



Research Paper

A Study on Communal Conflict of 2012 In Kokrajhar District Of Btad, Assam

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Abstract:

This paper is brief about the 2012 communal conflict between the Bodos and Muslim settlers of BTAD in the Kokrajhar district of Assam. The western part of Assam, BTAD has been witnessing series of violence in recent years on 1996 between Bodos and Santhals, 2008 and 2012 between Bodos and muslim settlers. All round development in the lower Assam has been halted due to these revolts. In this paper it will explore the Bodo-Muslim conflict of 2012, highlight the displaced families and will study about the psychological impact of other/different communities towards the Bodos.

Keywords: Communal, Conflict, Bodo, Psychological, Impact

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Communalism is today the most serious threat to the mankind and its different forms and nature continuously destructing the civilization. Communalism is the consciousness which is prompted by one's belonging to a distinctive religious community. Communal roots or similar events of communal conflicts are behavioral manifestation of that consciousness¹. Communalism, in a broad sense means a strong understood of unhealthy attachment to one's own religion. It's an ideology that, in order to unify the community, within the community and emphasizes essential unity of the community against other communities. In this way it promotes belief in orthodox tenets and principles, intolerance and hatred of other religions and thus, divides the society. Positive aspect of communalism stands for the affinity of an individual towards his/her community involving efforts for the social or economic upliftment of his/her community. However in negative connotation, it is an ideology which emphasizes the separate identity of religious group in relation to other groups with a tendency to promote its own interests at the expense of others². Communal violence, in different parts of the world, is alternatively referred to as ethnic violence, non-state conflict, violent civil unrest, minorities' unrest, mass racial violence, inter-communal violence and ethno-religious violence.

Human history has experienced numerous episodes of communal violence. For example, in medieval Europe, Protestant clashed with Catholics, Christians clashed with Muslims while both perpetuated violence against Jews and Roman minorities. The Horn of Africa as well as West African regions have similar history of communal violence. Nigeria has seen centuries of communal violence between different ethnic groups particularly between Christian south and Islamic north, there were widespread communal violence in the ethnically diverse state of Zanzibar.³

Communalism as a political philosophy has its roots in the religious and cultural diversity of India. It has been used as a political propaganda tool to create divide, differences and tensions between the communities on the basis of religious and ethnic identity leading to communal hatred and violence. In ancient Indian society, people of different faith coexisted peacefully. Buddha was perhaps the first Indian prophet who gave the concept of secularism. Meanwhile, kings like Asoka followed a policy of peace and religious tolerance.

Medieval India witnessed the arrival of Islam in India marked by occasional occurrence of violence such as Mahmud Ghazni's destruction of Hindu temples and Mahmud of Ghor's attacks on Hindus, Jains and Buddhist. While religion was an important part of people's lives but there was no communal ideology or communal politics.

¹Jayaraj, MK. Communalism, Fundamentalism and Terrorism, thesis Dept. of Philosophy, University of Calicut, 2012.p.23

²Drithias.com, 13th May, 2019

³Pedia.org/wiki/Communal Violence

Rulers like Akbar and Sher Shah Suri followed the religious policy of toleration towards different cultures and tradition practiced across country⁴. The genesis of communal politics in India rose due to the policies of British Imperialism of “Divide and Rule”. A communal and distorted view of Indian history taught in school and colleges played a major role in rise and growth of communal feelings among the masses and the rise of communal and fundamentalist parties. The frequency of communal violence increased after the first partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon. The colonial rule was viewed by each side as favoring the other side resulting in a wave of communal riots. There was hundreds of communal violence from 1905 to 1947 including partition of India⁵. After the independence of India series of communal conflict took place mostly due to the conflicting political interest. Political parties have always had a hand in instigating and exploiting communal violence so as to meet their electoral interests. The politicization of the Mandir-Masjid issue and the subsequent demolition of the Mosque gave the BJP the opportunity to consolidate its vote banks. Though communal conflict are condemned in various quarter there is still inaction both from the administration and ruling governments in many states⁶.

