

**POLITICS OF ETHNIC ASSERTION AND SUSTAINABILITY
OF LAND: A CASE OF ADIVASIS IN KOKRAJHAR
DISTRICT**

*A Dissertation Submitted to Dibrugarh University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for Award of the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Political Science*



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2018

Acknowledgements

The present work “*Politics of Ethnic Assertions and Sustainability of Land: A case of Adivasis in Kokrajhar District*” is an effort which may not be documented other than the support and inspiration of many people to whom I am grateful.

At the very commencement, I would like to take the name of my guide Dr. BorunDey who has been the major source of aspiration in my research. My guide Dr. BorunDey has constantly observed my work, raised issues that are pertinent to my research that I was tend to overlook and also reminded me the stipulated timeframe of the research work. He has ensured maximum liberty in placing my individual opinions and arguments for the research. Given that he has also educate me about the limitation of our research and articulate those arguments on track. It will be not easy for me to summarize both theoretical as well as empirical issues in the dissertation if he often not cross-examines what should be addressed and how. He helped me in numerous ways to develop insights on the issue as well as the important technical assistance. I therefore acknowledge my heartfelt sincere gratitude to Dr. BorunDey.

I would like to offer my gratitude to Professor RudramanThapa, the HoD of Political Science of Dibrugarh University, for his keen interest and kind suggestions and encouragements towards my work.

I express of thankfulness to my teachers of the department of Political Science of Dibrugarh University, Dr. Dolly Phukon, Dr. Dibyajyoti Dutta, Dr. Obja Borah Hazarika, Ms. Amrita Pritam Gogoi, Dr. Kaustubh Kumar Deka, Ms. Phulmoni Das, Ms. Urbi Das; who have expressed their keen interest in my work and encouraged me in many ways.

I would like to express my heartiest thanks to my teacher Dr. BhaskarMili, former faculty of D.K.D college, who help me in the early draft of a few chapters and helped me to rearticulate some of the problems that I elevated. I also express my gratefulness to my college teachers of D.K.D college; Dr. Navanita Devi, Dr. DhirenTamuli, Dr. Rajiv Thengalfor their kind help during my research work.

I am also thankful to many other people who helped me in carrying out this work. I am privileged to acknowledge my gratefulness to Mr. SatyanathTudu one of the leading activists of All Adivasi Student Association of Assam for his guidance while conducting the field study. He has guided me to visit persons who are turn important for my research. I would also like to acknowledge, Professor Walter Fernandes, the Senior Fellow of North Eastern Social Research Centre for his references to the conceptualization of land alienation and while analyzing the whole issue of land alienation of Adivasis.

Again, I want to show my heartiest gratitude to Dr. Bikash Chandra Dash, Assistant Professor of Assam University, Diphu Campus for his advice and encouragement while conducting the study. I would like to offer my appreciation to Dr. Lipson Rongpi for his valuable advice in understanding the problems of land alienation among the tribals of Assam. I express my

heartiest gratefulness to Dr. Sristidhar Dutta, retired professor in History of Rajiv Gandhi University for his valuable advice while conducting the historical part of the research study.

I am grateful to the librarians and other staff of Lakshminath Bezboruah Central Library of Dibrugarh University and North Eastern Social Research Centre for their cooperation towards the conclusion of my work. My work would have remained incomplete if I would not have received cooperation from the District Commissioner office of Chirang and Kokrajhar district, Land Revenue Department of Bodoland Territorial Council, Kokrajhar. Again, I am also obliged to the entire staff of Action Northeast Trust and Promotion & Advancement of Justice, Harmony and Rights of Adivasis for their encouragement and data for conducting the whole research study. They have provided me all the necessary information as I required for my study. I offer my sincere gratitude to all of them.

I am greatfull to my parents Mr. Dulu Mahanta and Mrs. Punya Mahanta, who are always become my source of inspiration. My mother always encourages me in conducting the research objectively. My father always encourages me immensely during my research work. I have no words to display my appreciation towards them. I am also gratified to my other family members for their love, friendliness and inspirations.

I am also thankful to my hostel seniors, Himanghsu Deka, Abhijit Hazarika, Bhaskar Borah, Ujjal Boruah, Rakesh Chteri for their supports and help in while conducting the filed study. I would also like to appreciate the encouragement made by my research scholar friends, Shivanath Chutia, Rahul Gupta, Sun Gogoi, Nangendra Nath Gogoi, Subha Mangal Chakma,

BudhindraNathGogoi, TehsinaYesrin, Gyanashree Kotoki, Bedika Neog, Violate Hazarika etc. I would also like to acknowledge all those who have directly and indirectly help me conducting the research.

I also appreciate all my colleagues of Sri Sri Aniruddha Deva Junior college for their questions and arguments made on different issues pertaining to the research. I would like to offer my gratitude to my friend Monoshe, Unisha, Dibyanjali, Shayna for their consistent help and encouragement during my whole study. Again, I express my heartiest thanks to Ankur Saikia, Satydeep Lahakar, Bijoy Sarak, Robin Pegu, Pronam Prabhu Boruah, Jayanta Chutia, Bijoy Kumar Dutta, Nipu Sahu for their encouragement for conducting the whole study.

My friend Monoshe, Biraj and Unisha have encouraged me in many ways while conducting the research. They helped me conducting the content analysis, the grammatical errors and always pointed out the first hand errors of the compositions. I am highly thankful for their encouragement and help.

Although, I was profoundly benefited by so many people, however, for all limitation of the research study, the entire responsibility is gone to me.

Date:

Signature

List of Abbreviations

AASAA :	All Adivasi Student Association of Assam.
AAV:	Assam Adivasi Vision
AAWAA :	All Adivasi Women Association of Assam
ABSU :	All Bodo Student's Union
ADC :	Autonomous District Council
ANT :	Action Northeast Trust
APTL :	Assam Plain Tribal League
APTL :	Assam Plain Tribal League
ASDMA :	Assam State Disaster Management Authority
ASS :	Assam Sahitya Sabha
ATTSA :	Assam Tea Tribe Student Association
BAC :	Bodo Autonomous Council
BEC :	Bodo Executive Council
BLT :	Bodo Liberation Tiger
BPAC :	Bodo People Action Committee

BPPF :	Bodo Peoples Progressive Front
BTAD:	Bodo Territorial Area Districts
BTC :	Bodoland Territorial Council
CPR :	Common Property Resources
DC:	District Council
ETF:	Eco Task Force
FAO :	Food and Agriculture Organization
FPF :	Forest Protection Force
HDI :	Human Development Indices
ICITP :	Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Population
IDP :	Internally Displaced Person
KM :	Kilo Meter
MOS :	Memorandum of Settlement
NCPCR:	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NDFB :	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NE :	North East
NGO :	Non- Governmental Organization

NRC :	National Register of Citizens
PAD :	People's Action of Development
PAJHRA :	Promotion & Advancement of Justice, Harmony and Rights of Adivasis
PTCA :	Plain Tribal Council of Assam
PTCA(P) :	Plain Tribal Council of Assam (Progressive)
SeSTA :	Seven Sisters Development Assistance
ST :	Scheduled Status
U.S :	United States
UN :	United Nations
UT :	Union Territories
UTNLF :	United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front
Via :	By means of/ Through
Viz :	Namely
Vs. :	Against

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Introduction

1.1.Statement of the Problem:-

“India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only.”¹

- Mark Twain

India is one of the long-standing and prominent civilisations of the world. The region spreads from the Himalayas in the North to sun-drenched coastal villages of the south and the humid tropical forests on the south-west coast, from the fertile Brahmaputra valley on its east to the Thar Desert in the west.²The region has diverse numbers of ethnic, linguistic, religious groups that make it as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic society, which ultimately results in the form of heterogeneous society. Different types of communities have been living in the region since the time of immemorial. Among these communities, Adivasis are the remarkable one, who has been living in the region since the stone era. Historically there is no evidence of commencement of human beings in India. The Adivasis in India is considered to be the first indigenous community, who came to this land before the Aryans, Dravidians, Mongolians etc. India is mostly a diverse country and also has a long history of migration to the land that expresses its tremendous diversity and unique character. Though it was believed that Dravidians were the original inhabitants of the land, but later it was proved that before the Dravidians, Adivasis were the first who came to this land. The Bench containing Justice MarkandeyKatju and Justice GyanSudhaMisra of Supreme court of India

also put forward a judgment, which clears the fact that Adivasis are the original inhabitants of India.³ Some of the historians believed that Adivasis were the first community of the region as they belong to the Australoid race. The archaeological study of India reveals that the human body parts that were found while mining the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro are similar to the Pre-Dravidian Mundas of Chota Nagpur. Notable eminent historian M. Banerjee proclaimed, “The earliest inhabitants of Indian are now to be judged with the ethnic type of people unearthed at Mahenjodaro and Harappa which ‘represent some culture yet unknown to us of Dravidian or proto-Australoid origin. The human remains at Mahenjodaro show a close affinity with the pre-Dravidian Munda of Chota Nagpur.’”⁴ Again historians like Cornel Dalton and Risley alleged that the Adivasis reached at the region of Chota Nagpur from Cambodia and Vietnam through crossing Burma, present-day Myanmar and Assam, where history cannot be reached.⁵ Thus, from above interpretation of the various eminent historians, it has been revealed the fact that the Adivasi is the ‘first people’ of the land of India.

Back in history, they were the self-governing and self-determining community that was primarily inhabited in the forests and river bank areas. Formerly they hunted animals and collected foods from the forest areas for survival; but in the course of time like other communities of the globe, Adivasis also developed themselves from hunter-collected societies to cultivation based society. Forest and rivers are the primary sources of survival for Adivasis. Because while hunting they required forest and for cultivating crops they need the river bank areas, which is very useful for agriculture. Therefore, there is an intimate relation between land and Adivasi. However, they remained undeveloped and irrational than other communities of India due to their unorthodox and superstitious believes and culture. They lived a very

marginalised and neglected existence in the society. In most of the parts of pre-colonial period, they were hypothetically a part of the 'Unknown frontier' of the respective states, where the rule of the reign did not expand, and Adivasis administrated themselves outside the influence of particular ruler. Thus, despite their marginalised and disfranchised socio-economic conditions, they lived peacefully in their own region without any interference from the outsiders. However, the whole scenario was changed after the arrival of the Britishers.

At first, British East India Company came to India for business purpose. However, after occupying the trade command of the country, they tried to capture the political power due to the absence of strong ruler and prevailing internal conflicts among the rulers. Thus after the historical battle of Plassey of 1757, British company for the first time occupied political power of Bengal and gradually expanded its territory to the other regions of the country. For that purpose, British introduced the concept of private property and land ownership system and enacted Permanent settlement act of 1793 in the Calcutta presidency to which Jharkhand belonged in order to deprive the Adivasis from their land rights.⁶ As for the effective and efficient running of the country, they need a large amount of money and during that time the only source of getting money was to increase the land revenue. Earlier the land revenue system was not permanent, and also the mode of payment of land revenue was in the form of labour, not in the form of money. However, during the time of Colonial administration, they made land as a purchasable, transferable and profitable commodity and also changed the earlier mode of payment of land revenue. In order to regularise the collection of land revenue, they introduced 'Zamindari' system in order to control over the vast territories, including the Adivasis territories and also selected feudal lords for revenue

collection through the Permanent Settlement act of 1793. After the land act, British enacted forest act and imposed taxes on forests on which Adivasis people were dependent for their daily livelihood. The Adivasis had inhabited these areas for several centuries, and they were not economically stable so that they could not be able to pay taxes to the British government for using forest resources. Again due to the lack of land document they lost their land. Colonial power fundamentally required the mineral-rich tribal areas that were also rich in raw materials.⁷ Thus British alienated the Adivasis from their own land that can be considered as their source of economy and the hub of their ethnicity and identity.⁸ Their very identity and culture are fundamentally dependent on their land. Land means a lot for them. For Adivasis land means a source of livelihood, a source of belief, culture and customs and also a source of their relationship with their ancestral people. Therefore, land can be considered as the way of life, and alienation and deprivation of that land resulted in the form of marginalisation and exploitation of the Adivasis in the society.

While in North East context, in the early 1820s, the British East India Company began a large scale of production of tea in the region. British used the Chinese seeds, Chinese tea planting techniques to cultivate tea for export. In the year 1826, through Yandaboo treaty East India Company took over the region from Ahom dynasty and for the first time in 1837, tea garden was established at Chabua in Dibrugarh, and from 1840 the Assam Tea Company commenced the production of tea on the profitable basis. The rapid expansion of the tea industry and its highly labour intensive nature meant that large scale of labourers was required to work for plantation. Like Permanent settlement act of 1793, Assam Land act of 1834 was also enacted in order to acquire the land for commercial purposes specifically for tea

cultivation. Again, the Charter act of 1833 that introduced land ownership to the Europeans that paved the way for tea, rubber and coffee plantation in the region.⁹ Again, in order to manage the wasteland, British implemented Waste Land Grant Rules of 1838, through which they desired to acquire a large amount of wasteland "to facilitate the commencement of tea enterprises in Assam and its expansion."¹⁰ The British tea planters hoped that the local tribes such as Ahom, Konch, Bodo, Tiwa, Deuri, Chutia, Moran, Muttack of Assam would ready to work in the tea plantation. However, the local tribesmen never wanted to become a wage labourer under the British tea planters. Again, the local labourers were not suitable for plantation. Therefore, the Adivasi tribesmen of Jharkhand, Orissa and Chhattisgarh became the next choice of British for plantation. The British colonial government finally compelled to believe that the landless labours would be far easier to exploit and they were more hardworking towards their work in comparison to the local tribesmen of Assam. Again, the slothful and undedicated nature of local tribes towards their work compelled the colonial administration to think for an alternative source of labours, especially the rootless and landless labourers from outside the region. Thus in order to meet a large number of labours, the colonial administration introduced a process of importing labours from the then Bengal and Madras Presidencies of British India to which Adivasi areas belonged. Already through the Permanent settlement act of 1793 and forest act, the Adivasis of Chota Nagpur regions lost their home and land. Their land and Common Property Resources were encroached by the Colonisers. Again due to their marginalised and disfranchised socio-economic condition, they were not in a position to pay money for using forest land and resources. Thus they gradually lost their traditional forest and land rights, that made them way less because the forest and land can be considered as their way of life and way of sustaining their culture and identity.

Even there was a rumour that the Colonial administration began a famine in the Adivasi inhabited areas of Chota Nagpur region by discontinuing and stopping the supplies of food that resulted in a brutal famine in the Chota Nagpur region.¹¹ Such type of deprivation and alienation from their land and CPR's led to a victimised and marginalised condition of Adivasis in their region. When the Colonisers proposed them for migrating to the land of Assam in order to work in the tea plantations, they jumped at the opportunity and ready to migrate to Assam in search of better life and economic conditions. Thus, from 1840's the process of migration was started primarily from the Adivasi regions of Central and Eastern India to Assam as wage labours of tea plantation. The abusive behaviour of British was imitated from the fact that all the first batch labourers that were imported from Chotanagpur region in the year 1841 were died due to starvation and disease.¹² SriramAnanthanarayanan in his article "Scheduled tribe status for Adivasis in Assam" asserted that the labour recruitment policy of the British administration was coldhearted and inhuman in nature that had been shown from numbers of instances of swindle, forceful enrollment, abduction and anguish.¹³ Thus, it can be said that the recruitment process of tea labourers in the plantation is totally based on force and exploitation. In 1859 only 2000 labourers were imported that increased to 1,10,000 by the year 1909.¹⁴ While importing the labour from central India, the British colonial administration introduced a new labour act, namely Transport of Native Labour act in the year of 1863 in order to regulate the transport of labourers from the then Bengal and Madras Presidencies and to legalise the earlier informal labour recruitment system. Again, the *Sardari*¹⁵ system was implemented by the colonial administration under the Amendment act of 1870.¹⁶ As per the Administrative report of Bengal for the year of 1867-68, 22,800 labourers were imported to the land of Assam.¹⁷ Thus, a large amount of Adivasis and other

communities were imported in order to work in the tea plantation. Again, there was another dimension of the migratory history of Adivasis to Assam, especially to then Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar district. Due to the Santhal rebellion of 1855, most of the Adivasis were victimised by the British policy of extermination. British introduced martial law in order to stop such type of growing agitations against the British government. During that time, they were already deprived of the traditional land rights that resulted in the form of socio-economic marginalisation and disfranchisement of Adivasis in their own region. Therefore, the Christian missionaries that were working in the Santhalparagana encouraged them to migrate to the state of Assam in search for better lifestyle. But, the inherent reasons for such migration was to weak and destabilised the Santhal rebellion of 1855 against the colonial administration. All the Adivasis of Assam had a history of deprivation, exploitation and torture. This is not only applicable to the Adivasis, who were migrated as wage labourers of tea plantations, but also applicable to the other Adivasis, who were brought by the Rev. Lara Olsen Skrefsrudin order to restore and stabilise the condition of deprived and victimised Adivasi tribesman from the SanthalParaganas to the Santhal colony of Assam. They were migrated to the land of Assam in order to stabilise their life. On this matter, some of the historians revealed that they were brought to the region in order to weak the Santhal mass rebellion against the Colonial administration. However, after independence, the Adivasis, brought by the Skrefsrud merged with the 'Tea-tribes' that were imported as wage labourers.

After migrating to the region of Assam, the socio-economic conditions of Adivasis, were not so good, who were inside the tea estate. In the new region, they lived a marginalised and deprived life. All of their fundamental rights were taken away from them forcefully by the British colonial administration. Again in 1859, British enacted Workmen's Breach of

Contract act to provide punishment if any labour broke the contract. This act was in favour of tea planters, which rescued them from the scarcity of labour. Hundreds of labourers were killed by the British as a punishment for breaking the contracts. Thus, their condition was worse than animals. The conditions of the Adivasis in the colonial period can be reflected in the words of then Chief Commissioner of Assam Fuller, as he asserted, "They were deprived of all their freedom, and their derogatory conditions and atrocities remind one of the slaves running in Africa and the global slave trade".¹⁸ However, in comparison with the Adivasis of tea plantation, the socio-economic conditions of Adivasis of outside gardens were quite impressive. Adivasis of Santhal colony of then Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar enjoyed the tribal status and also had the land *pattas*¹⁹ during the British colonial period. Their land rights were protected under the provision of Tribal belts and blocks. After independence, they were politically trapped, and along with they were deprived of scheduled status through including them within the 'Tea-tribes'.

Now a day, these Adivasis people are popularly known as 'Tea –tribes', a politically given term. According to the 2011 census, 17% of the total population of Assam is tea tribes. Among them, 4 million are tea tribes, and 2 million are ex-tea tribes, those who once active as labour but now have left the job for other employment opportunities and also include other Adivasis, who are never engaged in tea plantation that was brought by the Skrefsrud. Eminent social scientist Walter Fernandes in his article "Assam Adivasis: Identity issues and liberation" revealed that probably 50 to 60 % of the tea tribes are Adivasis and the majority of the Adivasis are found in lower parts of the Assam, especially in Chirang, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Udalguri and Baksa. In those areas, the Adivasis are the majority, and only a few are fluent in Assamese. Hence most of them communicate in Jharkhand tribal

language.²⁰ Again some of the Adivasi leaders tried to revert their Jharkhand based original identity that leads to ethnic conflicts.²¹ Local people consider those Adivasi migrants as a threat towards their local culture, tradition and identity. The underlying cause of conflict between the Adivasis and local ethnic groups is the management of tea estates. Regarding the ethnic conflict in Bodoland, it can be said that tea management is very much responsible for the ethnic unrest in Bodoland between Bodos and Santhals, because the management inspires them to settle down in the forest land that was the primary source of survival of Bodos and that ultimately resulted in the form of brutal violation in the region of Bodoland.²²

The Bodos are an ethnic and linguistic aboriginal group of Brahmaputra valley, mostly found in Udalguri, Chirang, Baksa, Sonitpur, Goalpara, Kokrajhar districts of Assam. Historically they are the deprived section of the society as their rights are violated in the hands of outsiders and state actors. The continuous deprivation from their land and threat towards their culture and identity originated agitations against other ethnic communities whom Bodos considered to be the outsiders of the region that ultimately resulted in the formulation of Bodo Autonomous Council after the Bodoland Peace Accord, signed in 2003 by the Centre, the Assam government and the disbanded Bodo Liberation Tiger militants. But other tribes such as Adivasi, Bengali-Muslims, KonchRajbanogshi also have been living for a long time in Bodoland. Their cultural differentiation led to the clash of Bodo with other tribes of the region. While tracing the genesis of the ethnic violence that has been taking place in the Bodoland, Prof RajibHandique of the Department of History at Gauhati University asserts that it has its roots from the time of colonial era. He asserts, "It is the land hunger and the problem of identity of getting marginalised in one's own homeland that leads to ethnic clashes and takes the form of ethnic cleansing."²³ In 1996, the Bodo-Adivasi conflict resulted in the

displacement of over 2.5 lakh people in Kokrajhar and Gossaigaon.²⁴ Similar clashes occurred in 1998, triggering another wave of exodus between both the communities. Hundreds lost their lives. The attacks on Adivasis led to the birth of All Adivasi Students Association of Assam and Adivasi militant forces like the Adivasi Cobra Force and Birsa Commando Force that are continuously engaged in the process of identity formulation of Adivasis in the region of Assam. The land alienation is larger among the Adivasis in Bodoland. From the report of Assam State Disaster Management Authority(ASDMA), it has revealed the fact that due to annihilation and subsequent reciprocal violence, approximately 4,85,921 people displaced from their own land and homes and out of which 2,46,582 were residing in the relief camps across the Chirang and Kokrajhar district.²⁵ It is evident from the fact that not only the ethnic conflicts are responsible for the alienation of Adivasis land; but also the governmental policy of land acquisition, land agreements, land capitalism and private companies are responsible for the alienation of Adivasis land that harms their very identity. They lost their source of livelihood as well as a source of identity. In the absence of a proper administrative system, the Adivasis are gradually evicted from their own land. Their land is often grabbed by the Bodos and by the Bengali Muslims. Continuous deprivation from their land has a negative impact on their culture and identity. In the present era, they are politically trapped by the politicians and often their problematic issues are used by them for their own benefits. Therefore, the research study mainly tries to focus on the issue of identity and land sustainability of Adivasis in Bodoland, specifically confined to the district of Kokrajhar of BTAD.

1.2.The Significance of the Study:-

The whole study tries to explore the issue of ethnic articulation and assertion and the sustainability of Adivasis land in Assam specifically focus on the Kokrajhar district. The report regarding the human development reveals that the Adivasis are the most vulnerable section of the society not only in Assam but also in the other parts of the country. Hence, the conditions of Adivasis in Assam can be considered as worst in comparison to other parts of the country. After coming to the region, the Adivasis became estranged from their traditional beliefs and culture. During the British period, the conditions of Adivasis who were engaged in plantation works were most suffered by the exploitative policies of British. After the independence, the same conditions of Adivasis is continuing. But in the contemporary era, the exploitative histories of Adivasis reach its endpoint, where their distinctive identity, tradition, belief, rituals, land right become a menace. The political turmoil, the rise of ethnonationalism, modernisation, industrialisation and the emergent governmental neo-liberal policy brings ethnic conflict in the region, where Adivasis face brutal victimisations and even exterminations. Most of the Adivasi leader believes that the state is playing a negative role towards the Adivasis. The government attempts to emasculate the Adivasis economically, intellectually, socially, culturally as well as politically. The governmental double sided policy is very much responsible for the impoverished condition of the Adivasis. Some of the Adivasis intellectuals consider it as a conspiracy of the government that throwing them towards the darkness. Merely, all such factors are responsible for diminishing and victimise condition of the Adivasis in the region of Assam. The study fundamentally tries to provide a platform to analyse the problematic areas that are faced by the Adivasis in the Assam towards their identity and land rights. Again, the study is helpful while understanding the socio-economic and political deprivation and victimisation of Adivasis in the region of Assam. The

study is quite significant from the sense that it tries to provide a brief historical analysis of the Adivasis of Assam and also provides a clear understanding about the impact of political turmoil, rising ethnonationalism and ethnic cleansing on the sustainability and survivals of Adivasis in the region of Assam. Again, the existing research domain primarily focuses on the tribal land alienation and their identity assertiveness, but the study tries to give a comprehensive understanding of the conditions of non-tribal in the Sixth Schedule. The study tries to highlight the state-sponsored discrimination towards the underprivileged in the region of the Bodoland on which the Kokrajhar district belongs. That is why the study is quite significant from victimised non-tribals in the domain of *tribalraj*²⁶.

