0 (230)

Source: Own Survey

As can be seen from the table above, only 20 percent of Adibasi surveyed have documents certifying their ownership of land. Fifty-seven percent consider their ownership as a customary right, which they have inherited from their ancestors. 20 percent answered that they do not have ownership and 3.5 percent are living in house plots allocated by the headmen. To prevent disputes, some Adibasi have submitted their land documents to the local administration through their headman. But the authorities did not respond as yet. Most of the land related cases are thus held up by the administration.

Section B26 (1) of the Peace Accord states,

> Notwithstanding anything contained in any law for the time-being in force, no land within the boundaries of hill district shall be given in settlement, purchased, sold and transferred including giving lease without prior approval of the council: provided that this provision shall not be applicable in case of areas within the reserved forests, Kaptai hydro-electricity project, Betbunia Earth Satellite Station, State-owned industries and factories and lands recorded in the name of government.

Section B26 further added, "Notwithstanding anything contained in any law for the time-being in force, no lands, hills and forests within the boundaries of the Hill District shall be acquired and transferred by the Government without consultation and consent of the Hill District Council" (South Asia Terrorism Portal 2008). The above provisions have been included in the Hill Tracts Council Acts. However, in practice the Government itself and the concerned authorities are breaking and violating these provisions on a regular basis. The following table shows the amount of land the government has both allocated and planned to allocate in different sectors without consulting the council:

Table 15: Allocated Land in the CHT

Sector	**Amount of Land (in acres)**
Ruma Armed Forces Garrison	9,560
Bandarban Brigade Headquarters	183
Artillery Training Centre	30,446
Air Force Training Center	26,000
Reserved Forest	72,000
Lease by District Commissioner	18,333
Total	156,552

Source: (Chowdhury 2002)

In the above mentioned ways, the Adibasi have already lost much of their land and still they fear that they may lose more land, hills, house-plots and natural resources if proper initiatives or resistance are not formed. The Adibasi are still hopeful and convinced that an effective land commission is the only body which could resolve their troublesome land disputes.

Functioning of the Land Commission

An effectual Land Commission is one of the major demands of Adibasi people. It was stipulated in the Accord but has not yet materialized. It is clearly stated in the Peace Accord that:

> A commission (land commission) headed by a retired justice shall be formed for settling land disputes. This commission, in addition to settling (disputes of land of the rehabilitated tribal refugees), shall have fullest power for cancellation of ownership of those lands and hills which have been so far illegally settled and occupied. No appeal can be made against the judgment of this commission and decision of this commission shall be final. This (arrangement) shall be applicable in case of fringe land also (South Asia Terrorism Portal 2008).

However, all the Governments since the signing of the Peace Accord have shown reluctance to implement this part of the Accord. It took around two and a half years until the Land Commission was set up in April 2000. Initially, there was discontent regarding the unilateral appointment of the Chairman of the Land Commission on December 1998, which was done without consulting the JSS. Eventually, the

JSS accepted the appointment of Justice Anwarul Haq Chowdhury as Chairman in May 1999. Unfortunately he died before he could enter office. Subsequently the Government appointed another retired judge as Chairman of the Commission but he resigned from the post soon after accepting it. Thus, the Commission remains embroiled in complications and does not function effectively (Acharya 2000; Chowdhury 2002). Sanjib Drong, the General Secretary of Bangladesh Adibasi Forum (BAF) said at a discussion marking the 11th anniversary of the CHT Peace Accord, 'In the last 11 years the Land Commission has not started functioning to settle land dispute. The indigenous people are now subject to more persecution and the Peace Accord is violated frequently' (The Daily Star 2008).

The Adibasi expected that the Government would allocate the land properly for each Adibasi family as the CHT Peace Accord prescribed. However, more than 11 years have passed, and the Accord remains unimplemented, causing frustration among them. A participant in the group discussion said, "We expected that at least two acres of land would be allocated for each Adibasi family in the CHT. It would have been a convenient way to establish peace in the CHT. But the reality is just the opposite" (Group Discussion, 080122, Byttapara). Indeed, there are valid reasons to doubt the Government's commitment to implementation of the Peace Accord as already more than a decade has passed and yet the Accord is not fully executed.

Withdrawal of Military Administration

One crucial weakness of the Peace Accord was the lack of a specified time limit for the withdrawal of army camps from the CHT. As a result, the army's involvement and control of the civil administration has lingered, and this remains one of the central problems in the CHT. During the conflict, there were 230 army camps, more than 100 BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) and 80 police camps in the CHT. So far only 32 temporary camps have been dismantled (Acharya 2000). The Awami League commented in a publication in 2003 that:

> The 6th anniversary of the signing of the historic CHT Peace Accord was marked by terrible violence in *Khagracahari* with the gunning down of an indigenous youth and wounding of some others on December 2, 2003. Instead of celebrating the day, the tribal community let it pass amid protestations. It is indeed, unfortunate that even after six long years of its conclusion; the Accord remains yet to be fully implemented. The fate of the CHT Accord is now in a limbo (Bangladesh Awami League 2003, p.1).