The issue of the Bangladeshi illegal migrant had troubled the state of Assam for decades. The lack of authentic data on illegal migrant flows only adds to discomfort. The illegal Bangladeshi migrant issue tends to dominate the political, economic and social discourse of Assam. The lack of data of migration adds to sense of being ‘under siege’ by outsider as no one is sure as to the number of migrants visibly infiltrating all walks of life in Assam. The resent disturbances in Kokrajhar and Dhubri district of Assam has one again brought the issue of ethnic clash between Muslim and Bodo communities.

I. Survey of Literature

Bipan Chandra in his book “Communalism in Modern India” has discussed the factors leading to the communal politics in India.

Regarding, the preservation of Ethnic Identity, Girin Phukan in his book “Politics of Regionalism Northeast India” Mentioned that the urges of different identities have been a living phenomenon in the politics of region in particular and of the country in general.

Hira Charan Narzinary entitled “The Saga of the Bodos” clearly analyzed the historical, linguistic and political history of Bodo people with their struggle for geopolitical power and demand for a separate state of Bodoland.

The book ‘Bodoland Movement 1986-2001, A Dream and Reality’ published by All Bodo Student Union, Kokrajhar is a historical record of different stages of the Bodoland Movement.

Narayan Konwar in his book ‘Society and Politics in Assam’ has discussed the factors of autonomy movements by the tribals and said that the autonomy movement is the product of long days deprivation and backwardness of the tribal people in the fields of economy, education, culture and politics.

‘Political Identity Crisis of the Bodos and their Bodoland Movement’ written by Dr. Premananda Moshahary is an analytical and historical book on the political identity crisis of the Bodos and their struggle for revival of political identity and racial solidarity.

Statement of the Problem

The tribal people including the Bodos living in the plains of Assam remain backward in every sphere of life. The tribal people have been neglected and exploited by non-tribal people. Though the tribal belt and blocks had been created for the protection of the tribal people, the large scale encroachment of the tribal land by non-tribal people primarily the immigrant Bangladeshi had created pressure over land which results in ethnic and communal conflicts in the area killing hundreds of innocent people. Hence the Bodos under the leadership of All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU) had been struggling vigorously for a separate state since 1986 so their distinct Socio-cultural separate territorial arrangement i.e. Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) in 2003 consisting of four new districts.

II. Objectives

1. To study the Bodo conflict.
2. To highlight the causes of the tragic incident.
3. To study the displaced families during the conflict.
4. To study the psychological impact among the different communities towards Bodos.

⁴ Drishtias.com 13th May 2019. Communalism

⁵ Neil Stewart, Divide and Rule: British Policy in Indian History.p.19

⁶ Chandra, Bipan. Communalism in Modern India.p.6

III. Methodology

In this paper qualitative, analytical and descriptive method has been used. The work has been based on secondary data. Secondary data has been used from various books, journals, articles, guidelines from Government institutions and sources from the internet.

History of the Bodo Conflicts

The state of Assam and district of Kokrajhar in particular is populated by various communities such as Bodos, Assomiyas, Bengalis, Rajbonshis, Santhals, Rabhas, Garos and Muslims etc. that has been experiencing ethnic conflict for quite some time. The conflict which was erupted recently in the Kokrajhar district of Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD), Assam has displaced the Indigenous Bodos, Rajbanshis and the immigrant Muslims from their habitats.

The district Kokrajhar where the conflict has erupted is considered by the Bodos as the heartland of Bodoland and is the largest district of the BTAD, which was created on 10th February 2003 with an area of approximately 8821 Sq. km, within the state of Assam, after an amendment of the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution after a long struggle by the Bodos. Prior to the creation of BTAD, Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) was in existence since 20th February 1993 on northern banks of mighty Brahmaputra. The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) which spearheaded the movement for a separate state rejected the BAC in its Lunghin Session held in Karbi Anlong in Assam. The struggle for statehood continued resulting into signing of the Memorandum of Settlement (MOS) between the centre, state and the Bodo leaders in the year 2003 creating BTAD with four districts namely Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri as the area of BTAD.