1.3.Review of Related literature:-

Numerous books, articles in journals and newspapers are obtainable regarding the Adivasis in Assam. Existing literature on Adivasis in Assam is vast. These books and articles emphasise on nature of socio-economic and political conditions of Adivasis, how the major political parties manipulate them, their role in the Assam legislative assembly election as well as Lok Sabha election in Assam, demand for scheduled tribe status for Adivasis in Assam, how they are deprived of their land rights etc. The review of literature can be categorised into three

interrelated themes: historical migration of Adivasis to Assam, identity issues and liberation of Adivasis and sustainability of Adivasis land, particularly in Kokrajhar district.

1.3.1. Historical Migration, Deprivation and Adivasis:-

Adivasis are not the original inhabitant of Assam. They were imported by the British tea planters to work in tea garden as wage labour from the present day Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh and Orissa. While in case of Adivasis of lower Assam²⁷, they have a separate migratory history. In order to weaken the Santhal rebellion of 1855, the British colonial government imported a certain amount of Santhalis from SanthalParagana to Santhal colony, then Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar district in the later decade of 19th century. Manogobindra Banerjee in his book "A Historical Outline of Pre-British Chotanagpur(from earliest times to 1765)" explores how the Adivasis were migrated to the land of India in the stone era. While the book highlights the socio-economic and cultural conditions of Adivasis in the pre-colonial era in the region of Chotanagpur of Central India. The book provides a wide outlook of the Adivasis from the time of emancipation of human beings in the region. An eminent historian, Sir Edward Gait in his book "A History of Assam" also provides a comprehensive analysis of the history of Assam and while deciphering the history of Assam, he also highlights about the pre-historical migratory process of Adivasis to the Chotanagpur region. Again, Hamlet Bareh in his book "History and Culture of Khasi people" describes the migratory process of Khais to the region as a first indigenous community and their socio-cultural practices. Here, the writer makes a comparative analysis of the cultural similarities between Adivasis and Khasis. Again the notable historians, Amalendu Guha in his famous book "Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom struggle and electoral politics in Assam 1826-1947" studied region's plantation economy. Guha mainly elaborated the labour intensive tea plantation system

and conditions of their labourers. Again, Dr D. John Paul in his book, "A social work approach to the Tea plantation labour in India" briefly explained the migratory process of tea garden labour to the region and the reasons for such type forced migration of labour. He also discussed the socio-political and economic condition of tea garden labourers in the region during the time of British period and how they were exploited in the hands of colonial administrators, the British tea planters as well as in the hands of feudal lords or 'zamindars'. P. Griffith in his work, "The history of Indian Tea Industry" and E. Gait in his work, "The history of Assam" have made a brief reference to the historical background and development of tea industry. Again, in the book "Ethnicity and Political Economy in North East India" edited by H. Srikanth and Rooplekha Borgohain, they fundamentally highlight the issue of ethnicity and political economy in the region of North East. In one of the chapters of the book entitled "Of people, land and laws: Colonialism, Immigration and history of land laws in Assam(1826-1947)" specifically highlights the development of tea plantation in the region of North East and somehow reflects the socio-economic conditions of the plantation labours. Ranajit Das Gupta in his paper "Plantation Labour in Colonial India" published in the edited book, entitled "Plantations, Proletarians and Peasants in Colonial era", by E. Valentine Daniel, Henry Bernstein and Tom Brass provides a brief analysis of the plantation economy and the socio-economic conditions of the planters under the regime of Colonial proletarians in the colonial period. It reflects the marginalised conditions of the plantation labourers in the tea, rubber and coffee plantation in various parts of the country.

SriramAnanthanarayan in his article "Scheduled Tribe status for Adivasis in Assam" briefly elaborated the historical background of Adivasis in Assam. He described how they were migrated to the region by the British planters. Again one of the eminent scholar of North

Eastern Social Research Centre, Walter Fernandes in his article “Assam Adivasis: Identity issues and liberation” briefly elaborated about the origins of Adivasis and the reasons which were compelled them to migrate to Assam as a tea garden worker. The whole article provides a brief analysis of marginalised and deprived socio-economic conditions of the Adivasis as wage labourers of tea plantations in Assam. Again, Bodhi Sattwakar in his article “British colonial policy of immigration in Assam(1826-1910)” highlights the migratory process of Adivasi tribesmen to the region of Assam from the then Chotanagpur as wage labourers to work in the tea plantations. Along with he reflects the British policy of migration that is primarily for fulfilling their own interest. An eminent scholar Wilfred Topno in his article “Adivasi JanagosthirBuronji” specifically analyses the migratory history of Adivasis to the land in the pre-stone era and the colonial period to the land of Assam. Again, Xavier Topno in his article “SantalHul 1855-1857” highlights the historic Santhal rebellion in the region of SanthalParagana in the year of 1855 against the exploitative system of British and the consequences of such agitation that resulted in the form of migration of Adivasi tribesmen from their original birthplace to Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar districts of Assam.

1.3.2. Identity Issues, Liberation and Adivasis:-

The issue of identity and the ethnic assertion is one of the significant issues of Adivasis in the region of Assam. While deciphering the ethnic assertiveness of Adivasis in Assam, it is essential to understand the whole process of identity and ethnicity and specifically the ethnic assertiveness among the tribal communities of Assam. The whole study is based on the theory of ethnicity, identity while exploring the issue of ethnic assertiveness and sustainability land of Adivasis in the district of Kokrajhar district.

Paul R. Brass in his book "Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison" describes ethnicity and nationalism from a series of examples and case studies from India. He also makes a comparative analysis of India with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and presents a descriptive analysis of the ethnic problems of India. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen in his book "Identity & Violence: The Illusion of Destiny" defines the concept of identity and links with the violence. He elaborates some of the subtle problems of the society that human beings are facing in the contemporary era. Along with he also links identity with fundamentalism, multiculturalism and terrorism. Anjali Kurane in her book "Ethnic identity and Social mobility" describes ethnicity from the lens social structure. Here, he elaborates the process of identity formulation and the contribution of ethnic identity in the development of society. Again, in the book "Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural identity in North East India" edited by B. Pakem, reflects the process of identity formulation among the various ethnic tribes of the region of North-East India. The book also deals with the development of the concept of ethnonationalism and culture based identity in the region. S.P. Kar in his book "The North East Crucible: Geopolitics, Ethnicity and Turmoil" examines the geopolitical importance of North East India and border-related issues. The book fundamentally deals with the issue of regionalism, the problems of immigration, anti-foreigners agitations and the growing insurgency in the region on the basis of ethnicity. Nava Kishor Das in his book "Ethnic Identity, Ethnicity and Social Stratification in North-East India" describes the concept of ethnicity from the context of India and North East India. Besides, he elaborates the social differentiation, ethnic relations among the various ethnic tribes of the region and deals explicitly with social conditions of various ethnic communities. In the book "Social dynamics in contemporary North-East India: A study of regional exclusion, self-determination movements and ethnic

violence” the writer Shukhdeba Sharma Hanjabam and J.J. Roy define the socio-economic marginalisation of the ethnic communities of N.E India and reflect its implication in the form of self-determination movement and ethnic conflict in the context of North East. Prasenjit Biswas and Chandan Suklabaidya in their book "Ethnic life-worlds in North-East India: An analysis" primarily discuss the ethnology and politics of culture and ethnicity of North-East India. The book also elaborates the conflicts that are originated in the region on the basis of ethnicity. In the book "Politics of identity and Nation-building in North-East in India" edited by Girin Phukon and N.L. Dutta highlights the issue of formulation of identity consciousness among the ethnic tribes of North-East and also the process of politicisation of identity and its implications in the nation-building process in the region. Again, B.B. Kumar in his edited book "Problems of ethnicity in North-East India" illustrates the role of ethnicity while constructing identity and in the rising of ethnic insurgency in the region. The book highlights the ethnic mobilisation and ethnic assertiveness in the region among the tribes of N.E. and also its overwhelming implications in the existing social structure.

As earlier discussed, Adivasis are not the original inhabitant of Assam; therefore after coming to the region, they were faced with lots of problems. British enacted several crucial laws to control their activity, such as Workman's Breach of contract Act, 1859. They were only offered 25 square feet of area for their personal use. Even, they were not permitted to remain absent in plantation work for a single day. Hence, they were not allowed to meet labourers of another tea garden. Noted Historian Amalendu Guha in his books "Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom struggle and electoral politics in Assam 1826-1947" elaborates illiterate, ignorant, unorganised and isolated conditions of the Adivasi tea labourers inside the tea estates. The plantation workers are weak and powerless against the planters. However, still several times they tried to protest

against the autocratic planters and estate managers, e.g. the protest in 1884 Bowalia tea estate, the strike of Helem tea estate in 1921. However, most of them were ruthlessly suppressed. The tea garden labourers never got any help or encouragement from the upper caste Hindu dominated Indian National Congress leaders of Assam. Guha in his book reflects the political mobilisation of tea garden workers during the colonial period in Assam. Dr D. John Paul in his book, "A social work approach to the Tea plantation labour in India" describes the socio-economic conditions of Adivasis that were starved, illiterate, innocent and exploited people in their place of origin. Therefore they were victimised earlier in the hands of British tea planters and later in the hands of state actors and by the other communities of the region. The ethnic assertiveness of Adivasis is co-related with the ethnic assertiveness of tribal communities of Assam, specifically with the Bodos. ChandanaBhattacharjee in her book "Ethnicity and Autonomy movement: Case studies of BoroKocharies of Assam" highlights the development of ethnic assertiveness among the tribes of Assam and their struggle for autonomy, specifically deals with the movement of Bodos towards their greater autonomy. Again, CharanNarzary in his book "The Boros: Their plight and aspiration" reflects the construction of identity consciousness among the Bodos and their aspiration for greater autonomy in their own region through historic Bodo movement.

Udayan Mishra in his article "Adivasi Struggle in Assam" reflects the political struggle of Assam Tea Tribe Student Association (ATTSA) and All Adivasi Student Association of Assam (AASAA) demanding for schooled tribe status for Adivasis along with other five communities of Assam. Mishra elaborated the political importance of Adivasis in Assam Legislative Assembly election and Lok Sabha election of Assam. In about 124 ZilaParishad out of 800, 700 out of 2,200 GramPanchayat seats, 36 constituencies out of 126

Assembly seats, the Adivasis hold clear domination over others. Therefore, all the major political parties are conflicting with each other to prove their support for the Adivasis that leads to politicisation of their issues related to ethnicity and land. SriramAnanthanarayan in his article “Scheduled Tribe status for Adivasis in Assam” briefly elaborates the socio-economic and political condition of Adivasis in Assam and their struggle for scheduled tribe status, which they enjoy in the other parts of India. M.S Prabhakaran in his article "Behind the Adivasi unrest in Assam” highlights the struggle of Adivasis for the uplift of their socio-economic and political conditions and also describes their clashes with the other ethnic groups of Assam. Again, Walter Fernandes in his article “Assam Adivasis: Identity issues and liberation” reflects the identity movement of Adivasis. Here he provides an analysis of their plight and aspiration for retaining their original identity in the region of Assam. HirenGohain in his essay “A Question of Identity: Adivasi Militancy in Assam" emphasises that from the 1980s, the state of Assam has witnessed number of movements that are primarily associated with the issue of the protection of land, liberty and ethnicity by the local tribesmen of the region. Following the path of local tribesmen, the tea tribes, who were merely isolated and alienated from the mainstream socio-political structure of the society, also engage themselves in the series movement for demandingimprovement of their socio-economic and political condition as well as for scheduled tribe status.

BanajitHussain in his article “The Bodoland violence and the politics of exploitation”, primarily emphasises the unequal political representation of Bodoland. Only 28% of the total population are scheduled tribes in the region. Hence among 46 seats of Bodoland Territorial Council, 30 are reserved for Bodos, which creates a sense of anxiety and uncertainty among the non-Bodo population of the area and ultimately leads to communal riots in the region between

Bodos and Non-tribals. Due to such conflict, the Adivasis, who have been residing in the region since the colonial period are in critical position, and their identity is at risk.

1.3.3. Alienation, Land and Adivasi:-

Karl Marx in his book "Paris Manuscript"(1844) described the theory of alienation. To Marx, alienation does not come from thoughts; rather it emanates out the material conditions of the nature of political economy. Wage, profit and private ownership, all culminate into alienation. Hegel wanted to overcome alienation in thought; alienation is a problem of inadequacy of consciousness. Besides, Marx wants to ground the theory of alienation in material practices. Again, Bertell Ollman, in his book "Alienation: Marx's conception of man in capitalist society" explained the Marx concept of alienation. To him, the theory of alienation is the rational paradigm in which Marx demonstrates the overwhelming effect of capitalism over the human beings, over their physical and mental capabilities and on the social process of which they are a part. Dr B.N. Bordoloi in his work, "Transfer and alienation of Tribal land in Assam, with special reference to the Karbis of the Karbi Anglong district" mainly emphasises the issues of transfer and alienation of tribals of Assam. Here he discussed the line system, tribal belts and blocks for the protection of the interest of tribal people developed by the British administrators. The book provides a broad conceptual framework about the issue of land alienation that can be considered to be one of the major problem faced by the Adivasi in Assam. An eminent journalist and academic researcher Subir Bhaumik, in his book "Troubled Periphery: Crisis of India's North East" highlights the perpetual crisis of North Eastern part of India. It provides an extensive spread analysis about how land, civil society, language and leadership became the seeds of concentration in North East India and also highlights how the factors like ideology,

ethnicity and religion have shaped insurgency, ethnic cleansing and forced migration in the region.

Sanjib Boruah in his book “Durable disorder: Understanding the politics of North East India” briefly elaborates socio-political disability of the North East and partly emphasises on the genesis of conflicts of Bodos with the Non-Bodos. The Non-Bodos in Bodoland is continuously opposing the establishment of Bodoland Territorial Council, and simultaneously it has strengthened their demands for scheduled tribe status, specifically among the Adivasis. Due to such reasons, the conflict occurred between Bodos and Adivasis. The Adivasis had become victims of violence committed by Bodo militants and also resulted in massive displacement from their homes. B.B. Dutta and M.N. Karna in their edited book “Land relations in North-East India” highlights the land relations among people and the importance of land in the life of aboriginal ethnic communities. In the North Eastern region, the land is one of the most vital assets for best productive use for the welfare of the people. However, due to the modernisation and introduction of new laws and rules and regulations, the land relation has changed, and an exploitative system of land relations has been emerging with rising landlessness among the tribals in some parts of the region. Along with the tribals, the non-tribals community of Assam are also facing the problem of alienation. J.J Roy Burman in his article “The Bodoland ethnic conflict” published in “Quest for identity, autonomy and development: The contemporary trends of ethnic and tribal assertion in Assam” (Vol. 2), edited by C.J Sonowal mainly elaborates the ethnic conflicts in Bodoland. He emphasises that the state of Assam has witnessed a constant flow of migrant populations from different periods of history and such type of illegal immigration to the region have accelerated ethnic conflicts among the different ethnic tribes of society for land, identity and natural resources. Therefore, in Bodoland, the

Bodos are constantly fighting with the other ethnic tribes of Bodoland, whom they considered to be an infiltrator. Again, Binayak Dutta in his article “Of people, land and laws: Colonialism, Immigration and history of land laws in Assam(1826-1947)” published in “ Ethnicity and political economy in North East India” edited by H. Srikanth and Rooplekha Borgohain, reflects the land related issues of Assam and the process of land acquisition during the colonial period. The 1833 Charter act introduced European land ownership in India, which paved the way for the establishment of industries and plantation in Assam. Again the Waste Land Grant Rules were formulated in 1838 to facilitate the commencement of tea plantation in Assam and also helped in the expansion of the tea industry in Assam. Thomas Pulloppillil in his book “Identity of Adivasis in Assam” describes the terrific socio-economic and political condition of the Adivasis that is primarily due to the appearance of autonomous territories in the region such as Bodo, Karbi and Mishing Autonomous Councils. For example, in Bodoland autonomous district they have been facing brutal violence since the time of the 1990s. The Bodo militant groups burned their homes. The state or the other groups grab their land because of lack of proper documentation.

Walter Fernandes in his article “Assam Adivasis: Identity issues and liberation” describes the genesis of the ethnic conflict in Bodoland. He asserts that Adivasis are majority in lower Assam, particularly in Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District, where Bodo people have been living since the time of immemorial. According to Fernandes in lower Assam, very few are fluent in Assamese and most of them speak Jharkhand tribal language. It shows that in that particular area, Adivasis are not fully assimilated with Assamese native culture and language unlike the Adivasis of Upper Assam. Besides these, some the Adivasi leader tries to revert to their Jharkhand based identity that creates a negative impact on the minds of the Bodo people.

They consider these people as a threat to their culture and identity. In B.T.A.D area a certain amount of land is occupied by the Adivasis, which also an important cause of Bodo-Adivasi clash. Udayan Mishra in his article “Adivasi Struggle in Assam” reflects the critical conditions of Adivasis in the region of Bodoland. The Bodoland People’s Progressive Front and other Bodo leader consider Adivasis as migrants so that they cannot profess to be autochthonous to the region. He highlights the problematic issue of Adivasis that they have faced in the region of Bodoland. BijoySankar Bora in his article “Unrest in Bodoland: the killing fields of Assam” also elaborates the clash between the Adivasis and Bodos in Kokrajhar and Chirang and also asserts the issues like land alienation. NishadNeelakandan in his article “Secessional Clashes: Conflict in Assam between Bodos and Adivasis” reflects the acts of terror and ferocity against the Adivasis by the National Democratic Front of Bodoland. Due to the clashes between Bodo and Adivasis not only the Adivasis, but Bodo people also face violence. According to the data, around 2.4 lakh people were living in 118 relief camps across the districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri. Dr SamratSinha in his article “Our Forgotten wars: Victimization and Survival in Bodoland” highlights the crisis in Bodoland. It is reflected that the conflict has observed 4,85,921 evacuated persons with 2,46,582 person residing in the formal relief camp. Among these displaced people, the child, pregnant women, infants are mostly agonised in the relief camps. Dr N. Manoharan in his article “Violence in Bodo areas: Issues and Options” mainly discusses the conflictual situation of Bodoland in the peak of ethnic conflict. To him, violence in Bodoland is not only an ethnic clash but also a complex exodus with socio-political and security dimensions. The agitation of Bodos against the non-tribals of Bodoland was developed due to land, language and livelihood issue. NamrataGoswami in her article “Violence in the Bodo areas: Deciphering the causes” briefly elaborates the socio-political tension of

Bodoland and the reasons behind it. Due to the massive influx of illegal infiltrators, Bodos become the minority in the region, which constitutes only 29% of the total populations and gradually it has created a fear in the minds of Bodos. Such type of fear eventually leads to the ethnic exodus in the region between Bodos and other ethnic groups of Bodoland. To Goswami, the core reason for the violence is the insecurity over land. Shankhadeep Choudhury in his article "Adivasi threat: Bodoland will burn again" basically emphasises the Adivasis struggle for their legitimate rights. Adivasis in Bodoland has opposed the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council and also has demanded armaments for their fortification. In the ethnic clash with Bodos, the Adivasis are mostly affected. The Bodo militants brutally killed many of Adivasis and were evicted from their land, which resulted in a massive amount of Adivasi's land alienation in the region. Walter Fernandes in his article "Land Relations and Culture among the North Eastern tribes" mainly deals with the historical alienation of Adivasis in the mainland of India during the colonial period. But after migrating to the North Eastern region, their lands are evicted by the other ethnic tribes and by the government. The governmental policy of modernisation and neo-liberalisation is entirely responsible for the alienation of Adivasis land in the region of Assam. Again, the ethnic disorder is also somehow responsible for land alienation.

The above reviewed works are basically the analysis of historical journey of the Adivasis, their attitude towards ethnicity and their plight for identity. But, the question of sustainability of land of Adivasis is a major concern of the community on which very few literature are found. Therefore, the work on the issues of sustainability of land of the Adivasis in Kokrajhar of BTAD is relevant keeping in view the existing socio-economic and political condition of Assam.

1.4. Objectives of the Research:-

The whole research is based on defined objectives for attaining its destination. The objectives that are mentioned below provide a proper direction during the time of conducting the whole research study.

- To study the various dimensions of the historical migration of Adivasis to the land of Assam in general and to Kokrajhar in particular
- To study the socio-economic and political condition of Adivasis during colonial and pre-colonial period
- To explore the impact of identity consciousness among the Tribal communities, specifically the Bodos on the sustainability of Adivasis in Kokrajhar
- To study about the probable factors those are responsible for the growth of identity consciousness among the Adivasis in lower parts of Assam in general and in Kokrajhar in particular
- To give an analysis of the factors that are responsible for the alienation of Adivasis land and Common Property Resources
- To study the inter-relationship between land and identity and the consequences of alienation from land and identity in the survivals of Adivasis

1.5. Research Questions:-

The research study entitled “Politics of Ethnic Assertion and Sustainability of Land: A Case of Adivasis in Kokrajhar District” attempts to explore the numerous research questions in order to achieve the solution towards the problem as mentioned above on which the whole study is based. The research questions that the study seeks to address in the later chapters are mentioned below.

- What were the conditions under which the journey of Adivasis took place? And what problems were faced by the Adivasis in the land of Assam?
- What are the various interpretations regarding the migration of Adivasis to the land of Assam, especially to the lower parts of Assam?
- How does the growing identity consciousness among the ethnic tribal communities become a threat towards the identity and culture of Adivasis?
- What are the factors that are associated with the ethnic assertiveness of Adivasis in Assam?
- How did Adivasi people alienate from their land and house and what are the devastating impacts of land alienation on their lives?
- How does the Adivasi Civil Society work for the enrichment of the community?

1.6. Definition, Rationale and Scope of Study:-

Assam is a land that is well-known for its tasty tea. The appearance of the tea industry is genuinely related to the process of migration of Adivasis to the land of Assam. A large amount of Adivasis was migrated to the region of Assam to work as a wage labourer in the tea

industry. It was they who were contributing crores of rupees to the state economy through their hard labour in the tea garden placing the region on the world map for its excellent tea. Again, in another phase, a certain amount of Adivasis origin people were imported from then SanthalParagana to then Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar district by the British administration in order to weak the agitations of the local tribesmen against the exploitative policies of British administration. Since the time of the colonial period, they were subjugatedby the British and now, it is alleged that they are being subjugated by the local tribes of Assam, which lead to a slave life. The life of Adivasi in Assam is full of challenges, but no political party is willing to address. Most of them are deprived of the essential daily needs. The politician wants their votes but provides no relief for their development. An important question is arisen by the Adivasi leaders that if the Adivasi have been given Scheduled Tribe status in every other part of India, then why they are deprived of getting ST status in Assam. It is true that they are not the original inhabitant of Assam. But most of the tribal communities in Assam who have been granted Scheduled Tribe status trace their migratory histories from the present day East and South East Asia and eventually Adivasis were indirectly forced to get migrated to the region as labour. By such reason, they started demanding for ST status on the basis of national identity.

According to the Human Development Indices(HDI), they are not only the lowest community in India, but they also continue to face several human rights violations in the region of Assam. There are no such operational legislative procedures to shield their identity and their land. Literacy rates and health indicators are remarkably weak in comparison with other communities. Again they constitute approximately 55% of the displaced people of the

country. Due to their marginalised and underprivileged condition and they find it tricky to enroll their child in the educational institution. Again, the medium of instruction are also posing hindrance while getting education and that creates a problematic situation in getting suitable employment. The spread of intoxication and child and women trafficking are very high in Adivasi communities.

