

People of No Land: A Study of the Hajong Tribe of Changlang District of the Diyun Circle of Arunachal Pradesh (On the basis of IMPRESS-ICSSR Project Work)

Dr. Adidur Rahman

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Haji Anfar Ali College, College Road, Doboka Town, Nagaon, Assam 782440, India

DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2020.v08i10.00X](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2020.v08i10.00X)

| Received: 28.09.2020 | Accepted: 25.10.2020 | Published: X

*Corresponding author: Dr. Adidur Rahman

Abstract

Original Research Article

The displacement, migration and statelessness are the words have long been recognized as relevant issues in international law. Nowhere the problem of displacement and statelessness is more acute than in South Asia and Southeast Asia. The Sri Lankans, Tibetan, Afghani etc. in India, Burmese in Thailand and recently Rohingya in Bangladesh, Vietnamese refugees in Cambodia and many ethnic Chinese in all parts of Southeast Asia are currently living a stateless life. Similar type of human rights abuses are suffering by the Hajongs of Diyun circle of the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Hajongs are the small ethnic sub-tribe of the greater Bodo (Kachari) group of people of Northeast India. They are Mongoloid people and belonged to the Tibeto-Burman group. The Hajongs are the worst victims of the partition of India in 1947. The Hajong concentrated areas were annexed with the East Pakistan during of the country in 1947. They are found original inhabitant of North Mymensing District of erstwhile East Pakistan. The Hajongs were displaced from their original abode and migrated to undivided Assam as refugees in different phases. Subsequently, the Hajongs along with other refugees were rehabilitated in different Northeastern states. However, the Hajongs those who are rehabilitated in NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) by the Government of India are still fighting for citizenship rights and living a stateless life. The present work examines the causes of displacement and statelessness of the Hajongs of Arunachal Pradesh especially in Changlang District of the Diyun Circle. It examines the causes of reactions from the indigenous Arunachali tribes; the All Arunachal Pradesh Student's Union and even from the State Government. The paper concludes with study of the role of the Hajongs organizations, the Union Government and the Supreme Court in their fight for acquiring Indian citizenship rights for the Hajongs with relevance of the study.

Keywords: Displacement, Migration, Refugee, Rehabilitations and Statelessness.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A few words such as displacement, migrations, refugee rehabilitations and statelessness were widely used in international spheres during the World War-II. Since then the displacement of people has been one of the challenge causing statelessness of people in different regions of the world. It obviously renders people homeless and is being deprived of their places of abode. In Indian Sub-Continent several thousand of people have been affected by displacement. During the partition of the country in 1947, the Northeast region of India is territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries, giving rise to discontentment and assertion of one's identity. The region has experienced massive displacement,

migration and refugee problem causing statelessness in the wake of independence including the Hajongs of Diyun circle of the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh (A.P). The Hajong tribe who were rehabilitated in the Diyun Circle of Changlang district are still deprived of their basic human rights-the right to citizenship and considered as people of no land.

METHODOLOGY

The Changlang district is chosen purposively for the study as majority of the Hajongs are found rehabilitated in this district. A multi-method approach is adopted for the study, including historical, descriptive. Relevant data are collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources include the firsthand information from the informants belonging

Hajong of Diyun circle. The respondents were selected primarily from the person having good knowledge about the Hajong history, polity and culture. The secondary sources such as relevant books, journals, periodicals and websites have also been consulted in the study.

Aims of the Study: The study is conducted to meet the following objectives:

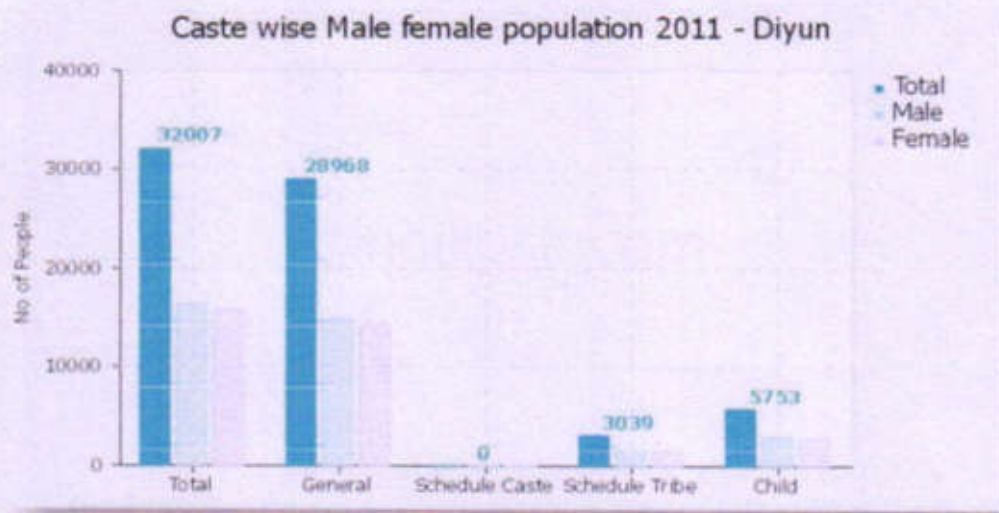
- To identify the major causes of displacement, migration and rehabilitation of the Hajongs in the Diyun Circle.
- To examine the causes of opposition by the indigenous Arunachali tribes of the rehabilitated Hajongs.
- To study role of the Hajongs organizations and Union Government to resolve the Hajong citizenship issue.

Changlang District: A Brief Profile

According to a legend prevalent among the local tribes of Diyun that the name Changlang owes its origin to the local indigenous word 'Changlangkan' which means a hilltop where people where people discovered the poisonous herb, as used for poisoning river water for trapping fish. The present Changlang district came into existence through a gradual development of administration. Earlier it was a part of

Tirap district and bifurcated by the A.P. Reorganization of district Amendment Bill, 1987. The Government of A.P. formally declared Changlang as the 10th district on 14th November, 1987. The district lies in the Southeastern corner of A.P. with an area of 4662 sq. km and lies in between 26^o40'^N-27^o40'^N latitude and 95^o1'^E- 97^o1'^E longitudes in the globe. The district is bounded by Tinsukia district of Assam and Lohit district of A.P. in the North; Tirap district in the West and by Myanmar in the South-East.

During field survey it is revealed that that the highest numbers of Hajongs refugees are rehabilitated in Diyun Circle of Changlang district. To facilitate the administration, the entire circle is further divided into 31 revenue villages. The Diyun Circle is the most populous Revenue Circle in the Changlang district. As per the latest Census Report (2011), it has population of 32,007. Out of which 16,227 are male while 15,730 are females. The average sex ratio of Diyun circle is 966 and a total of 5,949 families have been residing in the Circle. However, the population of Diyun Circle has increased by 10.7 per cent in last 10 years. As per the Census Report of 2001, the total population was about 29,000 in comparison to the 32,007 of 2011. The Caste-wise male and female population as per 2011 Census Report may be presented in the following chart.



Source: District Census Abstract-2011

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Principal
Haji Anfar Ali College
Doboka : Nagaon : Assam

Displacement and Migration of Hajongs

Unlike many other tribes, the history of the Hajongs is a record of distant migration. The word 'migration' has almost become synonymous with the Hajongs. The Hajongs belong to a tribal group which has for centuries inhabited the North of Mymensing District of Bangladesh (earlier East-Pakistan). Since the beginning of the 19th century following natural calamities and socio-political disturbances the Hajongs were disintegrated and displaced from their original abode and started living a scattered refugee life in

different parts of undivided Assam in India. After the partition, the Hajongs which remained in East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) was displaced massively. The displacement was caused primarily due to their demand to the Boundary Commission for amalgamation of 'Partially Excluded Areas' of the North Mymensing District with the Indian Union in 1947. The decision of the Boundary Commission was against the Hajongs which annexed the entire inhabited areas with East Pakistan [1]. The fate of Hajong tribe and other tribes of that area was sealed for good into an abysmal.

During interview with respondents in Diyun Circle, a number of causes like- demand for separate state known as 'Adhistan' by the Hajongs, Garos and other smaller tribes of the 'Partially Excluded Areas' of East-Bengal [i], abolition of pre-colonial special status, arrival of Bihari Muslims (Muhazirs) from Bihar to the Hajong inhabited areas, religious discrimination, and impact of Communist Movement are also found mainly responsible for the displacement and migration of the Hajongs including those who were rehabilitated in the Diyun Circle of Changlang district. Finding no shelter, the Hajongs had left East Pakistan and sought asylum in India as refugee. In 1964, about 15,000 Hajongs refugees migrated to India. M. Hajongs, an inhabitant of Kalmakanda of erstwhile East-Pakistan, presently living in Madhupur, Diyun, A.P., expressed his anguish during interview and said,

"the Hajongs people were worst affected along with other tribes by the bifurcation of the country in 1947. The Hajongs people were mainly concentrated in the Mymensing district of the East Bengal before independence. The freedom fighters had tantalized the Hajongs people. Our forefathers supported the freedom movement in order to free the country from the clutch of the mighty British Raj. The appeal and memorandums submitted by our people to amalgamate our land with the Indian Territory was turned down without assigning any reasons. Even, I remember that some Hajongs people hoisted Indian National flag to celebrate the Independence Day in our locality. But the leaders poured cold water to our long cherished dreams and plunged into grief the whole Hajongs tribe and which helped the anti-people government to displace us forcefully from our land (East Pakistan) [iii]."

Rehabilitation in NEFA

The Hajongs migrated in a hopeless and pathetic condition to of Assam from the erstwhile East-Pakistan. According to the Government of India estimate, by the middle of 1964, at least 1, 40,000 persons including Chakma and Hajongs consisting of 2902 families had migrated to Assam. The then Government of Assam expressed their inability to settle such a large number of migrants in the state and requested for their shifting to other places. It was also suggested that a substantial number of families could be accommodated in NEFA as 'some surplus land was available there in NEFA agreed to accommodate some new migrants including the Hajongs under a 'Definite Plan of Rehabilitation [iv]'.

But the rehabilitation of the Hajong and Chakma tribes in NEFA ((now Arunachal Pradesh) become a headache for the administration. It may be mentioned here that the NEFA was administered by the

Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India with the Governor of Assam acting as an agent to the President of India. On April 10th 1964, Vishnu Sahay, the Governor of Assam, in his letter No. GA-71/64, dated April 10, 1964 [v], addressed to the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, pointed out that:

"it occurred to me that we may get trouble between the Mizos and the Chakmas in the Mizo district. These Chakmas would be quite suitable people to go into the Tirap Division of NEFA where there is easily found vacant land in the area about which you and I have often spoken [vi]."