Throughout the Bodoland movement and especially during the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) time period and the present BTC governance, the region experienced inter-community tensions and violence as the territorial claims to a Bodo homeland acquired strength in the political rhetoric and historical imagination, and the attempt to prove the rights of the autochthon over the land became a priority. Before becoming a full-fledge district, Kokrajhar was a small town with railway station that connected it with rest of the country. Under the administration of Bimola Prasad Chaliha Kokrajhar became subdivision in 1957 and upgraded to a full-fledge district in 1983.

Kokrajhar is in news due to the Bodo-Muslim conflict and undoubtedly the influx of population from neighboring Bangladesh is the major factor. Apart from this there are many emerging causes that are fuelling and aggravating the present situation. The influx of immigrants into Kokrajhar is not of a recent origin. When Kokrajhar was a part of undivided Golpara district, the immigrants came to district from Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur district of Bangladesh and settled on char lands from as early as 1901 and the immigration still continues. The density of population in Goalpara district in 1961 increased many folds compared to that of 1951 which clearly substantiated and supported immigration from across the border. Historically Goalpara district has been identified as the main gateway for the influx of population into Assam.

The conflict which is experienced today in the tribal areas between immigrant Muslims and Tribal communities is not recent origin. There have been many such conflicts in the past. The earlier conflicts had occurred due to lack of understanding of the land laws by immigrants in the belts and blocks, which brought them into conflict with locals from time to time. It is also well known that the creation of tribal belts and blocks have a direct relationship with the large scale immigration of people from eastern Bengal especially from Mymensingh area. The conflict which erupted in 1950s in the district of undivided Goalpara compelled about 150,000 Muslim immigrants to return or find alternate places.

The district of Kokrajhar experienced another conflict between the Adivashis and the immigrant Muslims during the 1980s just after the creation of Santhal Colony Tribal Block in the year 1977. The Santhal Colony Tribal block had 57,930 bighas of land in the western part of Assam, created by the Assam Government in 1977, vide notification no. RSD.9/77/11 dated 24.08.77, to protect the land of the Santhals and the tribes from the land-hungry immigrants. The conflict during the 1980s forced the immigrants to leave the colony and settle outside the border of the colony⁷.

When the conflict between the immigrant Muslims and the tribal communities occurred in Udalguri district in 2008, more than 55 people lost their lives. The reoccurrence of conflict between the immigrants and tribal communities in Assam reveals the animosities between the two communities over the years with the immigrants settling in the areas previously dominated by tribal communities. The failure of the administration to protect the tribal belt and blocks resulted vast tracts of land being illegally transferred to the immigrants and non-notified classes, which led to the displacement of tribal people to forest areas. The alienation of tribal people from their land is believed to be one of the causes of various tribal movements in Assam⁸.

⁷Manjil Basumatary, "Conflict Between the Bodos and the immigrants Muslims in Kokrajhar and the Rehabilitation.p.5

⁸ M.H. Rahman, BTAD: The Valley of Violence.p.7.

It is important to mention here that many new villages belonging to minority community have sprung up in the Kokrajhar district during the last 10-15 years, which is proof enough and clearly provides statistical evidence to the continual inflow of people be it from neighboring district or from across the border. The settlements have not only been in the belt and block areas but also encroached on the 'khas' lands meant for animal grazing. There is no denying the fact that every democratic organizations i.e. students wings of the Muslims, the AAMSU and the All Bodoland Minority Students Union (ABMSU) has got their right to protest against the injustice done to their interest but violent protest are not proper. Recently, there was incident of firing at a remote village under Gossaigaon sub-division under Kokrajhar district by some miscreants in which a labor belonging to settler community was killed. When the incident occurred it was taken for granted that the Bodos had committed crime. The next morning the AAMSU and the ABMSU gheraoed the Gossaigaon police station and shouted slogans against the Bodos in the heart of the Gossaigaon town. When the police station was gheraoed, the Additional Superintendent of Police, Kokrajhar was present in the police station. In front of the Additional SP, the mob shouted slogans against the administration and the SP for their failure to protect the life and properties of the people. After a day or two, the firing which has carried out had been proved and established, in which some Adivashis youths were found to be involved.