The AL report also clearly states that the Chairman of the CHT Regional Council Jyotirindra Bodhipriya (Shantu) Larma has time and again expressed his concern over the fast deteriorating situation in the hills. He has also cautioned of unrest and violence if the Peace Accord remains incompletely implemented. The report also says:

> In the last 6 years, clashes between the supporters and opponents of the Accord have reportedly left more than 400 people dead and many more injured. Some 750 people were also abducted

during the same period. Illegal toll collection, discovery of caches of arms in secret dens of criminals, smuggling of sophisticated arms in combination with all the above, indicate the imminent unfolding of ominous events (Bangladesh Awami League 2003).

Constructing the List of Voters

It is stated in the Peace Accord that a person shall be considered legally eligible to vote if he is (1) a citizen of Bangladesh (2) not below 18 years of age (3) not declared mentally unsound by any competent court (4) a permanent resident of the Hill District. Nevertheless, this provision has been severely violated in the preparation of the list of voters in CHT. A large number of Bengali settlers have been included in the voters' list and now greatly outnumber the Adibasi. This is in conflict with the treaty, which stipulates that non-tribal settlers are those who possess land legally in the hill district and live at a certain address there. They shall be designated as 'non-tribal permanent residents.' The indigenous people of the three CHT districts have alleged that thousands of 'outsiders' have been enrolled in the voter list while permanent residents of the area have been left out. On August 7, 2006 ahead of the World Indigenous Day, the Chairman of the CHT Regional Council J.B. (Santu) Larma said:

> At least 30,000 Rohingya[28] refugees have been enrolled in the voter list…even though the permanent residents are supposed to be enrolled in the voter list, the real CHT people are being left out in the list which is in violation of the peace treaty (cited by Kumar 2006, p.3).

Larma further alleged that many army, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and police personnel posted in the region have become voters. He pointed out that the peace treaty he signed in December 1997 stipulated that the tribal people would have a separate voter list (cited by Kumar 2006, p.3).

The issue of the list of voters in CHT finally reached the High Court of Bangladesh. The Court ruled on 27th August, 2007 in response to a case filed by Tajul Islam (writ petition 6451/2007) that the Government of Bangladesh must explain why the CHT peace treaty signed with the erstwhile SB leaders in 1997 should not be declared without lawful authority. After a brief hearing on a Public Interest Litigation writ, the court also ordered the authorities not to debar any non-tribal Bangladeshis living in the hill tracts from registering in the voter list until the case is resolved (The Financial Express). In 1999, Md. Shamsuddin filed a similar case against the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and others, opposing the signing and implementation of the Peace Accord. Through the writ petition issued by the High Court (4113/99), the Bangladesh government was asked to respond as to why the Peace Accord should not be regarded as unconstitutional. More recently, another case was filed by a Md. Badiuzzaman on a similar tone. In the writ petition (no.26669/2000), the Government was asked to explain as to why the Regional Council 1998 and Rangamati, Khagracahari and Bandarban Hill District Council Act should not be

28 Rohingya is an ethnic Muslim minority from Myanmar who was forced to leave their country. A large number of Rohingya are residing as refugees in Southern Bangladesh.

considered anti-constitutional. Both these cases were subject to prolonged hearing, and a final verdict is still in the offing (Kona 2007).

However, the latest voter list was recently completed by the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC), with the actual listing conducted mainly by Bangladesh Army personnel. The BEC prepared an Electoral Roll with Photographs (ERP) for the first time in Bangladesh with funding from the Government of Bangladesh and financial support from nine international development partners, namely Denmark, the European Commission, Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Along with various other parts of the country, the listing of voters in Chittagong and the three Hill Districts began on 22nd October 2007 and was completed by June 2008. UNDP reported, "Most of the voter registration centers in Bandarban and Rangamati operate without power and telephone coverage. Furthermore, many of the areas are not accessible by road which means that equipment needs to be delivered by boat, helicopter or by foot" (UNDP Bangladesh 2008). The Adibasi of the study area have alleged that many of them were not incorporated properly in the latest voter list and thus they will not be able to vote in the coming years. Moreover, the CHT voter list issue is now under jurisdiction of Bangladesh Judiciary due to above mentioned filed cases at court. Generally, such cases take a long time to complete the whole procedure and thus the Adibasi's voting right has been further restricted and partial due to incomplete voter list and as the issue is subject to court verdict.

Rehabilitation of the Bengali Settlers outside the CHT

Before signing the Peace Accord, the national committee on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh promised the JSS leaders that the Bengali settlers would be withdrawn from the CHT and the Government would resettle them in suitable plain regions in Bangladesh where they would be given full citizen rights. The then prime minister also stated the same proposal to the JSS leaders. However, this has not yet come to fruition. On the contrary, the Government, local NGOs and some of international organizations are working in favor of the Bengali settlers, and seem to be encouraging the settlers to stay for longer periods. There was an opportunity to successfully rehabilitate the settlers in the plain districts with the assistance of the European Union, but the operation did not proceed. The European Parliament, in a resolution, (9(d) B4-0962 and 0989/97) urged the Government of Bangladesh to review its demographic policy, to relocate the Bengali settlers from the CHT and rehabilitate them in the plains, with full respect of their rights and with the full use of financial assistance of the European Union (Acharya 2000, p.6).