Vishnu Sahay, the Governor of Assam, decided to make necessary arrangement to settle more than 10,000 refugees to Tirap divisions of NEFA to avoid any troubles between local people (Mizos) and refugees. On April 16th 1964, P.N. Luthara, the advisor to the Governor of Assam, replied that 3000 families of refugees may be rehabilitated and expressed his inability to accommodate 10,000 families. In the mean time there was strong opposition from the indigenous Arunachali tribes against the rehabilitation plans in their areas. In April, 1966, Deputy Secretary (P&D) Shillong, wrote to the Liaison Officer, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation, NEFA, that:

"in Lohit district we had contemplated to settle 1000 families but on account of opposition from Khamtis, Singhpos, and Mishimis, we had to slow down our program. We shall be rehabilitating nearly 2253 families by the end of 1966-67 [vii]."

In the midst of strong opposition, initially about 57 families of hajong and Chakmas from Ledo Camp of Dibrugarah were settled in Abhaypur block of Diyun Circle of the erstwhile Tirap district of NEFA. The Government records of A.P. indicate that between 1964 and 1969, a total of 2,748 refugees comprising some 14,888 persons were sent to the NEFA. Nearly 1000 members of the Hajong tribe, a Hindu group from Mymensing district of Bangladesh were also settled in these areas [viii]. Initially these refugees were settled in 10,799 acres of land in the three districts namely, Lohit (214 families settled and 1192 persons altogether), Subansiri (now in Papum Pare; 238 families and 1133 persons in total) and Tirap (now in Changlang :2146 Chakma families with 11,813 persons in total and 150 Hajong families with 750 persons in total). By 1979 these figures increased up to 3919 families consisting of 21,494 persons and 65,000 as per census in 1991 [ix]. In 2001, it has been found that there are more than 85,000 Chakmas and Hajong refugees living in different areas of A.P. especially in Diyun circle of Changlang district. The following table (1) is the indicative of the population growth in Changlang district between 1961 and 1971 as:

Table-1: Population Growth in Changlang District, 1961-71

Year	Total Population			Tribal Population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	30,601	28,990	59,591	27,423	27,681	55,104
1971	51,774	45,696	97,470	34,493	34,352	68,845

Source: Dutta, Choudhury, S. (ed.) 1980. *Gazetteer of India, Arunachal Pradesh, Tirap District*, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Shillong, p.43.

Rehabilitation and its Reactions

The issues of rehabilitation of the Hajong and Chakma refugees have been a matter of simmering discontent among the indigenous tribal people of A.P. There was strong opposition from the indigenous tribes against the Central Government's initiatives of the rehabilitation plans of Hajong and Chakma refugees in their areas. It has been alleged by the local Arunachali tribes that the large influx of the Hajongs and Chakmas from East-Pakistan (now Bangladesh) are responsible for major demographic imbalance and displacement of the indigenous population. The immediate consequence is that the problem of indigenous people getting marginalized and displaced. Apart from the psychological fear of being reduced to a minority in their own habitat, the local Arunachali tribes are afraid of losing control over their ancestral land.

In the wake of anti-foreigners agitation in Assam, the state Government of A.P. undertook a series of repressive measures against the Hajongs and Chakmas beginning in 1980. The All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU) launched 'Refugee go back' movement serving 'Quit Arunachal Pradesh' notice to the settlers to leave the state by 30 September, 1995, in the wake of 'people's referendum rally' held on September 20, 1995 at Naharlugun, Itanagar [x]. All the major political parties including the ruling Congress-I Chief Minister Gegong Apang participated at the rally and vowed to resign from the primary membership of parties and organisations if their demand was not met by the Central government before the expiry of the deadline. As a consequence, a large of Hajong and Chakma refugees fled from A.P. and took shelter as refugees in the neighbouring state of Assam. The reality is that the Hajong and Chakmas are at risk of displacement for the second time who is regularly threatened with expulsion by influential Arunachal student's organizations. Even before that state government of A.P. undertook a series of repressive measure including social and economic boycott in support of the agitation programme against the Hajongs. For instance, the Arunachal Government vides its letter No. POL-21/80 dated 29th September 1980, banned public employment for the Hajongs in the state. In 1994, the state government further directed 'withdrawal of all kinds of facilities 'from Hajongs and Chakma settlement areas [xi]' afflicting gross human rights violations of the Hajong refugees.

The state Government of A.P. is of the view that even if the Central Government is obliged to confer

citizenship on to the Hajong and Chakma refugees under Indira-Mujib Agreement in 1972 cannot settle them permanently within the state since '....the Agreement [does] not take away the rights of the state Governments to restrict the entry of non-locals through the instrument of Inner Line Permit (ILP) and not to allow permanent settlements of non-locals in the state. The issue is not of conferment of citizenship rights on these refugees but against the permanent settlement of these refugees in A.P. Furthermore, while responding to the charge of violating the political sanctity of the Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972 by demanding the removal of the Hajong and Chakma refugees from the state, Ex-Chief Minister of A.P. Mr. G. Apang has remarked:

"The Indira-Mujib accord was signed in 1972; our constitution came into being in 1950. The Indira-Mujib Accord has not mentioned specifically about Chakma and Hajong refugees of Arunachal Pradesh. Moreover, the Chakma and Hajong settlement in the state has been done violating the legal sanctity and constitutional provisions, the questions of violating the political sanctity of Indira-Mujib Accord does not arise [xii]"

In fact, the ignorance of the Supreme Court's judgment and callus attitude of the state government and dubious role played by the AAPSU made the Hajong and Chakma refugee issue a more vexed politicized problem in the state. P. Hajong [xiii], a resident of Madhupur-I, Diyun, Changlang of A.P. stated that,

"...the present state of statelessness indicates a close link between the failures of the Central Government in extending the protections of Indian citizenship to the Hajongs on the one hand and their consequent statelessness and human rights violation at the hands of the state government and AAPSU, on the other".

The study reveals that the present condition of statelessness of the Hajong along with Chakmas has made them more susceptible to oppression at the hands of the state Government and the local Arunachali tribes, basically threatening from the AAPSU for mass eviction.

Role of the Central Government

The Central Government often asserted that the Hajong and Chakmas have a legitimate claim to India citizenship. The desire of granting citizenship to

the Hajong and Chakma in A.P. by the Centre turned the relationship bitter with the state. Since their resettlement in NEFA during 1964-69, the issue of granting citizenship to the Hajong and Chakma refugees had figured prominently in almost all the debates and was being considered seriously by the Central Government. It becomes clear from the Ex-Home Minister Mr. S. V. Chavan's repeated remarks in this respect met with strong opposition from all quarters in the state. The AAPSU strongly condemned Chavan's initiative on granting citizenship to the Hajong and Chakma refugees and accused that it was an attempt to woo the voters at the cost of annoying the indigenous people of the state. It was only on 23 September 1992 that the first official pronouncement to this effect was made in the Lok Sabha by M. M. Jacob, the Minister of State for Home and Parliamentary Affairs. He categorically stated that being 'New Migrants', viz., refugees from Bangladesh who came to India between 1964 and 1971 respectively, are eligible to the grant of citizenship according to the policy of the Government on the subject and most of these migrants have already been granted citizenship. In fact, the Central Government is strongly of the opinion that citizenship should be granted to the Hajong and Chakma refugees to which they are entitled under the Citizenship Act, 1955, under section 5(1)(a), also reveals the Centre's firm determination to settle them permanently in A.P. This strong perception of the Central Government on the question of Hajong and Chakma citizenship issue was vindicated by the Supreme Court in its historic verdict delivered on 9 January 1996 [xiv].

Fighting for Citizenship Status

On September 9, 1994, the People's Union for Civil Liberties, Delhi brought the issue of Hajong and Chakmas to the notice of the National Human Rights Commission [xv], which in reply issued letters to the Chief Secretary, A.P. and Home Secretary, Government of India for making inquiries in this regard. On October 15, 1994, the Committee for Chakma-Hajong Citizenship Rights filed a representation to NHRC, complaining prosecution of Chakma-Hajong refugees and the later brought the matter before the apex court. The Supreme Court in its historic judgment in January, 1996, in the case of National Human Rights Commission vs. State of Arunachal Pradesh directed the state government to provide adequate protection to the refugees to ensure against their forcible eviction [xvi].

Table-2: Political Conditions of the Chakmas and Hajongs of Arunachal Pradesh

Political Status	Total Percentage
Having Right to Vote	10%
Not Having Right to Vote/Rejected	30+40=70%
Minor	20%
Citizenship Rights	0%

Source: Prasad. C 2013, *India's refugee Regime and resettlement Policy: Chakmas and the Policy of nationality in Arunachal Pradesh*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, pp.106-107.

Following the Supreme Court directions the Election Commission of India (ECI) after scrutinizing 15,000 applications merely 1,497 Hajong and Chakma tribes born in India between 1964 and 1987 were included in the Voters' List and allowed to exercise their franchise during the 2004 Lok Sabha election. For the first time in the history of their settlement in Arunachal Pradesh, a limited number of Hajong and Chakma were given voting rights as Indian citizens. However, there was vehement protest against the order of the ECI in the state. The AAPSU submitted a memorandum to the ECI demanding revocation of the said order and decided to ban forthcoming Parliamentary Election on 5 May 2004. Even the Ex-Chief Minister Mr. G. Apang resigned from the All-Party Core Committee on the Hajong and Chakma refugee issue in protest against the inclusion of these voters in the electoral rolls. In the midst of severe protest, the ECI held that the non-inclusion of the 1497 voters implied a violation of the constitutional mandate given to it by Article 325. The state government, however, yet to take decision on rest of the Hajong and Chakma refugees seeking Indian citizenship and whose number is growing day by day.

The Hajong continues to face an uncertain future with a status worse than that of refugees-as a stateless people. The denial of right to nationality directly affects their personal security and makes them extremely vulnerable. The lack of citizenship and statelessness deprives them of their basic human rights such as the right to education, health, water, employment, freedom of movement and developmental facilities. This becomes vivid from the expression of 59-year-old villager R. Hajong of Haripur-I, Diyun Circle, Changlang, stated that:

"...I was just fifteen years old when I came to India alongwith my parents and other neighbours of Nolitabari of erstwhile East-Pakistan. I have spent more than half of my life at Diyun, but I am still deprived of my voting rights. Because i am not a citizen of India [xvii]"

The deprivation of political rights of the Chakmas along with Hajongs becomes obvious from the following Table-2.