There are instances where several stray incidents had occurred and various agitation programs were launched by the AAMSU. It may be worthwhile to recollect a few to provide an overview of what is being reiterated



Bodo-Muslim Conflict, Kokrajhar 2012

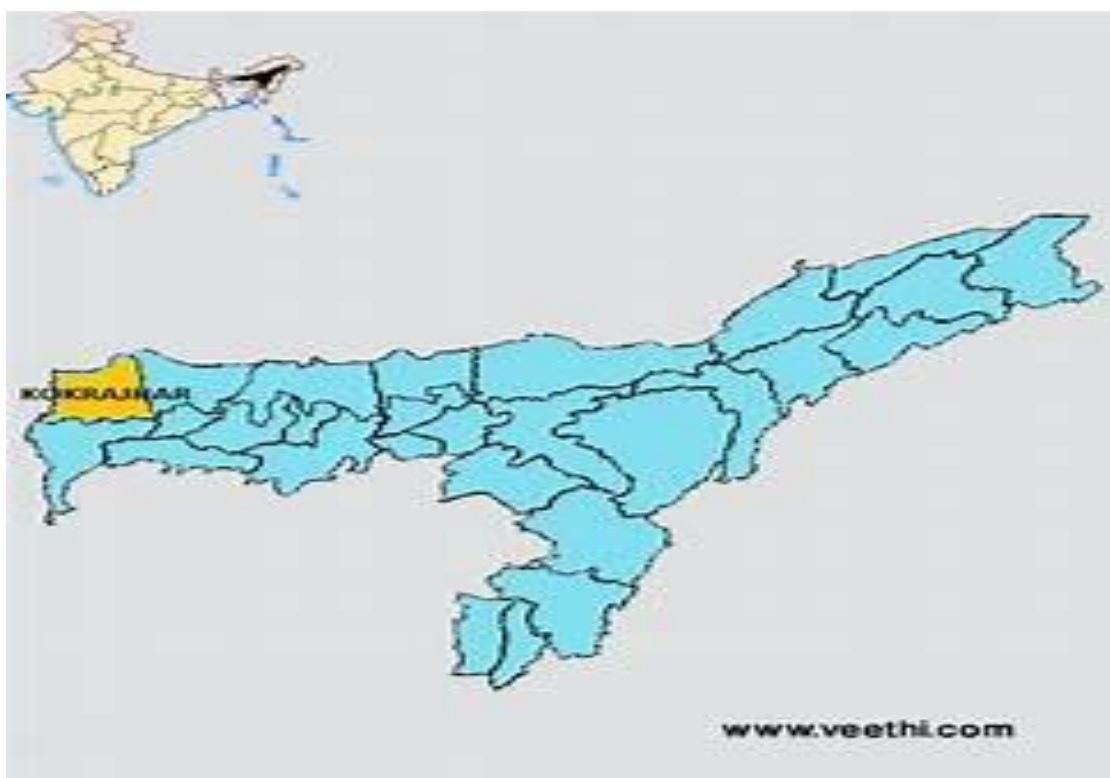
This is not the first time that ethnic violence has taken place in Kokrajhar or Bodo dominated areas. There was a firing from an automatic weapon by miscreants at a group of people at Anghihara village near Dotma under the district of Kokrajhar on 6th July 2012, which led to the killing of two persons and injuring three others belonging to settler community. It was also taken for granted by the settler community that the Bodos were involved in the incident. In retaliation the immigrant Muslim started attacking the Bodos. It was learned later that the incident was with timber smuggling as the people involved were those beside the river Gangia which flows through the Anghihara. Miscreants should not be considered belonging to and identified as members of a particular community having societal sanction for such harmful acts. This thought of judgment has to be inculcated by the people and administration in an effort to bring sanity in subsequent action.

Such unwarranted incidents in Kokrajhar district led to setting fire of two-wheelers, assault and physical attack by the immigrant Muslims, on many uninvolved Bodos and innocent people having tribal facial features. Without establishments of facts, the immigrant community should not feel justified in targeting a particular community for all the incidents that occur. The statement of the present Home Minister in the floor of Parliament on 8th August 2012 made it very clear that an underground organization of the Koch-Rajbongshis community, the Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO) was involved in the incident of 6th July 2012. After this incident, again two youths belonging to the immigrant Muslim community had been fired upon by a gang of miscreants at Magurmari, near Kokrajhar. There are many unrecorded deaths and if the recorded death is to be taken into consideration, the number unrecorded deaths will be higher.