Local Council

Both parties to the CHT Peace Accord agreed to build a strong and effective local council within the framework of the constitution of Bangladesh. This was agreed upon to circumvent demands for regional autonomy. The Government was very much concerned about the constitutional framework, and were determined that the constitutional regulations be upheld. On the contrary, the JSS leaders entered the negotiations demanding full autonomy of the CHT. Ultimately, the agreement signed provided for the formation of three separate Hill District Councils (RHDC) in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagracahari and one Regional Council in the CHT. It was the agreement that the three HDC would be empowered to control, supervise and monitor the following issues: land and land management, police, tribal law and social justice, youth welfare, environment preservation and development, local tourism, management of local organizations except *Paurasabha* and union councils, licensing for local trade and business, proper utilization of water resource of rivulets, canals, ponds, (except Kaptai lake) and irrigation, preservation of death, birth and other statistics, trade and Jhum cultivation (South Asia Terrorism Portal 2008). However, in practice, the local councils are not empowered enough to make decision and implement their programs due to the dominance of civil administration, military dominance and due to the interference by the successive Governments of Bangladesh. Moreover, the councils are not properly formed with democratically elected Adibasi representative.

Islamisation Policy

The sponsoring of religious politics and the inclusion of religion in the constitution of Bangladesh has fractured the secular trajectory of the nation. This has had effects in CHT as well. Islamic fundamentalist groups had vested interests in the CHT since the birth of Pakistan and thus have been trying to control the region. Later on, Bangladesh's vigorous Islamisation policies exacerbated the situation. Once a predominantly non-Bengali area, CHT is fast becoming a Bengali Muslim area through the Islamisation policies of the government (Talukder 2005). The following table shows the growing percentage of the Bengali Muslim/Hindu Population in the CHT:

Table 16: Growing Percentage of the Bengali Settlers

Year	Ethnic Jumma People	Bengali settlers
1941	98.5%	1.5%
1951	91%	9%
1961	88%	12%
1974	77%	33%
1981	58.6%	41.4%
1991	60.32%	39.68%

Source: Talukder (2005)

As we can see form the above table, the Bengali Muslim population was only 1.5% of the total population of the CHT in 1947, but has now leaped to 49%. Concurrently, the Adibasi population during the same period constituted 98.5% of the total population has now dwindled to a low of 51%. The Adibasi are becoming the minority in what was once their own homeland. Forced religious conversion was also considered as a mode of assimilation during the period of insurgency, and it continues in various parts of the CHT. Some Middle East backed NGOs and fundamentalist political parties have been implicated. *Al-Rabita*, a Saudi Government backed NGO is still working in Langadu with their missions. It began with an Islamic missionary center, hospital and so on. Recently, they have opened some schools to further their motives and missions. The army always provides the necessary assistance for them to perform their Islamisation tasks smoothly. *Jamaat-e-Islami* (a fundamentalist political party) also worked actively with the military. *Jamaat* always supports the Bengali candidates in the national and regional elections. The military also facilitates the process of Islamisation in the CHT (Mohsin 2003). All governments patronized Islamisation all over the country including in the CHT as part of a long term plan to prevent the organization of indigenous movements and to weaken the indigenous population relative to the Muslim settlers and army in the region. If this continues without any remedy, the Adibasi people will soon, as Talukder pointed out, find themselves in a situation in which they will have no option but to either 'flee the CHT, embrace Islam, or opt for unconstitutional struggle' (Talukder 2005).

Arms Transit and Drug Deposit in the CHT

It is another politically-charged decision to mark this region as an arms transit area and identify the region as a drug delivery and deposit center. The CHT was a conflict area in the decades before the signing of the Peace Accord. It was expected that the situation would greatly improve through the treaty as the SB has surrendered their illegal arms and returned to normal life. It was very important to provide full and long term support to ex-rebels, as they had left a conflict situation and a harsh and unpredictable life. They had engaged in such extremely dangerous behavior to achieve autonomy and economic freedom for their homeland. It was a great concession on their part to agree to the Peace Accord without gaining full autonomy for the region. Naturally, in return, they have been expecting the full implementation of the treaty, and as mentioned, this did not materialize. The partial implementation of the Peace Accord effectively humiliates the JSS and SB forces in the eyes of their supporters. The CHT region is overrun by Bengali, but the Adibasi are always under suspicion of arms and drug trafficking, and as agents of underground smuggling rings. The local people say that the army uses these issues as an excuse to maintain their presence in the region. Such blame game is certainly incompatible to creating mutual trust. As a consequence, Adibasi have lost their faith upon the military forces and treat each other as crude opponent.

Post Accord Situation: Administrative Structure

Mohsin (2003, p.60-85) analyzed the post accord situation in the CHT and suggested some actions to remedy the state's failure to implement the treaty. She looked at the post accord situation from the viewpoint of political autonomy, security and economic autonomy, and focused on the parallel administration and lack of coordination, governmentalization and lack of democratic practices and values, electoral politics, arms, drugs, uniforms, polarization, intercommunity violence, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), rehabilitation problems, the roles of government and NGOs forces and their activities and attitude towards hill peoples (Mohsin 2003, p.60-85). She also attempted to formulate some policies for the further development and empowerment of the Adibasi. Mohsin conducted a survey among the hill people to get feedback on the process of implementation of the CHT Peace Accord. The limitations of the treaty come into view clearly from her research. Her research outcomes reinforce my point that the Adibasi people are quite dissatisfied with the implementation of the Peace Accord. Her respondents mostly intimated that the government was not dedicated to solving the Adibasi's problems and that the situation is becoming intolerable (Mohsin 2003, p.60-85).

