

Road to Enduring Peace in CHT: A Post Insurgency Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the historical events of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and an effort has been taken to identify the root causes of the prevailing tensions. The key argument is the fabricated history which is creating disparities in the understanding of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and the tribal communities of CHT. Some vested corners and feudal classes always tried to do politics by exploiting the emotion of the general tribal populations of CHT. It has been observed that the tribal populations badly suffered in different times of history due to inappropriate decisions of their leaders; maximum times they moved against the flow and the course of actions they have decided was not welcomed by their counterparts. Sometimes personal interest of the feudal classes got priority instead of community well-being. In the early 1960s, the enormous sufferings of the mass tribal populations caused by 'Kaptai Dam' was acceptable to Chakma Circle Chief Tridiv Roy. Although Bangladesh as a country was not responsible for any of the sufferings of the tribal communities in CHT, they started an armed insurgency movement against the GOB in 1976. After the peace accord in 1997, the insurgents did not deposit maximum of their illegal arms to the GOB as promised, rather there are four different fractions of tribal regional parties at present. All the parties are maintaining armed groups for area domination and easy illegal tax collections. Besides these challenges, there are enormous potentialities in CHT; if those are well-nurtured, there likely to have effective changes in the socio-economic and political sectors. In the upcoming days, the development and economic solvency of the general people might become a situation changer in CHT.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ① Insurgency situation and post peace accord scenario of CHT.
- ② The backwardness of CHT occurred due to haughty attitude of feudal classes, inappropriate decisions of the tribal leaders and inadequate participations of local tribal communities in the national politics.
- ③ Enormous potentials of CHT need to be explored for economic development.

Keywords: Post Insurgency Scenario, Armed Groups, Development Potentials, Chittagong Hill Tract, Tribal Community, Bangladesh

The development of events and various issues of CHT gets discussion priority due to its enormous potential. Besides the long-continued numerous tensions prevailing in CHT, various challenges frequently turn up; those are different from other parts of Bangladesh. In 1997, although a peace accord was signed between the GOB and Parbattya Chattogram Jano Shanghati

Samiti (PCJSS), at present there are four different tribal regional parties in CHT. All these parties preserve their manifesto and objectives. It appears that the ideology

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and ethnic spirit, the insurgent outfit '*Santi Bahini*' (SB) and PCJSS used to conserve, are not being followed by the present day's all four tribal regional parties. At present, these parties are maintaining armed groups for respective area domination and illegal tax collection. In an insurgency situation, popular support is a big factor. In the previous century, the three decades' insurgency was well-ordered by the dedicated leaderships who were mostly educated and strong in their ideological beliefs; they could achieve popular support by their motivational capabilities and at the same time, their causes were projected with logical justifications.

In the present day, the general people are obliged to cooperate with the tribal regional parties' armed groups due to fear of losing life. Over the years, after the peace accord, people's realization has been altered towards reality. There are significant changes in the social and cultural practices among the tribal communities; their understandings about the regional parties' movements have been revised as well.

Although the progress is slow and there is a lack of research and synchronizations, GOB has taken various initiatives for the development of CHT to bring normalcy. The reformed perception of the general people of CHT and GOB's well-thought-out projects in the upcoming days might bring permanent peace in CHT. This paper tried to refute the fabricated and distorted history through credible references and also to highlight the way forward for achieving permanent peace in CHT.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since 1990, CHT has become a point of interest to researchers due to its insurgency based conflicting situation. Although there are significant numbers of publications, the writers have taken the sides from their point of view; even there are fabricated descriptions of the history also. While writing this article, the sources were accepted after doing adequate critical examination; there was also scrutiny of external inaccuracies and in-depth reliability. The books and publications utilized while writing this article were divided into the following categories:

Basic Books on CHT and Ethnicity. In Willem van

Schendel's edited book Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (Schendel, 1798), the writer Francis Buchanan described the demography, kingship, ethnic practices of the tribal communities of CHT. Captain (later on Lieutenant Colonel) Thomas Herbert Lewin also highlighted the above aspects in his book, 'Hill Tracts of Chittagong and dwellers therein' (Lewin, 1869). Afterwards, he discussed the government system through the circle chiefs in his other book, 'A Fly on the Wheel; Or How I Helped to Govern India' (Lewin, 1912). William Wilson Hunter emphasized various statistics of CHT in his book, 'A Statistical Accounts of Bengal, Vol-6'. Hunter said, 'The history of Chittagong Hill Tracts is mainly the history of various tribes inhabiting it'. Hunter divided the tribes into two segments; Independent and Dependent (Hunter, 1876). In Alexander Mackenzie's book, 'History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the Northeast Frontier of Bengal', ethnicity and community interest issues have been highlighted. The author also criticised the colonial government (Mackenzie, 1884). Pierre Bessaignet labelled the Chakma and Marma tribe people as 'The Hillmen' in his book, 'Tribesmen of the Chittagong Hill Tracts' due to their development of lifestyle in comparison to other tribes (Bessaignet, 1958).