The impoverishment of Adivasis in Assam mainly is due to the deprivation from their own land. Without own land, one cannot be economically developed. Historically the Adivasis was imported to Assam as labour, so they do not have their own land. Adivasis those are still in the tea garden, tea estate authority only temporally provide them with a little amount of land and a house. But those who left the tea garden, management settled them in the forest areas that are the populated place of local tribes of Assam. Therefore, in such areas, Adivasi communities face lots of violence, and that exotically happens in Bodoland. Again due to their poor economic condition they are unable to afford land of their own. Most of the times, their land is often usurped by the Government or by the other private groups because of lack of proper documentation. Thus, the land is one of the most important needs of Adivasis for improvement of their social-economic as well as political condition. Again, their identity is in a critical position. The emergence of ethnonationalism among the tribal communities of the region is posturing threat towards the identity and culture of the Adivasis. Therefore, the issue of identity and ethnicity is one of the important issues for the Adivasis in Assam. The research is helpful for understanding the socio-economic condition of Adivasis in Assam, struggle for their identity, their land issues and how it will impact their lives and culture.

The study is confined only to the identity and land issues of Adivasis of Kokrajhar district that fall under the jurisdiction of BTAD. The study is fundamentally dealt with the issues of ethnicity and identity of Adivasis, primarily the probable impact of various factors on their ethnicity issues, the crisis towards their distinctive identity and ethnicity as well as their ethnic assertions in various ways in the state of Assam, in general and in Kokrajhar district, in particular. Again, the study predominantly concern the issue of sustainability and problem of the land of Adivasis, primarily focus on the problems of land alienation in the form of forced displacements, encroachments and evictions overally in Assam and particularly in Kokrajhar district of BTAD.

1.7. Research Methods:-

The overall research is largely based on historical, descriptive and analytical methods to understand the issues of politics of identity, ethnic assertiveness and sustainability of land of Adivasis, explicitly dealing with the Adivasis of Kokrajhar district. Research methods are comprised of both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources such as personal interaction with the Adivasi villagers of Gossaigaon of Kokrajhar district, interviews with the leaders of Adivasi Student Organisation, interaction with eminent scholars, Non-Governmental Organisation's e.g., Action Nation Trust (ANT), Promotion & Advancement of Justice, Harmony and Rights of Adivasis (PAJHRA) (those are associated with the various issues of Adivasis, observation of the conditions of Adivasis) are used to make the research authentic and scientific. Secondary sources such as books, scholarly articles published in journals, newspapers, data published in government documents, various official declarations and statements, reports etc. are used for overall enrichment the research and these help in

getting various ideas. Internet sources are also used to update empirical data and for overall enrichment of the study. The whole research is qualitative. While during the time of collection of data, unstructured questionnaires, the unstructured interview is used. The entire research is based on inductive reasoning, interpretivism and constructionism. The error of central tendency scale is used while observing the research areas. While in case of the collection of the sample from the whole population of the study area, non-probability sampling method, such as, convenience, purposive or judgmental sampling methods are used in order to get primary data for making the overall study more scientific.

1.8. Profile of the Research Area:-

The research study is primarily confined to the politics of ethnic assertions and sustainability of land of Adivasis of Kokrajhar district that is an administrative district in Bodoland Territorial Council of Assam. There are two administrative divisions in the district, namely Gossaigaon and Kokrajhar, with three sub-divisions, namely Kokrajhar Sadar Sub-division, Gossaigaon Sub-division and Parbatjhora Sub-division.²⁸ The district is comprised of five revenue circle; Kokrajhar, Dotma, Bhowrahuri, Gossaigaon and Bagribari.²⁹ The total area of the district is 3,169.22 sq. km.³⁰ According to the 2011 census the district has a population of 8,86,999, including 4,52,965 male and 4,34,034 female.³¹ The district has a population density of 280 inhabitants per square kilometre.³² Kokrajhar has a sex ratio of 958 females for every 1000 males.³³ The district is multi-religious, multi-ethnic in nature due to its diverse ethnic compositions. In Kokrajhar the percentage of Hindus are 65.60%, Islam 20.36%, Christian 13.72%. Again in the district, Bodos are the majority with 32.37%, Bengalis 21.06%, Assamese 20.28% and Santhal 16.70%.



(Map of Kokrajhar District)

1.9. Chapterisation:-

Chapter 1: Introduction:- The chapter entitled “Introduction” provides a brief outline of the whole research study. The chapter contains the statement of the problem, definition, rationale and scope of the research, significance of the study, review of the related literature, research methods and research area on which the entire study is based on. The chapter provides a wide analysis of the problematic issues of Adivasis in Assam in particular and in Kokrajhar in particular those are fundamentally related with their ethnicity, identity and land.

Chapter 2: Understanding Ethnic Assertion and Sustainability of Land: The Theoretical Framework: -This chapter deals with the theories or concepts that are being used in the research study. The chapter primarily delivers a viewpoint of the theories of ethnicity and identity in order to

elucidate the critical conditions of Adivasis, specifically their identity of crisis and to understand the process of identity construction and their overwhelming struggle for Scheduled status. Again, the chapter is trying to provide a brief outline about the concept of alienation and perception of the various philosophers such as Hegel, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx and also to focus on the concept of land alienation in order to proper understand the problems of alienation of Adivasi's land, collective property rights and identity. The fundamental reason behind the deprivation from their identity and land is the constant ethnic conflict in the region of Bodoland. The problems of ethnic unrest can better be understood from the concept of relative deprivation that is considered to be the primary reason for the emergence of ethnic turmoil in the region. Again, the chapter tries to analyse the concept of eminent domain while understanding the problem of alienation of Adivasi land particularly in the district of Kokrajhar district. This chapter provides a conceptual framework of the concept of identity, ethnicity, alienation, eminent domain, deprivation and relative deprivation for better realising the problems that are faced by the Adivasis in the region of Bodoland in general and particularly in Kokrajhar district.

Chapter 3: Migration,Victimisation and Adivasis: A Historical Analysis:-

This chapter provides the background of the Adivasis in Assam. Before going to discuss the historical migratory journey of Adivasis to the land of Assam, the chapter fundamentally deals with the migratory history of the Adivasis; those can be considered as the first indigenous community to the land of India. The chapter also provides a brief understanding of the socio-economic condition of Adivasis in the Pre-colonial era and also their socio-economic and cultural deprivation and victimisation in the colonial period due to the

appearance of exploitative policies of the colonial administration. As the migration of Adivasis to Assam as the plantation labourers and later in search of better lifestyle to the Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar district of Assam are fundamentally associated with their victimised and deprived conditions in the Chotanagpur Santhal Paragana during the colonial period. The commencement and expansion of tea industry were primarily related with the process of migration of Adivasis to the Assam region. Again, the Santhal rebellion of 1855 has had a noteworthy involvement in another phase of migration of Adivasis to then Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar districts of Assam. The chapter attempts to provide a clear understanding of the interpretation of various historians regarding the debate on “Who is first in Assam?” Hence, the chapter highlights their socio-economic and political condition during the British era as well as in the post-colonial era that contains a comparative analysis of the deprivation and victimisation of Adivasis including both tea tribes Adivasis and other Adivasis of ‘Santhal Colony’ of then Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar district.

Chapter 4: Ethno-Nationalism, Identity and Adivasis: Articulations and Assertions:-

The stimulation of ethnic realization among the Adivasis is the emergent issue of current politics of Assam. The third chapter delivers a widespread analysis of the rise of sixth schedule politics in the region that has had a remarkable contribution towards the process of identity construction among the Adivasis of Assam in general and of Kokrajhar district in particular. The hilly tribes movement for greater autonomy has had an adverse impact on the formation of identity consciousness among the tribal communities of Assam. The Segregation policy of the British and spread of Christianity among the tribal communities of Assam also had a remarkable contribution towards the growth of ethnic assertions among the tribal communities as the Colonial administration enacted Scheduled District act of 1884 and

Frontier Trait Regulation act of 1880, by which Excluded and Partially Excluded areas were created. Following the path of hilly tribes, plain tribal communities also raised their voice for separate territorial arrangements. The establishment of Plain Tribal Council of Assam provided a momentum towards the plain tribal's movement for greater autonomy as they raised the voice for the separate statehood for plain tribal communities of Assam in the name of 'Udayachal'. After the historic Assam movement (1979-1985), Bodos launched their movement for autonomy separately. Under the initiative of ABSU and BPAC, the movement took an ugly shape in the region and observing such situation, a memorandum of settlement was signed in 1993 between the Government and respective Bodo organisations. But Bodos were not able to form the autonomous council in the year 1993 due to the non-fulfillment of the Bodo accord. Bodo leaders thought that these were happened due to the massive influx of migrations to the region and as result they started attacking the other non-tribal communities of the region that may be called as 'Ethnic cleansing'. In that ethnic cleansing, the Adivasi people were mostly victimised and exterminated. Massive amounts of Adivasi community were brutally killed in the ethnic violence of Bodoland in the decade of 1990s. Again, a major portion of Adivasis were alienated and displaced from their land and CPR's due to the ruthless termination by the Bodo militants. Historically, there existed a connection between the land and identity of the Adivasis. Most of their religious practices, customs, and ceremonies are attached with land and forest. So isolation from the land can be considered as an alienation from their distinctive ethnic identity. The governmental neo-liberal policy, urbanisation, modernisation and globalisation are also responsible for identity crisis of Adivasis in the region. Again, the inclusion of Adivasis with in Tea community also has a negative impact on their identity. The chauvinistic attitude of the Assamese elite section is

also responsible for segregation from their identity and culture. Due to the medium of instruction as Assamese, their linguistic identity is in threat. Thus, gradual deprivation from their identity generates fear in their minds regarding their survivals. Therefore, the Adivasi civil society is continued their struggle for revival of their original identity so that they can sustain their lives. 'Scheduling is the significant mechanism through which they will achieve their earlier status', which is the popular faith of the Adivasi civil society. They firmly believe that through scheduling their distractive identity and land can be protected. Thus, the chapter fundamentally highlights the issue of ethnic assertions and their overwhelming struggle for schedule status.

Chapter 5: State, Land and Adivasis: Alienations and Deteriorations:-

This chapter fundamentally deals with the issue of sustainability of land that specifically focus on the problem of alienation of Adivasis land in Assam in general and in Kokrajhar in particular. The chapter highlights the land status of Adivasis in the colonial period and probable causes for the alienation of Adivasis land in the region. The mere presence of ethnic violence is not fully responsible for the alienation and isolation of Adivasis land in the region. Apart from this, the process of modernisation, neo-liberalisation, urbanization is also responsible for the continuous eviction of Adivasi's from their land and CPR's. Capitalisation of land is also responsible for massive amount of alienation of Adivasis land in Kokrajhar. Taking the advantages of marginalised and impoverished condition of Adivasis, capitalist section of the society has evicted them from their land and identity. Again, the governmental policy of land acquisition is also questionable in nature. Major portion of Adivasis in Kokrajhar are evicted from their land by the government due to the illegal occupation of the

land. All these factors are responsible for the massive alienation of Adivasis land in Kokrajhar that somehow contributed to identity crisis of Adivasis of Kokrajhar.

Chapter 6: Conclusion:-

The concluding chapter basically tries to provide an overall conclusion of the study. This chapter summarises the entire study and also analyses the validity of the research objectives. The chapter also contains the extensive summary of the each chapter of the study. Again, this chapter also provides recommendations and measures for the existing problems that are faced by the Adivasis regarding their identity, ethnicity and land. The chapter highlights a scope for the future study on the Adivasis of Kokrajhar.

Notes and References:-

Understanding Ethnic assertion and Sustainability of Land: The Theoretical Framework

2.1.Introduction:-

The introductory chapter of the dissertation primarily deals with the problems of ethnic assertion and sustainability of land of Adivasis in Assam and also contains a detailed review of existing literature, definition, rationale and scope of the study, research questions that the study tries to explore and the research methods that were used while elucidating the problems. In the case

of this dissertation, the existing theories related to various topics were used to make an effective study of the research questions and problems that the study tries to elucidate. Therefore, the second chapter of the dissertation entitled "Understanding Ethnic Assertion and Sustainability of land: The Theoretical Framework" fundamentally deals with elucidating the concept of identity, ethnicity and ethnic identity to understand the politics of ethnic assertion of Adivasis in Assam, their struggle for building identity and their demand for Scheduled tribes status linking with the identity issue. Beside these, the chapter provides a clear concept about the theory of alienation and various thinkers' perception on alienation such as Hegel, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx and a special focus on the concept of land alienation in order to have better understanding of the problem of the Adivasi's continuous alienation and isolation from their land, Community Property Rights and identity. Again, the chapter deals with the concept of 'Eminent domain' that can be helped in the proper understanding of government's policy of land acquisition, which is also another reason for the alienation of the Adivasis land in the district of Kokrajhar district. Hence, to realise the Adivasi's assertion for their own identity and their sustainability of land, the concept of ethnicity and relative deprivation is instrumental. The primary objective of the chapter is to provide a conceptual framework of the idea of identity, ethnicity, alienation, eminent domain, deprivation and relative deprivation for better realising the problems that are faced by Adivasis in the district of Kokrajhar regarding their identity and land issues.

2.2. Conceptualising Identity:-

The concept of identity plays a remarkable role in the discipline of social science and humanities. The idea is essential while understanding the social exclusion and ethnic conflicts that are

continuously happened in society. 'Identity' is a keyword of present-day society. Day by day, the focus on identity has increased enormously. Most of the people of the globe always face the question, "Who are you?" This question includes the characteristics, preferences, goals and behaviour that is associated with human beings.³⁴ The study of identity will help the people to know the question actually "who they are?" While analyzing the concept of identity, Immanuel Kant, in 18th century asserted that individual's 'Self' has two sides, one is 'ego' that is the basis of all knowledge and concept and another is 'empirical ego' that we perceive through our introspection and observation.³⁵ The concept of identity involves a clear sense of self-definition. Oxford English Dictionary defines that identity is the persona and uniqueness of a person or thing; the similarity of an individual or thing in all position or situation, the reality and the state that a person and thing is itself and not something extra.³⁶ Paulin Djite asserts that the term identity refers to the people query actually who they are.³⁷ Djite in his definition regarding identity, interprets 'people's sense of what, who or where they belong to.'³⁸ Amartya Sen remark that identity can be a source of strength and confidence, not merely of pride and pleasure.³⁹ Ruthellen Josselson asserts:

"Identity is the stable, consistent, and reliable sense of who one is and what one stands for in the world. It integrates one's meaning to oneself and one's meaning to others; it provides a match between what one regards as central to oneself and how one is viewed by significant others in one's life. Identity is also a way preserving the continuity of the self, linking the past and the present...at the same time that our identity is fundamentally interwoven with others' to gain meaning, contrasting ourselves with others heightens our sense of what is uniquely individual."⁴⁰

Baggioni and Kasbarian argued that there are two types of identity; individual identity and social identity.⁴¹ Individual identity refers to the individual's identification in society. Again, social identity relates to the identification of different castes and classes in society. Tajfel refers to social identity as that the self-concept of a person is gained or attained from the knowledge of his association with a social group, together with the value and seriousness devoted to his association with that social group.⁴²

Social identity concerns the socially created perceptions of human beings about their membership in one or more groups. While the collective identity concerns the judgments about a single group that are shared by the members of that particular group. In Durkheimian perception, collective identity is a group characteristic that is mainly based on group's symbols, its customs, beliefs and ethics, which are shared by its members.⁴³ The concept of identity has numerous dimensions that are; Ethnic identity, Sexual identity, Gender identities, Class identities, Identities of Disability, Age identities. Thus, identity is a concept that is used in social sciences to elaborate various sense of belongingness, reflecting people's necessities to express themselves and others and it also makes a significant contribution towards building warmth and healthy relationships with others, such as neighbours, peoples belonging from the same community or fellow beings.

2.3. Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity:-

The concept of ethnicity has a significant implication in the socio-political study. The term ethnic means a particular ethnic or racial group, which was first coined by David Reisman in 1953.⁴⁴ The concept of ethnicity is primarily derived from the Greek word 'ethno' that means race, nation, tribe, caste, people.⁴⁵ But it has been seen that at present the pure race is a myth because races have intermixed with each other at different period of times as well as places. In the contemporary era, all

human beings are the mixture of all races. Even Hitler also claimed that Germans are pure Nordics is a myth.⁴⁶ In that sense, the concept of ethnicity has no meaning at all, but the term is used broadly in the socio-political study, which makes it as an essential concept and shows its relevancy in the contemporary era. E. Hunter and Phillip Whitten define a group of people within a large cultural part who recognise themselves as a different organism, that is detached from the rest is referred to as ethnicity. In addition to this aspect of self-consciousness, this group has other characteristics, which is distinctive in nature. These comprises of a separate dialect, particular tradition and customs, dress, food, ways of life and a restricted land base. In some hierarchical societies, ethnic groups may be homogenous similar to social classes. Mainly for two reasons these groups are found in many societies in the modern time. One is migration of people from their homeland to other countries and another is their fusion of different smaller cultural units.⁴⁷ Thus, the ethnic groups have their own identity and culture, which is different from others. Ethnic communities are a population which is biologically self-perpetuating that shares fundamental cultural values, realised in overt unity in cultural forms. Bhat remarks that ethnicity has arisen as a powerful mechanism for getting the achievement and social mobility in contemporary societies. Culture is the root of ethnicity on which ethnic groups are formed by stimulating their culture of origin within a new social context.⁴⁸ Ethnicity is an organising principle that is used by individuals to differentiate themselves from others on the basis of race, culture, kinship, religion, language and customary mode of livelihood. Max Weber defines ethnicity as a group of people that involve an emotional belief in their common ancestor because of their similarities in physical type or customs and similarities in memories of colonisation and migration. This feeling must be important for the cultivation and development of the group. Again, it doesn't matter whether an objective blood relationship is there or not.⁴⁹

There exists a number of theories that fundamentally deals with the concept of ethnicity. Primordial, Instrumentalist and Constructionist theories help in understanding the very nature of ethnicity and the forces that are engaged in the construction of ethnic identity among the different ethnic groups. The Primordial approach can be considered as one of oldest approach that is related to the concept of ethnicity, which fundamentally based on three basic opinions. This approach believes that ethnicity is an attributed and assumed identity that has a hereditary character. One can get his or her identity from his or her ancestors. Again, the boundaries of ethnicity are fundamentally static and permanent due to its hereditary character. The approach firmly believes that universal succession and antiquity is attributed to the formulation of ethnic identity among the different ethnic communities. Ethnicity is considered to be a feeling that can be injected through the prevailing culture, shared history, common descent and common origin. Again, the Instrumentalist approach doesn't believe in the arguments that are opined by the Primordial path of ethnicity. Thinkers like Paul Brass, Abner Cohen, Glazer and Moynihan, developed the Instrumentalist approach that fundamentally believes that ethnicity is used as an instrument to acquire the monetary and political domain in the society by the elite groups.⁵⁰ In that case, Paul Brass asserts, "Cultural forms, values and the practices of ethnic groups become political resources for elites in competition for political power and economic advantages. They become symbols and referents for the identification of members of the group, which are called up to create a political identity more easily. The symbols used to create a political identity also can be shifted to adjust to political circumstances and the limitations imposed by the state authorities"⁵¹ Thus, it can be said that ethnicity is instrumentalised by the powerful elite class of society to gain socio-economic and political power. On the other hand, Constructionist theory denies the argument given by the Primordial and Instrumentalist approach. Constructionist approach defines ethnicity as a social construct feeling, not as hereditary or as an instrument for building socio-

economic and political domain of the society. It believes ethnicity as a constructed feeling in the society can be built and re-built that makes it dynamic in nature. Therefore, the boundaries of ethnicity is not static and fixed as defined by the Primordial approach; instead, it is flexible and dynamic in nature. It can be said that 'ethnic affiliation or identification is determined or constructed by society, affirms that ethnic identity is fluid, situationally defined, produced and reproduced in the course of social transactions.'⁵² Thus, their numbers of approach exist that fundamentally seek to explore the very characteristics of the ethnicity and also the forces behind the emergence of ethnic identity among the different ethnic communities of the society.

Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic awareness, and awareness finally leads to ethnic identity, which is one of the crucial aspects of identity. The concept of ethnic identity has its root from the ethnic consciousness, which manifests in both intra and inter-ethnic interactions.⁵³ It can be considered as a significant unit of action in the socio-economic and political field that leads to social mobility among the communities. An ethnic group is a self-defined and self-conscious group, which has a specific way of interaction with the other communities of the society. Thus, ethnic group has a feeling of relatedness, similar cultural symbols and a sense of alliance which may provide an ethnic identity. Glazer and Moynihan define, "Ethnic identity manifests itself through cultural makers, they stress on the self as well as group related feeling of identity, distinctiveness and its recognition by others."⁵⁴ Deutsch, Gellner and Smith remark that the causative factors for the emergence of ethnic identity are a primitive sentiment and psychology of sense of belongingness and a sense of having a common descent, race, caste, cultures, religion, kin, language, blood, geographical area.⁵⁵ Ethnic identities are articulated and maintained by a name, shared beliefs, cultures and symbols. Ethnic groups, ethnicity and ethnic identity all are inter-related with each other. Ethnic identity mainly refers

to self-respect and self-esteem, dignity and pride, confidence, new values and new approaches and psychological freedom of ethnic groups, that creates new awakening, independent thinking and political consciousness and also develops organisations and political participation and increases the level of education, occupation, income, reduces the social distance and upward vertical social mobility. Besides, it provides a feeling of community and solidarity. The ethnic identity is vastly affected by adaptation, immigration, modernisation, conversion, westernisation, partition and politics of prevailing group in the social structure.⁵⁶UrmilaPhadnis in this regard argues that the emergence of new religion such as Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism are the result of the process of fission or separation from one religion to other. Again the *Mahars*,⁵⁷Who were initially Hindu, but later altered to Buddhism and acquired a new ethnic identity. Such type of ethnic conversion may lead to the ethnic crisis within the group that resulted in ethnic conflict and violence in society.

2.4. Conflict, Identity crisis and Ethnic assertion:-

Ethnic assertiveness or ethnic consciousness is one of the remarkable issues of recent day political scenario. Multi-diversity and the existence of multiple ethnic communities are the prime characteristics of the contemporary social structure. Due to such diversity regarding their culture, language, traditions and beliefs, numerous ethnic conflicts emerge in the society. But, it can be said that the mere presence of diverse ethnic communities are not responsible for the growth of ethnic sentiments among the ethnic communities that ultimately trigger in the emergence of ethnic conflict in the society. Hence, other various factors are responsible for the rise of ethnic conflict among the different ethnic communities. Numbers of perspectives exist that seek to explain the growth of ethnonationalism and sentiment towards their respective identity and culture. Such type of ethnic sentiment finally triggers in the form of ethnic conflict in the society. Diverse aspects and procedures

play a decisive character in the origination of ethnic conflict among the diverse ethnic communities. There exist numbers of approach, such as Modernisation approach, Relative deprivation approach, Cultural deprivation approach; Elite approach etc. that seeks to explain the formulation of ethnic conflict and crisis in the society. Modernisation theorists opined that the mere presence of the modern attitude and development of socio-economic and political structure attributed to the growth of national identity. In the words of Cyril Black, "Modernisation is the dynamic form that the age-old process of innovation has assumed as a result of the explosive proliferation of knowledge in recent centuries. It stems initially from an attitude, a belief that society can and should be transformed, that change is desirable."⁵⁸ The process of modernisation helps in narrowing the sectarian and dogmatic ethnic identity and makes it scope wider in nature. Modernisation brings certain good things towards the society, yet along with it generates a sentiment in the minds of the ethnic groups that prompts in the commencing of ethnic conflict in society. In the early phase of the 1970s, many thinkers believed that ethnic political activity was declined due to the emergence of economic modernisation, ultimately brought them towards the direction of the ethnic conflict.⁵⁹ The process of economic modernisation is very much responsible for the occurrence of ethnic conflict in Belgium and Canada.⁶⁰ The process of globalisation brings cultural assimilation in the society where the minority ethnic communities are gradually misplacing from their original distinctive culture and identity that creates a sense of deprivation and isolation from mainstream society. Karl Deutsch, a prime supporter of the modernisation theory fundamentally asserts about the progressive integration of the prevailing culture with the culture of other ethnic communities due to the rapid expansion of modernisation in the society. After the emergence of industrial society, a continuous flow has been seen from the rural areas to urban areas in quest of better economic condition and better lifestyle and thus people evacuated from their traditional culture and identity. Due to the rise of rapid industrial society, the

dominant urban culture replaced the local rural culture and thrown them to darkness. Again, centralised bureaucratic administration is also another factor for the isolation from their distinctive identity and culture. The appearance of the neo-liberal policy also leads to the growth of ethnic consciousness among ethnic communities. The neo-liberal policy brings economic modernisation to the society, where the majoritarian groups suppress minor ethnic communities. As a result of poor ethnic communities deprived of their legitimate rights.