Shantu Larma, president of the JSS said: "The course of the implementation of our programs for the hill people, whether it is constitutional or unconstitutional depends on reality and situation. If the Government forces us, then like before we will take up arms again."[29]

In fact, the sense of deprivation and alienation among the hill people arose due to complications with the implementation of the Peace Accord. In the wake of the goodwill generated by the political process, promises have not been kept. Successive governments have not been equally attentive in implementing the Peace Accord. Much of the administrative structure has been set up to benefit the ruling party, ensure political and economic privileges for party supporters and ensure ongoing political dominance. The Adibasi people in CHT are being ruled by inefficient and overlapping administrations both at the micro and macro levels. At the micro level of the local administration, the Adibasi have their traditional administrative set up comprising Karbari, Headman and King. They pay taxes and follow the traditional rules and regulations. Units of local government also exist there, that is the union council administration which is directly linked with the Upazila administration. The army camps and their administration are highly involved even at the grass roots level of Adibasi lives. Thus, the Adibasi are administrated by multiple layers of authority. In most cases, the Upazila administration and army are imposing their authority on the Adibasi and maintaining vigilance on them. At the macro level of regional administration, the CHT development Board, Regional council, District Council, and Deputy Commissioner (DC) office are all involved. Moreover, the military regional headquarters, and many sub quarters are also entitled to exercise their power over the Adibasi people. Besides all of these administrative and military bodies, the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (MOCHTA) has the full authority to

29 Interview published in *Jugantar* (Dhaka) November 13, 2000 cited in Mohsin, 2003, p.59

combine, monitor, implement and exercise its power. Some of these administrative and military bodies existed prior to the signing of the Peace Accord and a few have been set up following the Accord. The lack of coordination, personality clashes among prominent people, power struggles, bureaucratic inefficiency, politicization, and excessive power of the military officers and soldiers in giving privileges to the Bengali settlers have alienated the general Adibasi in the CHT.

11th Anniversary of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord

The Accord mapped out a new set of laws to strengthen the three separate Hill Councils and one Regional Council in the CHT. Santu Larma, the leader of JSS at the time of the signing was nominated as the chairman of the CHT Regional Council. He is still serving as the chairman of the regional council. The 2nd of December, 2008 marked the 11th anniversary of the CHT Peace Accord. Santu Larma himself called on the indigenous people to forge a strong unity and launch a movement to establish their rights. He said:

> The condition of indigenous people in the hill districts is getting worse. The result can never be good. I got a feeling from the experience of the last 11 years that there is a conspiracy to destroy the existence of *Jumma* people and their political, cultural and land rights. The consequence of non-implementation of the Peace Accord would not be good (The Daily Star 2008).

Mangal Kumar Chakma, the information and Publicity Secretary of JSS claimed that more than 50 leaders and workers of their organization who have been vocal for implementing the CHT treaty have been falsely charged for various offences. Raja Debasish Roy, the Chakma circle chief as well as the former special assistant to the chief advisor of Bangladesh said that some acts were passed according to the Peace Accord, but still many provisions of the Accord are not recognized in state policies. If the development programs in the hilly areas do not focus on the environment of the area, people will face scarcity of water and other problems will also intensify (cited by Mong 2008). Such concern clearly reveals the unplanned development projects in the region. Moreover, the suitable policies for significant development for the Adibasi have not yet been implemented or executed.

Movement for Full Autonomy and the Role of UPDF and other Organizations

The Adibasi were fighting for full autonomy of the CHT for decades prior to the signing of the Peace Accord. It was the sole demand of their struggle with the military and governmental forces. It is possible that India played a silent role at a certain stage to nourish this rebellion in the CHT, since it was in their own interest. However, India was not interested in achieving full autonomy through the rebellion. India has since changed its strategy and decided to cease supporting the SB rebellion

in the CHT in addition to reducing the food allocation and financial assistance for refugee camps in Tripura. They also have decided not to give arms assistance for the SB fighters. These Indian policies created impetus for signing the Peace Accord and surrendering illegal arms, since the JSS had no better option. Moreover, they had been losing their support base among the Adibasi due to the high toll of the insurgency, massive insecurity in the hills and impact on refugees and IDPs. However, the Accord was signed between the GOB and JSS leaders as there were no other strong political organizations which had the support of Adibasi people in the CHT. Nevertheless, an Adibasi student organization had opposed the Accord and called it a 'compromising treaty' between the GOB and JSS. They had been demanding full autonomy of the CHT and refused to concede on this point. However, those voices were not as organized and established as the JSS. However, following the Accord, on December 26, 1998 a new political party emerged, namely the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), which opposed the Accord and was determined to carry forward the movement for full autonomy of the CHT. In its manifesto, the UPDF stated:

> Speaking for the establishment of people's rights, the JSS led the resistance movement for around two decades through legal as well as illegal means, and initially it was able to muster overwhelming support from the peoples. But of late, the agreement with the ruling Awami League (2 December 1997) and the "surrender" (10February 1998), have clearly demonstrated the political bankruptcy of the JSS … It would not have been necessary for us to launch a new party had there existed any other political party in the CHT truly representing the people in terms of giving leadership to the struggle for establishing the rights of the downtrodden masses (cited by CHT Commission 2000, p.31).