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The ignorance of the Supreme Court's judgment, indifferent attitude of the state government and dubious role played by the AAPSU made the Hajong refugee problem a mere politicized issue in

recent time. The perception of the respondents of Hajong of Diyun circle becomes evident from the following Table-3:

Table-3: Hurdles on the way of Citizenship Rights of the Hajong

	Respondents	Percentage
The Govt. of India	47	13.82%
The State Govt. of A.P.	80	23.52%
AAPSU	123	36.17%
The Local Arunachali Tribes	90	26.47 %

Source: Field data generated by the investigator

The above Table-3 indicates that majority of the respondents consider AAPSU is the major hurdle in obtaining citizenship rights for Hajong in A.P. In the absence of any explicit refugee statute, it is not clear as to what shall be the legal status of refugees and how refugee problem shall be handled in India. At present, we have a few laws to tackle refugee problems in India such as the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, the Foreigners Act 1946, the Foreigners Order 1948, the Passport Act 1967, the Emigration Act 1983 and above all the Indian Constitution under Art. 21. These are the primary documents dealing with the treatment of foreigners in India. However, the Foreigners Act 1946 prevails over the other Acts. The most significant lacuna in the Act is that it does not comprise the term 'refugee'. Instead the term 'foreigner' was used to cover aliens temporarily or permanently residing in the country. In fact, Indian Government has dealt with refugee issues of different groups with a different administrative approach. According to an eminent legal expert Rajeev Dhavan, "Indian governance has not devised any systemic policy to deal with refugees, but has dealt with each particular crisis differently". As a result the present statelessness issue of Hajong remained an unsolved problem in the state of A.P.

Recent Development

In its election manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections 2019, the BJP led NDA Government had declared India as 'a natural home for persecuted Hindus'. The NDA government has taken several steps to simplify the process for granting long-term visa and citizenship to Hindu minorities from neighbouring countries. It is worth to mention here that in 2015, the Centre was given a deadline by the Supreme Court to confer citizenship to the Hajong and Chakma refugees within three months. The Arunachal Government approached the apex court and appealed against the order but in vain.

In fact, the initiative on the Chakma and Hajong refugees comes amid the ongoing row over the Central government's plans to deport Rohingya Muslims, who came to India due to alleged persecution in Myanmar. Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju, who hails from A. P., had recently raised the citizenship issue at a Northeast meet chaired by Union Home

Minister Rajnath Singh and attended by A. P. Chief Minister P. Khandu, Rijiju and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. After the hour-long meeting, Rijiju stated that a 'middle ground' will be found so that the 2015 Supreme Court order to grant citizenship to Chakma-Hajong refugees can be honoured and the rights of the local population are not diluted. It becomes obvious that the Centre is trying to find a workable solution by proposing that the refugees will not be given rights, including land ownership, enjoyed by Scheduled Tribes in A. P, an official said. However, they may be given Inner Line Permits (ILP)-required by non-locals in A. P. to travel and work.

Once again, several organisations and civil society outfits in Arunachal have been opposing citizenship to the Chakma and Hajong refugees. They contend that it would change the demography of the state. There was demonstrations and protest by the student's organisations against the move of the Central Government. Rijiju replied that "We are trying to find a middle ground so that the Supreme Court order is honoured, the local people's rights are not infringed, and human rights of the Chakmas and Hajongs are protected." Rijiju further added that a petition may be filed on the issue in Supreme Court soon.

In fact, the passing of CAA (2019) in the Parliament provided a ray of hope to the Hajongs of Diyun of acquiring citizenship status in the state as revealed by many Hajongs during interview with them. However, they also expressed their apprehension that the local indigenous tribes will oppose any move to grant them citizenship status as they did since their rehabilitation. It is also found that the Hajong community people possessing citizenship right was out listed during NRC up gradation in the neighbouring state of Assam in 1918-19.

Relevance of the Study

The present study on the citizenship rights question and statelessness of the Hajongs especially of Diyun Circle of Changlang District of A.P. have more national as well as international relevance in the present context:

1. The work identifies a number of factors that were mainly responsible for the displacement and

persecution of the Hajongs from the erstwhile East-Pakistan with the help of available materials.

2. The study tries to focus on the stateless refugee life of the Hajongs of Diyun circle of Changlang District and the role played by the Central Government, State Government, National Human Rights Commissions and even the Supreme Court of India in handling the issue of statelessness of Hajongs in A.P. This is the most relevant point of the study.
3. The study emphasizes that India needs specific refugee laws and policy to tackle massive refugee problem of the country including the Hajongs which is still absent. The massive refugees are treated by some domestic laws of the country which are not enough to resolve the massive refugee issue of the country.
4. During my field study, it is revealed that living a refugee life for a long period, the traditions and identity of the Hajongs are on the verge of ruin. Like many other little known tribes the Hajongs are marginalized. The tribe is affected by poverty, illiteracy and political identity crisis. The study also tries to bring out that the tribe is neither represented politically to the State Assemblies nor any local body in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is because of their disintegration and scant in numbers in the state.
5. It tries to draw the attention of the Government as well as the society for the eradication of their deprivation, exploitation, poverty, statelessness of the ethnic group, resolving the inter-ethnic conflict and to bring Hajongs into the mainstream.
6. The study will encourage further investigation and research about other little known tribes like Hajongs refugees in the region who are on the verge of ruin.

CONCLUSION

There can be no doubt that the Hajongs migrated from the erstwhile East-Pakistan mainly hilly regions of Mymensing district and has been residing in A.P. for more than 50 years. Under the Indira- Mujib Agreement of 1972, it was determined that India and not Bangladesh would be responsible for all migrants who entered India before 25th March 1971. If the Tibetans who fled to A.P. in 1959 can be given Indian citizenship status, why can not the Hajongs, who were given valid migration Certificate and rehabilitated by the Central Government in A.P. This is discrimination towards Hajongs and violations of International Conventions relating to the rights of refugees. More importantly, the state governments of A.P. and the Central Governments in the affidavit to the Delhi High Court have recognized that the Hajongs are indigenous like the rest of the people of A.P. Therefore, it is legitimate on the part of the Hajongs to claim Indian citizenship removing their statelessness in A.P. Simultaneously, basic human rights of indigenous Arunachali tribals need to be protected and both the

Central and State Government should come forward to fulfill their democratic obligations in this regard.

Acknowledgment: MHRD/IMPRESS-ICSSR Research Project Work.

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Principal
Haji Anfar Ali College
Dehoka : Nagaon : Assam

Partition of India and Migration from the Mymensing District of Erstwhile East Pakistan: A Study of Hajong Tribe

Dr. Adidur Rahman*

Associate Prof, Deptt. of Pol. Science, Haji Anfar Ali College, Doboka, Assam, India

DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2020.v08i02.003](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2020.v08i02.003)

| Received: 20.01.2020 | Accepted: 27.01.2020 | Published: 24.02.2020

*Corresponding author: Dr. Adidur Rahman

Abstract

Review Article

The Hajong is a numerically small ethnic tribe of Northeast India with its own rich culture, religion, social customs and traditions. The evidence of the early history of the Hajong tribe is extremely thin. The aboriginal dwelling places of the Hajong are found in Goalpara of Assam in North, Sylhet in South-East of present Bangladesh and in Garo Hills district of Meghalaya. The highest numbers of concentration of Hajong inhabitation were found in the hilly areas of North Mymensing district. At the time of partition of the country, the entire Hajong inhabited areas were annexed with the East-Pakistan. Like many other tribes, the Hajong community became the political victim of the bifurcation of the country. The Hajong tribe which remained in East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) was displaced massively. They were oppressed and suppressed by the majority groups on the one hand and put atrocities by the Government forces of erstwhile Pakistan on the other. Finding no shelter, majority of the Hajong tribe along with other community had left East Pakistan and took shelter in India as refugee. In 1964, about 30,000 Hajong refugees were migrated to India. The Hajongs who were rehabilitated in Arunachal Pradesh, especially in Changlang district are deprived of citizenship rights. The main objective of this article is to identify the causes behind the large scale migration of the Hajong tribe into undivided Assam. The materials for the article are drawn from primary as well as secondary sources like contemporary documents, field investigations, and oral interview with knowledgeable person having information about the Hajong history, polity and society.

Keywords: Migration, displacement, refugee, rehabilitation.

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INTRODUCTION

The partition of the sub-continent in 1947 and the subsequent emergence of India and Pakistan as two modern sovereign nation states had changed the geo-political landscape of South-Asia forever. The euphoria which had marked the birth of new nation-states was simultaneously accompanied by the cataclysmic partition of the sub-continent resulting in one of the worst incident of human tragedy in recorded history with millions of people becoming refugee. In fact, the first wave of decolonization in South Asia in the late 1940s was accompanied by the largest single bilateral flow of people in the region and also perhaps the biggest refugee movement of the 20th century[1]. A study on the aftermath of partition in South Asia notes-

"across national boundaries in South Asia the view is now widely shared that partition was an 'epic tragedy' that changed the destinies of people in the region. Increasingly, as the long term consequences of partition are becoming manifest, the perception is gaining ground that partition was not just an event but a trigger for a series of reverberation, the tremors of which can still be felt in the region."[2]

¹. Sing, D K. *Stateless in South Asia: The Chakmas between Bangladesh and India*, New Delhi, Sage Publication India Pvt. Ltd, 2009, p.7.

². Tan, Tai Young & Kudaisya, G. *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* London, Routledge, 2000, p.8.

The Northeast region of India is ethnically, linguistically and culturally very distinct from the other states of India. At the time of partition, the Northeast region is territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries giving rise to discontentment and assertion of one's identity in the region. As a result, the entire Northeastern region has experienced massive migration and refugee problem including the Hajong tribe.