On August 6 and 7, four more people were found dead and two injured in Kokrajhar and Chirang districts raising the figures of the number of people killed to 78. The violence that has disrupted life in the

BTAD areas started on July 19 and 20. On July 19, two student leaders belonging to the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) and All Bodoland Minority Students' Union (ABMSU) were shot in Kokrajhar district. This allegedly led to a retaliatory attack by the minority community, killing four former members of the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT). This in turn led to an escalation of violence in the BTAD areas and the nearby Dhubri district.

Since 19 July 2012, the riots in the Kokrajhar and the other three Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD) Assam have claimed about 113 lives. Out of the 113 deceased, 81 belonged to the Muslim community and 20 belonged to Bodo community. The number of displaced people goes over 400,000 (Sheik, 2013). The internal displacement has been variably described as the largest one since India's partition. It did not take a long to paint the riots in Assam as a "communal" one along the lines (Hindu-Muslim) witnessed in mainland India for centuries. As a violent demonstration was stage at Azad Maidan in Mumbai on 11 August 2012 to protest against the attacks on the Muslims in Myanmar and Assam (both unrelated) and over 50,000 people hailing from Northeast India fled from various states of mainland India due to physical attacks and threats from religious fundamentalists, a fight that started in the outskirts of Kokrajhar town, village called Joypur (Muslim dominated Village) where 100s of native Muslims gathered and came in argument with 4 surrendered BLT cadres (Bodoland Liberation Tiger) because of the gunshots they heard and brutally killed them and became a national issue. Further CBI charge sheeted against Moinul Hoque, former AMBSU president because of the shootout in Joypur and declared master mind behind Joypur lynching⁹.



Causes of the Tragic Incidents

While complex, the causes can be deciphered. First, the political empowerment of minority community in the BTAD areas in recent years has resulted in growing unease among the Bodo community. In May 2012, the Bodo Territorial Council (BTC) chief, Hagrama Mahilary, had accused the minority representative in the BTC, Kalilur Rehman of the Congress, of instigating the minority community against the Bodos. What further led to tensions between the two communities was the demand by the ABMSU and AAMSU for dissolution of the Bodo dominated BTC for its alleged involvement in Bodo-Muslim tensions.

Secondly, these political tensions have been further compounded by the perception in Bodo areas that illegal migration from Bangladesh is relegating the Bodos to minority status in their own land. The Bodos at present constitute 29 percent of the population, followed by the Rajbongshis (15 percent), Bengali immigrants (12 to 13 percent) and Santhals (6 percent).

⁹ Asian Centre for Human Rights, Assam Riots: Preventable but not prevented

Thirdly, the ‘perception’ of massive illegal migration has generated a fear of psychosis among the Bodo community that their ancestral land will be illegally taken away by the migrants. The lack of reliable data on the number of people coming in from Bangladesh in Assam aggravates this situation.

Fourth, the inclusion of illegal migrants name in the voters list is viewed as a deliberate ploy by some outside force to empower an outside group vis-à-vis the Bodos, so that the later lose their sense of distinct indigenous identity. This has created a siege mentality among them.

Fifth, the existence of armed groups like the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (anti-talk faction), the Kamatapur Liberation Organization (KLO), the Birsa Commando Force representing the Santhals, etc, further contributes to a situation of violence¹⁰.

A fact finding team from BJP, led by Vijay Goel, did touched the issue but the party hardly had a voice in the State. It said, “Timely action could have been taken, but the State government failed to assess and control the situation because of its vote-bank politics”. It also pointed that illegal migration was at the heart of the problem, as the Assam government neither bothered to prepare bothered to prepare the National Register of Citizens nor identified the illegal migrants, especially Muslims from Bangladesh and asked the border with Bangladesh to be sealed. Vast stretches of the Assam-Bangladesh border are porous and somewhere it is almost impossible to have fencing, especially where the mighty Brahmaputra cuts in Dhubri. Constant and closely monitored guarding, adoption of scientific patrolling in the border areas, efficient intelligence gathering, proficient maintenance of the National Register of Citizens are some of the ways by which infiltration can be checked but it requires strong political will which hard to come by in a state which depends majorly on who the Bangladeshis vote and so far that happens it’s only a matter of time before a similar event erupts in the whole state¹¹.