The *Pahari Gono Parishad* (PGP) (Hill People's Council) and the Hill Women's Federation (HWF) also have expressed their reservations to the signed Accord, which they identified as an unsatisfactory compromise with the GOB. They expressed their desire to continue the fight to achieve full autonomy. Thus, the once-united Adibasi have fractured into pro-Accord and anti-Accord groups. Mohsin notes: "The PCJSS regards the UPDF as a terrorist group, while the latter accuses the PCJSS of being an agent of the government" (2003, p.70).

However, the Adibasi also claim that the military may have directly and indirectly played a role in destroying the unity of the Adibasi, in order to destabilize the peace process. At both the institutional and individual levels, the army benefits financially by remaining in the region. Whatever the causes behind the division among the Adibasi, it has spread violence and crimes in the areas. Groups already have murdered rivals, and kidnapping, abduction, toll collection etc. have occurred. This trend may cause the general Adibasi population to lose any remaining trust and confidence in their leadership. This would cause any chain of command or institutional framework of the national or regional political parties to disintegrate, possibly leading to civil war and severe unrest in the future.

The Future of the Accord

There were many promises in the Peace Accord based on the agreement of the National Committee on behalf of the GOB and JSS. It was agreed that all aspects of the Peace Accord would be implemented from the date of the signing of the treaty. The treaty was painstakingly crafted, and if properly implemented, it would have been a great advancement in the assurance of Adibasi rights. However, as we have seen, thirteen years after the signing, many key parts of the Accord remain unimplemented. The polarized politics of Bangladesh, the Government's reluctance to fully implement the Accord, the disproportionate influence of the army on politics, the interference of donors and international organizations in the country's internal affairs, the intense pressure from the Bengali settlers, the complex bureaucracy, the various factions among the Adibasi – all these components played roles in hindering the implementation of the Peace Accord. Far from capitalizing on the momentum created by the signing of the Accord, the situation has since deteriorated out of frustration and deviation from the promises made by the state itself.

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

Thirst for Mountain Peace

The CHT Adibasi people are distinct from the majority population of Bangladesh in terms of ethnicity, language, social organization, and religious beliefs. The demographic profile and origins of the Adibasi people are also different from those of the mainstream Bengali population of Bangladesh.

Based on the CHT literature that I have studied and my personal experience from the field work, I find them a vulnerable, marginalized section of people in Bangladesh.

Although their economic situation probably has deteriorated, the Chakma society in Sonai and Mayni was poverty stricken also in the past. The *Jhum* land (slash and burn land) was once more fertile than it currently is; it has been severely degraded, and so has the plain land. One or two out of twenty to twenty-two families were poor at that time, according to my local sources. According to their own view of the past, they did not suffer the hardship they presently do. The well-off households and particularly the *Mohazons*[30] could help the poor households to earn money in order to bear family expenses or to cultivate the land. Mohazons have traditionally been obliged to help other Adibasi households and receive some of the produce in return. But now, no Adibasi has sufficient land to produce a surplus. Currently, very few households can grow enough to meet their own family needs.

The lack of social policy for poor Adibasi people is obvious when observing their livelihoods, their land disputes, land possession and the settlement of immigrant Bengalis. The same conclusion has to be drawn after looking into existing support programs by the government and NGOs. Moreover, the Adibasi movement is restricted by the settlers, army, and police, while the settlers are freer to move around compared to the Adibasi. The violation of human rights is a regular practice on the part of the army and civil administration as well as by a section of Bengali settlers who are set on grabbing land and other assets from the CHT region.

The Adibasi of the CHT needs more concentration on maintaining their survival as social and human beings. They need a set of social policies that can ensure the fulfillment of their basic needs, i.e.: food, shelter, education, health and security.

30 Mohazon is a comparatively well-off peasant.

The process of social exclusion of Adibasi established in the CHT has both long and short term effects on them. Their deprivation makes them isolated and creates resentment. They lost their trust in the State and its institutions since the government did not follow up the implementation of the CHT Peace Accord.

Many Adibasi were forced to leave their original settlements and move to remote hilly areas. Lots of Chakma respondents had their original house plot and cultivable land in places like *Dadipara, Dhighinala, Bui chara, Bamechora, Mondir Tila, Moladip, Haza chora* and *Uluchori* near the study area (Sonai and Mayni mauza). Bengali settlers have occupied these areas for years, and, as explained above, often changed the original names of those places into Bengali ones.

Major portions of the CHT seem to be captured by the Muslim Bengali settlers. The Sonai and Mayni locality are now surrounded by other villages which are mainly occupied by settlers as well as by army camps, while they were once fully under Adibasi possession. They used to live there and cultivate the plain land and the Jhum in the hilly regions. The Adibasi have lost the whole *Gathachora,* a neighboring village due to the settlers' arrival. The Chakma are now restricted to live within the Sonai and Mayni Mauza, while they once lived in *Uluchori, Molladip, Bhai-bon chora, Sinduk Chori, Hazachora* and other places.

The Adibasi used to be the majority in the CHT, but nowadays it is drastically different. The drastic decline in the proportion of hill people in the CHT occurred during the Pakistani and Bangladeshi regimes, when multitudinous Bengali settlers moved into the region to live and conduct business, trade and other economic exchange with the hill people. It later emerged that the settlers' arrival was part of a government sponsored program, which also included forced evictions of Adibasi from the area. The settlers receive food rations and other administrative and legal support both from the army and the civil administration.