Flow of Migration from East Pakistan: In the wake of partition, the East Bengal, which became East-Pakistan in 1956, became an integral part of Pakistan. During the period from 1947-1971, large number of people became migrants of India, mostly rehabilitating in some Northeastern states, especially in undivided Assam. Among them, there were some other little known tribes like Santhals, Hajongs, Kochs, Dhalu, Hudis, Morgan, Bannais and Garos were forced to migrate from the North frontier district of East Pakistan. They had migrated mainly from the Mymensing, Rangpur and Sylhet districts of East Pakistan. They were victimised by both the mob and the state apparatus whenever they demanded for their rights with Pakistani authorities. In order to avoid inhuman torture, they sought shelter on the basis of threat to life due to communal violence gave them refugee status and they had a potential homeland in India [3]. The estimated number of displaced people migrated to India from East-Pakistan may be shown in the following table:

Table-1: Number of displaced persons those who migrated to India as Refugee, 1947-1993:

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

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

Hajong inhabitation in North Mymensing District: The history of Hajong tribe is void without the history of their migration. The tribe is the most harassed and afflicted tribe among other little known tribes [4]. As regards the settlements of the Hajongs in the North of Mymensing district, it is said that the areas was settled for the first time by the Hajongs cleansing the dense forest before the advent of any other generation in the area. Scholars conceded that there was large concentration of Hajong people in East Bengal (present Bangladesh) during the pre-partition days of India. The Hajong inhabitation were said to have bounded by Suwarkuna village in the north near Lakhipur of Goalpara district of Assam by Jamkona or Jongkona village in the South East, now in Sylhet district of Bangladesh and by Morkona village in the West Garo Hills district and near Mankacher of Assam. In this periphery of Hajong habitation the region from Mahiskhola to Laochapara- Bahadur kata near Mahengraganj in the border of composite Garo Hills and Bangladesh, the Hajong habitations were compact and concentrated. From Mohiskhola to Laochapara about 1440 sq. km. of areas of land patch was predominantly inhabited by the Hajongs and the Garos [5]. The following Census report of 1891 shows the concentration of the Hajong tribe in the region:

³ . Zolberg, A. R. ,Suhrke, A. ,& Aquayyo, S. *Escape from Violence: Conflict and Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 132-135.

⁴ . Sheikh, E Ali. *Hajong Janoghosti*, Assam: Goalpara, Moromi Printers, 2012 p.266.

⁵ . Ibid. .



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Table-2: Census Report, 1891

	District	Male	Female	Total
	Cacher(plains)	242	243	485
	Sylhet	1516	1289	---
	Surma Valley total	1516	1289	2805
PLAINS	Goalparta	195	202	
	Kamrup	1	---	
	Darrang	7	---	
	Nowgong	3	---	
	Sibsagar	---	---	
	Lakhimpur	---	---	
	Total Brahmaputra Valley	206	202	408
	Total in plains	1722	1491	3213
HILL DISTRICTS	Khasi Jaintia Hills	164	131	
	Garo Hills District	2720	2538	
	Total Hill Districts	2884	2669	5553
	Total in Entire Regions	4606	4160	8766

Source: Allen, B C 1891, Census Report, Vol. 1, p.29

Flow of migration of the Hajong Tribe: The problem of migration between India and East Pakistan started as early as the partition of the country in 1947 and arrived its climax in 1964. The large scale flow of migration of the Hajongs from the North Mymensing district of erstwhile East Pakistan may be attributed of the following factors:

1. Demand for Amalgamation with India: There was a relentless effort even before the partition of the country in the North Mymensing district by Hajongs to amalgamate the 'Partially Excluded Areas' with the Indian Union. The long arduous struggle for freedom had reached at its climax with the acceptance of the proposal of the 'Cabinet Mission' made at Shimla on 3rd June 1947 to attain independence at the cost of partition of the country. The Boundary Commissions-one for Punjab and other for Bengal with Cyril Radcliffe as chairman of both the Commission were constituted. During those fateful days, the demand was made by the Hajongs to incorporate the partially excluded areas of Bengal with the Garo Hills district. The background of demand was the concentration of the majority Hajong people in the said areas [6]. In order to fulfill their demand of amalgamation of their territory with the Indian Union, the Hajong communities submitted two important memorandums to the then Congress President Acharya J. B. Kripalani and Jawaharlal Nehru respectively. The Hajong representatives like Sri Monoranjan Roy Hajong, Sri Dinesh Chambugong (later on Sangma), Rohini Madhav Jowardar, Moni Sarkar, Narendra Chandra Sarkar and Dipendra Sarkar took active part for submitting the memorandums[7].

Sri Monoranjan Roy Hajong along with other Hajong representatives expressed profound grief and discouraged by the award accorded by Radcliffe as Chairman of the Commission. They found the declaration was a one-man job and to be a mere show to appease some aggrieved people. Despite their repeated efforts the demand for annexation with the Indian union of the entire North-Mymensing region was left unfulfilled. The fate of the Hajong tribe was sealed for good in to an abysmal darkness. Monoharan Hajong, an inhabitant of Kalmakanda of the erstwhile East-Pakistan, Presently living in Matia camp- 11 in Goalpara district, expressed his anguish during interview and said,

"the Hajong people were worst affected along with other tribes by the bifurcation of the country in 1947. The Hajong People are peace loving people and were mainly concentrated in the Mymensing and Sylhet district of the East Bengal. The freedom fighters had tantalized the whole Hajong people. Our forefathers supported the freedom movement in order to free the country from the clutch of the mighty British Raj. But who knew that we were merely fighting to shift from foreign to another foreign government. The appeal and memorandums submitted by our people to amalgamate our land with the Indian Territory was turned down without assigning any reasons. But the leaders poured cold water to our long cherished dreams and plunged into grief the whole Hajong tribe and which helped the anti-people government to displace us forcefully from our land (East Pakistan)[8]."

⁶ . Hajong, B, *The Hajongs and Their Struggles*, Meghalaya, Hawakhana, Tura, 2000, P.70.

⁷ . Ibid.

⁸ . Monoharan Hajong, Matia camp-II, District- Goalpara, Assam

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Haji Anfar Ali College
Doboka : Nagaon : Assam

Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the man who was entrusted the job to demarcate the boundary between India and Pakistan had never visited British India before and had absolutely no idea about the complexity of the ethnic make-up or the varied cultural practice of the numerous communities inhabiting this colonial territory. As stated by Tan and Kudaisya (2000: 94), 'Radcliffe knew only too well that this had been a butcher's job, and not a surgeon's operation, and that his rushed job of an award would please no one.' To quote from one of the letters he wrote to his stepson on the eve of his departure from India: 'Nobody in India will love me for the award about Punjab and Bengal and there will be 80 million people with a grievance who will begin looking for me. I do not want them to find me'⁹. These words of Radcliffe proved ironically prophetic for the millions of refugee including the Hajongs tribes.

It becomes abundantly clear that due to the inclination of the Hajongs and other minority tribal communities inhabiting in strip of land of North-Mymensing district were regarded as anti-Pakistani and disloyal to the authority of the Pakistani government. In retaliation countless inhuman torture was meted out on the Hajong tribe by the East-Pakistani armed forces. The Hajong tribe along with others had migrated to India crossing international border to save their life.

2. Demand for Adhistan (Tribal land): Even long before the partition, there was a demand to form a separate state known as 'Adhistan'[10] by the Hajongs in the partially excluded areas of East-Bengal. They raised their demand under the leadership of Mr. White, the father of the Baptist Mission, Birisiri (Durgapur Police Station). The tribes managed to convince the leaders like Amrit Kaur, A. K. Azad of the Indian National Congress about their demand for ' Adhistan' Moreover, the demand of the Hajongs was supported on the basis of the Census Report, 1941[11].

Since the day of denial of their demand by the boundary commission, the incidence of inhuman atrocities and extortions increased more on the tribes including the Hajong tribe as anti-national in their areas. As a result, in order to avoid atrocities at the hand of the East- Pakistani forces a large number of Hajong tribe had left their native place and migrated to India especially in the years 1949, 1950, 1964 and in 1971[12]. The East-Pakistani government had created a rare example in human history by declaring these indigenous tribes as 'enemy'[13].

3. Religious Discrimination: The partition of Indian sub-continent in 1947 and subsequent communal clashes that caused massive migration of minority communities from the erstwhile East Pakistan to India. Majority of the tribal land of Garos, Koch, Dhalus and Hajongs along the border strip of the Mymensing district were incorporated with the East Pakistan mainland. Because of their religious differences majority of the tribe migrated to India after partition of the Indian sub-continent [14]. The Hajongs follow a religion similar to Hinduism. According Ahmed Rafiq, "in terms of religious beliefs Hajongs are close to Hindus, Hajong worship Durga and other Hindu Gods and Goddesses. But Shiva is their chief deity. They observe a number of bratas (vows) including the kartik brata performed in the month of kartik (October-November). Girls and women dance and sing in brata ceremonies. Hajong also worship the Brahmaputra River. Like Hindu Brahmin, Hajongs wear paita (the holy thread) on their bodies. Hajong are believers in incarnation too[15]. In fact, religious cult was one of the factors of migration of Hajong from the East Pakistan.

4. Communal Tensions: The communal violence that broke out in the wake of the partition of Indian sub-continent had left an indelible black mark in its history. The communal disturbances may be attributed as another cause of cross border migration of Hajongs. The Muslim League Government acted on two main objectives-the exploitation of the East Pakistan and the other is to drive away the religious minority communities from the East Pakistan. In fact, the acute anti-Hindu policy of the Muslim League was responsible for the outbreak of communal riot in 1950[16]. The communal tension was responsible for the flow of migration between both the countries. But the flow of migration reached its highest number in 1964. Biren Hajong (2000) stated that about 60,000 Hajongs inhabitants and a great chunk of them forced to evacuate their native villages from the East-Pakistan. As per records, between 1964-71, average in every year 1, 96,296 numbers of refugees including the Hajong migrated to India from the East Pakistan. 17 Urmila Hajong narrated their tale very succinctly during interview that:

⁹ . Tan and Kudaisya, op. cit., p. 94.

¹⁰ . Sheikh ,E A,op.cit.p.259.

¹¹ . Hajong, Nikhil. Roy. " Hajong der Artha-Samajik Abaster Botaman Parjaya".Smoranika,(in Bangla), Birisiri.1987, P. 20.

¹² . Sheikh ,Ibbat. Ali,op.cit.p.259.

¹³ . "The Hindu Minority in Bangladesh" *The Assam Tribune*, 18th January, 2000.

¹⁴ .Kim, Amy. et. al. *The Hajong of Bangladesh: A Socio-Linguistic Survey*, SIL International, Electronic Survey Report, 2011, P.11.

¹⁵ .Ahmed, Rafik, *Banglapedia : National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh* , ' Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2003, p.490.

¹⁶ .Ibid, p.140.

¹⁷ . 'The Hindu Minority in Bangladesh', *The Assam Tribune*, Jan,18,2000.

“...in fact, our (Hajongs) destiny became bleak before the British had left the country. The situation turned worse since the days of the partition of the country. Many of our relatives and other tribes and communities had left their villages and migrated to India. But still we determined and tried to stay in East-Bengal (Mymensing District) despite repeated attack on our tribe. But the communal violence that broke out in 1964 (approx) forced us (Hajongs) to leave behind our native village abandoning our homeland and valuable properties [18].