Literatures Criticised the Policy of GOB. Aditya Kumar Dewan criticized the development projects of the British, Pakistan and Bangladesh Governments in his research work, 'Class and Ethnicity in the Hills of Bangladesh'. He claimed that those efforts have destroyed the uniqueness of different ethnicities in CHT (Dewan, 1990). Amena Mohsin denounced British Colonialism in CHT. According to her research work, 'The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts', the same strategy was continued during the Pakistan and Bangladesh period; the ethnic communities of CHT had to badly suffer due to Government policies (Mohsin, 1997). Swapon Adnan criticized the Government's stand on CHT affairs in his book, 'Migration, Land Alienation and Ethnic Conflict' (Adnan, 2004). Willem van Schendel projected the Government policies to be detrimental to the interest of the tribal ethnic communities of CHT in his article, 'The invention of the Jummas: State Formation and Ethnicity in Southeastern Bangladesh' (Schendel,

1992). Professor Mesbah Uddin Ahmed highlighted the historical events of the CHT crisis and analysed the post peace accord scenario in his PhD thesis on 'Manobendro Narayan Larma O Parbattya Chattogramer Rajnoitik Songram' (Mesbah, 2015).

Books and Publications Supported the Policy of GOB.

In these categories of books, the writers tried to explain the context of Government decisions and policies which had to be adopted for the greater interest of the country. According to Mizanur Rahman Shelly's edited book, 'The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: The Untold Story, Bangladesh as a country was not responsible for the crisis of CHT, it has been inherited. He said, "As the untold story related in this work clearly shows the hitherto intractable factor in this process has been the violence and terrorism senselessly practised by a handful of foreign-linked, misguided armed men belonging to a single tribe in the Chittagong Hill Tracts" (Shelly 1992). Major General (ret'd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim reasoned out from his experience the way he used to see the crisis from the government point of view as a military man. He has explained the historical context of the CHT crisis in his book, "Parbattya Chattogram: Shanti Prokriya O Poribesh Poristhitir Mullayon" (Ibrahim, 2001). Atiqur Rahman criticized the fabricated history of CHT and highlighted the connection of Muslims and the Chakma community in his book, 'They are not Indigenous' (Rahman, 2013).

Books on Insurgency in CHT and Peace Accord. Syed Anwar Hossain has explained the insurgency in CHT and peace accord in his book, 'War and Peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Retrospect and Prospect' (Anwar, 1999). Besides this book, Nuh-UI-Alam Lelin's edited book, 'Jhum Pahare Shanti'r Jhornadhara: Oitihatik Parbattya Shanti Chukti (Lelin, 1998), Selina Hossain's book, 'Parbatta bhumir Pothe Prantore' (Hossain, 1999) and Humayun Azad's book, 'Parbattya Chottogram: Sobuj Paharer Bhitir Diye Probahito Hingshar Jhorna dhara' also have been written on insurgency situation and peace process (Azad, 1997).

Local Writers' Books and Publications. Local writers of CHT have expressed the sufferings of the tribal ethnic communities due to inappropriate decisions

of the government machinery and feudal classes. Siddhartha Chakma's book, 'Prosongo Parbattya Chattogram (Siddhartha, 1986), Gaynendu Bikash Chakma's book, 'Oitihatik Prekkhapote Parbattya Chattogram Sthanio Sorkar Porishod' (Gaynendu, 1991), Prodipto Khisha's Book, 'Parbattya Chottogramer Somoosya' (Khisha, 1996), Biplob Chakma's book, 'Parbattya Chottogram: Sayottoshason O Sadhikarer Sondhane' (Biplob, 1997), Princes Chondra Roy's book, 'Land Rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts' (Chandra, 2000) and Sorodindu Shekhar Chakma's book, 'Jummo Jonogoner Itikotha ebong tader Sayottosason Andolon' (Chakma, 2002) are these categories of books.

In all above different categories of the book on CHT demography, insurgency, basic rights, the effect of the government policies on different ethnic communities, the actual responsibilities of Bangladesh government, peace process, post peace accord scenario, the present state of security, economic solvency at the macro level etc aspects have been discussed at length. Although the authors of different books expressed their points from their perceptions, a detailed study has been conducted based on the literature review and some ways forwards have been formulated after necessary discussions.

METHODOLOGY

This was an exploratory study. Data was collected both from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources' data was collected from the responses of tribal ethnic community members, government employees and private workers, public representatives in CHT and so on. I have personal experience of serving in CHT for more than 10 years (2003-05 and 2013-21) which allowed me to come across numerous credible information. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, newspaper articles, empirical research reports etc.