Relative deprivation approach believes that due to the appearance of modernisation, globalisation, industrialisation and neo-liberal policy, the minor and poor ethnic communities are constantly deprived and alienated from their distinctive culture and such type of feelings of deprivation and isolation finally triggers in the growth of ethnic sentiment and ethnic conflict in the society. Whenever a particular ethnic community feels deprivation from their originality; it generates a sense of insecurity and uncertainty in their minds. Ethnic conflicts are mainly occurred due to the mere presence of the feelings of deprivation. The cultural denial is also another cause for the appearance of ethnic unrest in the society that seeks to explain by the Cultural deprivation approach. The forced cultural imposition by the majority ethnic groups over the minor or deprived ethnic communities may consider being a cause of the ethnic crisis. The growing sentiment of ethnonationalism among the dominant ethnic communities becomes the basic reason for the increasingly ethnic violence in society. AlamSaleh asserts, "In states wherein minorities experience economic discrimination, inequalities in standards of living as opposed to other ethnic groups and asymmetrical access to such state resources as land and wealth, ethnic conflict is more likely. In states which exhibit social discrimination, where the aggressive, dominant ethnic group imposes a nationalist dogma, where minority ethnic groups are prevented from expressing their customs and

language, where the practice of religious freedom is inhibited or where groups have antagonistic prejudices towards each other and or regard themselves as victims, the prospects for conflict are corresponding all the worse. Such a situation triggers ethnic politics and serves to mobilise an ethnicity's members.”⁶¹ Thus it can be said that when a dominant ethnic community exercises partialities or biases towards the other minor ethnic communities that can birth in the seed of ethnic conflict in the society. Again, the elite theory describes the dominant role of the elite section of the society in the formation of ethnic sentiment among the diverse ethnic communities. The awareness of the elite class is considered to be the pre-condition for the consciousness of general masses of the society. The elite theory believes that the culture, belief, tradition and values of the ethnic communities are used by the elite section of the society to gain socio-political and economic domain of the society. Again, the neo-elite class of the society, the educational elite class is considered to be one of the important instruments while mobilising the ethnic groups by generating consciousness. “The intellectuals of the new ethnic group usually create literature that binds them together- poetry, fiction, history and stirring polemics”.⁶² All such factors are responsible for the emergence of ethnic sentiments among the various ethnic communities that ultimately help in the rise of ethnic conflict. While, in the time of conflict, the ethnic community, who enjoy the status of majority often dominate the minor ethnic communities that leads to the feelings of insecure and marginalise in their minds. Minority exploitation is the major issue in the contemporary ethnic politics. Their rights are subjugated by the prevailing ethnic group of the society. The emergent sentiment of ethno-nationalism is remarkably contributed towards the growth of ethnic unrest among different communities, where minorities are mostly victimised. These increasing deprivation and insecurity towards the culture and identity of depressed section of the society indicate to the appearance of

ethnic assertiveness. This is occurred mainly to defend their distinguishing identity and culture from being oppressed and alienated.

2.5. Making sense of alienation:

Alienation is a central philosophical idea in the contemporary political thought to know about human beings and their status in the world. The theory of alienation is considered to be an 'intellectual construct' through which Marx shows the devastating effect of capitalism on the physical and mental capabilities of human beings and also on their social process. The concept of alienation means isolation, separation and indifference from something such a society, religion, own property and even from self. As quoted by I. Robertson regarding the concept of alienation,

“Alienation attributes to the sense of powerlessness, isolation and meaninglessness experience by the human beings when they are confronted with social institutions and circumstances that they can not control and consider oppressive.”⁶³

The concept of alienation was for the first time found in the realm of metaphysics, where the philosophers pursued to establish logical reconciliation between the 'real' and 'essentials'.⁶⁴ Plato is considered as the first political philosopher who dealt with the concept of alienation. To Plato, only certain people can live a fully realised and fully human life. The metaphysical idea of alienation is found in the philosophy of Hegel, who argues that the history of man is 'absolute spirit, a consciousness which progressively upholds through a series of dialectical contradiction in pursuit of creating self-knowledge. He asserts that the fullness of the spirit is realised through its alienation and self-externalisation in nature

and history.⁶⁵ The concept of alienation is generally associated with Karl Marx, a famous communist philosopher and his critique of capitalism.

The term alienation has different meanings in an individual's life, in social science and philosophy. The Encyclopedia of philosophy defines the term alienation as “the act, or result of the act, through which something or somebody becomes alien to something or somebody else.”⁶⁶ In daily usage, alienation means “turning away or keeping away from former friends or associates.”⁶⁷ In law, it usually means “the transfer of property from one person to other, either by sale or as a gift”⁶⁸ In contemporary Psychology and Sociology, alienation often means “an individual's feeling of alienness towards society, nature, other people or herself.”⁶⁹ For sociologist like Marx, alienation means “the act, or result of the act of transforming human properties, relations, and actions into properties and actions of things which are independent of man and which govern his life.”⁷⁰ Again for other philosophers like Hegel, the term “alienation” means “self-alienation” or “self-estrangement”: “the process, or result of process, by which a “self”(God or man) through itself that is through its action becomes alien to itself that is to its own nature.”⁷¹

The famous thinker Lukacs defines alienation as a loss of liberty in society due to the social contract and also refers alienation in economic relations. In his study *Young Hegel*, Lukacs defines alienation as follows:

“In themselves, there is nothing novel about the term Entausserung and Entfremdung. They are simply German translations of the English word ‘alienation’. This was used in works on economic theory to betoken the sale of a commodity, and it works on natural law to refer the loss

of aboriginal freedom, the handing-over or alienation of freedom to the society which came into being as a result of a social contract.”⁷²

Thus, the concept of alienation can be understood as deprivation and separation from the existing socio-economic and cultural structure.

2.5.1. Hegel on Alienation:

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was an eminent German philosopher and one of the chief exponent of the idealism of 18th century. The contribution of Hegel towards the development of political thought is a notable one. His major works are *The Phenomenology of Spirit*(1807), *The Science of Logic*(1812), *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*(1817), *Philosophy of Rights*(1821). Hegel’s system claims to be a system of “absolute idealism”. Hegel seems as the heir of the great idealistic tradition.⁷³ He formulated the theories of dialectic and self-realisation. The dialectical method of Hegel played a decisive role in his political philosophy. The main thrust of Hegel was to solve the problem of contradiction in the society by using the categories of a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis. Hegel's dialectical method presupposed that ideas and beliefs were to be related to their institutions and social structures, the spheres of the subjective mind and the objective mind had to converge.⁷⁴For Hegel, dialectics was the only accurate method for comprehending pure thought. He described dialectics as,

“...the indwelling tendency outwards by which the out-sidedness and limitation of the predicts of understanding is seen in its true light...the Dialectical principle constitutes the life and soul of scientific progress, the dynamic which alone gives immanent connect and the necessity to the body of science.”⁷⁵

As he develops the idea of dialectical development, there arises a tension, Hegel pleads between human needs on the one hand and social environment on the other hand. In such situation, the mind finds itself alienated due to diversion to self-consciousness, but not the consciousness of the world as its own existence.⁷⁶ He saw human history as the unfolding of human consciousness. He characterises the human condition as a state of alienation, in which subject and object are separated from each other. Thus, the Hegel's "Phenomenology" provides a metaphysical conception of alienation, what he calls "unhappy consciousness."⁷⁷ Hegel also believes that alienation is inherent in human life which creates the social world by using the object while transforming itself in that process.⁷⁸ Hegel is considered as the first philosophers who dealt with the concept of alienation. To him, alienation is a part of a process of consciousness. Hegel deliberated alienation only at a level of consciousness, but he ignores the external dimensions as pointed out by Marx.

Hegel in his work "Phenomenology of Spirit", uses the term 'alienation', which means the same meaning as externalisation and estrangement. He refers that alienation means externalisation of spirit. According to Hegel when people lose its universality, he is alienated from himself, which Hegel refers as self-alienation.⁷⁹ In society, people alienate itself from its inner nature and arrives at the extreme of discordance with itself.⁸⁰ Self-alienation refers to a separation between the essence of individual and its condition, which basically includes human's individuality and universality.⁸¹ Thus, in that way, Hegel analyses the concept of alienation from his ideological perspective.

2.5.2. Ludwig Feuerbach's Perspective on Alienation:-

Ludwig Feuerbach was one of the prominent German philosopher and anthropologist of the 19th century. In his famous book *The Essence of Christianity*, he provided a critique of Christianity. Again in his subsequent writings, he servilely criticised the religion that it represented an inverted reality and he called for a “religion of man in place of God”.⁸² Marx attributed to him a genuine theoretical revolution due to his inversion of Hegelian idealism. He was associated with the group of disciples of Hegel basically known as the young Hegelians.⁸³ Tucker remarked that “Feuerbach was the major point of the transformation of idea from Hegelianism to Marxism. He helped Marx in freeing his mind and observation from its servitude to Hegel’s system as he suggested that this system was an overturned representation of human authenticity and a consideration in the philosopher’s mind of the existential condition of man in the natural world.”⁸⁴

To Feuerbach religion is the primary source of alienation, because “man (severs) from himself those powers and capacities which were at least potentially his; he had projected them into a God or fetish. He had thus made himself a slave to one of his own creations.”⁸⁵ He firmly believed that alienation is a form of intellectual error and it could be cured by analysing its content. Feuerbach is not against what he perceives as the essence of religion; instead, he perceived that the element of alienation of setting over and above himself, what rightly belongs to man.⁸⁶ Again he perceived the world of Hegelian philosophical consciousness, in which spirit is alienated from itself and engaged in the process of transcendence of alienation.⁸⁷ Thus Ludwig Feuerbach described the concept of alienation in his philosophical works.

2.5.3. Marx's Interpretation of Alienation:-

The concept of alienation denotes a socio-psychological condition of the individual which involves his estrangement from certain aspects of his social existence. It is complicated to provide an accurate concept of alienation because the idea of alienation has been used by the different political philosophers and Karl Marx also one of them. It was the Marx, who systematically analysed the concept of alienation after Hegel and Feuerbach. Karl Marx was the chief exponent of the concept of communism and scientific socialism. He firmly believed in the materialistic condition of society. His entire philosophy is based on the economic structure of the society, and he basically emphasised on the economic matters in his theoretical formulations.⁸⁸ He firmly opines that the political and intellectual life of a society is determined by the mode of production as necessitated by the want of material life. The idea of alienation that was formulated by the Marx finds its manifestation in his early writings of “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844”.⁸⁹ Marx formulated his concept of alienation not from an idea but from historically created human possibilities and from man's own capacity for freedom and creativity.⁹⁰ It will be beneficial to discuss Marx's concept of human nature before going to explain his theory of alienation. Marx's conception of human nature is one of the essential ideas of his theoretical formulation. He did not deny the existence of universal human nature. While discussing the characteristics of human nature that makes man as human beings, Marx uses both biological and historical method.⁹¹ Biologically human beings are distinguished from animals due to their intellect, emotion and will and their ability to reflect upon themselves.⁹² The keywords that express this biological conception of man are powers and needs.⁹³ Marx in his biological model of human nature introduced the notion of specific, historical criteria that determine not immutable, but determine characteristics.⁹⁴ Most of the people wrongly interpreted the Marx theory of human nature due to a failure to differentiate between the components of human nature, which are historical and biological. The biological model

determines the characteristics that distinguish man from the animals and while defining the human nature, historical model alone elaborate the differences in behaviour over the time.⁹⁵

Marx in his theory of alienation has made a philosophical diagnosis of the situation of human beings in the contemporary capitalist society, where human beings are made as an instrument and as a machine. The capitalist forces guide all the necessities and rights of human beings. The capitalist continuously exploits the labours for the fulfilment of their own interest. The common men have engaged themselves all the time to improve their socio-economic condition. The individual has to remain so busy in the pursuit of his occupation that he hardly gets time to think of the quality of his own life that Marx asserts in his theoretical formulations.⁹⁶ As capitalist exploits the situation for their own interests, the workers find themselves alienated from the society, state and from those with whom they are working and even from their own self. Thus individual remain in a state of continuous anxiety and worry.⁹⁷ Marx in his theory of alienation firmly described the alienated persons as an 'abstraction', because he had lost connectivity with society and with all human species. Further, Marx believed that human beings under the capitalist mode of production are alienated from his work and life activity, also alienated from his own product and also from his fellow men.⁹⁸ Marx was primarily interested in the individual that he felt oppressed at his miserable condition under the capitalist system.⁹⁹ Marx firmly believed that the social division of labour creates vast accumulations of capital and personal wealth at one pole of society, an increase in the value of things achieved at the cost of the progressive devaluation of man as a human species.¹⁰⁰ The source of this evil is found in the capitalist system in which organisation of labour has the effect of directly transforming man's labour into a saleable commodity.¹⁰¹ Thus Marx used his concept of alienation while elaborating the human illness in the capitalist society. He believed that alienation arises

due to the continuous conflict between productive forces and the relation of production. Scholars about alienation remarks:

“Alienation is an eminently historical concept. If a man is alienated, he must be alienated from something as a result of certain causes – the interplay of event and circumstances about man as the subject of this alienation –which manifest themselves in a historical framework.”¹⁰²

For Marx, the social arrangements in capitalist society alienated the workers. They failed to provide them with the opportunities for a meaningful and creative existence. The worker is alienated in that way that he neither gains satisfaction from his work nor receives the full product of his labour. The worker is subsequently alienated from the true nature of man. Actually, they are alienated from their own self. The conditions that characterise the modern industrial production prevent the workers from ‘exercising his full creative powers and so releasing the full potentialities of his nature.’¹⁰³ As quoted by the Duncan Mitchel:

“Alienation is that condition when a man does not experience himself as the active bearer his own powers and richness, but as an impoverished thing dependent on powers outside of himself.”¹⁰⁴

According to Marx, alienation results from the lack of a sense of control over the social world. People forget that society and social institutions are envisioned by human beings and can, therefore, be altered by human beings. The social world thus environs people as an antagonistic thing, leaving them alien in the very environment that they have created.¹⁰⁵ Marx used the term alienation to many social institutions such as law, government, religion and economic life. But he gives more preference on the

alienation that is happened in the economic field. Marx writes religious alienation as such occurs only in the sphere of consciousness, in the inner life of man, but economic alienation is that of real life. It, therefore, affects both aspects mind and action.¹⁰⁶

To Marx, alienation has four different major dimensions- alienation from labour, alienation from the process of production, alienated from fellow beings and alienated from himself. Marx asserts that due to the dominated nature of the capitalist system over the workers as a labourer and also as a man, constitutes the total alienation of human labour. In the capitalist system, man alienates from his own activity, means from his own product. Marx maintains that labour does not belong to man's essential being because it is not a satisfaction of a need by merely satisfies needs external to it.¹⁰⁷ Labour in capitalism degrades man's body and ruins his mind which makes him uncomfortable and unhappy.¹⁰⁸ Productive activity in capitalism is spoken of as 'active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation'.¹⁰⁹ Asking 'What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?'; Marx in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844* writes:

"Labour is external to the workers, i.e. it does not belong to his intrinsic being; that in his work, therefore, he does not assert himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop his physical and mental energy freely but mortifies his body and ruin his mind. The worker, therefore, only considers himself outside his work, and in his work outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working, he is not at home. His labour is, therefore, not voluntary, but coerced; it's forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely meant to satisfy need external to it."¹¹⁰

Thus, Marx asserts that labour in capitalism mortifies the human's body and also ruins his mind and therefore in that particular system he is uncomfortable and unhappy. In that productive system, man no longer feels own self to be free, because of the absence of association and identification with his labour. The productions that are produced by the workers directly go to the hand of the bourgeoisie. The worker does not get any reward and satisfaction for his labour that is used in order produce something. With time, he gets physically exhausted and mentally depressed.¹¹¹ Human being feels more pleasure and comfortable when he is at home and when he is not working. So workers always have a feeling in their minds that they are not working for self-happiness, instead they are working for others. Marx asserts that labour is not satisfied with his work and therefore such type of labour is not voluntary in nature. It can be considered as forced labour. As a result, the workers are continuously alienated from their own labour in the sense that the private property that created out of his labour in the form of profit does not belong to him, but those belong to the bourgeoisie who has no sympathies with him.¹¹²

The second of the four major dimensions of alienation is the individual's relation to his product. In Marx's words, 'the relation of the worker to the product of labour as an alien object exercising power over him.'¹¹³ Man is alienated from his product because the activity that produced was alienated. The workers put their all hard works to make a product, and once it becomes a finished product, it has gone into the hands of bourgeoisie and the product is alienated from the workers. Thus labour's product transforms into an alien object; the more he works, the more he finds himself dominated by the world of objects which is his own creation.¹¹⁴ The workers put his hard work, time into the object, but now his life no longer belongs to him, rather to the object. Therefore his productive potentiality has been drained off into his product without giving him any return.¹¹⁵ Marx asserts:

“The more worker spends himself; the more powerful the alien objective world becomes which he himself creates, the poorer he- his inner world- becomes, the less belongs to him as his own... The worker puts his life into the object, but now his life no longer belongs to him to the object. Hence, the greater this activity, the greater is the worker's lack of objects. Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not. Therefore the greater is this product; the less is he himself.”¹¹⁶

The products that are made by the workers are alienated to him because he is not able to utilise them in further productive activity. Rather he is not able recognised them as his own product. Therefore under such circumstances, the worker is not able to work creatively. He just works to satisfy the others. Thus workers are alienated from their own product.

The third dimension of alienation is, in which Marx exhibits the worker's alienation from his fellow beings. This social alienation is fitted on to activity and product alienation that can be understood from the Marx explanation on alienation, where he exhibit that if the product of labour doesn't related to the worker and if the product confronts him as an alien, hostile, powerful object independent of him, this can be because it belongs to some other man than the worker. That means someone else is master of this subject. Every self-relation of men from himself and nature appears in the relationship in which men separate himself and nature apparts from him and separates himself from them.¹¹⁷

Marx asserts that in a capitalist society human beings are separated from his co-workers. The workers have no close relationship or attachment with the other workers with the works. Marx has characterised this alienated man as an "abstraction' because he has most touch with all human specificity.¹¹⁸ He has been reduced to performing undifferentiated work on humanly indistinguishable

object among people deprived of their human variety and compassion.¹¹⁹ Thus in every way, man is alienated from others. He tries to measure every other human being according to his own standard of valuation and viewpoint.¹²⁰ Therefore, the labourers treat his management not as a human but as an instrument of exploitations. Instead of sympathisers fellow beings are treated as enemies and in many cases bickering and ill will dominate.¹²¹ Thus Marx asserts that the estrangement of man and in every relationship, in which a man stands for himself, is felt for the first and expressed in the relationship in which a man stands with another man. That is why, within the relationship of estranged labour, every man observes the other in accordance with the standard and the situation in which he finds as a worker.¹²²

Likewise, human beings are not only alienated from their own products but also separated from his fellow beings. The last of four broad relations Marx uses to reconstruct man's alienation in capitalist society is the alienation from his species and from own self. Marx asserts that the capitalist mode of production creates the alienation in all its manifestation.¹²³ Development and all-embracing character of capitalism lead to alienation. Marx claims that 'estranged human labour estranges the species from man'.¹²⁴ Nature itself is alienated from human beings, and as such he loses his own inanimate body. The other forms of alienation are qualitatively different from human being's alienation from his species. Like alienation from his work, product and other men, alienation from his species is not tangible in which living people are determined by the standard of what it means to be a man.¹²⁵ Perhaps, this aspect of alienation can be clearly understood with the help of reformulation of man's alienation in his work, product and other men and it is overviewed from the perspective of individual's membership in the species. As asserted by Marx:

“In tearing away from man the object of his production...estranged labour tears from his species life, his real species objectivity, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him. Similarly, in degrading spontaneous activity, free activity, to a means, estranged labour makes man’s species life a means to his physical existence.”¹²⁶

Marx says, ‘The object of work is...the objectification of man’s species life,’ with the removal of these object from his control, the human species is deprived of its reality, of what it requires to manifest itself as the human species.¹²⁷The obvious implication of these ideas is that capitalism has created a situation in which man has been alienated from self because in the system no person is treated on the basis of man to man but as employer and employee.¹²⁸Marx regards that human beings are considered as a part of the machine and as such, they are alienated as a man. Again, the workers lose his self-identity, and he gradually becomes impersonal and fails to relate himself with anybody else. The workers find themselves powerless and isolated because of selfishness and self-centred tendencies.¹²⁹Thus, Marx shows how human beings are alienated from labour, products, fellow beings and species or self.

Thus, from the above discussion it has been reflected that alienation is primarily a working-class phenomenon. But it can't be said that only the working class is the victims of alienation, rather all classes of the society are victimised by the alienation. Both bourgeoisie and proletariat are faced similar kind of self-alienation. Due to the existence of alienation in society, it is divided into two classes. Marx asserts that by producing alienated material objects and in the process, themselves as an alienated class, the proletariat produces the alienation of people with whom they and their products have relations.¹³⁰Marx basically argued that living in the ‘realm of alienation’, the capitalist must be in a ‘state of alienation’,

because the workers do not have human relations with him and he does not have human relations with them.¹³¹ Marx believes that alienation increases impoverishment of the labourers and wealth of the capitalists. Thus, alienation divides the society into two classes; proletariats and bourgeoisie.

Marx opined that alienation would lead to dehumanisation and devaluation of human beings in the society. In the world of capitalism, the workers are the victim of exploitations. "The more wealth the worker produces, the poorer he becomes. Just as labour produces the world of things, it also creates the devaluation of the world of men. This devaluation increases in direct proportion to the increase in the production of commodities."¹³²In Marx view, a significant source of alienation is the farthest division of labour in modern societies. Each worker has a specific, restricted and limited role. The worker no longer applies the total human capacities of the hands, the mind and the emotion to work. In the words of Marx, alienation seems as one of the major problems that are faced by the workers during production. The worker spends his entire life in producing everything for the powers that manipulate, not for him. Marx concept of alienation, which was written well over a century ago, seems as relevant today.

2.6. Elucidating Land Alienation:-

The land is one of the essential assets for every community of the society. The land is the backbone for most of the rural communities, who are primarily dependent on agriculture and other allied activities. Such communities have an emotional attachment to the land. Agenda 21, which is basically formulated to protect the environmental degradation, has defined land 'as a physical entity regarding its topology and spatial nature thus is including natural resources like the soil, minerals, water and biota existing on the land. These components provide a variety of services essential to the maintenance of life-systems and the productive capacity of the environment.'¹³³In Convention to Combat Desertification(

United Nations 1994), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations has defined the land broadly and holistically that the land is a physical area of the terrestrial surface of the earth. It contains all the features of the biosphere right above or below the surface, including the nearest surface, climate, terrain forms and surface hydrology, the nearest apparent grainy strata and allied groundwater reserve, the plant and animal populations, the human settlement arrangement and physical consequences of earlier and contemporaneous individual action.(FAO, 1995)¹³⁴

Land, therefore, is considered an essential asset of the people, whose life is basically based on agriculture and other allied activities. The land is the mainstay for the tribal communities. The land is a prime resource for the tribals due to their dependency over the land. The term 'Tribe' is imitated from the Latin words 'tribes'. The word tribe appeared in the 16th century and denoted a community of persons claiming descent from a common ancestor.¹³⁵The tribes can be defined as a "collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not originally it might have been so."¹³⁶In the words of R.N Mukherjee, "a tribe is that human group, whose members have a common interest, territory, language, social law and economic occupation."¹³⁷Basically, they were hunter gathered community at one point of time and later converted as an agro-based community. Therefore they are primarily related to forest and land.

Several political philosophers like Hegel, Feuerbach, Karl Marx developed the concept of alienation, where they briefly discuss how did human beings alienate from the social processes. To Marx, alienated labour involves four aspects; alienation from the object that he produces, alienation from the process of production, alienation from the community of his fellowman and finally alienation from himself. Many social scientists used the concept of alienation while defining the tribal's problems of

depriving of their own land. The concept of alienation is firstly determined by the Hegel and later used by Marx to analyse the social condition in which human beings are estranged from the social process and from the own self. The tribal communities, who are generally called as an indigenous community, are eventually deprived of his own land on which they have existed since the time of immemorial. In the case of tribal society also the tribal people continuously estranged from their own property and land. Their land and property are grabbed by the non-tribals due to their indebtedness, impoverishment, lack of land records, administrative inefficiency. Thus the concept of alienation is interpreted to understand the problems that are faced by the tribals regarding their land. Such type of deprivation and separation of tribal communities from their own ancestral land can better be understood scientifically with the help of the concept of land alienation.