5. Arrival of Bihari Muslims (Muhazirs) Refugees to East-Pakistan: The arrival of large numbers of Bihari Muslims (Muhazirs) from the state of Bihar and Assam to East Pakistan also responsible for the forced displacement causing migration of the Hajong tribe. It is to be noted here that Muhazirs are the Bihari Muslim refugees migrated to East Pakistan from India as a result of communal violence. The impact of communal violence that broke out in March-April, 1950, at Khulna, was large scale exodus of Urdu speaking Muslims (Muhazirs) from Bihar and Assam to East Pakistan [19]. There are also reports that there was an in-flow of Urdu-speaking migrants from West Bengal to the East Pakistan. According to an estimate furnished by Ahmed [20]. by 1951, Urdu speakers accounted for about 20 percent of the total population of East Pakistan. The Government adopted dual strategies to tackle the rehabilitation issue of the migrated Muhazirs. The first was the rehabilitation of Muhazirs in the tribal occupied land and the second was to cause force exodus of the recalcitrant insurgent peasants like Hajongs, Garo, Dhalus and other tribes. As per the plans, the Muhazirs were pushed towards the North-Mymensing aborigines areas with pretext or plea to uproot the Hajongs and other indigenous tribes. Despite stiff opposition, Pakistani police used 7 to 8 elephants [21] to evict the lands of the tribal peasants. Besides, the Government forces instigated the Muhazirs against the tribes to capture their land and to snatch away their valuable properties.

As per the hidden plan of the Government, the Muhazirs who migrated first were rehabilitated in each village under Susang-Durgapur and Kolmakanda police stations [22]. However, the large flow of Muhazirs from Assam in the month of March-April, 1950 deteriorated the situation more badly increasing the amount of harassment on the tribes including the Hajongs. They were forcibly rehabilitated into the densely populated villages of aboriginal peasants under the police stations of Haluaghat, Nalitabari and Sribardi. There are reports that about 150 villages were evicted entirely to accommodate the Muhazirs which included- Panchgaon, Kharmoi, Chaityanna Nagar, Langura, Jigtola, Haluaghat, Vehikura, Maizpara, Ghoshgaon, Gajirbhita, Bhavankura, Jugali, Kakorakandi Manpara, Bokura, Kangsa, Jinaigha [23]. etc. Besides, a number of Hajong villages were evicted partially for rehabilitation of Muhazirs in the northern borderland strip of Mymensing district. In the midst of protest, all the peasant leaders and youths were apprehended and jailed without any trial. The amount of inhuman torture was so horrible that had left 25 tribal peasants death inside the jail [24]. The Government's decision to rehabilitate these Muhazirs into the north Mymensing regions was also responsible for the migration of the Hajong tribes.

6. Impact Communist Movement

The real cause behind their migration was found the growing involvement of the Hajongs in the militant peasant movement under the auspices of the communist party. In fact, Hajongs supported communist party to fight against the exploitation of the zaminders of the North Mymensing district and to prevent the atrocities of police thanas on the Hajong peasants. They even threatened to dare the Thanas [25] in their region. The whole Hajong inhabited areas were influenced profusely by the wave of communist movement under the West Bengal Kissan Sabha. The movements like Tonko Movement, Tebhaga, Hati Kheda Begar system were dominated by the communist party leaders of the Hajong tribes against the exploitation by zaminders. Some of the communist party leaders namely, Lalit Sarker Hajong, Sachin Hajong (Bharatpur), Prasanna Hajong, Jehal Hajong, Jameswar Hajong, Monmohan Hajong, Birat Hajong, Tanuram Hajong, Kangal Das Hajong, Rasendra Hajong, Biswerswar Hajong, Nayan Hajong [26] etc. struggle for the peasants against the zaminders. In order to suppress the communist movements and their leaders, the East Pakistani forces started

¹⁸. Informant-Urmila Hajong (67), W/O- Lt, Joggeswar Hajong, Matia, Camp-1, Goalpara, Assam.

¹⁹. Gupta, Promot, *Mukti Juddhey Adivasi*, Calcutta, Manisha Library, Pvt. Ltd, 1963, P.116.

²⁰. Ahmed, Rafiuddin, ed, *Religion, Nationalism and Politics in Bangladesh*, New Delhi, South Asian Publishers, 1990, pp.13-14.

²¹. Gupto, Promot, *Jey Sangramer Ses Nei*, (Bengali) .Calcutta, New Age Printers, 1971, p.179.

²². Gupta, Pramath., op.cit. p.139.

²³. Ibid., p.116.

²⁴. Ibid., p.117.

²⁵. Sonowal, K, "Tribes of North East India" *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, Vol.3, Issue 2, Feb, 2014, p.8.

²⁶. Hajong, Biren, op.cit. p.68.

combing operation to nab the ring leaders. Majority of the leaders migrated to India to escape the police arrest. The following table (3) also corroborates the response of the respondents about the causes of their migration:

Table-3: Response on the Migration of the Hajongs from the erstwhile East Pakistan

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

Source: Field data generated by the author

It becomes amply clear that the Hajongs were the victims of the bifurcation of the Indian sub-continent. They became the target of the communal violence that broke out in East Pakistan in 1950s again in 1964 and later in 1971. During field study it is found that majority of the respondents of Assam, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh displaced forcibly from Northern Mymensing and Sylhet district in 1964. Tarun Sen, a renowned writer commented on the plight of the People of East Pakistan which reads:

"...hardly there could be a single country in human history, where freedom fighters were declared as traitors, tortured and oppressed and jailed after spending 200 years under foreign domination. During the last 20 years, these type of heinous crime happened in front of our eyes. The people of Pakistan could not enjoy the taste of independence for a single day". (Promoth, Gupto, 1971. pp. 109-110).

The influx of refugees from the East Pakistan constitutes the biggest migration stream into Assam during the decade of 1941-51. Following the Noakhali disturbances in 1949 and partition of India, there had been steady exodus of refugees from East Bengal into Assam. The arrival of refugees into Assam till 1951 may be presented in the following Table:

Table-4: Arrival of Refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan into Assam, 1946-1951.

Year	No of Refugees
1946	6,860
1947	42,346
1948	41,740
1949	33,138
1950	144,512
1951(Jan & Feb)	3,479
Total	272,075
From West Pakistan	647
District of origin not known	1,733
Grand Total	274,455

Source: Census of India, 1951, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, p.359.

It is to mention here that the continuous flow of refugees increased after the partition of the country into undivided Goalpara district of Assam. In 1951, about 44,967 numbers of refugees took shelter in Goalpara [27]. Again 23,611 families registered their name in Goalpara district in 1955-56. In this way the numbers of refugees increased to 85,946. Among the 23,611 families which arrived in 1955-56, about 2827 families were sheltered in town areas of Dhubri sub-Division (2544) and Goalpara Sub-Division (283) families. The remaining 20,784 families provided sheltered in village areas of both the Sub-Divisions. The rehabilitated places and the numbers of their families may be shown in the following table:

²⁷. Sheikh, Ohijuddin. 'Kukrajharer Ghusti Sangarsha Aru Kisu Prasangik Katha, in M. Abdul (ed)'Ayna', vol. principal No: XII, Guwahati, 2013, P.18.

Table-5: Settlement of Refugees in Dhubri and Goalpara sub-divisions

Name of Sub-Division	Place of Settlement	No. of Families
Dhubri Sub-Division	Dhubri	711
	Bilasipara	1931
	Gulaokganj	2948
	Gusaigaon	1315
	Kokrajhar	2318
	Mankachar	395
	South Salmara	542
	Total	10,160
Goalpara Sub-Division	Goalpara	494
	Dudhnoi	747
	Lakhipur	668
	North Salmara	4239
	Sidley and Bijnee	4476
	Total	10624
All Total		20,784 Families

Source: Gazetteer of India, Assam, Goalpara District, Govt. of Assam, Guwahati, 1979.

In fact, more than 75,000 refugees from East Pakistan arrived into Assam within one and half months since the genocide began in 1964. The refugees, mostly Garos, Hajongs and Dalus from Mymensing took refuge in Garo Hills of Assam, now in Meghalaya [28]. By 28 March, 1964, around 78,000 tribal refugees had migrated from Mymensing district of East Pakistan. According to the Government of India estimate, by the middle of 1964, at least 1, 40,000 persons including Hajong and Chakmas consisting of 2902 families had migrated to Assam. The community wise numbers of refugees accommodated at different camps under Dalu area in 1964 [29] may be shown under the following table:

Table-6: Community wise Refugees at Various Camps under Dhalu Area in 1964.

SL. No.	Name of Refugee Camp.	General		Backward Classes			Scheduled Caste			Schedule Tribes		Total		
		Bengali	Bihari	Koch	Banai	Raj-Bongshi	Dalu	Barbar	Sweeper	Fisher-man	Cobbler		Garo	Hajong
1.	Machangpani	322	26	201	21	---	701	30	5	47	25	4008	1638	7024
2.	Bhogai	450	297	---	67	170	683	---	---	---	8	3958	1336	7077
3.	Chandabhoi	6	16	474	---	2	48	---	9	9	9	609	1626	2849
4.	Bilkona	309	43	---	332	---	9	---	---	---	---	5319	1158	7167
5.	Deplipara	29	---	---	---	5	---	---	---	---	---	1400	2042	2476
6.	Maghupara	438	---	2304	481	37	710	---	16	16	6	1429	3829	9291
7.	Mineng	163	201	120	---	26	1051	---	66	66	34	3506	129	5296
8.	Dindini	---	---	27	5	---	25	---	---	---	---	7392	20	7469
9.	Dalu	17905	5001	991	---	1003	---	---	---	---	500	5019	3064	33483
Total		19619	5584	4117	906	1243	3227	30	96	96	582	32640	13842	82132

Source: File no. GRRO 1/64/...Accommodation of Refugees, D.C. Office, West Garo Hills, Tura

Moreover, Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 also compelled the Hajongs, Garos and others to cross the international border and took shelter on the Indo-Bangladesh border of Garo Hills of Meghalaya. Every day hundred and thousands of refugees flooded into Garo Hills from 26 March, 1971 till December 1971. But the highest number was recorded in the Governments record was 2, 82,947 as on 9 December, 1971.30 Religion wise their numbers in these camps may be shown in the table:

²⁸. Bhattacharya, S K. *Genocide in East Pakistan/ Bangladesh*, Houston, Ghosh Publisher, 1987, p.108.