The exclusionary process of Adibasi from the authority and collective ownership of their homeland started several decades ago. The British rulers opened for settlers in order to establish their economic dominance and to facilitate trade and resource extraction from the CHT. Later, the government of Pakistan experimented with various policies to assert its dominance and to gain revenue from the CHT resources. The government of Pakistan had planned and executed the *Kaptai* hydro-electric dam project which had caused forced resettlement of Adibasi. A large number Adibasi were bound to leave their property after getting evacuated by the government of Pakistan. The subsequent government of Bangladesh also failed to allocate proper services and welfare to the Adibasi of the CHT.

There have been and continue to be efforts which ostensibly aim to assimilate the ethnic minorities into the mainstream culture and 'civilization' in the name of development, change and upward mobility. In fact, many interventions made in the name of 'development' have excluded and marginalized the hill people, and stymied their self-development, to the benefit of the state and the dominant ethnic group, which is the Bengali. Thus, a sharp contrast and mistrust between the dominant group and the subordinate Adibasi has arisen in the CHT.

Indeed, there are many conflicting interests in the area. The settlers possess economic and political power, both due to their number and to the resources they command. Furthermore the army has a strong interest in the area. Likewise, donors and NGOs are pursuing their own agendas in the area. Another recently emerged factor is the impact of ideological and organizational differences among the hill people. There are at least three different Adibasi political organizations which have recently sprung up: Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS), JSS Reformist and United People's Democratic Front (UPDF). The belief exists among local Adibasi people that the government and army seek to provoke or support these various Adibasi organizations in an attempt to divide and rule. Thus, Adibasi are victims of many crimes, i.e.: land grabbing, police and army harassment, false police cases and severe insecurity for their children, and women, while since decades they have claimed mountain peace, separate identity, dignity and sovereignty. They even agreed to reach an agreement with the government and signed the Peace Accord in 1997 to get relief from an unrest and war. The JSS and SB had surrendered their arms to the government and promised a peaceful and normal life. They trusted the Peace Accord and expected that the armed forces would be withdrawn from the CHT and that the Adibasi will enjoy a free life like the Bengali Muslim population. However, their dreams did not materialize and thus the Adibasi still are thirsty for peace in the mountains.

Vulnerability of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

The CHT has experienced civil discord since the early 1970s. The demand for autonomy by Adibasi leaders, the settlement of huge numbers of Bengali and the intervention of armed forces has sparked insurgency and counter insurgency. The conflict has caused forced and voluntary migration, both internal and external. A large number of Adibasi people crossed the nearby border with the Indian States of Tripura and Mizoram. A significant number got classified as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), and moved into the deep forest or to other valleys in the CHT. The fighting between the hill people and the Bangladesh Army continued for almost two decades, and forced around 100,000 hill peoples to become refugees and IDP.

The unrest is ongoing and the suffering of IDP is widespread in the CHT; the *Sajek*, one of the more remote and hilly border areas in Rangamati district is merely one example. Many Adibasi took shelter there after losing their homes and assets. In April 2008, the Adibasi IDP and others were targeted in a horrific attack by settlers who were backed by the armed forces. The incident was publicized in Bangladeshi media. I heard about the attack and observed the distress even among the Adibasi of the *Mayni* and *Sonai* valleys where I conducted my field research. Settlers managed to penetrate the Sajek valley and occupied large areas of hill and plain land. On top of it all, the army systematically tends to favor the settlers over the Adibasi. This bias has been documented in the media and other sources, as well as in my own research reported above. Protests against the army-backed attack in Sajek were held by the CHT Students' Union and other organizations in Dhaka.

During June 2008, when I visited the Mayni valley and talked to the Adibasi people of that locality they were much preoccupied and panicked by the incident in Sajek. Some had relations living there. They fear that the settlers and army will mount another attack in an attempt to seize more land in the area. Some also informed me that there had been increased UPDF activity in Sajek recently, and they speculate that another reason for the attack may have been to try to halt UPDF activities. Whatever the motives, the attack has again stirred unrest among all Adibasi in the CHT, not so many years after signing a Peace Accord in 1997.

Land Issues

Land has emerged as the issue most crucial and important to the Adibasi. My work has also lead me to believe that land is the most sensitive and important issue in the CHT. The Adibasi are neglected and deprived, and have become alienated and separated from the mainstream. Land issues are of central importance, but the administrative structure, the role of army, and the government's attitude towards the Adibasi were also found to be tools of oppression. These factors contributed to grievances which evolved into an insurgency, causing the state to take counter-insurgency measures. Although dialogue processes were sometimes attempted, all of these were apparently constructed to primarily protect the interests of the state and dominant class.

The state has always been interested in the hill lands, which are the chief territories of the hill people. Thus, land ownership became a point of tension between the Adibasi and Bengali and between the military the state and the hill people. British rulers first captured the hill lands in the name of the Forest Department in 1870s and in a similar vein, the government of Pakistan established the Kaptai Dam in 1960. These two historical interventions denied the hill people access to large tracts of their traditional land. Later, during the Bangladesh government, land disputes intensified due to the swelling numbers of Bengali in the CHT, both officially sanctioned and unofficial migrants. It is obvious that unofficial migration was not prevented by the state; rather it seems to have been secretly state-sanctioned.