Analysis and Findings

Bangladesh as a country is the worst sufferer of an armed insurgency for which she was not at all responsible. In 1971, the Government of a newly liberated country had to face multi-diversified challenges. The long nine months' war debris and non-cooperation of some of the leftist parties created the tasks of the Government

steeper. The situation became more difficult due to the 1974 famine. In that context, the demands of CHT's tribal leaders did not get much importance.

The main reason for dissatisfaction among the tribal communities was the establishment of the Kaptai dam during the early 1960s. It is also a fact that around 80,000 to 100,000 tribal people were the victim of the Kaptai dam and they were displaced in different other portions of CHT; many of them took shelter in India. Even Chakma Circle Chief Tridiv Roy's palace was submerged into the water; approximately 220 square kilometers (85 sq mi) of cultivable land became unusable. The Kaptai dam was established by the then Pakistan Government with the financial and technical support of the U.S. However, besides the adverse aspects of establishing the Kaptai dam, it is worth mentioning that the lake created an easy naval connectivity in the hilly areas. More so, the hydroelectricity project was a major factor in the establishment of Kaptai dam. Unfortunately, the general tribal victims did not receive the promised amount of compensation. Chakma Circle Chief Tridiv Roy was well involved with the overall process. Despite his good relationship with the Pakistani Government, he did not have any significant role to reduce the suffering of his people (Azad, 2010).

There might be criticisms on the establishment of the Kaptai dam; the newly liberated Bangladesh did not have any role to create the sufferings of the tribal people of CHT. The tribal leaders of CHT did not have a strong protest against the Pakistani Government except some soft movement of Manobendro Narayan Larma (MN Larma). However, after the independence of Bangladesh, the tribal leaders brought the following four points demand to Bangabandhu (Rahman, 2004):

- ❖ Declare the Chittagong Hill Tracts as an autonomous zone with an assembly of its own.
- ❖ Inclusion of statute similar to the Regulation of 1900 in the constitution.
- ❖ Recognize and maintain the offices of the tribal kings.
- ❖ Incorporate provisions in the constitution for safeguarding the autonomy of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

It has been propagated by the vested corners that Bangabandhu asked the tribal populations to become the Bengalis and some of his comments in 1973 during the election campaign disheartened the tribal communities. However, MN Larma joined Bangladesh Krishok Sromik Awami League (BAKSAL) by the call of Bangabandhu. Nonetheless, he went underground with his followers and started Shanti Bahini (SB) insurgency movement after the tragic death of Bangabandhu (Murtaza, 2004).

The Government of President Ziaur Rahman decided to counter the insurgency movement of SBs militarily. At the same time, almost half a million Bengali people were rehabilitated in different parts of CHT. These people were mostly poor and landless. The rehabilitated Bengalis were allotted five acres of land for each of the families. The presence of the newly rehabilitated Bengalis worked as a buffer in many situations and there were plenty of casualties of this poor and landless community. At the same time, there were casualties of general tribal communities and SBs also. Both tribal and Bengali inhabitants in CHT had been struggling in a challenging situation (Murtaza, 2004).

PCJSS Chief MN Larma's brother Santu Larma was arrested by the security forces in the late '70s. He along with other renowned tribal leaders like Rupayon Dewan and Chabai Mog were released by the GOB without any charges. The controversial release of Santu Larma was a point of discussion at that time in 1983. Both Rupayon Dewan and Chabai Mog were aware of the details on the controversial release of Santu Larma. Another front raking important leader Priti Kumar Chakma continued his suspicion against Santu Larma. Both MN Larma and Santu Larma were the followers of communism but Priti Kumar used to believe in equal rights and democracy. The practice of communism by the Larma brothers and dissemination of their belief among the PCJSS activists was not liked by Priti Kumar. Although India had been providing support to the armed movement of PCJSS, possibly the idea of communism was not liked by India as well. That's why MN Larma and Santu Larma instructed the activists not to carry communism related books while travelling to India. MN Larma and Santu Larma's interest in communism was known to the Indian

authority but they were being endured and sustained for a bigger interest (Harun, 1992) and (Saufa, 1998).

Santu Larma's release and return to the SB Head Quarter made MN Larma more confident. He appointed Santu Larma as the Chief of armed groups. This decision made Priti Kumar and his followers dissatisfied. On 10 November 1983, MN Larma and some of his associates were killed by Priti Kumar's group. Santu Larma took over the Chairmanship of PCJSS; Priti Kumar and 250 of his followers surrendered to the GOB in 1985. The GOB arranged jobs for them according to their qualifications; Priti Kumar took shelter in Tripura, India (Ibrahim, 2001).