²⁹. File no. GRRO 1/64/...Accommodation of Refugees, D.C. Office, West Garo Hills, Tura.

³⁰. Sangma, S N. *Bangladesh Immigrants in Meghalaya*, Delhi, Anshah Publishing House 2005 p.60.


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Table-7: Religion wise Refugee classification in different Camps, 1971 (As on 7.08.1971)

SL. No	Name of Camps	Hindus	Muslims	Others	Total
1	Dalu(Barenggapara)	1,352	6	366	1724
2	Vety. Compund Dalu	3,930	1,037	1286	6,253
3	Chandabhoi	5,573	1,156	1,290	8,019
4	Sisengpara	2,985	852	1,799	5,633
5	Haichati	2,125	2	584	2,711
6	Machangpani	3,985	26	939	4,923
7	Dimapara	5,037	1,934	8,352	15,323
8	Puraldiasa	5,086	737	2,100	7,923
9	Baghmara	34,682	2,772	16,390	53,844
10	Sibbari	7,138	1,713	5,864	14,715
11	Bilkona	48	3,604	4,022	7,674
12	Mineng	433	1,971	5,124	7,528
13	Mahendraganj	---	---	---	---
14	Kalipara	15,637	7,929	490	24,056
15	Patijora	---	---	---	---
16	Ampati	3,074	8,221	12	11,307
	Total	91,098	31,960	48,618	1,71,636

Source: Sangma, S N 2005, *Bangladeshi Immigrants in Meghalaya*, Anshah Publishing House, Delhi, p. 28.

It may be noted from the above table that some other tribes including the Hajongs were included in the Hindu refugees groups. The evacuees started to take shelter in the Garo Hills from 26/03/1971 onward till February 1972. Daily records show that there were continuous flow of evacuees since March 1971 and which lasted up to 9/12/1971. Sheikh (2012) has presented an elaborate demographic profile of the rehabilitated Hajong population and their inhabitation in India and the Hajong population of Bangladesh based in the year 1996 and 2006 31 respectively which may be presented in the following table:

Table-8: Hajong Habitation and their Population-

		1996	2006	Total	
India	Assam	Goalpara	22,483		
		Dhemaji	8,910		
		Dhubri	8,466		
		Lakhimpur	5,102		
		Nagaon	3,776		
		Kamrup	3,480		
		Tinsukia	1,871		
		Darang	1,850		
		Nalbari	1,707		
		Bongaigaon	1,176		
		Karbi- Anglong	386		
		Barpeta	350		
		Sunitpur	302		
		Dibrugarh	136		
		Kokrajahr	7		
		Meghalaya	Garo Hills	-----	55,902
Khasi Hills	-----		9,722	65,624	
Arunachal Pradesh					
	Changlang(Miao)	-----	11,000		
	Lohit	-----	11,000		
	Tirap	-----	11,000	33,000	
	Tripura	-----	2,500	2,500	
	West Bengal	Jalpaiguri	-----	3,000	3,000
	Madhya Pradesh	Dandhakaranya	-----	3500	3,500
	Andaman Islands	Portblair	-----	900	900
Bangladesh	Mymensing		17,600		
	Sylhet		2,280	19,880	
Total				1,88,406	

Source: Sheikh, I. A., (2012), '*Hajong Janoghosti*' Moromi Printers, Goalpara, Assam p.50.

³¹. Ibid. .p.50.

The above analysis of data and circumstances reveal the root cause of displacement resulting forced migration of the Hajong tribe that took place from North of Mymensing district in different phases. After the partition of the country, majority of the displaced Hajongs tribe were rehabilitated in different parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal and Andaman and Nicobar. Except Arunachal Pradesh, the migrated Hajong tribe were rehabilitated and awarded Indian citizenship rights with ST status. In Arunachal Pradesh the Hajong tribe are still fighting for their citizenship status and living a stateless refugee life.



Principal
Haji Anfar Ali College
Doboka : Nagaon : Assam



International Journal of Research (IJR)



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Dr. Adidur Rahman

for the paper titled

*Displacement and Statelessness: A Study of the Chakma Refugees of
Dijun Circle of Arunachal Pradesh*

Published in *International Journal of Research (IJR)*, Vol-05, Issue-21

October 2018 ISSN: 2348-6848

International Refereed and Indexed Journal for Research Publication

With Impact Factor 5.60

Index Copernicus Value (ICV) 100 & Indexed in Thomson Reuters

S.N. Sharma
Editor-in-Chief

International Journal of Research (IJR)

www.internationaljournalofresearch.com & <https://pen2print.org/index.php/ijr/>

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Principal
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Doboka : Nagaon : Assam



Displacement and Statelessness: A Study of the Chakma Refugees of Diyun Circle of Arunachal Pradesh

Dr. Adidur Rahman
Asso. Prof. Deptt. of Pol. Science
Haji Anfar Ali College, Doboka (Assam)
adidurrahman7@gmail.com

Abstract: *The displacement and statelessness are the words have long been recognized as relevant issues in international law. Nowhere the problem of displacement and statelessness is more acute than in South Asia and Southeast Asia. The Sri Lankans, Tibetan, Afghani etc. in India, Burmese in Thailand and Rohingya in Bangladesh, Vietnamese refugees in Cambodia and many ethnic Chinese in all parts of Southeast Asia are currently living a stateless life. Similar type of human rights abuses are suffering by the Chakmas of Diyun circle of the Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Chakmas are the victims of the partition of the country in 1947. They were displaced from their original inhabitant of Chittagong Hill Tracts and subsequently migrated to different Northeastern states of India. They were rehabilitated in NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh) by the Government of India are still fighting for citizenship rights and living a stateless life. The present paper examines the causes of displacement and statelessness of the Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh especially in Diyun of Changlang district. It examines the causes of reactions from the indigenous Arunachali tribes; the All Arunachal Pradesh Student's Union and even from the State Government. The paper concludes with study of the role of the Chakma organizations, the Union Government and the Supreme Court in their fight for acquiring Indian*

citizenship rights for the Chakmas with relevance of the study.

Key Words- , Statelessness, Displacement, Migration, Refugee, Rehabilitations and its reactions.

Introduction: A few words such as displacement, migrations, refugee rehabilitations and statelessness were widely used in international spheres during the World War-II. Since then the displacement of people and communities has been one of the challenges facing the statelessness of people in different regions of the world. It obviously renders people homeless and is being deprived of their places of abode. In Indian sub-continent several thousand of people have been affected by displacement.. At the time of partition of the country, the Northeast region of India is territorially organized in such a manner that ethnic and cultural specificities were ignored during the process of delineation of state boundaries, giving rise to discontentment and assertion of one's identity. The region has experienced massive displacement, migration and refugee problem causing statelessness in the wake of independence

including the Chakmas of Diyun circle of present Arunachal Pradesh.

Methodology: The present study adopted multi method approaches of the study, which include historical, descriptive. Required data are collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary sources include the firsthand information from the informants belonging Chakmas of Diyun circle and extensive field works. The informants were selected primarily from the knowledgeable person having good information about the Chakma history, polity and culture. The secondary sources such as relevant books, journals, periodicals and various websites have also been used in the study.

Objectives: The main objectives of the study are:

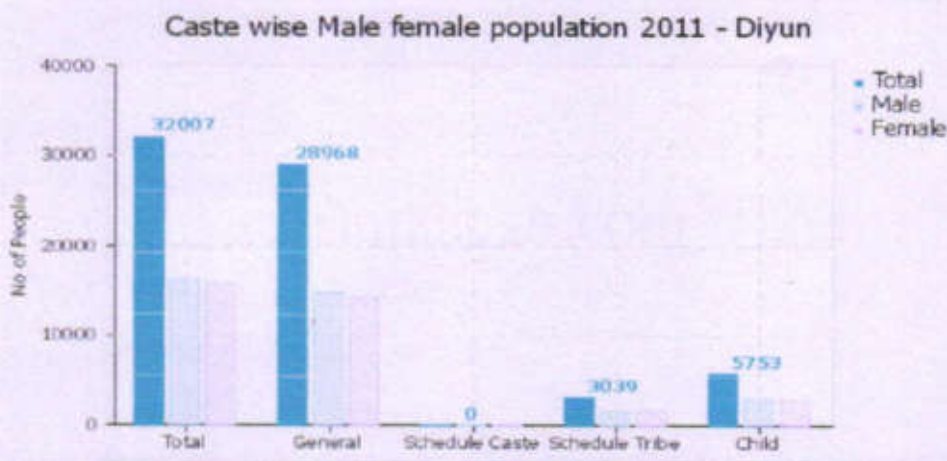
1. To find out the causes of displacement, migration and rehabilitation of the Chakmas in the Diyun.
2. To identify the causes of opposition by the indigenous Arunachali to the rehabilitated Chakmas.
3. To know the present role of the Chakma organizations, Union Government and the Supreme Court of India on the issue.

Diyun Circle: A Brief Profile

According to a legend prevalent among the local tribes of Diyun that the name Changlang owes its origin to the local indigenous word 'Changlangkan' which means a hilltop where people where people discovered the poisonous herb, as used for poisoning river water for trapping fish. The present Changlang district came into existence through a gradual development of administration. Earlier it was a part of Tirap district and bifurcated by the Arunachal Pradesh Reorganization of district Amendment Bill, 1987. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh formally declared Changlang as the 10th district on 14th November, 1987. The district lies in the southeastern corner of Arunachal Pradesh. It has an area of 4662 sq. km and lies in between 260⁰40'^N-27040'^N latitude and 95⁰1'^E- 97⁰1'^E longitudes in the globe. The district is bounded by Tinsukia district of Assam and Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh in the North; and Tirap district in the West and by Myanmar in the South-East.

It is to mention that the highest numbers of Chakma refugees are rehabilitated in Diyun circle of Changlang district. To facilitate the administration, the entire circle is further divided into 31 revenue villages. The Diyun circle is mostly populated by the Chakma tribes. It is the most populous circle in the Changlang. As per the latest census report (2011), it has population of 32,007. Out of which 16,227 are male while

15,730 are females. The average sex ratio of Diyun circle is 966 and a total of 5,949 families have been residing in the circle. However, the population of Diyun circle has increased by 10.7 per cent in last 10 years. As per the census report of 2001, the total population was about 29,000 in comparison to the 32,007 of 2011. The Caste-wise male and female population as per 2011 Census Report may be presented in the following chart:



Source: District Census Abstract-2011.