As per the guidelines of Government of India, land alienation can be defined as the sale and mortgage of tribals land by the non-tribals.¹³⁸ The leasing of tribals lands in exchange of loans to the non-tribals are also considered as land alienation because in that particular system most of the tribal families are not able to refund the loans and thus, they lose his ownership over his own land and the money lenders capture that specific land. Thus, the tribals are estranged from their own land and resources. Again most of the tribal communities lose their land due to the transfer of land to the governmental department including the forest department, private institutions and voluntary organisations is also described as the alienation of tribal lands.¹³⁹ World Geography Final Flashcards is of the view that when a society or cultural group occupies the land of another, when the settlers take the land away from the original inhabitants or when the government takes possession of the land of the inhabitants of a country then it is called land alienation and thus, land alienation takes place in the existing social structure.¹⁴⁰

According to Black's Law dictionary defines alienation as 'the transfer of the property and possession of lands, tenements or other things, from one person to another.'¹⁴¹ Alienation of land is a euphemistic term that is used to define the grabbing of tribals land by the non-tribals.

2.7. Exploring Eminent Domain:-

Every government of the globe always requires development, and for develop they need resources, especially the land. The land is one of the essential assets for the state from a developmental perspective. Therefore, each state has the power that may exercise over the land within its territory, which can be considered as the eminent domain. The power of eminent domain of the state related to the compulsory acquisition of land, which is necessarily required for development and the power is used only public purpose.¹⁴² But it is notable that what constitutes the public purpose is an open debate in contemporary time. With the help of the concept of eminent domain, the government acquires a large amount of land to establish infrastructure and to carry out various developmental projects, which may birth massive amount of displacement that can be considered as a debatable issue concerning development. The power can be used by the state through legislative delegation. But in India, in the early constitutional years of independent and before the development of the concept of eminent domain, the Land Acquisition act of 1894 has played as the cornerstone of India's expropriation policy that was used to acquire any private property.¹⁴³ With the help of this act, the government may acquire any kind of private property in exchange for compensation to meet public purposes. The term 'eminent domain' was coined by the Dutch Jurist Hugo Grotius in his treatise *De Jure Belli Ac Pacis* (*On the Law of War and Peace*) in 1625. The concept of eminent domain can be found in Roman law. The twelve talks of Roman law has defined the limitations of the government's power to take private property for public use.¹⁴⁴ After that, in 1215 A.D through Article 39 of Magna Carta and the Chapter 28, England recognised the power

of eminent domain.¹⁴⁵ Again in 1791, the owner's right to get fair compensation was recognised in France. Subsequently, United States passed the historic 'Bill of Rights' in which the power of eminent domain was accredited in the Fifth Amendment of the United States constitution which stated that the state should not have the ability to acquire the private property for public use without remunerating fair and just compensation.¹⁴⁶ The concept of eminent domain Hugo Grotius, the father of international law, defined the concept of eminent domain in the following ways;

“The property of subject is under the eminent domain of the state, so that the state or he who acts for it may use and even alienate and destroy such property, not only in cases of extreme necessity...but for ends of public utility, to which ends those who found civil society must be supposed to have intended that private ends should give way. But it is to be added that when this is done the state is bound to make good the loss to those who lose their property.”¹⁴⁷

Hugo Grotius asserts that the concept of eminent domain is used by the state to acquire private property. While explaining the power of the eminent domain, it is considered that the eminent domain is ‘the power of the sovereign to take property for public use without the owner's consent. The meaning of the power in its irreducible terms is: (a) power to take, (b) without the owner's consent, and (c) for the public use.’¹⁴⁸ For the well-being of the people, the state may use the property of her citizens, and the people must collaborate and work together with the government for achieving development. But the existence of several shortcomings may help in the rise of sharp criticism against the concept. UshaRamanathan asserts that the sovereign orientation was an indication of one of the problems that have focused on the existence and uses of the eminent domain power that is the affiliation between the state and individual. The power to acquire and the inappropriate nature of public use have spread and

made possible displacement on a large scale, and rapidly becoming a force which is usually getting illegitimate among the displaced persons. It is further the idea that the power to acquire will be from an owner has excluded large numbers of from even the minimal consideration given by the law in form of minimum compensation while occurring displacement. Dispossessed labourers, craftsperson and others whose livelihood is not accompanying with land proprietorship as well as women have been among those whom this understanding of eminent domain has left excluded from the jurisdiction of regulations. Thus, all those are basically excluded from the jurisdiction of eminent domain. Given the succession rights and the laws of ownership who have determined ownership, the possibility of women being unconditional proprietors with whom the state will have to convey is distant.¹⁴⁹

The concept of eminent domain gives a vast amount of powers to the state to take private property for public use. But the main thing is that government does not define the actually what does 'public use' include. Government yet not defines what conditions they will take acquire the private property. It has been seen that compensation policy is also not clearly defined by the government. Compensation is similar from state to state, and often uneven distribution of compensation has been from state to state. Again, the landless labourers, artisans and other those, whose livelihood is not related with the landownership are primarily excluded from the jurisdiction of eminent domain. Again, in case of India, the women who do not have property rights are also not mattered by the eminent domain, because the State is bound only to deal with the 'land owner'.¹⁵⁰ The power of eminent domain may cause a massive amount of land alienation, and mostly the tribal communities are affected by it. While analysing the concept of alienation and its probable causes, the power of eminent domain of a state will automatically come. Therefore, it is essential to discuss the concept of eminent domain to better understand the concept of land alienation.

2.8. The Notion of Deprivation and Relative Deprivation:-

Deprivation is one of the essential concepts that are closely associated with the discussions of social inequality. The sociological analysis defines the concept of deprivation broadly as disparity to access to social goods. According to the Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology defines the concept of deprivation as, “In general, deprivation refers to a condition in which people lack what they need.”¹⁵¹ Again the Collins Dictionary of Sociology asserts deprivation as:

“Deprivation refers to.....the lack of economic and emotional supports generally accepted as basic essentials of human experience. These include income and housing, and parental care for children.”¹⁵²

Thus, the concept basically means that human beings need several things that are very basic and necessary for their development and when they are deprived of those things it will lead to dissatisfaction in their minds, and it will automatically lead social mobilisation and social unrest. There are two notions of deprivation, absolute deprivation and relative deprivation.¹⁵³ Absolute deprivation refers to the lack of life necessities such as food, water, shelter and fuel. It primarily means the absence of the means to satisfy the basic needs for survival; food, clothing and shelter.¹⁵⁴ Again the notion of relative deprivation refers to the deprivations experienced when individuals compare themselves with others.¹⁵⁵ Deprivation may cause social exclusion in society.

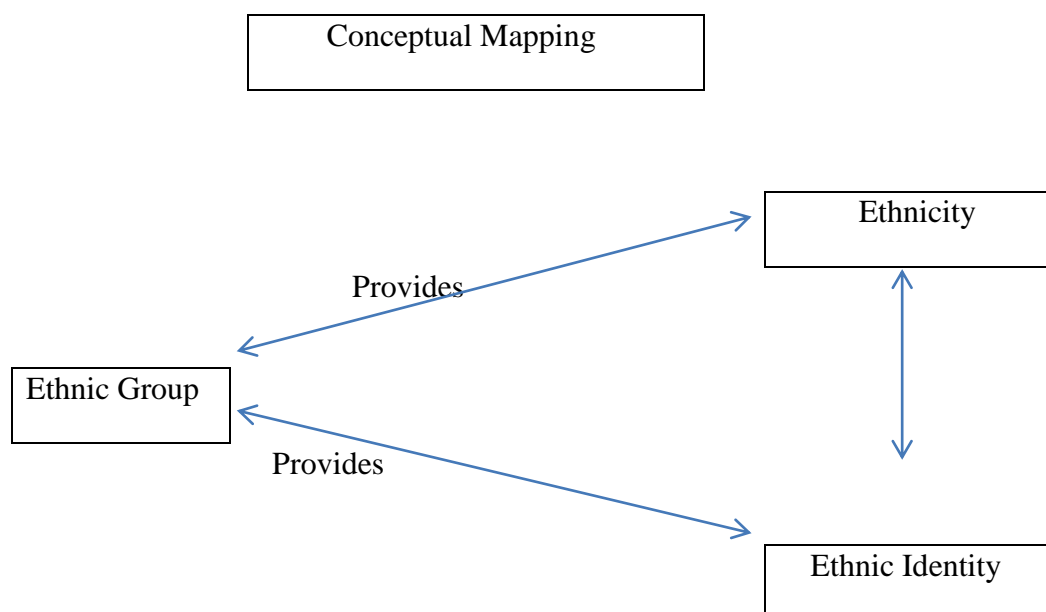
People's deprivation from their necessities leads to the social mobilisation against the concerned authority. To bring change to the socio-economic as well as political structure of the society, people are gathered and protested for fulfilling their demands. The social mobilisation that is occurred due to the deprivation from those what they need can better be understood by the theory of 'Relative deprivation',

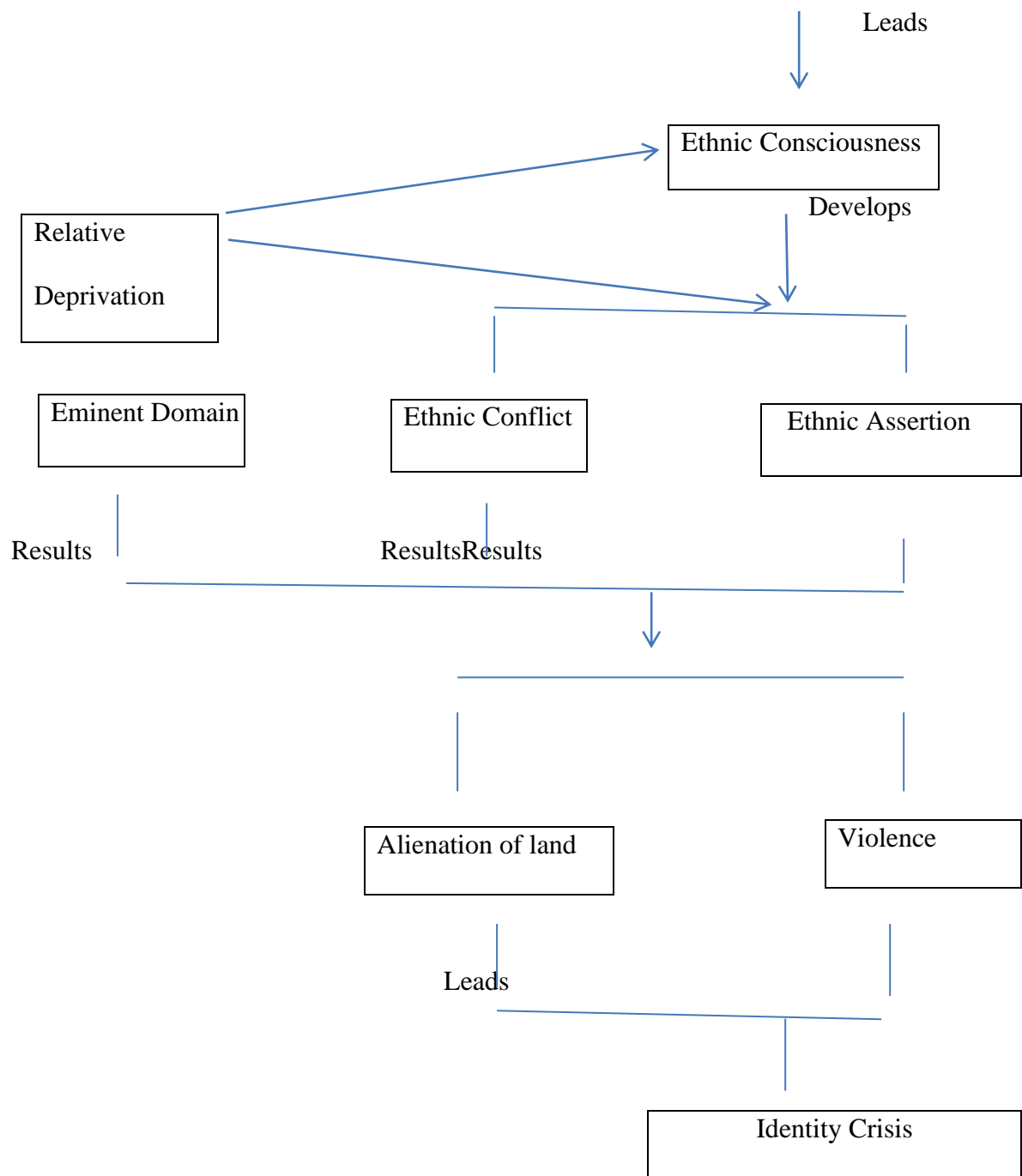
which is one the main theory that concerning social movements. The concept of 'Relative Deprivation' is developed by Samuel A. Stouffer in his classic socio-psychological study "*The American Soldier*".¹⁵⁶ Horton and Hunt assert that the individual's feelings of deprivation are primarily related with their anticipations and acquirements. Those individuals are less deprived whose expectation is limited in number; hence those felt more deprivation, who actually wants more and more.¹⁵⁷ The notion of relative deprivation fundamentally refers to the sense of deprivation and dissatisfaction of the individual in desired condition. When the individual requirements become an authentic expectation and those requirements are obstructed by the society that leads to the appearance of the felling of relative deprivation among the masses. Morrison remarks that relative deprivation is fundamentally understood to be the dominant variable while explaining the mass movement that is used to comprehend the discovery of change which interprets social movements. Thus, the spirits of virtual dispossession are helped in the rise of bulk of social movement.¹⁵⁸

The concept of relative deprivation is basically applied to solve out the socio-political, economic and organisational problems that are existed in the society. The concept inspires towards the explorations of individual's feelings of dispossession, which may result while relating individual's conditions with that of referent person.¹⁵⁹ In the words of C.N. Shankar Rao, the experience of relative deprivation is then when a person compares himself with others. In such case, individuals who lack anything, compare them with those who have that thing and feel a sense of deprivation by doing this. Relative deprivation contains not only comparisons, but is definite in subjected term that has been familiarly interconnected with the concept of reference group.¹⁶⁰

Thus, deprivation is measured not by an objective standard, but by the comparison with the relatively superior advantages of others, such as members of a reference group with whom one desires to emulate.

2.9. Making Sense of Politics of Identity, Ethnic Assertion and Land Alienation:-





The world has diversity regarding its geographical location, identification of the people. The whole world, which is heterogeneous are comprised of numbers of racial, linguistic and cultural groups. There is an existence of numerous ethnic groups in the world and each the ethnic groups have their own distinctive culture, language and customs. The ethnic group develops the concept of ethnicity and ethnicity develops an ethnic identity. Ethnicity can be considered as a sense of ethnic identity. Ethnic group, ethnicity and ethnic identity; all are inter-related with each other to that extent that without any of them, it is not possible to explain one. An ethnic group comprises a group of people that have common language, beliefs, norms, practices, customs, norms and rules and regulations. An ethnic group is entirely different from other ethnic groups due to its socio-cultural differences. Ethnicity can be defined as a primordial sense of ethnic identity that has been defined by Vos de as ‘a group of people use the subjective, symbolic or emblematic aspect of culture, to differentiate themselves from the other groups.’¹⁶¹ Ethnicity helps in the creation of ethnic consciousness in the mind of people belonging to various ethnic groups. Ethnic self-consciousness leads to the emergence of awareness towards their culture, beliefs, identity and customs. Sometimes it has been seen that ethnicity is used as a substitute form of social mobilisation and identification to a community. Ethnicity is used by the ethnic groups to raise their demand in the political domain for alteration of their position, economic well-being and socio-cultural development.¹⁶² In several cases, the ethnic communities are relatively deprived of their rights as they are enjoyed by birth. It has been noticed that ethnic group, which have a distinctive culture and identity are deprived of their legitimate privileges. Ethnic identity is vastly affected by immigration, conversion and also due to modernisation. In colonial and ex-colonial societies, the dominant groups that acquire the ruling command of those societies become a critical factor towards the growth of ethnic

conflicts. The process of modernisation also may produce cultural and identical imbalance among the ethnic groups, and that may ultimately result in ethnic rivalries. It is notable that due to the process of modernisation cultural assimilation is happening at a rapid pace and such type of assimilation may affect in the originality and uniqueness character of ethnic communities. Gradually their originality and uniqueness are declining day by day in the process of cultural assimilation. In the era globalisation, the minority ethnic groups choose the process of assimilation to the language and culture of dominant ethnic communities of existing social structure. Again when a particular community is relatively deprived of their legitimate rights, it will lead to ethnic consciousness as well as the ethnic assertion and ethnic rivalries. In the words of Paul R. Brass, ethnic consciousness, ethnic demands and ethnic conflict are occurred due to the rivalry of ethnic groups with other dominant elite groups.¹⁶³ The constant conflict among the ethnic group also leads to the 'ethnic communalism'. Again, ethnic conflict has been seen more likely in that place where there is no single dominant group because in that particular place there is a chance of more competition among different cultural norms and beliefs. The entire situation is turned into a political issue when it enters in the politics. Glazer and Moynihan explain the politicisation of ethnic identity and self-consciousness and argue that basically, the minority group fails to achieve success according to the provisions that are formulated by the dominant groups, which may lead to the insecurity in the minds of minority communities and that ultimately result in identity consciousness.¹⁶⁴ The growing identity consciousness among minorities leads to the emergence of political parties and other social organisation. Identity politics is to be considered as one of the mostly debatable issues in the contemporary political system. Identity politics is basically understood as a phenomenon that helps in the emergence of counter objection against the domination and prejudice towards the various ethnic communities on the basis of their religious, racial, linguistic and cultural identity. The politics of identity emerge through the procedure of identity formulation of marginalizing and oppressed sections of the

society.¹⁶⁵ Such type of identity construction among the oppress and marginalise section of the society leads to the emergence of identity consciousness. It has been seen that often the political parties make this identity consciousness as an electoral issue. They are politicising the whole issue for their own benefit because through focusing on the problematic issue of a particular ethnic group in their electoral manifesto, they will be able to get the support from that ethnic community.

Some of the ethnic groups that have distinctive culture and identity can be defined as the "Tribal groups" by the state mechanism. Basically, the government uses the term "Tribal group" to define as a collection of families bearing a common name, members that occupy the same territory, speak a common language and also follow a common culture. Basically, whether a particular ethnic group is a tribal or not, is defined by the state mechanism. By the backwardness and uniqueness of ethnic group, the state defines a particular ethnic group as a 'Tribe'. Land and forest are one of the important assets for the tribals because for them it is not only the source of economic substances but also the source of identity. For them land is their instrument for their socio-economic and cultural development. Besides, most of the festival, dance and food habits of the tribals are mostly associated with forests. But, it has been seen that in certain extent government occupy the land from those tribal communities for public uses with the help of the power of 'eminent domain' that resulted in the massive amount of land alienation. Therefore, eminent domain can be considered as one of the important sources of alienation of land. On the other hand, cultivated violence is related to identity conflicts.¹⁶⁶ It is remarkable that identity becomes a prominent source of richness and warmth, at the same time terror and violence in society.¹⁶⁷ The growing ethnic consciousness among the ethnic communities, especially in the minds of tribals leads to the emergence of ethnic violence in society. Again, the ethnic conflict also results in massive numbers of alienation of land. Thus, the government's power of eminent domain and growing ethnic conflict among

the ethnic communities are associated with the alienation of land and ethnic violence in the society, and again the alienation of land and ethnic violence also leads to an environment of the identity crisis of ethnic communities. When an ethnic group is alienated from their land, that is their source of identity also effect on their sustainability of identity. Thus, the ethnic identity, ethnic consciousness, ethnic assertion, ethnic conflict, relative deprivation of ethnic groups, the power of eminent domain, alienation of land, ethnic violence and identity crisis; all are inter-linked with each other, and entire research is developed with the help of this concept.

2.10. Conclusion:-

Thus, the chapter dealt with the principal theories and concepts that are used while elucidating the problems that are faced by the Adivasis regarding their culture, identity and land. The entire chapter entitled “Understanding Ethnic Assertion and Sustainability of land: A Theoretical Framework” provided a clear conceptual understanding while elucidating the research questions that the research basically tries to explore. After framing a conceptual base, the next chapter deals with the historical analysis of the Adivasis, mainly their migratory history to the land of India, their condition in the pre-colonial era and colonial era in the land of India, their migratory process to the Assam and specially to the lower parts of Assam and their socio-economic and political conditions in Assam as a tea garden workers and as daily wage earner.

Notes and References:-

Migration, Victimisation and Adivasis: A Historical Analysis

3.1. Introduction:-

The issue of identity assertion and land of Adivasis in Assam is one of the most debatable and complex issues of the recent day politics. In order to understand their present status of identity and land, we have to go back to their past life from where we can get a clear concept about their originality that helps us in the process of identifying their present status of identity and land and also their future aspirations.

3.2. India: As a Land Migrant:-

India is one of the earliest and prominent civilisations in the world that has a unique culture. The region is heterogeneous in nature due to the existence of diverse ethnic groups, linguistic groups and religious communities. The region is full of high hills, deep forests, great plain complex plateaus and coastal plains and rivers, that make it enrich environmentally. India forms an important part of Mackinder's "World Island", that is the Afro-Eurasian landmass. It is the seventh largest country in the world, covering 2.2 % of the world's total land. India is characterised by a great diversity of physical features, estimated among the total land area of India, 10.7% was covered mountains, 18.6% by the hills, 27.7 % by the plateaus and 43.3 % was covered by the plains. In the words of Mark Twain, "India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend and the great grandmother of tradition. Our most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only."¹⁶⁸ The country has a highly developed culture that makes a profound contribution to the cultural development of the country. The ancient civilisation was found in India. 2.6 age-old stone tools and three animal bones were found in the north of New Delhi. This era of civilisation

signified the growth of agriculture and hunting. It is the Dravidian who created the first Indian civilisation that is the Indus or Harappan civilisation. The stone tools of the Paleolithic era were discovered from the many parts of the country. Non-Aryans have been living in the region since the time of immemorial even before the Aryans came to the land. The massive number of migration to the region changed the demographic history of the land as well as the culture and civilisation of India. Some of the notable historians considered the Aryans as the cause of the destruction of Harappan civilisation in India. After the destruction of Harappan and Mohenjo-Daro civilisation, the process of rapid migration took place in the region that made the Indian society as a composite heterogeneous society.

Migration is considered an important phenomenon in today's global world. The global interconnectedness makes migration as more comfortable as possible that touches every corner of the world. Modern communication and transport system help in the migration process. Conflict, inequality, poverty and lack of proper employment facilities compel people to leave their homes in search of a better lifestyle and future. Since the time immemorial, the people have been migrating from one region to another region in search of a comfortable place despite having better communication and transport facilities. The origin of human species was found in Africa and after that from Africa people were started migrating to the other region of the world for attaining a calm life. In the case of India, there is no proof of the inception of human species in the land. India is mostly a country and has a long old history of migration to the land that expresses its tremendous diversity. At one point of time it was believed that Dravidians were the original inhabitants of the land, but in later period it was proved that before the Dravidians, Adivasis, the original ancestor of the land came. The

Bench containing Justice MarkandeyKatju and Justice GyanSudhaMisra of Supreme court of India also put forward a judgment, which clears the fact that Adivasis are the original inhabitants of India.¹⁶⁹ Estimated 92 per cent of the human beings had their migratory history and rested 8 per cent that is the Adivasis can be considered as the aboriginal community of India. Many of the scholars, therefore, consider like India is country of migrants. India's condition is similar to North America, which also had a migratory history.