The huge number of migrated Bengali populations in CHT became a hatred community to the tribal ethnic insurgents. There were also good mutual understandings among some of the general tribal and Bengalis; many of them had been doing timber businesses through cooperation. However, in the mid-'80s, the atrocities of SBs became more brutal and violent. Besides the Bengalis, a good number of general tribal people also lost their lives.

Considering the overall situation, GOB decided to shift the newly migrated Bengalis and distressed tribal communities to different cluster villages established near the security forces camps. Among these people, especially the Bengalis lost possession of their allotted lands where many of them had plantation and cultivation. GOB started issuing rations to the Bengalis and tribal populations staying in the cluster villages. The cluster villages were allotted as follows (Ibrahim, 2001):

Cluster Villages in Khagrachari District

- ❖ Bengali Cluster Village: 30,128 Families
- ❖ Tribal Cluster Village: 6,974 Families

Cluster Villages in Rangamati District

- ❖ Bengali Cluster Village: 1,492 Families
- ❖ Tribal Cluster Village: 3,676 Families

Although, GOB had a plan to maintain the cluster villages for three years since 1986, still in 2021 the Bengalis are

leading a substandard life in there. The atrocities of SBs caused not only the shifting of Bengalis to the cluster villages, but also many tribal populations had to take refuge in India. There are allegations of the forceful crossing of borders by the tribal populations despite their unwillingness. PCJSS wanted to attract global attention by projecting the presence of a significant number of refugees in India. In February 1994, during the first phase of rehabilitation of the refugees, the Indian authority handed over a list of 11,806 families' 56,496 persons (Kamal M and Sharmeen M, 2001).

GOB undertook several efforts for discussion with the PCJSS leaders for reaching to an amicable solution. Many a time there were successful meetings. PCJSS was adamant about their old demand for an autonomous CHT. GOB created the 'Local Government Council (LGC)' which had the flavor of autonomy. The Chairman of LGCs was empowered as a state minister. An election was held in all three hill districts. Chairman and members were elected through the votes of the general people (Gaynendu, 1993). Government thought that the idea of empowerment of local people would satisfy PCJSS and there will be a stable security situation; unfortunately, it did not happen that way. SBs became more violent; they continued forceful sending of tribal people to India as a refugee. However, many of the tribal people returned to Bangladesh in their arrangement. According to them, there were numerous difficulties in the refugee camps in India. The standard of rations provided to them were not eatable. Moreover, their sons and daughters were away from education. The tribal refugees were worried about the future of their kids (Khogeswar, 2020).

From the early 1990s up to the process of the peace accord in 1997, there were several meetings between the representatives of GOB and PCJSS. There were tensions in the PCJSS leadership also (Bakul, 2020).

- ❖ Huge pressure of the tribal refugees; many of them had been coming back on their own.
- ❖ A good number of SB activists surrendered to the security forces and desired to lead a normal life.
- ❖ Gradual interest was being generated on the national politics among the tribal communities.

- ❖ The long stay of the SB activists in the jungles was becoming intolerable; they were pressurizing PCJSS top leaderships for closing down the crisis.
- ❖ Last but not the least, possibly PCJSS also received a green signal from their foreign allies for opting for a peace accord.

According to the overall situation of CHT in 1997, the security force was in the upper hand. Despite numerous limitations and challenges, PCJSS had a smart bargain with the GOB and turned many of the clauses of the peace accord in their favor; some of the clauses were contradictory to the constitution of Bangladesh. Besides the peace accord, 'Local Government Councils' were renamed as 'Hill District Councils (HDCs)' and a central controlling body of HDCs was established as CHT Regional Council. Approximately 30 to 32 departments were handed over to the HDCs; it started functioning almost as an autonomous body. However, due to disagreement between the Regional Council and GOB regarding the voter lists, elections of HDCs could not be held in the last two decades (Khogeswar, 2020).

According to the peace accord a land commission was formed in 2001. After necessary scrutiny and discussions, GOB approved the 'Land Commission Ordinance' in 2016. The commission is yet to be functioning effectively. Moreover, the Bengalis are not agreed with many of the clauses of the approved Land Commission ordinance (Mohsin, 2021).

In 1997, although PCJSS reached a deal with the GOB, another tribal fraction countered the peace accord and demanded full autonomy of CHT. This fraction led by Proshit Bikash Khisha formed another regional party named 'United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF)'. The then opposition party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was against the peace accord; possibly because it was enlightening the reputation of the Government globally.

Despite the formal surrender of weapon ceremony in Khagrachari, PCJSS did not deposit all their weapons and military equipment to the security forces or the Government agencies. Possibly PCJSS was watchful and wanted to see the reaction of the Government as promised

in the Peace accord. Moreover, the newly raised party UPDF also became a concern for them (Shyamol, 2020).