Displacement and Migration of Chakmas: Chakmas is a record of distant migration. The word 'migration' has almost become synonymous with the Chakmas. The Chakmas belong to a tribal group which has for centuries inhabited the CHT of Bangladesh (earlier East-Pakistan). Since the

Unlike many other tribes, the history of the beginning of the 19th century following natural calamities and socio-political disturbances the Chakmas were disintegrated and displaced from their original abode and started living a scattered refugee life in different parts of Assam, Tripura,

and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. After the partition of the country, the Chakmas which remained in East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) was displaced massively. The displacement was caused primarily due to the construction of the Kaptai hydroelectric project over the river Karnaphuli in 1962¹ with its funding from USAID (United States Agency for International Development). About 40 Per cent of the best agricultural land of CHT was submerged due to the commissioning of this dam. The project displaced about 100,000 indigenous people comprising about one-third of the total indigenous Chakma people who were forced to evacuate their native land. Finding no shelter, the Chakmas along with other community had left the CHT of East Pakistan and took shelter in India as refugee.

During interview with respondents in Diyun circle, a number of causes like- demand for amalgamation with India, abolition of pre-colonial Special status, lack of consensus among the Chakma leaders, construction of Kaptai Hydroelectric Project, religious discrimination, and communal tensions are also found mainly responsible for the displacement and migration of the Chakmas including those who were rehabilitated in the Diyun Circle of Changlang district. Finding no shelter, the Chakmas had left East Pakistan sought asylum in India as refugee. In

1964, about 60,000 Chakma refugees migrated to India. M. Chakma, an inhabitant of CHT of the erstwhile East-Pakistan, presently living in Kamakhyapur, Diyun circle, expressed his anguish during interview and said,

“ the Chakma people were worst affected along with other tribes by the bifurcation of the country in 1947. The Chakma people were mainly concentrated in the Chittagong district of the East Bengal before independence. The freedom fighters had tantalized the whole Buddhist Chakma people. Our forefathers supported the freedom movement in order to free the country from the clutch of the mighty British Raj. The appeal and memorandums submitted by our people to amalgamate our land with the Indian territory was turned down without assigning any reasons. Even, I remember that some Chakma people hoisted Indian National flag to celebrate the Independence Day in our locality. But the leaders poured cold water to our long cherished dreams and plunged into grief the whole Chakma tribe and which helped the anti-people government to displace us forcefully from our land (East Pakistan).²

Rehabilitation in NEFA: The Chakmas migrated in a hopeless and pathetic condition to the Lushai Hill district (now Mizoram) of Assam and Tripura from the CHT of erstwhile East Pakistan. According to the Government of India estimate, by the middle of 1964, at least 1, 40,000 persons including Chakma and Hajongs consisting of 2902 families had migrated to Assam. The then Government of Assam expressed their inability to settle such a large number of migrants in the state and requested for their shifting to other places.

Even the Government of Tripura did not encourage these displaced Chakmas to settle in the state despite request from Chakma leaders. During that time a suggestion was made that a substantial number of families could be accommodated in NEFA as 'some surplus land was available there in NEFA agreed to accommodate some new migrants including the Chakmas under a 'Definite Plan of Rehabilitation'.³

But the rehabilitation of the Chakma tribes in NEFA ((now Arunachal Pradesh) become a headache for the administration. It may be mentioned here that the NEFA was administered by the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India with the Governor of Assam acting as an agent to the President of India. On April 10th 1964, Vishnu Sahay, the Governor of Assam, in his letter No. GA-71/64, dated April 10, 1964,⁴ addressed to the then Chief Minister of Assam, Bimala Prasad Chaliha, pointed out that:

*"it occurred to me that we may get trouble between the Mizos and the Chakmas in the Mizo district. These Chakmas would be quite suitable people to go into the Tirap Division of NEFA where there is easily found vacant land in the area about which you and I have often spoken."*⁵

Vishnu Sahay, the Governor of Assam, decided to make necessary arrangement to settle more than 10,000 refugees to Tirap divisions of NEFA to avoid any troubles between local people (Mizos) and refugees. On April 16th 1964, P.N. Luthara, the advisor to the Governor of Assam, replied that 3000 families of refugees may be rehabilitated and expressed his inability to accommodate 10,000 families. In the mean time there was strong opposition from the indigenous tribe against the rehabilitation plans in their areas. In April, 1966, Deputy Secretary (P&D) Shillong, wrote to the Liaison Officer, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation, NEFA, that:

*"in Lohit district we had contemplated to settle 1000 families but on account of opposition from Khamtis, Singhpos, and Mishimis, we had to slow down our program. We shall be rehabilitating nearly 2253 families by the end of 1966-67".*⁶

In the midst of strong opposition, initially about 57 families of Chakmas from Government camp of Ledo in Dibrugarh were settled in Abhaypur block of Diyun Circle of the erstwhile Tirap district of NEFA. The Government records of Arunachal Pradesh indicate that between 1964 and 1969, a total of 2,748 refugees comprising some 14,888 persons were sent to the

NEFA. Nearly 1000 members of the Hajong tribe, a Hindu group from Mymensing district of Bangladesh were also settled in these areas.⁷ Initially these refugees were settled in 10,799 acres of land in the three districts namely, Lohit (214 families settled and 1192 persons altogether), Subansiri (now in Papum Pare; 238 families and 1133 persons in total) and Tirap (now in Changlang : 2146 Chakma families with 11,813 persons in total and 150 Hajong families with 750

persons in total). By 1979 these figures increased up to 3919 families consisting of 21,494 persons and 65,000 as per census in 1991.⁸ In 2001, it has been found that there are more than 85,000 Chakmas refugees living in different areas of Arunachal Pradesh especially in Diyun circle of Changlang district. The following table (1) is the indicative of the population growth in Changlang district between 1961 and 1971 as:

Table: 1
Population Growth in Changlang District, 1961-71.

Year	Total Population			Tribal Population		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	30,601	28,990	59,591	27,423	27,681	55,104
1971	51,774	45,696	97,470	34,493	34,352	68,845

Source: Dutta, Choudhury, S. (ed.) 1980. *Gazetteer of India, Arunachal Pradesh. Tirap District*, Directorate of Information and Public Relations, Shillong, p.43.

Hindrances for Rehabilitation: The issue of rehabilitation of the Chakma refugees has been a matter of simmering discontent among the indigenous tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh. There was strong opposition from the indigenous tribes against the Central Government's initiatives of the rehabilitation plans of Chakma refugees in their areas. It has been alleged by the local Arunachali tribes that the large influx of the Chakmas East-Pakistan (now Bangladesh) are responsible for major demographic imbalance

and displacement of the indigenous population. The immediate consequence is that the problem of indigenous people getting marginalized and displaced. Apart from the psychological fear of being reduced to a minority in their own habitat, the local Arunachali tribes are afraid of losing control over their ancestral land.

In the wake of anti-foreigners agitation in Assam, the state Government of Arunachal Pradesh undertook a series of repressive measures against the Chakmas

beginning in 1980. The All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union (AAPSU) launched 'Refugee go back' movement serving 'Quit Arunachal Pradesh' notice to the settlers to leave the state by 30 September, 1995, in the wake of 'people's referendum rally' held on September 20, 1995 at Naharlugun, Itanagar.⁹ All the major political parties including the ruling Congress-I Chief Minister Gegong Apang participated at the rally and vowed to resign from the primary membership of parties and organisations if their demand was not met by the Central government before the expiry of the deadline. As a consequence, a large of Chakma refugees fled from Arunachal Pradesh and took shelter as refugees in the neighbouring state of Assam. The reality is that the Chakmas are at risk of displacement for the second time who is regularly threatened with expulsion by influential Arunachal student's organizations. Even before that state government of Arunachal Pradesh undertook a series of repressive measure including social and economic boycott in support of the agitation programme against the Chakmas. For instance, the Arunachal Government vides its letter No. POL-21/80 dated 29th September 1980, banned public employment for the Chakmas in the state. In 1994, the state government further directed 'withdrawal of all kinds of facilities

'from Chakma settlement areas'¹⁰ afflicting gross human rights violations on the Chakma refugees.

The state Government of A.P. is of the view that even if the Central Government is obliged to confer citizenship on to the Chakma-Hajong refugees under Indira-Mujib Agreement in 1972 cannot settle them permanently within the state since '.....the Agreement [does] not take away the rights of the state Governments to restrict the entry of non-locals through the instrument of Inner Line Permit (ILP) and not to allow permanent settlements of non-locals in the state. The issue is not of conferment of citizenship rights on these refugees but against the permanent settlement of these refugees in A.P. Furthermore, while responding to the charge of violating the political sanctity of the Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972 by demanding the removal of the Chakma-Hajong refugees from the state, ex Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Mr. G. Apang has remarked:

"The Indira-Mujib accord was signed in 1972; our constitution came into being in 1950. The Indira-Mujib Accord has not mentioned specifically about Chakma and Hajong refugees of Arunachal Pradesh. Moreover, the Chakma and Hajong settlement in the state has been done violating the legal sanctity and constitutional provisions, the questions of violating the political sanctity of Indira-Mujib Accord does not arise".¹¹

In fact, the ignorance of the Supreme Court's judgment and indifferent attitude

of the state government and dubious role played by the AAPSU made the Chakma refugee issue a more vexed politicized problem in the state. P. Chakma,¹² a resident of Avoypur-I, Diyun, Changlang of A.P. stated that,

“...the present state of statelessness indicates a close link between the failures of the Central Government in extending the protections of Indian citizenship to the Chakmas on the one hand and their consequent statelessness and human rights violation at the hands of the state government and AAPSU, on the other”.

The study also shows that the present state of statelessness has made them more susceptible to oppression at the hands of the state Government and the local Arunachali tribes, threatening from the AAPSU for mass eviction.