Immediate causes of the Incident

A turf war was going on in western Assam between the Bodos and the Muslim settlers and in certain pockets, the Adivashis. Matters have been made worse by disturbing political voices that have emerged over the past weeks.

BTC chief Hagrama Mahilary whose party BPF then was an ally of the ruling Congress in the state, has claimed that armed Bangladeshis from across the border had come in an incited the violence. His deputy at the council, Kampa Bargayari went a step further to state on television, that, “it is not a case of Bodos killing Muslims, it is a case of Muslim Killing Bodos”, a remark that made fellow panelist to shout him down, asking him not to communalise the issue.

Then there is Maulana Badruddin Ajmal, Lok Sabha Member of Parliament and president of one of Assam’s major opposition parties, the All India United Front (AIUDF) who claimed that armed man in olive green jungle fatigues went about killing Muslims settlers. On his part, Congress veteran and Chief Minister of Assam, Tarun Gogoi, asserted that “politically motivated forces” behind the riots could be trying to tarnish his image. Clearly, divergent political formations in the state have sought to interpret the present violence from narrow partisan perspectives. Crucially, this latest bout of violence has raised a question mark on the preparedness of both the state and the centre to deal with such flare ups¹².

Displaced families and Rehabilitation Measures

The Bodoland Territorial Council has remained one of the most disturbed and politically very sensitive areas since the Starting of the movement by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) in the later part of the 1980s. Whenever, conflict between the two communities occur people have to be on the run for their live with whatever can be carried physically at that moment. During the recent conflict people too had to face a similar situation and also had to hunt for alternate shelters. The extent of misery and financial loss is at times incalculable to these economically backward people. The number of the displaced goes over 400,000 in four district of BTAD including Dhubri (Sheik, 2013) and sheltered in 273 relief camps. The internal displacement has been veritably described as the largest one since India’s partition in 1947.

The immediate requirements of the affected people in the camp are food, drinking water, sanitation, medicine along with a few basic necessities. As per the government report, there are 79 relief camps in Kokrajhar district alone.

Below table showing subdivision-wise relief camps and inmates in Kokrajhar district as on 30-07-2012

Sl.No	Name of Subdivision	Number of Relief Camps	Inmates
01	Kokrajhar	24	23,434
02	Gossaigaon	40	74,396
03	Parbatjhora	15	159,900

¹⁰GoswamiNamrata “ Violence in the Bodo Areas: Deciphering the cause” August 9, 2012.p.13

¹¹Dosabandit, “Assam Riots 2012: A Saga of death and denial.p.11

¹²Wasbir Hussain “A Turf War”

The camps were setup on public land and on public buildings, including schools. Living conditions in the camp were reportedly dire, with lack of basic necessities and little access to health care and education services. Government schools and other buildings have been converted into relief camps thereby affecting the school students and general public. The Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) in its Report pointed out that no minimum standards were followed in Humanitarian Response. It mentioned that with no basic facilities such as adequate foods, medicines, drinking water, clothes, sanitation and hygiene and more people flocking to the already overcrowded relief camps, the humanitarian crisis are palpable. This point was further corroborated by the National Commission for Minorities in its report pointed out that the women are malnourished, children unclad, toilet facilities meager and hardly any place for people to take a bath. It was further observed that inmates of these relief camps also complained that their reports were not taken down as FIRs by the Police. Recurrence of violence was a major issue with most inmates¹³.