In 2001, when BNP assumed power, there was no much progress of peace accord implementation. UPDF became more organized in Khagrachari and some parts of Rangamati. They could generate interest among the young educated tribal communities with their leftist pattern of approach. The young tribal youths of the above-mentioned areas echoed the demand for full autonomy. Since its birth, UPDF had been countering PCJSS besides criticizing the Government. UPDF's stand against PCJSS provided latitude in some of the places in CHT which assisted their reach up to village and para level. In the meantime, Santu Larma's adamant attitude and desire to remain surrounded by the relatives caused the talented senior leaderships to get out of PCJSS and form a new platform JSS (MN Larma) in 2010. Among the top leaderships of PCJSS, a significant number of leaders like Sudha Shindhu Khisha, Tatindro Lal Pele, Rupayon Dewan, Bimol Chakma, Sudorshon Chakma and many others formed JSS (MN Larma) intending to uphold the ideology of MN Larma; according to them, it was missing in Santu Larma led PCJSS. Since the inception of JSS (MN Larma), the leaders and activists had to take support of Proshit Bikash Khisha's UPDF for security. Gradually JSS (MN Larma) also started maintaining an armed group led by Proggan Khisha (Obhijan, 2020).

In 2015, around 20 to 25 armed activists of UPDF (Proshit) left the party due to some internal clash. These people were given shelter by JSS (MN Larma) to build up their muscle power. However, the senior leaderships of JSS (MN Larma) did not want them to adjust within JSS (MN Larma). Possibly they thought that it might create misunderstanding with UPDF (Proshit).

UPDF returnees decided to form a new party with the covert support of JSS (MN Larma). On 15 November 2017,

a new party was launched naming UPDF (Democratic). The objective of this newly formed party was to maintain true democracy within the party and create pressure on the Government for the full implementation of the peace accord (Shyamol, 2020).

At present, all four tribal regional parties dominate respective specific areas in CHT and collect illegal tax from different sources like construction contractors, timber businessmen, mobile phone operators etc. All these parties retain armed groups for easy area domination and inter-party clash. These parties have collected modern automatic weapons and ammunition from the arms smugglers through the neighboring countries. Normally all these weapons are of China origin; the arms smugglers collect those from various insurgent or secessionist groups of Myanmar or they collect directly from illegal arms markets located in Yunnan province China or Thailand. Sometimes the surrendered insurgent groups of Tripura also sell their arms to the tribal regional parties of CHT (Obhijan, 2020).

Among all four tribal regional parties, JSS (MN Larma) and UPDF (Democratic) upkeep the well-being of the GOB. They show respect to the Father of the Nation, National anthem, National flag etc. In the 2018 parliamentary election, these two parties worked at the field level for various candidates (Shyamol, 2020).

In Rajestholi of Rangamati district and some places of Bandarban district, a Marma based party Mog National Party (MNP) has been formed up in 2018. Although their strength is insignificant, they carry modern automatic weapons and some of them are experts in Improvised Explosive Devices (IED). Besides MNP, the presence of JSS (Santu Larma) activists are seen in Rangamati and Bandarban districts; UPDF (Proshit) activists dominate in the remote places of Khagrachari and Rangamati district; JSS (MN Larma) activists maintain their influence in the Sadar areas of Khagrachari; UPDF(Democratic) activists remain active in all three districts in a limited scale. According to various sources, JSS (Santu Larma), JSS (MN Larma), UPDF (Proshit) and UPDF (Democratic) are maintaining approximately 500, 150, 330 and 90 armed cadres respectively (Sompriti, 2021).

At present the tribal regional parties are mostly occupied in illegal tax collection, respective area domination, participating in village-level judiciaries, propaganda against the Government through social media, processions, displaying banners, conducting meetings and seminars etc. All these parties celebrate the events of community interest, like the Kalpona Chakma abduction claim that occurred in 1996, still, every year this event is being remembered (Bokul, 2020).

Since the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007, the tribal communities of CHT have started claiming themselves as 'Indigenous' although it was never demanded earlier; PCJSS signed a peace accord as a *tribal community* (Ibrahim, 2001). The GOB has cleared the issue by terming these communities as *Small and Minor Ethnicity*. However, the instruction of the Government is being intentionally violated by the tribal community leaders, leftist parties' leaders and some of the national political party leaders (Mohsin, 2021).

DISCUSSION

After analyzing the facts, it has been felt that there are differences of perceptions among the tribal leaders of CHT which are contradictory to reality. In maximum cases, CHT tribal leaders steered reverse against the flow; sometimes the '*Kingship*' became a priority than that of general tribal communities' need and in maximum cases, priorities have not been set according to the actual need.