3.3. Who are the Adivasis?

If someone asks what does the term “Adivasi” means, then answer will be, “The word *Adi* means the first and *Vasi* means the inhabitant. So they can be called as the first indigenous community of the land of India.” According to the first Assamese dictionary *Hemkosh*, the word ‘Adivasi’ means the first inhabitant of the land that means ‘aboriginal’ of the land. According to the Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Population(ICITP), “Adivasis are the first aboriginal population of India that comprised of a heterogeneous set of ethnic and tribal groups.”¹⁷⁰ The term ‘Adivasi means- *Adi*(Original) and *Vasi*(Inhabitant). These groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological sector of the population.”¹⁷¹ Famous historian Mangobina Banerjee defines the ‘Adivasi’ as:

“Their taboos about food and intermarriage have hitherto prevented them from being coalesced into one; otherwise, they may be said to be harmoniously amalgamated as one nation, under the generic name of ‘kol’, better the aborigines, or under the present nomenclature of the Adivasis of Chota Nagpur.”¹⁷²

A famous historian from Assam, Prafulla Kumar Baruah in his book "Bharat Buranji" defines Adivasis as, "Adivasi people were characterised by short, very black with a flat and

broad nose. They liked to live in the hilly and forest areas. They had no written language, and their language was different from the languages of the Aryans and Dravidians. *Kol, Munda, Bhil, Santhal, Juwang, Orang, Saura, Kharia, Bhumij* these ethnic groups were included within the Adivasis.”¹⁷³ The Adivasis are considered to be the ‘son of the forest’, because they fundamentally dependent on the forest for their livelihood. For their sustainability, they were primarily dependent on the land and forest.

3.4. Migratory History of Adivasis to India:-

India is a region that is primarily famous for its migratory history. While analysing the ancient history of India, it is found that there is no evidence of the inception of human beings in India. In general, India is a land of migrants. All the ethnic communities that claimed to be indigenous in the region had a migratory history. From that perspective, Adivasis, who consider themselves as the original inhabitants of the region had a migratory history like the other communities of India. Since the pre-historic Stone Age, different communities have been migrated to the different region of India in the different phase of time. The Adivasi is considered themselves as the first indigenous community of the country, which was migrated to the region during the pre-historic stone era. There was no proper evidence of the migratory history of Adivasis to the land of India. Because, they came to the land of India during that period, which history can never be reached. A historian like Cornel Dalton and Risley believed that the Adivasis reached the region of Chota Nagpur from Cambodia and Vietnam through crossing Burma, present-day Myanmar and Assam, where history cannot be reached.¹⁷⁴ As proof, the Dalton and Risley signified the similarities of their languages with the ‘Khasi’ language, who is the first indigenous community of Assam, presently found in the

state of Meghalaya. The following Santhali song is also reflected in the migratory history to the land of Assam.

*“SihiriPipirire ban janmalen
Haratere ban haralen
Khajkamanare ban khajlen
Chachanberare ban jatlena.”¹⁷⁵*

“Born in ‘SihidiPipidi’
We are promised ‘Kaman’,
Started going in ‘Harata’ and
Split into different species in ‘ChachanBera’.” (English translation)

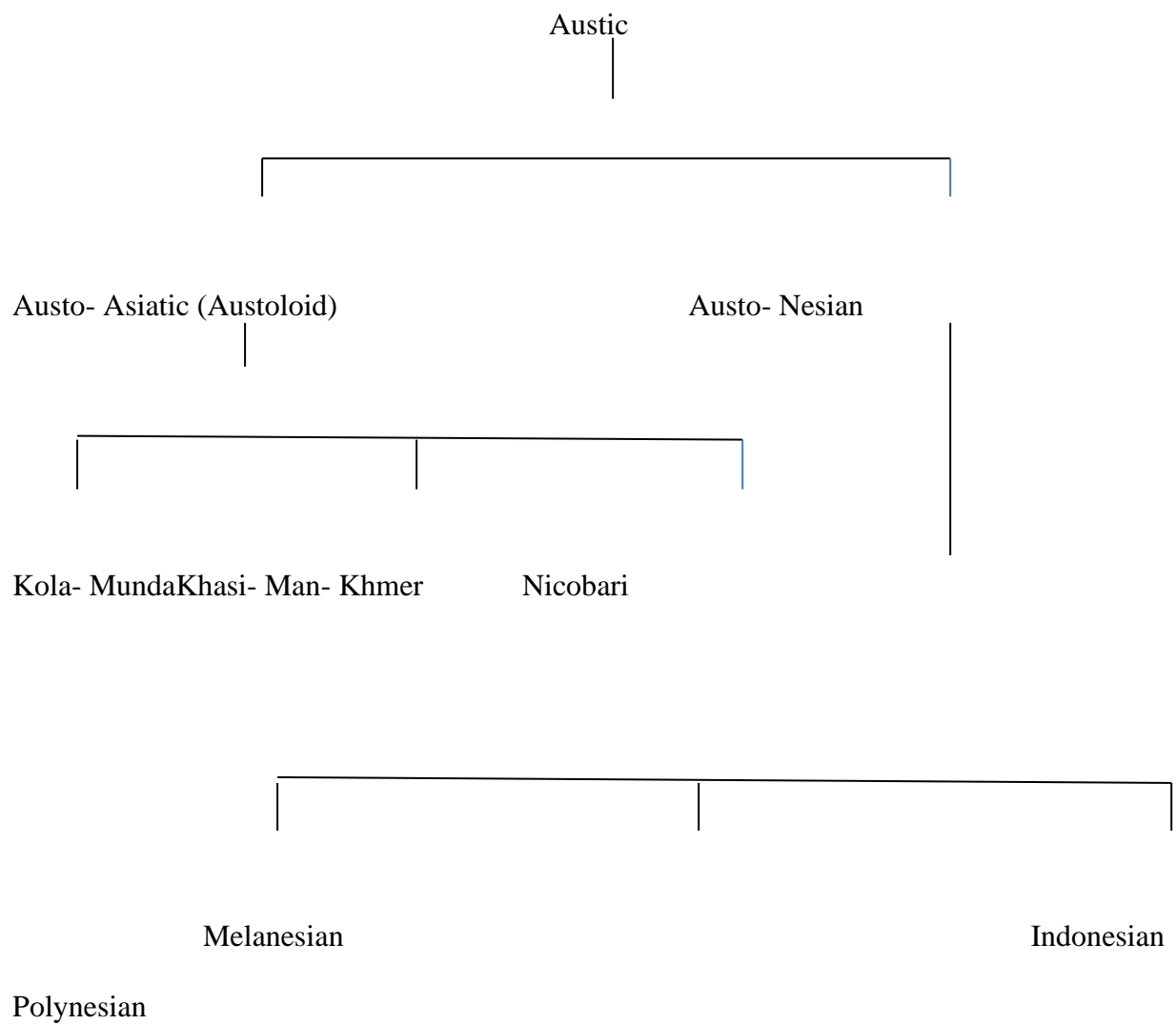
The Santhali song reflects that the first human species migrated from Sihiri(Indonesia) to Kaman(a city of Turkey) and from Kaman to ChachanBera(Somewhere in Europe) and final to Champadekh(China).¹⁷⁶ Along with some of the historian believed that the name ‘Bharat’ originated from the Santhali word ‘Bhar-Haxa’, here ‘Bhar’ means Virtue and ‘Haxa’ means land, in simple words India is a land of virtue.¹⁷⁷ Again some of the historians believed that in the pre-historical period the greatest Indian civilisation *Hinducivilisation* came to being. However, due to the comet, the prominent Indian *Hinducivilisation* was destroyed. Besides this reason, the historian also offers other reasons behind the demolition of *Hinducivilisation*. A Santhali song reveals such claims of the historians,

*“Mare siyo Mare siyondasandeldako day
Jariledahoo, Manobjariledai
Takarepetahekaha-ho manob
MenakMenakdhiriKapot*

MenakMenakdhiridandor
Andegeletahekena ho manowa
Andegelesarlana."¹⁷⁸

"Five days and five nights of fire rain,
Where were the Humans? How were they saved?
There were caves of stones, gates of stones, and
There were the humans,
Also, Saved like this."(English Translation)

This song means that due to comet the Adivasi civilisation was destroyed and some of the non-Aryans or the Adivasis got success to save their life from that natural calamity. However, after Aryans entering the land of India, the Adivasis were never succeeded in forming a civilisation like the earlier one. The archaeological study of India reveals that the human body parts that were found while mining the Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro are similar to the Pre-Dravidian Mundas of Chota Nagpur. Notable historian M. Banerjee also asserted, "The earliest inhabitants of Indian are now to be judged with the ethnic type of people unearthed at Mahenjodaro and Harappa which 'represent some culture yet unknown to us of Dravidian or proto-Australoid origin. The human remains at Mahenjodaro show a close affinity with the pre-Dravidian Munda of Chota Nagpur.'"¹⁷⁹ Another historian Sir George Campbell in his "Indian Ethnology" divides the aboriginal races into two classes- the first one is the Dravidian aborigines and the second one is the Kolarian or Northern aborigines.¹⁸⁰ The Australoid race is considered to be the first aboriginals of the land of India and from the various human skeleton of the prehistoric period that were found from different parts of India, reveals the fact that Adivasis are the Australoid. The Australoid is a branch of 'Austic' race.



From the preceding list, it is apparent that, Adivasi tribes that including Bhil, Munda, Kol, Santhali are the Austo- Asiatic or Australoid racial community, so that they can be considered as the first the aboriginal community that reached at the land of India before the Dravidians, Aryans and Mongolians.

3.5. Land, Adivasi and Colonialism:-

Historically Adivasis were the self-governing and self-determining community that settled in the forest and riverbank areas. Earlier they were hunting animals and collecting food for sustaining their livelihood; over the time like other communities of the world, Adivasis also grew from hunter-gatherer societies to cultivation based society. Forest and river are the primary sources of livelihood of Adivasis. Because for hunting, they need a forest and for cultivating, they need the river bank areas, which is very useful for cultivation. Therefore, there is an intimate relation between land and Adivasi. Generally, Adivasis are considered as the forest-based community and as the "son of the forest" so that they are mostly dependent on nature. For them, nature is not only a source of livelihood, but they consider it as a holy place. They worshipped natural products such as stone, river, forest etc. They considered land and nature as a means of their identity and worship. Their very identity and culture are intimately related to the land.

3.5.1. Adivasis in the Pre-Colonial era:-

As Adivasis is the first aboriginal community of the land, but after entering the Aryans in the region, they gradually lost their earlier status. After the demolition of Harappan and Mohenjo-Daro civilisation, they became very backward in comparison with other communities of India. Again their role in the formation of Indian civilisation, like the earlier Harappan and Mohenjo-Daro was not a satisfactory one. History found the Adivasis as the most marginalised and backward communities in comparison with other ethnic communities, which were lived in the dark forest areas far from the modern civilisation. History revealed that they were not civilised in nature. Therefore other ethnic communities often considered themselves as "Janghalis." They had no link with other communities, and therefore, the

process of modernisation never touched Adivasis. During the time of Mughal emperor also, they were excluded from the territory of their regime. Before coming to the British, they were the self-governing and self-determining community. Due to their marginalised and disfranchised condition as a 'Jungle based community' were isolated from the mainstream community of the region during the pre-colonial period; therefore Adivasi areas were part of 'Unknown Frontier' of the respective states, where the region's rule did not expand, and they governed themselves outside the influence of a particular ruler. Moreover, they never tried to expand their regime to the inhabited areas of Adivasis. Thus, despite their disfranchised and marginalised condition, they were peacefully living in their own areas without any disturbance of the others.

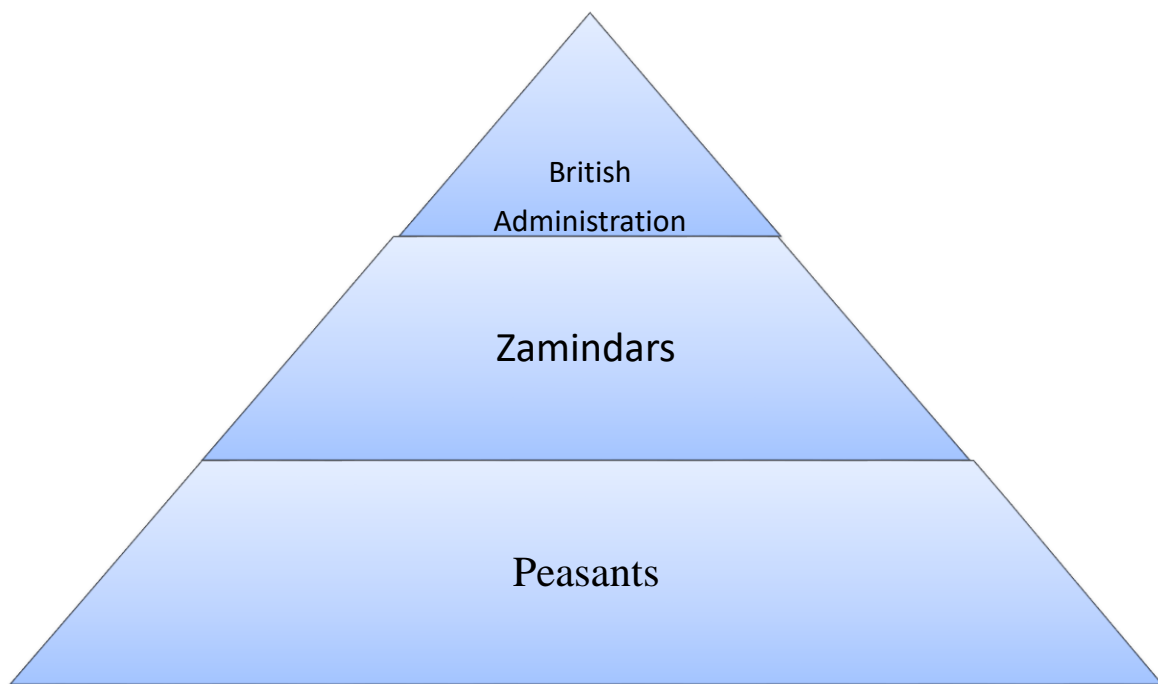
3.5.2. Colonialism, Deprivation and Adivasi:-

Colonialism was one of the most shattering policies of the European countries, through which they tried to exert the territory of others in order to expand their markets. Colonialism is considered to be one of the most exploitative and discriminatory policy. An eminent sociologist Ronald J. Horvath regarded colonialism as, "a form of domination and exploitation. The idea of domination is related to the concept of power."¹⁸¹ Colonialism had a devastating impact on the world economies. Among the colonial power, the British were the most influential one. Almost all the under-developed countries of the world were under British colonialism. Some of the intellectuals asserted British Colonialist Empire as an empire on which the Sun never sets. Like the other countries of the world, India also had deleterious experience of British colonialism. The colonialism not only devastated the economic condition of the country but also distressed and shattered the socio-cultural foundation of the country.

After acquiring the economic power of the land, they gradually inspired to control over the territories of the land. Taking advantage of the political instability of the region, they captured the territory from the Indian rulers. First, they captured the territory of Bengal by defeating the Nawab of Bengal in the Battle of *Plassey* of 1757. The battle of Plassey dramatically changed the perspective of British East India Company as they realised that they could conquer the other kingdom of the country also and that perspective marked as the beginning of an era of colonialism and imperialism in the South Asian region. Thus within a few decades, they captured almost all the kingdom of the land.

Along with the expansion of the British domain, several other concepts also developed. They started the system of private land ownership and legalised the land. The process of colonisation had conveyed extreme variations in the prevailing land revenue arrangement of the country. In the pre-British era, the individuals had to pay their land revenue in the form of physical labour, but after the advent of colonial administration, the mode of payment of land revenue was changed. In place of physical labour, the colonial administration had monetarised the land revenue arrangements under which the individuals had to pay the land revenue in the form of money. Again, they made land as commercial, saleable, purchasable, transferable, profitable commodity that can be considered as the one of radical transformation regarding the earlier land system. Because in the pre-British era, the land ownership fundamentally belonged to the king and individuals had no personal rights over the property, but it was the British who for the first time made the system of private ownership over the land. In order to make such type of reform of the existing land arrangements, the colonial administration introduced and enacted the Permanent Settlement act of 1793. This is fundamentally an agreement between the colonial administration and the

landlords. Though the Permanent Settlement act of 1793, the British colonial administration introduced the system of “Zamindari”, also known as Permanent Settlement system that was introduced in the Bengal Presidency. Prior to British, the local rulers appointed the *Thikedars*¹⁸² and *Jathedars*¹⁸³ in order to collect the land revenue in their respective states and the British turned them as *Zamindars* with more responsibilities than earlier.¹⁸⁴ The following diagram reflected the system of Zamindari that was introduced by the British through the Permanent Settlement act of 1793.



Zamindari system (Permanent Settlement act of 1793)

According to provisions of the act, the ownership of land was delegated in the hands of Zamindars, and they have entrusted the power to collect the land revenue from the peasants instead of British colonial administration. The collected revenue was divided into 11 parts

between the Zamindars and British administration, out of those 11 parts 1/11 portion went to the hands of Zamindars and the remaining 10/11 portions belonged to the British government. Such type of Zamindari system led to a system of Absentee-landlordism, where the farmers are deprived of the rights over their production. Under the Permanent Settlement system, the Zamindars became more interested in the higher form of revenue collection rather than agricultural improvement. Again, during the pre-colonial era, most of the forest areas and inhabiting areas of tribal communities were excluded from the state jurisdiction. British administration tried to occupy the forest as well as the 'Unknown frontier' that were the livelihood of the tribals. In order to strengthen their economic condition, they started a process to grab the tribal lands that were very naturally rich and also in minerals. The land became an important source of revenue for the British colonial administration. The sustainability of the British administration was genuinely dependent on the collection of land revenue. Therefore, in order to make the earlier temporary land revenue system as a permanent one, they enacted the Permanent Settlement act of 1793.

Tribals became the most underprivileged and subjugated section of the society due to the British colonialism, especially the Adivasis of Chota Nagpur of Central India, who was severely affected by the expansionist and exploitative policies of British colonialism. In pre-Colonial India, the Adivasis were the part of "Unknown Frontier" that were excluded and isolated from the rule of the respective states, where they governed themselves outside the influence of the respective states. During that era, they were fundamentally self-governing and self-determining community and were inhabited in the dark forest areas. When British had conquered the whole country, they gave more emphasis on the collection of substantial

land revenue in order to strengthen their economic condition that became a fundamental necessity for rule the whole country. Therefore, through the Permanent settlement act of 1793, they originated a system of individual land ownership and landlordism in the region of Bengal presidency to which Jharkhand belonged that were the inhabited place of the Adivasis, which earlier outside the jurisdiction of respective states. Gradually, British tried to expand their territory to the "Unknown Frontier" that was the inhabited place of Adivasis, which were earlier excluded from the jurisdiction of the respective states. The inherent purpose of such policies of the British was to increase the collection of land revenue in order to strengthen their economic condition. Again, British colonial administration wanted to capture the naturally rich forest land and other forest resources on which the Adivasis were mostly dependent for sustaining their livelihoods. The colonisers needed the mineral-rich Adivasi areas for using the raw materials that were essential for industrialisation. Realising the importance of forest land and their resources, after the enacting the Permanent settlement act, they introduced the forest act in order to impose taxes on the consumption of forest resources. The inherent reason behind this was to deprive the Adivasis of those forest lands so that they could seize those forest resources. During that time, Adivasis were the most deprived and marginalised community in case of economically as well as socially, so that they were not able to pay taxes for using the forest land and forest resources. All those land and forest act were primarily based on the principle of Eminent domain that believes all natural resource as the property of the state.¹⁸⁵ The principle of Eminent domain entrusted the power to evict the forest land and other natural resources for developmental purposes, mainly to construct the railways and crops plantations. This, in turn, resulted in the form of the encroachment of Adivasi land by the Colonisers in the name of using their land and natural resources for

development purposes. Again the process of Permanent settlement resulted in deprivation and marginalisation of Adivasis as they alienated and isolated from their land and CPR's.

The alienation and deprivation from their traditional land and CPR's resulted in the agitation of the Adivasis towards the British colonial administration. As an aboriginal community of the land, they were related with the forest and natural resources. Because, the land is not their source of economic sustenance, but this is the way of their life. Their culture, rituals and identity is very much dependent on forest and therefore alienation of land also mean alienation of identity and culture of Adivasis. The land and forest act of colonial administration made the Adivasis homeless and landless in their own birthplace in where they had been living for a very long period. Thus, from being alienated and deprived of their fundamental rights, a wide spread of agitation was begun among the Santhalis, one of the ethnic tribes among the Adivasis against the British colonial administration and Zamindars in the decade of 1850s. It was the first systematic revolution that was fundamentally fought against the exploitation and oppression of the British colonial administration as well as the Zamindari system. Under the leadership of SidoMurmu and KanhuMurmu, the headmen of Bhognadih village of SanthalParganas, the Santhal rebellion was launched in the year of 1855. In order to prevent such type of agitation of the local tribesmen, British imposed the martial law in the year 1855. A huge amount of Adivasis were killed and arrested by the martial law. Already they became a victimised section due to the alienation from their forest land and CPR's. But the practice of martial law made their socio-economic conditions more worsen. All such factors were remarkably contributed towards the process of migration of deprived and marginalised Adivasis in the region.

3.6. The Historical Migratory Process of Adivasis to Assam:-

Adivasis are one of the essential parts of composite Assamese culture and tradition. Historically, there was no confirmation regarding the origination of human species in the land of Assam. All the communities of Assam had their own distinctive migratory history. Likewise, during the colonial period, the Adivasis of Chota Nagpur region was migrated to the region. Hence, several other Adivasi intellectuals interpreted themselves as the aboriginals of the land of Assam that is one of the most controversial issues.