On 28th July 2012 PM Manmohan Singh visits Kokrajhar and said he was closely working with the state government to provide a sense of security to all the affected areas and to ensure that they can go back to their houses in the knowledge that their lives and livelihood are secure. Sing announced 2 lakh would be given to the next kin of those who died and Rs 50,000 to the injured. He announced Rs 100 crore for relief and rehabilitation of the affected people in the six affected districts, Rs 100 crore as special plan assistance for development programmes in the affected areas and another 100 crore Rs under the Indira Awaas Yojana. Rs 30,000 would be given to those whose houses were completely damaged. The Prime Minister ordered an inquiry committee to be set up to look into the violence and directed the state government to provide security to the affected so that they can go back home. 28th July, Tarun Gogoi said that the late arrival of central forces, including the Army, led to the spread of clashes in the State. So the buck stops nowhere when it comes to taking responsibilities. It is quite clear that the response from the State and the Centre has been awfully late and merely in announcing cash discounts to the affected most of whom will have to undergo bureaucratic hassles as and when peace gets restored which is not the solution to this problem. Not once did, either the PM or the CM, touch upon the issue of illegal immigration and the tension thereof¹⁴.

It is really unfortunate that the government of India too doesn't have the mechanism like many other countries to deal with such problems which occur frequently. Whenever people get displaced due to either ethnic violence or communal conflict, the responsibility lies with the state government and the district administration. This has led to wide discrepancies among different among different states in the same country. There is discrimination in the distribution of various relief grants without any justification to settle such contentious issues. The conflicts which occurred in 1993, 1996, 1998, 2008, 2011 and 2012 in the state of Assam are of similar nature. People got killed and got displaced due to communal violence or ethnic conflict. Although the effects are identical and the requirements of the displaced are also alike, they are not given equal treatment¹⁵.

More than 12,000 people displaced in this ethnic violence in the Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD) areas are still living in relief camps in Kokrajhar and Chirang districts. According to an official release, as many as 12,644 displaced people are still living in 20 relief camps. Of which 4615 are in Kokrajhar district of which belonging to the minority community and 395 Bodo and 7634 minority people are living in camps in Chirang district¹⁶.

Psychological Impact toward Bodos

The July 2012 clashes between the Bodos and illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in the three BTAD districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang and Baksa and in Bongaigaon and Dhubri districts are the indication that peace between the Bodos and non-Bodos in the Bodoland areas continue to be fragile. The genesis of the conflict between the Bodos and non-Bodo communities can be traced back to the British bringing in Adivasis and assigning them small pieces of land in exchange for their work in tea gardens. The Bodos have clamored for political and cultural autonomy through movements spearheaded by mass organization as well as armed groups, with each other claiming to be their sole representative. In the course of this movement, the Bodos have not only developed sharp contradictions among themselves but also with various communities sharing the same territory, which have sometimes overshadowed the Bodo people's movement for autonomy. Politically speaking, during the 1990s period, the state government always clandestinely pitched non-Bodos against in an attempt to prevent

¹³Manjil Basumatary, "Conflict Between the Bodos and the immigrants Muslims in Kokrajhar and the Rehabilitation.p.33

¹⁴Dosabandit, "2012 A Saga of Death and Denial"

¹⁵Manjil Basumatary, "Conflict Between the Bodos and the immigrant Muslims in Kokrajhar and Rehabilitation Issues"p.35.

¹⁶Ghosh Gitanjali, From Conflict to Accord and a Decade thenceforth- The plight of Internally Displaced Persons in Bodoland and the Law, October 2018.p.5.

ceding of areas to BAC. On the violence front instances such as of the Adivasi Cobra Militants and the Bengal Liberation Tigers attacking several Bodo villages proved that violence was not one-sided and was never about ethnic cleansing by the Bodos. Rather it was about violence and counter-violence, resulting in chain of violence, with its party trying to assert own point of view.

A violent protest was staged at Azad Maidan in Mumbai on 11 August 2012 to protest against the attacks on the Muslims in Myanmar and Assam and over 5,000 people hailing from North East India fled from various states of mainland India due to physical attacks and threats from religious fundamentalist because of their racial looks. It became evident that the Indo-Mongoloid people were seen as the proprietor of the riots.