Bomang Circle Chief has acknowledged in a television interview that they have been migrated from Pegu, Burma. Moreover, Chakma, Mong or Bomang kings were not included in the list of 550 princely states during the British colonial period. The British divided the CHT districts into three circles for their easy collection of taxes (Hunter, 1876). The circle chiefs were responsible to collect tax for onward deposition to the District Commissioner (DC). They were the adviser to DC according to the 1900 CHT manual. Now, there is a question, why the tribal leaders demanded those points after the birth of Bangladesh, why not during the establishment of the Kaptai dam. According to various interviews, the following points have been generated:

- ❖ Chakma and Bomang Circle Chiefs had strong influence and control over the general tribal people. As they had been supporting the Pakistani Government, there were hardly any strong processions.
- ❖ There are allegations that at the fag end of the liberation war in 1971, some of the freedom fighters displayed atrocities in the tribal villages considering all tribal communities were against the independence of Bangladesh. A good number of tribal people indeed performed as 'Razakar' especially from the Chakma community by the instruction of their Circle Chief Tridiv Roy; however, there were many freedom fighters from the tribal communities also.
- ❖ In 1971, the tribal leaders thought it to be an opportunity as the birth of Bangladesh was occurred through a bloody war. The demands of the tribal leaders were almost in line with the 'Six Point Programs' of Bangabandhu when the people of East Pakistan had been struggling for their basic rights.

Tribal leaders acted against the flow in all the important events of history. In 1947, during the partition of India and Pakistan, tribal leaders hoisted the flag of India in Rangamati although the Radcliff plan was reverse. In 1971, during the war of liberation, some of the tribal leaders especially, the Chakma Circle Chief and Bomang Circle Chief acted against the independence of Bangladesh.

In 1947, tribal leader Sneha Kumar Chakma went to Delhi and tried to meet Indian Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru. He got an appointment after 50 days and Nehru did not agree with the demand or requests raised by Sneha Kumar Chakma. That means the preparedness of tribal leaders was not fully proven. The country with which they desired to get entangled, were not valued that way (Sneha K C Memorandum, 1986).

There were distinct differences between the feudal class and general people in CHT. The feudal class never wanted the general people to be educated. Their son and daughters got higher education from Dhaka, Kolkata or London but they were very reluctant to build

schools and colleges for the general tribal populations. In 1966, Chakma Circle Chief Tridiv Roy obstructed the establishment of Rangamati College. Although PCJSS Chief Santu Larma does not belong to a feudal class, his father also considered themselves different from others; being a member of the Chakma community, they preferred using their clan title, 'Larma' instead of 'Chakma' (Ahmed, 2015). Santu Larma also opposed the establishment of a medical college in Rangamati. The attitude of feudal classes made the overall tribal populations more backwards.

Bangabandhu's comments of asking the tribal communities to become 'Bengali' were fabricated and wrongly projected. The spirits of Bangabandhu's words were to consider all the communities and ethnicities staying in Bangladesh are to be treated equally. He felt the need for development for the backward communities of CHT. He emphasized the basic and higher education for the tribal students with special facilities. The tribal leaders understood the spirit of Bangabandhu's words; they did not initiate the armed struggle till the time Bangabandhu was alive.

The newly liberated country, Bangladesh had been preparing for a fresh start; it was not possible to accept the unjustified demands of the tribal leaders. Although MN Larma led tribal leaders formally continued cooperating the GOB, they had been preparing an armed struggle taking the banner of Santi Bahini (SB). MN Larma participated in the parliamentary election in 1973 and joined the 'Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL)' in 1974. After the brutal killing of the father of the nation, MN Larma led PCJSS went underground and SBs were activated. The killing of Bangabandhu reshaped the regional politics; PCJSS started receiving military support from India which includes weapon training and supply of arms & ammunition.

Since 2007, although the Chakma Circle Chief Barrister Debashish Roy and other top tribal leaders had been claiming themselves as '*Indigenous Community*' for their unique cultural practices, unfortunately, the family members of Chakma Circle do not uphold their heritage and continuity of cultural practices. Raja Nolinakkho Roy got married a Bengali woman Binita Roy from

Kolkata. She used to wear 'Sharee'. The sisters of Raja Tridiv Roy also used to put on 'Sharee'. Two sisters, princes Amiti Roy and Moitri Roy got married a Christian man. The elder sister of Raja Debashish Roy, Chandra Kalindi Roy got married a westerner, Mr Henriksen from Hungary. Raja Debashish Roy also got married a Marma (or Rakhine) girl. He is rarely seen putting on Chakma traditional dresses. The feudal class of Mong Circle and Bomang Circle do the same practices almost. It seems that the suddenly claimed 'Indigenous' status has been generated for achieving the special facilities as mentioned in the UNDIRP declaration only.