3.6.1. Debate on “Who is first in Assam?”:-

Who is the first inhabitant of Assam is one of the most controversial questions in the contemporary era. The written history of Assam was generally found after the inception of ‘Ahom era’. It was the Ahom king *Sukapha* who started to write history in a continuous process. There were several other historical sources also found in the pre-Ahom period, but that was not enough to interpret the history and to get a clear perception about the development of human civilisation in the region of Assam. Like the mainland of India, there is no evidence of the origination of human civilisation in the land of Assam. The ethnic communities including the tribals of Assam had their migratory history. All the communities were migrated to the land at different phases of history. There is no proper evidence regarding when the first human species came to this land. Different historian interprets that the Khasis and Syntengs are the first indigenous communities of the land of Assam. They are the people of Austo-Asiatic or Australoid race. The Adivasis of Chotanagpur of the mainland India were

also belonging from the same Australoid race. Famous historian Sir Edward Gait in his book “A history of Assam” asserted, “A peculiar feature of this country is furnished by the monoliths which the Khasis and Syntengs use to erect in the memory of their dead. Similar monoliths are found amongst the Hos and Mundas in Chotanagpur who speak dialects belonging to the same family of language.”¹⁸⁶ Thus, there was a cultural and linguistic similarity among the Hos, Mundas and Khasis. From this point, several historians believed that they belong from the same community. There was a broad similarity of Khasi's culture and tradition with those of Tonkin, Indonesia and Burma from where they Adivasis also migrated to the mainland of India. Historians like Cornel Dalton and Risley believed that the Adivasis reached at the region of Chota Nagpur from Cambodia and Vietnam through crossing Burma, present-day Myanmar and Assam, where history cannot be reached.¹⁸⁷ Hamlet Bareh in his book “History and Culture of Khasi people” asserted that like the Mundas of Chota Nagpur, the Khasis also “burn their dead and collect the bones in a pot which is placed in a stone ossuary of dolmen style.”¹⁸⁸ Bareh described the cultural and linguistic similarities between the Khasis of Assam and Ho-Mundas of Chotanagpur as;

“The remarkable resemblance between Khasi and Munda funeral ceremonies has often been mentioned. Resemblances in the dress of the corpse and the way it is retained before cremating are impressive. The arrangement of the pyre, the way in which fire is lighted, a collection of bones after cremation and the offering of food are other points of resemblance. Similar customs are performed regarding bone-burial ceremony or the internment of bones inside a common family ossuary where, on such occasions, remains of the dead are collected from separate places and deposited inside a few

stone slabs of the family cinerarium, and along with the bones, a little food with other material offerings. Both the Mundas and Khasis have two classes of stone monuments, one is ossuary or repository stone, and the next is cenotaph or memorial stone. The Khasis have in common three menhirs or vertical stones and a dolmen, the Mundas have one dolmen and one menhir at a spot. However, in the latter case, a dolmen represents male sex only. These stones point out to the reverence of the dead by the two peoples, and the observers are highly impressed with that coincidence with divergence in order of events. The above similarity in death customs is worth considering about the view, based on linguistic affinity, that the Khasis and the Ho-Mundas were initially descended from a common stock.”¹⁸⁹

From such type of historical analysis by the eminent writer Bareh regarding the origins of Khasi, the first indigenous community of the region, it is revealed that there is a cultural and linguistic similarity between the Khasi and Ho-Mundas of Chota Nagpur. An eminent linguist, DrGrension asserted that both Mundas and Dravidian are the aboriginals of the land of India and regarding the historical migratory process of Adivasis he interpreted that if Adivasis were the migrants from other parts of the world, they must undoubtedly have entered Indian from the North-East.¹⁹⁰ From such fact, several historians interpreted, this is the primary reasons behind the cultural and linguistic resemblance of the Adivasis with the Khasis. Again, from the traditions and popular-talks of Adivasis, a certain amount of information regarding Assam can be attained. The word ‘Champa’ and ‘Dibrugarh’ is an Austic word. The word ‘Dibrugarh’ basically came from the ‘Austoloid’ word “Dub-Lak-Gar” that means bathroom.¹⁹¹ Again, some of the thinkers predicted that several names of rivers of

Assam, such as "*Dikhou*", "*Dibang*", "*Dikong*" is certainly coming from the Adivasi word "Daa" that means water.¹⁹² The Assamese intellectual DrBanikantaKakati in his book "Assamese-Its Formation and Development" asserted, "The term 'Kamrup' emanated from Austric phonation: 'Kamru' or 'kamru-t' and the meaning of the place replicate that 'Kamru Guru' was 'Santhali' of Austric origin was popularly famous as the 'Guru of Ojhas'. Conceivably, prevalently the land was known as 'Kamru' or 'Kamru-t(d)', the Santhali 'Kamru' or 'Kamru-t' being a suffix of place names. 'Kamrupa' having been a place famous for Tantric practices, 'Kamru-t' would suggest some connection with the land of necromancy."¹⁹³ Again F.A. Sachse in the Gazetteer of Mymensing asserted that during the era Mahabharata, the 'Mymensing' was the essential portion of 'Prag-jyotisa' and later the region was popularly famous as 'Kamrupa' predominantly in the Buddhist era. The region of 'Kamrupa' was spread to 'Dikrai River' in the east and 'Karatoya River' of the present day North Bengal in the west that still goes out of Nepal to the 'Atrai' via 'Rangpur' and 'Pabna'. Therefore, the region of 'Kamrupa' was covered the area from Northern paraganas of 'Mymensing' to the contemporaneous finishing point of 'Jamuna' and substantial floorings of 'Rajshahi' Division (now Rajsahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Malda, Rungpore, Bogra and Pabna).¹⁹⁴ Several Adivasi intellectuals asserted that from such type of fact it can be interpreted and predicted that once upon a time the Adivasis were the inhabitants of the Assam and in the later period due to the migration of Mongoloid to the region, bound them to migrate to Chota Nagpur region of mainland India. However, this is just a prediction of several Adivasi intellectuals, and no historical evidence yet has been found that proof their justification and claims to the indigenous of the land of Assam. Therefore, historical evidence is essential in order to proof that once upon a time in history they existed in Assam. Again,

some of the Adivasi intellectual in order to proof their justification referred to Dr Lila Gogoi, an eminent historian from Assam who revealed that while re-interpreting the ancient cave of hilly areas, where once upon a time first human beings were lived through using stone made instrument has been found that reminds the scenario human civilisation of pre-historic period. But due to the lack of skeleton, the body structure of those human can't be defined till now. But it can be predicted that they were the ancestors of the Austics or '*Nishads*¹⁹⁵'. Generally their body colour was black with red eye, board and flat nose. But such type of human body structure is never found in contemporary era. Hence some of the characteristics would be found among the Adivasis of Assam, primarily among the Adivasis of lower Assam. From such evidence that was offered by the Dr. Lila Gogoi, several Adivasi intellectuals try to proof their historical existence in the region of Assam. But such type of justification is just an imagination of the Adivasi intellectual and these imaginations can't be considered as a fact or truth. Again, in "AsomiyaJatirEtibitro", a published book by the *AxomSahityaSabha*¹⁹⁶ also revealed the same thing. According to this book, "Genuinely the Khasis are the Mongoloid race people, but their language is Australoid. The Kols and Mundas existed in the region of Assam before the Khasis, and they adopted the Australoid language from the Kols and Mundas." ¹⁹⁷ On such basis, the Adivasi intellectuals consider themselves not only the aboriginals of India but in Assam also. However, due to the lack of proper historical evidence and rational justifications, their claim to be an indigenious of the region as the first aboriginal community of the land is nullified in the contemporary era.

3.6.2. British, Tea plantation and Migration of Adivasis:-

The process of the migratory history of Adivasis to the land of Assam has several dimensions. Generally, it is believed that all the Adivasis were imported to Assam in order to work in the tea plantation by the British planters. However, most of the Adivasis of the lower parts of the Assam had a different migratory history that differs from the rest of the Adivasis of Assam that were migrated as labourers during the time of colonial administration in order to work in tea plantation.

The migratory history of Adivasis to Assam is related with the tea industry. Due to the tea plantation, Assam is reflected to be a weighty place on the global map.¹⁹⁸ The famous English poet William Cowper of 18th century asserts, “The cup that cheers but not inebriates”; still holds good in the modern society.¹⁹⁹ In the present day, tea has become one of the cheapest universal goods in the world. Maximum of the people of the world start their life with a cup of tea that makes it more valuable in nature. The origin of tea has its roots from China. Tea drinking was for the first time started by the Chinese people before west heard its name. Tea became the national drink of China under the regime of Tang(618-906 AD).²⁰⁰ In the late 18th century a Chinese writer Lu Yu wrote a book on tea that captured the attention of the world community towards tea.

Since the beginning of 17th century, British had their monopoly over the export and import system of the world due to its colony that over two-thirds of the world area. During that time, the British East India Company, which came to India in the year 1600, imported tea from the mainland of China. However, after invading the region of Assam from Ahom dynasty through the Yandaboo treaty, the British gradually became well knower about the fertility of land of the region. In the early 1820s British discovered tea when the native tea leaf in Assam, long brewed by the Singpho tribe. The credit goes to Robert Bruce, the

Scottish adventurer for the introduction of tea in the region of Assam. The tea plantation in Assam can be considered as the valuable gift that was provided by the British colonial administration. The Charter act of 1833 provided the rights on the wastelands in the annexed territory of Assam that was given to the European tea planters on long term lease. The British colonisers established the first tea plantation at 'Chabua' in Dibrugarh in the year of 1837 and from 1840 onwards, Assam Tea Company commenced the manufacture of tea as a profitable base.²⁰¹ From 1850 onwards, the tea industry was rapidly increasing in the region. Simultaneously, Sepoy Mutiny occurred in the whole country against the British colonialism. The Northern and Western part of India was sweltering under fire of Sepoy mutiny of 1857 that were posing disturbance towards the British colonial administration. Therefore, the British colonial administration preferred Assam for invest because of the least affecting nature of the region, and therefore they preferred to invest money in tea plantation.²⁰²

Tea plantation is a labour intensive industry as well as it is based on agriculture also. So that it required a large amount of labour to work in the tea plantation. Tea plantation needs an enormous number of workers in every stage right from the cleaning the forest area to make the land suitable for tea plantation. Thus, the labourers play a remarkable role in the origination and development of tea plantation. Therefore the necessity of labour in tea plantation can be compared to the necessity of a mother for a newborn baby. No baby can survive without a mother; likewise, a single tea plantation cannot survive without the labours. Due to the intense labour nature of the tea plantation, the British tea planters needed a considerable amount of workers in order to plant tea in the new region. The first choice of British was the local tribes and other ethnic communities. However, amazingly British found

local labourers very lazy and undedicated towards their works. They considered the work of tea plantation as derogatory and insulting. They remained absent from the work for a long duration on the excuse of the festival, marriage, puja and other family rituals: that led to the increase of complaints by the tea planters and district authority regarding the unpredictable nature of local labourers in plantation work. Again, most of the local tribes are the agro-based community. They have enough land for cultivation and hunting is the primary source of livelihood. The local tribes preferred cultivation and would prefer to work in tea plantation temporally, not permanent basis.²⁰³ However, the British wanted permanent labourers to work in the tea plantation. Again, the local tribes were self-governing in nature and during that time they had a self-sufficient economy.²⁰⁴ Therefore, the local tribes were not willing to work in the tea plantation under the supervision of tea planters. Again, the British imposed heavy taxes on the agricultural land of the local farmers. They were not ready to work hard and regularly; therefore they choose cultivation instead of working in the plantation. Besides, the local tribes were not suitable for plantation work. Such issues increased the mental pressure of tea planters and district authorities. Therefore, the Colonial administration finally agreed to import labour from outside the region in order to continue and save tea plantation.

The British colonial administration finally bound to believe that the landless labours would be far easier to exploit and they were more suitable in comparison to the local tribes. Again, the lazy and undedicated nature of local tribes towards their work compelled the colonial administration to think for an alternative source of labours, especially the rootless labours from outside Assam. Thus Colonisers started importing the labour from the then Bengal and Madras Presidency of British India. Already the Adivasis of Chota Nagpur

regions lost their home and land through the Permanent Settlement act of 1793 and forest act. Their land and CPR's were grabbed from them by the Colonisers. Again due to their marginalised and disfranchised condition, they were not able to pay money for using forest land and resources and thus they gradually lost their traditional forest and land rights that made them way less as forest and land can be considered as their way of life and way of sustaining their culture and identity. Even there was a rumour that the Colonial administration began a famine in the Adivasi inhabited areas of Chota Nagpur region by discontinuing and stopping the supplies of food that resulted in a brutal famine in the Chota Nagpur region.²⁰⁵ Thus, it has been noticed that during that time, the Adivasis faced brutal exploitation and victimisation through alienating and isolating from their traditional land and forest rights. Taking advantage of such marginalised and underprivileged conditions of Adivasis, the British tea planters started a process of importing of those Adivasis and several other ethnic communities from the then Bengal and Madras presidency in order to deal with the problems of scarcity of labours in newly established tea plantation in Assam and when they got that news, they jumped at the opportunity and they even very excited to work in the tea gardens with the hope of getting money and other allowances. From 1840 onwards, from the Adivasi region of Central and Eastern India, the process of forced migration was started to the Assam land. The exploitative nature of British was mirrored from the fact that all the first batch labourers that were imported from Chotanagpur region in the year 1841 were died due to starvation and disease.²⁰⁶ SriramAnanthanarayanan in his article "Scheduled tribe status for Adivasis in Assam" asserted that labour recruitment policy of the British administration was coldhearted and inhuman in nature that had been reflected from the numbers of instances of swindle, forceful enrollment, abduction and anguish through the labour recruitment procedure

of the planters.²⁰⁷ In 1859 only 2000 labourers were imported that increased to 1,10,000 by the year 1909.²⁰⁸ While importing the labour from the outside the Assam, the British colonial administration introduced a new labour act, namely Transport of Native Labour act in the year of 1863 in order to regulate the transport of labourers from the then Bengal and Madras Presidencies and to legalised the earlier informal labour recruitment system. Again, the *Sardari* system was implemented by the colonial administration under the Amendment act of 1870.²⁰⁹ As per the Administrative report of Bengal for the year of 1867-68, 22,800 labourers were imported to the land of Assam.²¹⁰ The fundamental purpose of this migration was to import labour for the tea plantation and thus the vast amount of Adivasis and other ethnic communities of then Bengal and Madras presidency were imported by the British colonisers to work in the tea plantation.

3.6.3. From ‘SanthalParagana’ to ‘Santhal Colony’:-

Most of the intellectuals of Assam misinterpreted the migratory history of Adivasis to Assam. They interpreted that the British colonial administration fundamentally brought all the Adivasi in order to work in the tea plantation. However, after reinterpreting and revisiting the history of migration of Adivasis to the land of Assam, it has been revealed that there was another dimension of the migratory process of Adivasis, especially the Adivasis of lower parts of the Assam. Those Adivasis have no link with the tea gardens. Even they had a separate migratory history from the Adivasis that can be considered as tea-tribes and ex tea-tribes.

8 February 1881, was considered to be the one of the special day for Assam history and very special for Undivided Goalpara and Undivided Kokrajhar district. Because in that day, 42 families comprised of 160 peoples were reached at Thakurpurof Undivided Goalpara

district from 'SanthalParagana' and the 'Chotanagpur' region.²¹¹ Mr. Barison, a Missionary from Denmark was the main person behind the process of migration of 42 families from Chotanagpur to lower parts of Assam trough rail and ship and finally, they reached Thakurpur. Later on, Thakupur became the main centre of Santhal colony in Assam. Hence, under the leadership of Barison, the process of migration was started from present-day Jharkhand to Assam, but the real man behind that process of migration was Rev. Lara Olsen Skrefsrud, a Christian missionary of Norway. During 1860's decade, Rev. Lara Olsen Skrefsrud was actively working for the socio-economic development of Santhal community of Santhalparagana.²¹² The 1855 Santhal rebellion destabilised the imperial foundation of the British Empire. Again, the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny also had a remarkable contribution towards the destabilisation of British colonial administration.²¹³ Simultaneously, the Adivasi tribes also had faced several types of problems in their day to day life. Most of the Adivasi tribes were evicted from their original lands under the system of 'Zamindari' that resulted in the form of famine in that particular region. While working in the Santhalparagana, MrBarison and Rev. Skrefsrudrealised the pity and deprived condition of the Adivasi tribesmen. At the same time, Skrefsrud was the secretary of 'Santhal Mission of the Northern Churches' which was later known as 'Indian Home Mission for Santhals'.²¹⁴ In order to save and to provide relief with the Adivasi tribesmen of then Santhalparagana from the destructive famine and the exploitation of the Zamindars, Rev. Skrefsrud started a process of to import such deprived tribesmen to Undivided Goalpara district of Assam through consulting with administrative system of Assam. The actual reasons behind such type migration in order to weak the Santhal mass rebellion against the British exploitative system.²¹⁵ According to the record, British administration of Assam reserved 25 square mile areas near the 'Honkhuh' river of Dhubri

district. Except for the tea plantation migrants, this was also another phase of migration of Adivasi people to the land of Assam which was started from the year of 1881. After one week of the migration of 42 families consisting of 160 families on 8 February 1881, another 13 families and later on again another 26 families were migrated to the region and total population reached at the number of 257.²¹⁶ It is revealed from the data provided by the then District Commissioner of Assam valley William Ward that government provided 5 rupees to each family per month. Again, for those 257 persons 55 shelters were built cleaning and cutting the forest areas and along with 251 *bighas*²¹⁷ of land were allotted for cultivation.²¹⁸ The Christian missionary not only imported the Santhalis but besides the other Adivasi communities were also imported from the Chotanagpur region to the land of Assam. Due to such continuous migration of Adivasi tribesmen from Central India, their population reached at 2,400 in 1904 and by 1931 it reached the milestone of 55,000.²¹⁹ According to the data of British colonial administration, they evicted 3,200 acres of land and they cleaned almost 43,133 acres of forest land in the region. From the census of 1931 that was conducted by the British colonial administration in the region, it has been revealed that during that time about 42,598 peoples spoke *Santhali*²²⁰ languages, 1,180 peoples spoke *Mundari*²²¹ language and about 5,412 people spoke *Kurukh* or *Orao*²²² language.²²³ All these migrated people to the Santhal colony of Undivided Goalpara and Undivided Kokrajhar district were generally cultivators. This process of migration was quite different from the process of migration of Adivasis and other ethnic communities from then Bengal and Madras Presidencies for tea plantation. Their objectives were also not similar to each other. It was a matter of great importance to the tribal people to leave their homeland, dear forest of SanthalParagana, the war of struggle by the rule of imperialism. Later on from the Santhal colony, they spread to

Grahampur, Srirampur, Haraputa, Kasugaon, Saraibil, Jaraguri, Garufela, Padmabil, Hakma of Undivided Kokrajhar district. The migration of those Adivasi tribesmen from other parts of India that carried a different culture is considered to be one of the remarkable incidents of the process of greater Assamese society formulation. They are the successors of famous tribal leaders and strugglers SiduKanu and BirsaMunda, who bravely fought against the British exploitations and deprivations towards the Adivasi tribesmen. After peacefully residing for long 115 years in the region, means in the year of 1996 they had faced brutal exploitations and exterminations due to the ethnic unrest. Most of the Adivasi families of the region have been struggling since the last decade of the 20th century, who once upon a time bravely fought against the British imperialism in the 19th century.

3.7. Socio-Cultural Condition of Adivasis in Assam: Colonial and Pre-Colonial era:-

Historically Adivasis were the most deprived and exploited section of the society. During the Colonial era, they were alienated and isolated from their fundamental traditional rights by the British colonisers through enacting the exploitative land and forest act. All the Adivasis of Assam had a history of deprivation, exploitation and torture. This is not only applicable to the Adivasis, who were imported to work in the tea plantations, but also applicable to the other Adivasis, who were brought by Rev. Lara Olsen Skrefsrud in order to restore and stabilise the condition of deprived and victimised Adivasi tribesman from the SanthalParganas. They were migrated to the land of Assam in order to stabilise their life. However, such type of hope became a dream for them after reaching in the region. They faced the same victimisation and exploitation in the land of Assam also. In tea gardens also, the British restricted the fundamental rights of the Adivasis. After coming to the region, they were gradually losing their traditional culture and identity. Generally, in Assam, they are

considered as the Tea-tribes, who are still working in the tea gardens and Ex-Tea-tribes, who already left from the tea-plantation work and now settle outside the tea gardens. However, all the tea garden workers are not Adivasis. Almost 50 to 60% of the tea gardens labours belong from the Adivasi origin. After independence, the Adivasis those were brought by the Missionaries under the leadership of Rev. Lara Olsen Skrefsrud in the later part of 19th century in order to rescue them from the British oppression and deprivation to the then Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar district also merged with the tea-tribes. However, historically they had no connection with tea plantation works. On that basis, their rights are subjugated and alienated from them. In Assam, the government, as well as other ethnic communities, consider them as an 'outsiders' or 'migrants'.

During the British colonial period, they lived a very marginalised life inside the tea gardens. Tea management never fulfilled their promises on which they were imported here to work in the plantation. The economic conditions of tea-garden Adivasis and ex-tea garden Adivasis is entirely different but the socio-political condition remains same.²²⁴ The economic conditions of ex-tea tribes Adivasis are quite impressive in comparison to the Adivasis of the tea gardens. Regarding the conditions of Adivasis, Ranjit Das Gupta asserted that the tea plantation labourers were fundamentally delimited and regulated worker and their method of payment and working environment were very much analogous with other fragments of industrial workers. Despite of these similarities, there exist numbers of distinctiveness between them regarding their socio-economic character. Again, the socio-economic behaviors of plantation labourers are quite different from the industrial labourers due to its agricultural cum industrial nature. Again, the workers that were brought by the British planters,

fundamentally from non-capitalist economy to capitalist economic structure.²²⁵ Such type of economic transformation directed towards the socio-economic deprivation and isolation in the plantation industry. The conditions of Adivasis were very worst in the tea gardens. During the first phase of tea plantation work, they had to work hard in the plantation, such as clearing the forest areas, making the forest land suitable for plantation, planting tea etc. During the British period, their condition can be compared with the slave. Most of the Adivasis faced rape, torture and most of the times; the dead workers were thrown in rivers. Again, in the tea gardens, they were lost their connection with the rest of the world and the management did not allow them to participate in the national freedom of India. The freedom struggle movement of the country never touched the tea garden areas. Only a few people of the Adivasi community were able to participate in the movement against the colonial exploitation. The struggle for freedom movement was considered to be the democratic movement, despite democratic nature of the movement, a vast amount of Adivasis of tea gardens was excluded and isolated from the mainstream population of the country. The management fundamentally used the term "Coolie" to mean the labourers that were engaged in the tea plantation. Only 25 square feet of land was given to them for their use. The conditions of the quarters that were given to them by the management were very pity and unhygienic. The term "Coolie line" was used by the tea planters to denote the inhabited areas of the tea garden workers. The workers of plantation did not have any individual choice. Even, the management never permitted the workers to remain absent from their work for a day. The management never permitted to meet the workers of another tea estate. Therefore, during the colonial period, they even did not get any chance to unite and integrate so that they could put their voice against the exploitation of plantation management. The management strictly prohibited on unification and integration of

workers that were engaged in the tea plantation. The management had the fear that if they would allow the workers to meet the worker of another tea garden, then it would help in the building of intimacy among them and that could result in the form of widespread agitation against the management. Again, in order to increase the number of labourers, the management forced them to increase their birth rate in order to rescue the planters from the scarcity of the labourers. Even, in some cases, the management strictly prohibited abortion. They thought that in order to get a large number of labourers, abortion was essential. Besides, the wages that were given to them in return of their hard labour in the tea plantation was very low. The male workers got Rs. Five per month and women workers got Rs. 4 only per month during the period from 1865 to 1881.²²⁶ Even, management forced their whole family to work in the plantations. The Adivasi child was deprived of their basic rights of education. Besides, the management encouraged the child to work in the plantation at very low payment. The conditions of women were also very pretty. Their wages were very low in comparison to the male counterparts of the society. The health conditions of the plantation workers during the time of the colonial period were in very pity condition as thousands of labourers died due to lack of proper medical facilities. The conditions of the Adivasis in the colonial period can be reflected from then Chief Commissioner of Assam Fuller as he asserted, "They were deprived of all their freedom and their derogatory conditions and atrocities remind one of the slaves running in Africa and the global slave trade".²²⁷ Thus, during the colonial period, the conditions of Adivasi tea workers inside the gardens can be compared to the condition of the people that were in Hitler's concentration and extermination camps.

The lifestyle of the tea garden workers was profoundly decided by the Workmen's Breach of contract act of 1859. In order to control the lifestyle of the plantation workers and to rescue the tea management from the scarceness of labourers, the colonial administration enacted the Workmen's Breach of contract act of 1859. Under the provisions of this act, the British administration had the power to arrest and even power to provide punishment under the civil laws of workers while they were liable and responsible for breaking any kind contract which they signed earlier with the management.²²⁸ Most of the Adivasi tribesmen were punished and killed while breaking the contract with the management. Thus, the tea garden workers had lived a very unhygienic and marginalised life in the tea gardens. They were deprived and isolated from all of their rights in the hands of British planters. When the country got independent, along with other people, they also thought that they would get the facilities and fundamental rights in the newly established independent country. However, nothing was happened as thought and hoped by the Adivasis. Their condition remains same in the pre-colonial period also. The other Assamese ethnic communities always try to subjugate and suppress their rights. Even still they are victimised and exploited by the tea management. However, the central, as well as the state government, are also doing a lot for the uplift of the conditions of plantation workers.

In order to develop and regulate the conditions of plantation workers, the Ministry of Labour and Employment enacted an act, namely Plantation labour act, 1951 that applies to any lands, which are used for tea, rubber and coffee plantation. The act deals with the welfare of the workers, who are engaged in the plantation works in the country. The act directs the state to provide legal wages, proper educational, housing, sanitation, water and health

facilities as well as hygienic working facilities to the plantation workers. However, the proper implementation of the provisions of the act is questionable in nature. The practical and efficient applicability of the act cannot be seen in case of the tea plantation workers of Assam. The government, most of the times, is failed to fulfil their promises. The educational conditions of Adivasi inside and outside the tea gardens are very pretty. Even the management never encourages the Adivasi child for education, because they never want to lose the traditional working forces that they use in the tea plantation works at very low payment. After independence, in the first five-year plan only 2.6 lakhs amount spent for the education of the tea-plantation child.²²⁹ Again the Adivasi child always faces problems due to the medium of instruction in the schools. Lack of proper water supply is another problem that is faced by the Adivasis inside and outside the tea gardens. The regulatory mechanism is wholly failed to provide safe drinking water. Recently from a report, it has been revealed that high levels of Arsenic are found in most of the district of Assam that leads to the emergence of various types of health issues among the people, especially the Adivasis who is genuinely deprived of safe drinking water facilities. The wages that are provided by the management to the workers in tea plantations are very low. In Brahmaputra valley, the workers get only 137 Rs. Per day and in case of Barak Valley, they only get Rs. 90 per day. Therefore, the economic conditions are very pretty. The same conditions are applicable in case of the Adivasis of outside the tea estate. Only a few people of the community had economically developed. The rest of the populations are still lived very marginalised and disfranchised life in the society. Again, they are not politically mobilised. Often the political parties use them as their vote banks. According to the Assam Polls Statistics, almost 9% of the voters are from the tea- tribes. Therefore, politicians always take advantage of marginalised and disfranchised condition of

the Adivasis in order to get their sympathy and that will ultimately help them in getting more votes.