Innumerable cases of land seizure by outsiders naturally created severe grievances and hardship among the Adibasi. After the completion of the official Government Resettlement Program (GRP), the new settlers invited their relatives to come and settle on land in the CHT, a process which is still continuing. It remains very simple for willing settlers to enter the CHT and occupy land, since there are no legal constraints. During my field work, I anecdotally learnt from the settlers that many of their neighbors settled in the CHT years after the GRP, and that outsiders continue to come and settle there. These late settlers provoke much complaint among the earlier ones, since the latter already struggle to eke out a meager living on their land and from trade.

However, hill people treated lands in the CHT as common property, not as something which could be privately owned, and certainly not as something they required

legal documents to access. The hill people always considered themselves naturally entitled to live on and cultivate that land, as long as they maintained the quality of the soil for use by future generations.

Conflicts in the CHT have evolved to encompass many complex dimensions including insurgency and counter-insurgency, but it can be argued that the root of the whole conflict is intimately related to land rights issues. Thus, the land crisis is an important contributing factor to the unrest. The disturbances in turn have forced many people to become refugees.

The Land Commission convened a few times, but did not act to resolve the land problems. On the other hand, most of settlers have their land deeds as government granted land to them when they arrived into the CHT.

Politics with the CHT

Some settlers now recognize that their migration was part of a larger political plan of the government, but they remain poverty stricken and thus helpless. Despite the land allocations, they are not used to living in the hills and thus found it challenging to adapt from their plains lifestyle[31]. Bengali settlers worry about the future of their children, since educational institutions in the area are not of a high quality. They also worry that the Adibasi children receive more education than their own, since they believe that the naturally hard-working Adibasi children are better able to walk the long distances to schools in hilly areas. The children of poor Bengali settlers seem little motivated to attend school, possibly because their parents feel that local schools fail to provide a proper environment for their education. Thus, deprivation and anger at government policies are not restricted to the Adibasi but also extend to the Bengali settlers, who came solely for the free land they were offered. The land given was generally insufficient for the settlers' needs and the allocation was improperly managed by the administration, causing great strife. Thus, neither settlers nor the Adibasi are happy with the government's actions in the CHT, and in addition they are in conflict with each other. The resulting land- based conflict has yielded a favorable situation for the army and the state[32], since they can use such clashes to justify suppression of the protests and organized movements of the dissatisfied Adibasi.

Army Dominance

The most obvious presence of the state in the CHT is the enormous military presence. The army's domination was initiated a few days after the birth of Bangladesh by the then government, and the military presence in the CHT continues to evolve. The deployment of troops has increased gradually over the years at the instigation of every government, whether elected, democratic, or neither. President General Ziaur

31 Field note.
32 Field note.

Rahman and General H. M. Ershad tried to impose a military solution on the CHT problem by forcibly suppressing the insurgency. Not surprisingly, this approach exacerbated existing problems and complicated the situation. The resulting state of war lasted for two decades. The Adibasi have suffered greatly merely for the sake of army interests.

Army personnel conduct body and luggage checks on all who travel and stay in the area – a practice not equally prevalent in other plain districts of Bangladesh. I travelled to CHT several times during my fieldwork to collect data and observed many army and paramilitary forces check points in various locations in the CHT, even along waterways. Cars, buses and boats are stopped and searched, and nobody seems to be exempt – indigenous people, settlers, newcomers and regular commuters are all searched indiscriminately.

Though it is difficult to determine the exact scope and cost of the army's activities, it is easy to observe its presence, authority, strength and the large scale facilities for the army personnel. The officers and soldiers remain more powerful and privileged than any other administrative staff. Their authoritarian presence is a severe violation of freedom and human rights of the Adibasi in the CHT.

The expensive army operations in the CHT are difficult to rationalize for a low-income country like Bangladesh. Nevertheless, in the name of peace and security, army expenditure remains high. There are sensible arguments for an army presence in the CHT, proportional to that in other (plain) districts, with soldiers performing their duty to protect the lives and liberty of people. However, over the past few decades, the army's actions in the CHT have instead resulted in alienation, fear and mistrust between the army and Adibasi.

Although the resettlement of the CHT was a government initiative, speculation is rife that the military was involved in the initiative, especially in light of their heavy presence in the region. Regardless of the exact cause, as a result of government and military actions, the Adibasi have recently become an ethnic minority in their own traditional land. They have become deprived and excluded, and thus feel marginalized as a group and insecure in their daily lives. This did not occur suddenly, but as an outcome of a long process. The seeds of deprivation were sown long ago. Forest resources were unlawfully abused, degraded and exploited by outsiders. Whether or not such actions were government-sanctioned, it is a fact that the government did little to preserve the CHT's resources.

It is not surprising that the military intervened heavily during a military regime. Disappointingly, however, democratic governments have not scaled down the army interventions. Mohsin notes, "The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) itself realized after a decade of military operations that the CHT problem required a political solution. ….Because the Bangladeshi military had been given extensive powers to put down the CHT insurgency and control the region" (2003, p.14).