The GOB is always sympathetic and trying to bring permanent peace in CHT. Although Pakistan Government cancelled the 'Excluded Area' (Deb, 1936) status of CHT, GOB has taken a lot of development efforts considering CHT to be 'Backward'. Bangabandhu thought of establishing the 'CHT Development Board' and the follow-up Governments materialized it.

Despite the controversial activities of Tridiv Roy in 1971, Bangabandhu declared his son Debashish Roy to be the Chakma king. Not only that Bangabandhu nominated Awami League candidate from the Chakma royal family in 1973.

Raja Tridiv Roy after taking the side of Pakistan during the war of liberation left the country and permanently migrated to Pakistan. He worked as a representative of Pakistan so that Bangladesh is never recognized as an independent country. When SB started an armed movement, Dr Ramendu Shekhar Dewan staying in London had been propagating against the GOB. Tridiv Roy was regularly in touch with him. Although Bangabandhu was kind to declare Debashish Roy as the Chakma Circle Chief, he met Dr Ramendu Shekhar Dewan in London with his father Tridiv Roy. That means both Tridiv Roy and Debashish Roy had been doing conspiracy against Bangladesh. GOB honored Debashish Roy by appointing him as an adviser to Caretaker Government in 2007, he started the illegitimate demand of 'Indigenous' status since that year.

The GOB rehabilitated the poor landless Bengalis in different places of CHT. Normally the tribal leaders complain regarding the legality of Bengali migration

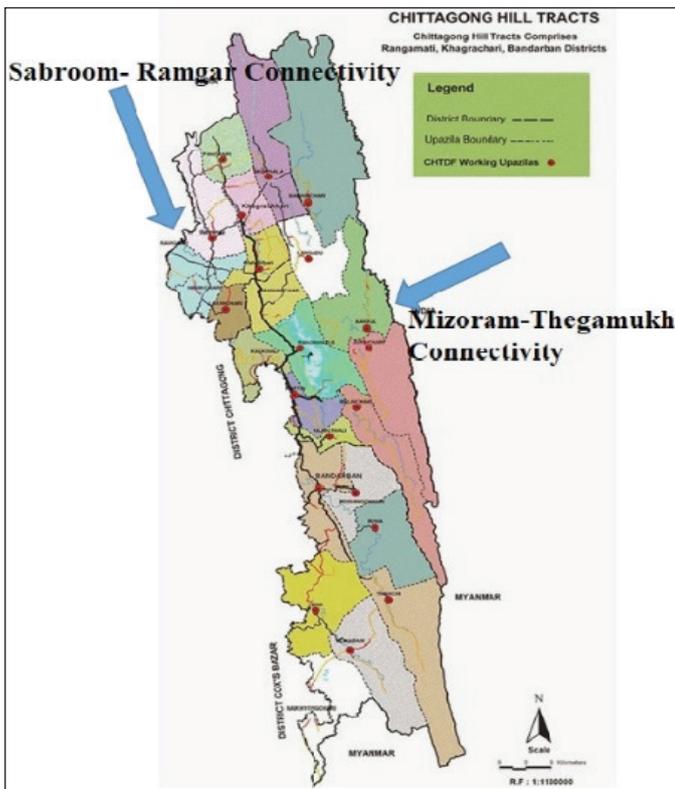
in CHT. According to the 1900 CHT manual, DC was empowered to allow any Bengalis to stay in the CHT area. But this allocation was not judiciously executed at that time. At present, in many cases the ownership of a particular land is being demanded by both tribal and Bengali; that means the allocation and handing over process were not full proof. Moreover, the poor Bengalis were rehabilitated in the insecure remote places of CHT without ensuring their security; a lot of Bengalis lost their lives. However, considering the security situation, Bengalis were shifted to the cluster villages near to security forces camps from 1986 onwards (Ibrahim, 2001).

In 1989, GOB decided to form 'Local Government Council (LGC)'; later on after the peace accord, this council was upgraded as 'Hill District Council (HDC). Although Government thought that if some kind of autonomous authority in the form of LGC is given, PCJSS would end their armed movement; on the ground, it did not happen that way (Ibrahim, 2001).

At present there are two sets of controlling machinery at the district level; sometimes contradiction of authority occurs between the DC and HDC. At the same time, the tribal leaders would like to take advantage of the 1900 CHT manual. However, if there are any contradictions surfaced between HDC regulations and the 1900 CHT manual, the tribal leaders of CHT prefers to choose the advantageous one (Mohsin, 2021).

Way Forward

The post peace accord situation is within the control of GOB. However, according to enormous economic potentialities of CHT, the GOB is yet to exploit the full extent of it. The security and economic development of CHT is also depending on the Regional and neighboring states' stability. The insurgent groups in Tripura and Mizoram have become comparatively dormant than earlier. At present, the state government of Tripura and Mizoram are more concerned about their economic development. Ramgar- Sabroom connectivity is almost completed. Thegamukh connectivity from Mizoram to Rangamati is also going on very fast.