Role of the Central Government: The central Government often asserted that the Chakmas have a legitimate claim to India citizenship. The desire of granting citizenship to the Chakma in A.P. by the Centre turned the relationship bitter with the state. Since their resettlement in NEFA during 1964-69, the issue of granting citizenship to the Chakma refugees had figured prominently in almost all the debates and was being considered seriously by the Central Government. It becomes clear from the S. V. Chavan's repeated remarks in this respect met with strong opposition from all quarters in the state. The AAPSU strongly condemned Chavan's initiative on granting

citizenship to the Hajong and Chakma refugees and accused that it was an attempt to woo the voters at the cost of annoying the indigenous people of the state. It was only on 23 September 1992 that the first official pronouncement to this effect was made in the Lok Sabha by M. M. Jacob, the Minister of State for Home and Parliamentary Affairs. He categorically stated that being 'New Migrants', viz., refugees from Bangladesh who came to India between 1964 and 1971 respectively, are eligible to the grant of citizenship according to the policy of the Government on the subject and most of these migrants have already been granted citizenship. In fact, the central Government is strongly of the opinion that citizenship should be granted to the Chakma refugees to which they are entitled under the Citizenship Act, 1955, under section 5(1)(a) which provides for citizenship status by registration and the Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972, which also reveals the centre's firm determination to settle them permanently in Arunachal Pradesh. This strong perception of the central Government on the question of Chakma citizenship issue was vindicated by the Supreme Court in its historic verdict delivered on 9 January 1996.¹³

Fighting for Citizenship Status: On September 9, 1994, the People's Union for Civil Liberties, Delhi brought the issue of Chakmas to the notice of the



National Human Rights Commission,¹⁴ which in reply issued letters to the Chief Secretary, Arunachal Pradesh and Home Secretary, Government of India for making inquiries in this regard. On October 15, 1994, the Committee for Chakma-Hajong Citizenship Rights filed a representation to NHRC, complaining prosecution of Chakma-Hajong refugees and the later brought the matter before the apex court. The Supreme Court in its historic judgment in January, 1996, in the case of National Human Rights Commission vs. State of Arunachal Pradesh directed the state government to provide adequate protection to the refugees to ensure against their forcible eviction.¹⁵ The apex court also directed that application made by refugees for registrations as citizens under Section 5 of the Citizenship Act should be properly acted upon by local authorities and forwarded the same to the central government for consideration.

Following the Supreme Court directions the Election Commission of India (ECI) after scrutinizing 15,000 applications 1,497 Hajong and Chakma tribes born in India between 1964 and 1987 were included in the Voters' List and allowed to exercise their franchise during the 2004 Lok Sabha election. For the first time in the history of their settlement in Arunachal Pradesh, a limited number of Hajong and Chakma were given

voting rights as Indian citizens. There was a vehement protest against the order of the ECI in the state. The AAPSU submitted a memorandum to the ECI demanding revocation of the said order and decided to ban forthcoming Parliamentary Election on 5 May 2004. Even the Chief Minister Gegong Apang resigned from the All-Party Core Committee on the Chakma and Hajong refugee issue in protest against the inclusion of these voters in the electoral rolls. In the midst of severe protest, the ECI held that the non-inclusion of the 1497 voters implied a violation of the constitutional mandate given to it by Article 325. The state government, however, yet to take decision on rest of the Chakma refugees seeking Indian citizenship and whose number is growing day by day.

The Chakmas continues to face an uncertain future with a status worse than that of refugees—as a stateless people. The denial of right to nationality directly affects their personal security and makes them extremely vulnerable. The lack of citizenship and statelessness deprives them of their basic human rights such as the right to education, health, water, employment, freedom of movement and developmental facilities. This becomes vivid from the expression of 68-year-old villager V. Chakma of village, Dumpani-I, Diyun circle, Dist.-Changlang, that:

"....I was just nine years old when I came to India. I and family fled Chittagong of East-Pakistan in 1964 along with thousands of other families. I have spent half of my life at Diyun, but I am still deprived of my voting rights. Because i am not a citizen of India,"¹⁶

The deprivation of political rights of the Chakmas becomes obvious from the following table (2)

Table -2

Political Conditions of the Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh

Political Status	Total Percentage
Having Right to Vote	10%
Not Having Right to Vote/Rejected	30+40=70%
Minor	20%
Citizenship Rights	0%

Source: Prasad C2013, *India's refugee Regime and resettlement Policy: Chakmas and the Policy of nationality in Arunachal Pradesh*, Kalpaz Publication, Delhi, pp.106-107.

The ignorance of the Supreme Court's judgment, indifferent attitude of the state government and dubious role played by the

AAPSU made the Chakma refugee problem a mere politicized issue in recent time. The perception of the respondents of Chakmas of Diyun circle becomes evident from the following table (3):

Table (3)

Hurdles on the way of Citizenship Rights of the Chakmas

	Respondents	Percentage
The Govt. of India	47	13.82%
The State Govt. of A.P.	80	23.52%
AAPSU	123	36.17%
The Local Arunachali Tribes	90	26.47 %

Source: Field data generated by the investigator

Source: Field data generated by the investigator.



From the above table (3) it becomes clear that majority of the respondents considers AAPSU is the major hurdle in obtaining citizenship rights for Chakmas in A.P. In the absence of any explicit (refugee) statute it is not clear as to what shall be the legal status of refugees and how refugees shall be identified in India. At present the Central laws to tackle refugee problems in India are the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, the Foreigners Act 1946, the Foreigners Order 1948, the Passport Act 1967, the Emigration Act 1983 and above all the Indian constitution under Art. 21. are the primary documents dealing with the treatment of foreigners in India. However, the Foreigners Act 1946 prevails over the other Acts. The most significant lacuna in the Act is that it does not comprise the term 'refugee'. Instead the term 'foreigner' was used to cover aliens temporarily or permanently residing in the country. In fact, Indian Government has dealt with refugee issues of different groups with a different administrative approach. According to an eminent legal expert Rajeev Dhavan, "Indian governance has not devised any systemic policy to deal with refugees, but has dealt with each particular crisis differently". As a result the present statelessness issue of Chakma remained an unsolved problem in the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Recent Development: In its election manifesto for the Lok Sabha elections 2014, the BJP had declared India as 'a natural home for persecuted Hindus'. After it came to power at the Centre, the NDA government has taken several steps to simplify the process for granting long-term visa and citizenship to Hindu minorities from neighbouring countries. In 2015, the Centre was given a deadline by the Supreme Court to confer citizenship to the Chakma and Hajong refugees within three months. The Arunachal government approached the apex court an appeal against the order but in vain.

In fact, the initiative on the Chakma and Hajong refugees comes amid the ongoing row over the Central government's plans to deport Rohingya Muslims, who came to India due to alleged persecution in Myanmar. Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju, who hails from A. P., had recently raised the citizenship issue at a Northeast meet chaired by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh and attended by A. P. Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Rijiju and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval. After the hour-long meeting, Rijiju said that a 'middle ground' will be found so that the 2015 Supreme Court order to grant citizenship to Chakma-Hajong refugees can be honoured and the rights of the local population are not diluted. It becomes obvious that the

Centre is trying to find a workable solution by proposing that the refugees will not be given rights, including land ownership, enjoyed by Scheduled Tribes in A. P., an official said. However, they may be given Inner Line Permits (ILP)-required by non-locals in A. P. to travel and work.

Once again, several organisations and civil society outfits in Arunachal have been opposing citizenship to the Chakma and Hajong refugees. They contend that it would change the demography of the state. There was demonstrations and protest by the student's organisations against the move of the Central Government. Rijiju replied that "We are trying to find a middle ground so that the Supreme Court order is honoured, the local people's rights are not infringed, and human rights of the Chakmas and Hajongs are protected." Rijiju further added that a petition may be filed on the issue in Supreme Court soon.

Relevance of the Study: The present study on the displacement and statelessness of the Chakmas especially of Diyun Circle of Changlang District of Arunachal Pradesh' have more national as well as international relevance in the present context:

1. It tries to draw the attention of the Government as well as the society for the eradication of their deprivation, exploitation,

poverty, statelessness of the ethnic group, resolving the inter-ethnic conflict and to bring Chakmas into the mainstream.

2. The work also identifies a number of factors that were responsible for the displacement and forced migration of the Chakmas from the CHT of erstwhile East-Pakistan with the help of available materials.
3. The study tries to focus on the stateless refugee life of the Chakmas of Diyun circle of Changlang District and the role played by the Central Government, State Government, National Human Rights Commissions and even the Supreme Court of India in handling the issue of statelessness of Chakma in Arunachal Pradesh. This is the most relevant point of the study
4. The study emphasizes that India needs a specific domestic refugee laws and policy to tackle massive refugee problem of the country including the Chakmas which is lacking till today. The massive refugees are treated by some domestic laws of the country which are not enough to resolve the massive refugee issue of the country.
5. Moreover, living a refugee life for a long period, the identity and traditions of the Chakma are on the verge of ruin. Like many other little known tribes the Chakmas are

marginalized. The tribe is affected by poverty, illiteracy and political identity crisis. The study also tries to bring out that the tribe is neither represented politically to the Parliament nor the State Assemblies in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. It is because of their disintegration and scant in numbers in the state.

6. The study will encourages further investigation and research about other tribes like Chakma refugees facing displacement and living statelessness life in the region and to protect them from violation of human rights.

Conclusion: There can be no question that the Chakmas migrated from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of erstwhile East-Pakistan and has been residing in Arunachal Pradesh for more than 50 years. Under the Indira- Mujib Agreement of 1972, it was determined that India and not Bangladesh would be responsible for all migrants who entered India before 25th March 1971. If the Tibetans who fled to Arunachal Pradesh on their own can be given Indian citizenship status, why can not the Chakmas, who were given valid migration Certificate and settled by the Central Government in Arunachal Pradesh. This is discrimination towards Chakmas and violations of International Conventions relating to the rights

of refugees. More importantly, the state governments of Arunachal Pradesh and the Central Governments in the affidavit to the Delhi High Court have recognized that the Chakmas are indigenous like the rest of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, it is legitimate on the part of the Chakmas to claim Indian citizenship removing their statelessness in Arunachal Pradesh. At the same time, basic human rights of both the Chakmas and indigenous Arunachali tribals need to be protected and both the Central and State Government should come forward to fulfill their democratic obligations in this regard.

Footnotes:

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12. Interviewee: P. Chakma (47), Avoypur-I, Diyun circle, Changlang, A.P.
13. Sing, D. K 2010, *Stateless in South Asia, The Chakmas between Bangladesh and India*, Sage Publication, New Delhi, p. 135.
14. Agarwal, HO 2008, *Human Rights*, Central Law Publications, Dharbhanga Castle, Allahabad,U.P. p.306.
15. Zutshi, R. Trakroo, Satpute, J, & Tahir, S (ed.) 2011, *Refugees and the Laws*, Human Rights Law Network (HRLN) Publisher, New Delhi-110014, p. 107.
16. Interviewee: V. Chakma (36) Dumpani-1, Diyun circle, Dist.-Changlang, A.P.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Hi' or a similar name, written in a cursive style.

Principal
Haji Anfar Ali College
Doboka : Nagaon : Assam