Adibasi Need More Care

Adibasi of *Sonai* and *Mayni* mauza, *Langadu* are living in poverty and exclusion. They are excluded from their own land in many senses. They are excluded from their house plot, cultivable land and also from the hilly and forest region. Many of them do not have legal documentation for their land, as they consider it their traditional property. They are excluded from economic activities as well as from their trade rights. The Adibasi people are further deprived from social policies. Housing, health facilities, water and sanitation, education, economic development and other programs have been initiated and handled very poorly by the various governments of Bangladesh.

Unless proper care is taken and a set of social policies for the Adibasi are implemented, they would become either extinct as a group or they might need once again to rise and rely on their own efforts. However, the attempts to organize such efforts have been systematically broken by the governmental policy, e. g by inviting Bengali settlers from various plain districts into the CHT region, granting land, assets and ration food to them, not preventing conflict between settlers and Adibasi, permitting army dominance over the Adibasi, withholding development activities in the CHT, keeping them isolated from the mainstream economic activities like trade with agricultural and other products, depriving many of their voting rights, not allowing them free movement like that enjoyed by the majority population, allowing barriers to be created by the settlers and by the civil and military administration, preventing the participation of the Adibasi main development programs in the CHT, not initiating the infra-structure development in the Adibasi para and local areas, not supplying energy for the Adibasi, not allowing them to receive higher education. Most importantly, insecurity is a recurrent and major concern among the Adibasi.

Social policy could have played an important role to solve the diverse CHT problems; At least, it could have prevented the enormous poverty among the Adibasi. The missing social policy in the CHT may have contributed to the social insecurity and unrest among the Adibasi.

A set of social policies along with good governance are essential aspects for the real development of the CHT. Moreover, the human right situation is dreadful in the area. Poverty, food insecurity and poor access to education and health services clearly show the need for social policy and good governance. The current governance situation is uneasy and inherently unstable.

Call for Democratic Practice

A complex set of bureaucracies and a dense web of administrative institutions overlap in the distribution of responsibilities. Furthermore, long term, interim, government-appointed authorities have weakened the CHT governance system, which stymies development of the region. Coordination and adjustment among the authorities and various departments takes time, especially with the existing stagnant schemes

and policies. It is of utmost importance to appropriately distribute responsibilities to local authorities, and making all institutions transparent and representative. The administrative institutions and regional bodies in the CHT need qualified leadership, transparent responsibilities, ethnic representation, proper manpower, sound logistics, appropriate finances, motivation and training to make progress in development. In addition, the nature of army deployment in the region needs to be changed immediately to establish peace and trust among the population of CHT.

Another catalyst of change in the area is the democratization of the feudal-like Adibasi societies, as proposed and encouraged by some prominent Adibasi leaders, who claim that real changes in Adibasi life are only possible in a democratic culture where Adibasi can raise their own voices representatively and collectively.[33] Santu Larma remarked, "Changes should be made in the social structure to establish indigenous peoples' rights as the feudal thoughts are still (present) in our society" (Mong 2008).

Despite calls for democratization from some prominent Adibasi leaders, the demographic complexity, influence of settlers' interventions, traditional social norms and judiciary along with the attachment and influences of the chiefs, all seem to conspire against democratization. Moreover, the number one priority issue, that of land tenure remains unresolved. As a result, despite the best efforts of some leaders and organizations, there are formidable barriers to practicing and establishing democracy in the CHT.

In a democratic culture and society, the concept of national minority incorporates minorities in such a way that they are entitled to enjoy membership of societal culture. Nationalism must provide suitable societal cultures capable of incorporating the ethnic minorities and to minimize their crisis of identity under a common nationality. After observing the CHT situation, I claim, based on evidence and respondents' views, that the Adibasi population cannot be considered as national minorities on the basis of their limited participation and entitlement within the societal culture. Rather, I argue that they suffer from a crisis of identification, and suffer from being treated, politically, as subaltern groups who have momentarily lost their fighting capacity against the armed forces and the state machinery. The political and organizational strength of these groups may again develop in another form if the attempts at integration by the state are not successful. The Adibasi groups of the CHT have already experienced long term conflict with the army and Bengali settlers. Therefore, social cohesion and the approaches of multiculturalism are of utmost importance if suppressed grievances are not to flare up.

Ensuring human rights and individual autonomy facilitates democratic practices in a society. There is an opinion among the Adibasi that new social revolutions must establish democratic practices in the place of the old feudalistic approaches.

33 Speeches in Dhaka by Santu Larma when the Chakma Raja and the then recently appointed Special Assistant to the Chief Advisor were present as Chief Guests.

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This study provides an overview of social policy and poverty among ethnic minorities (Adibasi) in Bangladesh, with a special focus on the *Chakma* people belonging to the *Sonai* and *Mayni* localities, situated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The main argument in this thesis concerns their struggle against exclusion which is an indispensable part of policy studies. In my work, I concentrate on the historical processes and the current situation among the Adibasi, characterized by social exclusion, deprivation and poverty. Furthermore, I discuss the peace process, and attempts to create integration and cohesion in the CHT. An integral part of my work consists of qualitative and quantitative data obtained from nine different hamlets (para) inhabited by the Adibasi. The findings are used to show how the Adibasi have been deprived of their land, emphasizing in particular the arrival of settlers, army occupation, as well as various government projects initiated during different regimes. In addition, I discuss the conflicts that have risen due to land grabbing, forced migration and displacement.

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