Map: Connectivity through CHT towards Chittagong Port

Both Tripura and Mizoram states will be utilizing the Chittagong port through the above-mentioned connectivity. Tripura has developed rubber plantations in the bordering areas of CHT. In the long run, there likely to be rubber-based industries in the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) developed in Sabroom. On the other hand, the Mizoram state government has signed a business deal with the commerce ministry of Bangladesh. Considering the fact, it is very less likely that the tribal regional parties of CHT will get the support of the neighbors now, the way they used to receive earlier. However, the intelligence organizations and the Border Security Forces of the neighboring countries might continue maintaining a connection with the tribal regional party leaders of CHT for the collection of information about the security forces movements of Bangladesh.

GOB is preparing a border parallel road in CHT from Teknaf to Ramgar. This road is being prepared 150 to 200 meters' parallel to the border. At present, Border Guard

Bangladesh (BGB) is unable to reach many remote places of the bordering areas due to tough terrain conditions. After completion of this parallel road within the next eight to ten years, BGB will have effective patrolling in the bordering areas. In that situation, all illegal trespassing will be difficult.

Besides the above-mentioned developments at the national and regional level the following issues also will have an effective impact on the overall situation:

- ❖ In the present days, the tribal regional armed groups are unable to attract the interest of the educated youths. There is a leadership crisis in all the tribal regional parties. Continuation of such a situation is likely to make tribal regional parties disorganized in the long run.
- ❖ The tourism potentials of CHT needs to be exploited. There should be variations and uniqueness of the use of natural beauties. So far it has been observed that the security forces deployed in CHT initiated and maintained the tourist spots like Sajek, Nilgiri etc; the involvement of the tourism ministry was not significant. A well-planned tourism ideas combination of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions) and Eco-tourism could bring better results in CHT. The Global MICE Industry size valued at USD 916.1 million in 2019, is predicted to garner USD 1.78 billion by 2030. So, CHT might become an economic booster for Bangladesh in future.
- ❖ GOB has decided to establish a hundred EPZs all over Bangladesh by 2030. The biggest one is being established at Mirersorai (67 km distance from the Chittagong Port). Tripura and Mizoram are also developing economic potentials considering the use of Chittagong port. So, some economic ventures might be taken in all three hill districts as the distance between CHT and Chittagong port is not that far; moreover, there is a huge working force among the tribal and Bengali populations in CHT. At present, approximately sixty to seventy thousand tribal youths are working at different factories in Chittagong, Dhaka and Gazipur.
- ❖ Besides the EPZs or Garment factories, there might

be food processing factories. It has been proved that CHT is an ideal place for producing different types of fruits. Besides the general people, regional party leaders and activists are getting involved in fruit gardening. Some of the rare products like coffee, orange, strawberry etc are also showing potentials in CHT.

- ❖ Involvement of the tribal leaders and important tribal personalities might be bestowed at the national level. They can contribute their expertise to the particular sectors of Bangladesh. It will elevate their status and they will contribute as proud Bangladeshi.
- ❖ The CHT ethnic people are mongoloid; normally they do very good in sports, especially football, weight lifting, hockey, arrow throwing, swimming etc. Concern ministry should explore the potential tribal youths and train them in their subject of interest.
- ❖ Forceful efforts are always detrimental and unsuccessful in the post insurgency scenario. All sensitive issues need to be dealt with through research.

CONCLUSION

In a multi-diversified country like Bangladesh, several languages and ethnicity might be considered as a pride. Gradually understanding and incorporation in the overall plan will bring normalcy to CHT. The situation changes with the passage of time and understanding of the generations. As the tensions are related to people, ethnicity, human rights, identity crisis and backwardness, the priority of approach should have been political. However, as there were also illegal armed movements in CHT, the counter-insurgency approach by the military cannot be ignored. That means both political and military approaches need to be synchronized and objective oriented. All efforts are to be executed professionally by upholding the constitution of Bangladesh. The idea of HDCs is contradictory to many of the clauses of the 1900 CHT manual and the constitution of Bangladesh. Again, some of the clauses of the peace accord are contradictory to the constitution. Despite all above conflicting difficulties, it is possible to

bring permanent peace in CHT by adapting an objective oriented long term planning. The development of regional politics and the economic interest of the neighbors have created a suitable platform for creating stability in CHT. Permanent peace in the post insurgency situation is not easy. Peoples' emotion is an important factor here. Forceful efforts, whimsical decisions and quick expectations of outcome might create a reverse consequence. A well-researched objective oriented short term and long term approach will bring permanent peace in CHT.

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