Meanwhile, media's role has been hardly surprising. For the first week it tried to suppress the story but in today's world of an active citizenry in social media it is hard to fool people and hide facts or present them in the desired way to suit political or corporate agendas. Unethical comparisons were made to allegedly larger riots in India as if riots are commodity requiring attention only when casualties are of particular scale. When it became clearer that they can no longer hide it when, casualties kept mounting up, reports began to appear in newspapers from as late as 23rd July, hitting headlines only a day later. Journalist kept inflating the agony of the Muslims while downplaying the issue of illegal infiltration or Bodo dilemma and suffering. The problems of the Bodos, slowly being driven to a minority status were ignored and they were almost referred to as "Militants"¹⁷.

The Bodos were accused of instigating and resort to ethnic cleansing, to achieve their goal of gaining majority as the percentage of the Bodo population is just 30 while that of the non-Bodos is close to 70¹⁸. Another discriminatory policy can be seen from the government policies, when the Honorable Chief Minister Visited the affected people in Kokrajhar, he did not make any compensation announcement in regard to the deaths of the people in the recent violence but when he visited the district Dhubri, he made an announcement that the victims would be given a sum of Rs 8 lakhs. This stance may very well lead many to believe as appeasement towards the immigrants Muslims.

IV. Conclusion

The state of Assam, home to various communities has been experiencing conflict for the last decades. Due to recurrence of conflict, lakhs of people have been displaced from their habitats over a period of time, which needs immediate and positive responses from the state administration in terms of relief and rehabilitation. Conflicts erupts frequently on long standing issues which led to conflict in the Bodoland areas and rendered many homeless and displaced. There is no denying fact that these tensions between the Bodos and Bengali speaking Muslims are nothing new to the region. What makes the violence different from the earlier tension is the level of viciousness and rumors were largely in circulation both among the Bodos and Muslims.¹⁹

It has been established that due to an influx of people of several new villages belonging to settler communities have come in existence in Kokrajhar district of Assam in particular and the entire BTAD areas in general. Most of these villages are found to be located in the tribal belt and blocks areas which the government of Assam has created for the protection of tribal and other notified classes. The creation of tribal belts and blocks therefore has got relevance to this perennial ethnic problem combined with human wants for land and share of natural resources. In the present circumstances, while there is need of the rehabilitation programme and to look beyond the humanitarian assistance. Permanent steps should be taken that conflict between the communities doesn't take place.²⁰

The worst outcome of this conflict is the Psychological impact among people. People of different communities are in dilemma whether such conflict might occur in near future as the aim of the Bodo people or organizations is attaining separate state for the Bodo people which they haven't gained yet. To overcome such fear of consciousness the media has an important role in playing the positive character but few media houses has maligned the Bodo people that they quote as "Bodo Militant" if some terrorist organizations architect the crimes. And it has been found out in the above study that the violence was never one-sided and was never about ethnic cleansing by the Bodos. Rather it was about violence and counter violence, resulting in Chain of violence, with its party trying to assert its own point of view. Thus the media should work on the positive building of the society as a whole.

An observation of the ground reality shows the fact that a series of communal violence took place in western part of Assam in recent years between Bodos-Santhals, Bodos-immigrant Muslims are direct result of Instigation, conspiracy and motivated by third forces motored with an intention to bring an anarchy and unrest in BTAD area for the dissolution or modification of territorial political setup especially meant for the economic

¹⁷Dosabandit, "2012 A Saga of Death and Denial".p.7

¹⁸ M.H. Rahman, BTAD: The Valley of Violence.p.11.

¹⁹ Manjil Basumatary, "Conflict Between the Bodos and the immigrant Muslims in Kokrajhar and Rehabilitation Issues"p.39.

²⁰ Rustam Brahma, "Violence in BTAD is instigated by third party".p.9

and political development of the indigenous tribal people, a long time neglected groups, as it primarily encompasses the tribal Belt and block. The state, authority first used the divide and rule policy to control the Bodo masses movement by instilling intra-communal conflicts between ABSU and PTCA, BLT and NDFB; then inter communal conflicts between Bodo-Muslims, Bodo-Santhal, Bodo-Rajbongshi etc.

It is the right time for the people to understand that this kind of violence is not solution to any problem; rather this may make the original problem more critical. For the development of BTC area and Assam, the people will have to develop humanitarian values, fraternity and respect for other communities in the greater interest of the Nation.

Reference:

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