In case of the Adivasis of lower parts of Assam, are inhabited in Kokrajhar, Chirang, Bongaigaon, Goalpara districts that had a separate migratory history which is entirely different from the migratory history of Adivasis of tea gardens. In the district of Kokrajhar, most of the Adivasis have no connection with the tea plantation. Historically they are the agriculture-based community. Like the conditions of Adivasis in tea gardens, they are also living a very marginalised and disfranchised life in the society. However, the Adivasis of lower parts of Assam have their land rights, because during the colonial period they acquired a vast amount of land through clearing the forest areas and therefore, on average they had 8 to 10 bighas of land. During the time of colonial administration, the Santhali community people among the Adivasis enjoyed the tribal status in the region of Assam. The government of Assam after independence also provided land rights towards the Santhalis through Chapter X of Assam Land and Revenue (Amendment) act of 1947 by introducing the tribal belts and blocks in the region.

The existence of Santhal Colony Tribal Blocks in the present day Goalpara district and Kokrajhar district showed the fact that originally they enjoyed protected class status in the region. However, in the political red tapism, they lost their earlier scheduled status in the region and they only became the protected class in the region. After independence, the government merged them with the tea gardens labourers and popularly termed as 'Tea tribes'. The term Tea tribes is a politically given term. The Adivasi civil society always asserts that this is nothing but a conspiracy of the government to deprive the Adivasis of their rights

as an aboriginal of the country. Again, the regulatory mechanism entirely failed to protect the land of the backward class in the tribal belts and blocks. Despite the existence of tribal belts and blocks, their land had gradually alienated from them. As Adivasi is the agricultural community, the land is considered to be the way of their life. Their economic sustainability is fundamentally dependent on the land. For them, the land is not the only source of economical ingredients but can be understood as the source of their identity and culture. Thus continuous alienation of land from the Adivasis has a devastating effect on their lifestyle. For marginalised and disfranchised socio-economic condition of Adivasis, the continuous alienation of land is very much responsible. While depriving of their traditional land and forest rights, the Adivasis live a very downgraded and disfranchised life in the society. Their condition is very pretty as like as the Adivasis of the tea gardens. Land alienation is one of the significant problems that are faced by the Adivasis in the region due to several reasons such as ethnic cleansing, forced governmental eviction, land agreement etc. Again, the government has failed in providing proper educational, health, employment and other necessary facilities towards them. The politician often uses them for their political benefit as a vote bank.

3.8. Conclusion:-

The growing identity consciousness among the other ethnic tribal communities in the land of Assam has posed a threat towards the identity and land rights of Adivasis. After the 1990's, the Adivasis, especially in the lower parts of Assam have become the victims of continuous violence in the region of Bodoland. The volatile and unstable socio-political situation of Assam also pushes towards the upsurge of extermination and victimisation of Adivasis in the region. The Adivasi massacre in the region of Bodoland in the decade of

1990s and 2014 has augmented due to the rise of ethnonationalism and growing militancy in the region of Bodoland in the form of Adivasi Cobra Force, Bodo Liberation Tigers and National Democratic Front of Bodoland. In the ethnic conflict, more than thousands of people lost their lives and more than one lakh people were alienated from their land and properties that resulted in an overwhelming effect in their survivals. Again, the deprivation from the scheduled status and continuous alienation of land as well as of their identities resulted in the form of identity politics and ethnic assertiveness among the Adivasis in the region of Assam that will be discussed in the next chapter of the study.

Notes and References:-

Ethno-Nationalism, Identity and Adivasis: Articulations and Assertions

4.1. Introduction:-

The chapter entitled “Ethno-nationalism, Identity and Adivasis: Articulations and Assertions” fundamentally deals with the identity assertion of Adivasis especially in the district of Kokrajhar. The origination of identity consciousness among the Adivasis in the Bodoland is one of the most noticeable issues of recent day political scenario of Assam. To understand the ethnic assertion of the Adivasis, it is essential to realise the politics of autonomy and the sixth scheduled of the indigenous tribals of Assam. The issue of identity assertion of Adivasis in Assam is genuinely related with the issues of demanding autonomy and the sixth schedule by the indigenous tribals of Assam. Therefore, it is essential to

understand the context of politics of autonomy and the sixth scheduled of the tribals before discussing the issue of identity assertion of Adivasis in Assam.

4.2. North-East India: A Study of Ethnographic Composition:-

The North Eastern region is one of the strategically important places of India, comprising of eight states viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, which is a geographical unit surrounded by five foreign countries that are Nepal, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The region is rich in minerals and forests and also rich in flora and fauna. The region is renowned for its cultural and ethnic diversity. The northeastern region of India possesses a distinct regional and geopolitical dimension due to its distinct location and its geopolitical features. The region has diverse ethnic characteristics with multiple numbers of tribal communities. The region is a mosaic of cultural diversity based on ethnicity.

Further, the region is known for some of the indigenous tribal communities having distinct cultural values and traditional political institutions. Assam is one of the essential parts of the North Eastern region and also possesses the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character that makes the greater Assamese society as a heterogeneous. It comprises of different socio-economic groups. Therefore, it can be considered as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual society. Such type of sociological plurality is one of the essential features of Assamese society. Linguistically, the Assamese society contains diverse linguistic communities such as Assamese, Bengalis, Bodos, Nepalis, Rabhas, Mishings, Tiwas, Karbis

etc. Multiple ethnic compositions make the Assamese society a significant one. Again, the existence of numerous tribal communities such as Karbis, Bodos, Kukis, Dimasas, Tiwas, Deuris, Mishings, Rabhas, Morans etc. make the Assamese more heteronomous in character. Those entire ethnic groups less more degree contributed towards the cultural composition of Assamese society. Tribal communities of Assam are divided into two types, namely Plain tribes and Hill tribes. The Karbis, Garos, Mikkirs, Dimasas, Kukis, Nagas, Khasis are considered as hill tribes, and on the other hand, the Bodos, Mishings, Tiwas, Deuris are regarded as plain tribal communities. Among all Plain tribes, Bodos are the largest in number than other tribes comprised of 5.5% of the total population of the state according to the 2011 census report. Bodos are considered to be the first aboriginal communities of the region.

With their distinctive identity and culture, Bodos constitute an essential part in mainstream Assamese society. While analysing the early history of Kamarupa, K.L. Barua asserts, "During the time of Mahabharata war or even earlier, the Bodo tribes constitute the bulk of the population in the Assam valley, northern and eastern Bengal and the surrounding and intervening hills."²³⁰ In the course of the several centuries, the Assamese nationality is developing with adopting several other ethnic culture and identity, but Bodos remained an essential component of indigenous people of Assam. In the pre-colonial historiography of Assam, Bodos, the aboriginal ethnic community can be considered as Kacharis, who has been the inhabitants of Brahmaputra Valley since the time of immemorial. Generally, it is predicted that the in the 12th century, Bodo community lived in the fertile land of Brahmaputra river bank area, but due to the influx of migrants, especially the Tai-Ahom from the West, in the 16th century, they moved to Karbi and North-Cachar Hills.²³¹ The Bodos is regarded as the

Indo-Mongoloid ethnic group and Tibeto-Burman speaking community.²³² Nowadays, they enjoy the status as the largest plain tribe of Assam, who inhabit in the Northern area of Brahmaputra Valley, especially confine in the districts of Chirang, Udalguri, Kokrajhar, Baksa, Sonitpur, Darrang, Kamrup, Nalbari, Barpeta and Dhubri etc. Elsewhere, a small portion of Bodo peoples is found in the regions of Nepal, Meghalaya, West Bengal and Tripura. In the words of Rev Sydney Endle,

“...the Bodos are the autochthons of Assam. Historically, the Bodos came under different ruler at a different point in time- more prominently under the Kiratas, Asuras, Mechchas and Danavas. In the recent contemporary history, the Bodo kingdom was at its zenith during the reign of Koch King Nar Narayan(1540-84). It was only after the assassination of Raja Govind Chandra in 1832 that the last Bodo kingdom in Cachar fell with its annexation by the British. It was following this demise that the Bodos started marginalised amidst the fear that they would be subsumed and submerged under other more dominant cultures...”²³³

Historically Bodos were the self-governing community, but after the annexation by the colonial rulers, the feeling of marginalisation and deprivation was gradually developed in their minds and such type of fear ultimately resulted in the form of Bodo's agitation and demand for greater autonomy. To understand the growing identity consciousness among the Bodos, it is essential to elucidate the context of the autonomy movement in Assam by the tribal communities that includes both hills and plains tribes.

4.3. Autonomy, Ethnicity and Constitution: Politics of the Sixth Schedule:-

Ethnic identity is considered to be the vital issue of socio-political mobilisation in North-East India. The growing ethnic assertions are one of the significant and sensitive dimensions of Assam politics, that gradually demanding greater autonomy within the prescribed form of the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution, which is primarily developed to protect the interest and rights of the tribal of the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Sometimes such type of ethnic assertions also includes secessionist assertion that demands the establishment of a separate state. The ethnic communities adopt both democratic and extremist strategies. The extremists lead to the emergence of insurgency in the region that makes tribal politics as violent politics having terrorist activities. The quest for the identity of diverse ethnic communities of North-East India has been a continuous phenomenon in Assam politics. Diverse ethnic communities that are living in the region possess a diverse linguistic and cultural identity and on that basis they have been seeking for the establishment of a separate state and for the constitutional safeguards of their respective identities. The politics of the North Eastern region is vastly motivated by the politics of identity that is stemming from the arising of ethnocultural awareness and assertion of regional and ethnic interests. The tribal politics had its roots in the colonial period when the British occupied the region through the treaty of Yandaboo in the year of 1826. From that time to until 1874, Assam was made an administrative part of Bengal presidency, and in 1874, it was made as a separate province with some areas of Bengal, such as Sylhet, Goalpara and Cachar districts and the hilly areas of North East.²³⁴Historically the hill tribes were not the part of Assam, but the colonisation process made them as a part of Assam. The colonial administration used the policy of segregation with the tribals and also considered them as “Primitive community”.²³⁵Therefore, the British kept the tribals in reserved territories, primarily known as ‘backward’ and

'excluded' tracts. Again several rules and regulations were implemented by the colonial administration in order to keep the tribal aloof from other communities. In that way, the colonial administration enacted 'Scheduled Districts act of 1884' and 'Frontiers Trait Regulation Act of 1880', by which Excluded and Partially Excluded area were created.²³⁶ Moreover, through the 'Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation act of 1873'; the colonial administration prescribed an 'Inner line' permit to restrict the entry of non-tribals in the tribal areas. Again, 'Backward areas' renamed as 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' areas under the provision of 'Government of India Act 1935'; with the recommendation of Simon commission.²³⁷ Such type of Segregation policy of British and spread of Christianity among the hill tribal societies make a remarkable contribution towards the emergence of ethnic assertion among the tribal communities. With the rapid expansion of Christianity in hill tribal societies provided scope for them to learn English education and later period that expansion of the English education system makes them more conscious towards their culture, identity and language. Such type of identity consciousness leads to the emergence of autonomy struggle as well as secessionist movement in the region. Therefore in order to understand the tribal issues and the growing demand for autonomy by the Hill tribal communities, the Constituent Assembly of India appointed a sub-committee under the chairmanship of then Assam's Premier Gopinath Bordoloi. After visiting the tribal areas and interacting with the tribal leaders, the committee recommended for establishing 'District Council' in those areas in order to provide them more autonomy under the provisions of Sixth schedule of the Indian constitution that makes special provisions for the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Article 244 and Sixth schedule of the Constitution consider those areas as 'Tribal areas' that are precisely dissimilar from 'Scheduled Area' that

is mentioned in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. Thus, the tribal autonomy was secured through the Constitutional provision of the Sixth schedule, but their demand for autonomy did not come to an end. The announcement of Assamese as the official language through 'Official Language Bill in 1960' had provoked the hill leader's aspiration towards getting separating independent state. Such type decision created a wide gap between the plains and hills, and eventually, it led to the emergence of 'All People Hill Leaders conference'. The demand for a separate state was continuously growing, and it became an intricate problem for both Central as well as the State government, and finally, Nagaland in 1962, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya in 1972 and Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1987 separated from the mainland of Assam and originated as a separate state.

4.4. Immigrants and Ethnicity: Politics of Plain Tribes:-

Similar to the hill tribes, the Plain tribes of Assam also demanded autonomy and some time they raised their voice for the separate territorial arrangement. It is an amicable fact that the plain tribe of Brahmaputra valley has been living in the region since the time of immemorial. Before the coming the Aryans and Ahoms to the land, they were the self-governing community and had their own kingdom. During the Ahom period, there were no remarkable incidents that could help in the growth of separatist tendency in the minds of plain tribal communities. Again in the Ahom era, a trend of assimilation was started. The Vaishnavite movement has a significant contribution towards the process of assimilation of tribal with the other ethnic communities of the region. During the British period, there was no remarkable development of identity consciousness among the plain tribes. However, the continuous influx of Muslim landless peasants from then East Bengal created a feeling of

consciousness among the plain tribes regarding their land and identity due to the issue of tribal land grabbing by the migrants. Again, the forceful imposition of Assamese language over the tribal also resulted in agitations. All these factors resulted in discontent among the Tribal leaders and a process for establishing a common forum for all plain tribes developed. As a result of such process 'Plains Tribal League' was formed in the year of 1933 for aiming to fight against the socio-political problems faced by the tribals. In the floor of Constituent Assembly, Gopinath Bordoloi argued that three categories of tribals have existed in Assam. The first one is the Plain tribes, who are the original inhabitants and have their own distinctive culture and identity gradually assimilated with the other plains communities.²³⁸ Again, Hill tribes can be divided into two categories, one is administered by the Governor General of India and other is come under the provision of Sixth Schedule.²³⁹ During that time Bordoloi did not consider Plain tribes under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Thus the Plain tribes were excluded from the Sixth Schedule. Therefore, after acquiring independence, the Plain tribal communities of Assam formed 'Plains Tribal Council of Assam'(PTCA) that provided a momentum towards the Plain tribe's movement for autonomy. On 20th May 1967, the PTCA submitted a memorandum to the President of India raising the demand for getting separate statehood for the Plain tribes of Assam in the name of "Udayachal".²⁴⁰ The demand for "Udayachal" included the plain tribal areas of the Northern tracts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sivasagar districts that including the Tribal belts and Tribal blocks.²⁴¹ However, the movement for "Udayachal" could not get success due to emergence another tribal movement in the region.

4.5. Identity and Struggle for Autonomy: The Case of Bodos:

Bodos are the first aboriginal community of the region that started their movement for getting greater autonomy. The Bodo's movement for autonomy has its roots from Brahma Dharma movement in the first decade of the 20th century. Under the initiative of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma, the Brahma Dharma movement was started in order to demoralise the social evils and superstitions that were existed in the Bodo society.²⁴² The initiative that was taken by the Kalicharan Brahma was not confined only to the socio-religious sectors of the society, but it had an adverse impact on the prevailing political condition of the Bodos.²⁴³ During that time, Kalicharan Brahma submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission for granting some political rights to the Bodos. Such type of political move of Brahma Dharma movement had an amicable impact in the minds of young Bodo people and the long run, it led to the emergence of a movement for safeguarding their identity and for demanding autonomy in the region, which continues today.²⁴⁴ This political development of the Bodo society dramatically changed the attitude of Bodo people towards their culture and identity. Thus, the religious movement, namely 'Brahma Dharma' took them towards a political cry for the protection of their culture, identity and language and such type of agitation and expression were found in the movement for Roman Script, an introduction of Bodo language and also for the separate state.

The Indian National movement spread a sense of equal rights and status irrespective of caste, creed, religion, language etc. Such type of feeling led to the emergence of Bodo's assertion for having equal right and status, and it gave birth to a new social and political upheaval in the Bodo society. The growing political consciousness of Bodos had a tremendous impact on the identity consciousness of Bodos. The demand for self-autonomy

began in the year 1928 when 'Kochari Youths' Association' and 'Goalpara District Bodo Association' submitted a memorandum to the Simon commission²⁴⁵ for the fulfilment of their political aspirations.²⁴⁶ Dr C. Bhattacharjee remarks, "In reality, the Bodo movement may be identified to have started from the year 1929 with the submission of a memorandum by the plains tribal."²⁴⁷ The memorandum reflected the political sentiments and aspirations of Bodos, which included the following demands:-

- (i) "Provisions for separate electorate for Bodos and Kocharis.
- (ii) Formation of Bodo Regiment in Indian Army.
- (iii) Reservation of one seat in the legislature for the Bodos of Assam.
- (iv) Provisions for Bodo representative in the Councils as well as Local Boards of Goalpara and Dhubri.
- (v) Provision for free and compulsory primary education and scholarship for Bodo students.
- (vi) Reservation of executive posts in provincial services for educated Bodos.
- (vii) The memorandum opposed the transfer of Goalpara district from Assam to Bengal."²⁴⁸

After that in the year of 1933, 'Assam Plain Tribal League'(A.P.T.L) was formed, which tried to bring all the Mongoloid communities of Assam under a common political platform that would assist them to raise their demand for separate political arrangement and more autonomy within the existing governmental structure. The establishment of this league reveals the socio-political aspiration of the Bodos in the colonial era. Again the British policy of reorganisation of India on the basis of local self-government and provincial autonomy

inspired the Bodo leaders to work along with other tribes in order to gain their socio-political aspirations.²⁴⁹

Like the other tribal communities, Bodos is also a land-based ethnic community. Agriculture is considered as a mainstay of the tribal economy. The British governmental policy of land and Sadulla's policy of 'Grow more crop' inspired the outsiders to come to the region in search of land. From the 20th century onwards large number immigrants from East Bengal came to the region and occupied a large amount of tribal land. Apart from this, the tribal land was alienated in the hands of non-tribal traders, moneylenders that resulted in destabilisation of tribal economy.²⁵⁰ All these factors accommodated in the germination of political and at the same time identity consciousness among the Bodos. By 1952 'Bodo Sahitya Sabha' had been formed with an objective to protect the language, culture and identity of Bodos. The year 1967 was considered as the landmark in the history of the social revolution of Bodos that witnessed several important events in the political scenario of India.²⁵¹ On 13th January 1967, then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced the policy of re-organisation of Assam states on the federal basis that led to the formation of 'All Bodo Students' Union'(A.B.S.U) on 15th February 1967. Indira Gandhi's proposal enthused the youth under the banner of a new student organisation, A.B.S.U. moreover, also to help in the process of mobilisation that was aiming to raise their demand for autonomy. The formation of 'Plains Tribal Council of Assam' in the year 1967 also contributed towards the development of political consciousness among the Bodos. Simultaneously, the 'Bodo Sahitya Sabha' started its movement for demanding Roman script that resulted in the accepting the *Devanagari* script for Bodo language and literature.²⁵² Moreover, in the year of 1979, P.T.C.A(Progressive) was formed,

and in 1980, it submitted a memorandum to then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi regarding their demand for separate Union Territory with a nomenclature of “Mising Bodoland”.²⁵³ The newly formed political party P.T.C.A(P) took the initiative in holding a discussion with the tribal organisation of Assam and with the State as well as Union government. The representative of P.T.C.A, P.T.C.A(P), All Assam Tribal Sangha, Boro Sahitya Sabha, All Boro Students' Union, All Assam Tribal Students' Union participated in a discussion on the issue of creation of separate political arrangement for the plains tribe.²⁵⁴ While discussing the issue, the then Governor of Assam L.P. Singh asserted that “Udayachal” is the contradictory term, linguistically Bodoland is the most appropriate term.²⁵⁵ The split of P.T.C.A into two political parties led to the emergence of political chaos among the Bodo. Therefore, the A.B.S.U tried to bring both these political parties under a single umbrella, and their attempt was failed. A.B.S.U organised a convention in Darrang district in the year 1984 in order to unify both political parties, but nothing was happened as thought by the A.B.S.U and Bodo people. In that convention, P.T.C.A(P) was disintegrated, and in that place another political party was formed in the name of ‘United Tribal Nationalist Liberation Front’(U.T.N.L.F) and submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister regarding the creation of separate political arrangement for tribals. It is evident that no sincere effort has been made by the Central as well as the State government in order to solve the tribal problems. Such type attitude of the Central and State government led to growth a feeling of agitation in the minds of the Bodos that ultimately resulted in the form of historic Bodo movement. Again, the chauvinistic nature of the Assamese people also boosted the Bodos agitation. The A.B.S.U along with its revolutionary wing, ‘Bodo People Action Committee’(B.P.A.C) started their movement for greater autonomy from 2nd March of 1987.²⁵⁶ Under the leadership of Upendra Nath Brahma,

A.B.S.U started their movement for achieving the aspiration of a separate state by 1990. Along with this demand, they were also raised another two demands, first one for the creation of District Council on the tribal areas of Southern part of Goalpara and Kamrup district under Article 244(2) of Indian constitution and secondly for the creation of regional council for the non-Karbi communities in the Karbi Along Autonomous District Council.²⁵⁷ On the basis of 'Charter of 92 points Demands', they raised all of their demands. In 1987, 12th of June, A.B.S.U organised a huge rally at Judge field of Guwahati, where thousands of Bodo people shouted the slogan of "Divide Assam 50-50". By 1989 several violent activities took place in Bodo areas that threatening the law and order situation of the state. In order to sort out such problems from the state, a tripartite talk has happened with A.B.S.U, B.P.A.C and Central as well as State government. However, the demand for a separate state was rejected in the first tripartite talk, and up to the sixth round of tripartite talk, government overruled the Bodos demands. On the other hand, the A.B.S.U and B.P.A.C leaders did not stop their movement and continue with hope. In the seven-round tripartite talk, the state government forwarded a proposal for establishment autonomous three-tier Panchayati Raj institution for the tribal areas.²⁵⁸ However, the proposal was rejected by the A.B.S.U and B.P.A.C. In the 8th round tripartite talk, the government of India proposed to establish a three-member committee of experts to define the jurisdiction of Bodo zones and also the committee was empowered to formulate commendation on self-government, statutory, administrative and monetary power that the government promised to provide them.²⁵⁹

The committee was authorised to consult with all the affined communities and they had to formulate their protocol within 45 days that had to be submitted to the government.

The then Union Labour and Welfare Minister Ram Vilas Paswan remarked, " The autonomy proposed by the government of Assam for the plains tribal was not adequate, and there was urgent need of consideration for granting greater autonomy."²⁶⁰ Such type of statement of Paswan provided a ray of hope in the minds of Bodos. On 21st October of 1990, Paswan visited the Kokrajhar and addressed the Bodo people, and in that meeting, a memorandum on the Bodoland issue was appraised. After that, on 25th February 1991, the Ministry of Home Affairs of Government of India constituted a three-member committee that is comprised of Dr Bhupinder Singh, Dr K.S. Singh and A.M. Gokhale on Bodo issues. The committee submitted its reports on 1992 and recommended for granting greater autonomy for Bodos. However, the Bodo leaders did not accept the proposal that put forwarded by the Bhupinder Singh committee, and they considered it much lower than their expectation. After that, another meeting was held between the State government and A.B.S.U and B.P.A.C. in order to sort out the Bodo problems. The Bodo leaders projected for the insertion of 4443 villages in their planned autonomous territory. However, the state government made it clear that the proposed territory of Bodoland will be included only those villages that will come within the compact area of Bodos. However, the discussion could not arrive at the final solution, and after that Union Minister of the State for Home, Rajesh Pilot came to Assam in order to sort out the longstanding Bodo problem. On February 10, 1993, a Memorandum of Settlement was signed between the Government of India, the Government of Assam and the representative of the Bodo Student Union, namely All Bodo Student Union and Bodo Peoples Action Committee constituting a 40 member Bodo Land Autonomous Council. In March 1993 the interim Bodoland Executive Council came into being under the head of S.K. Basumatary. But in later period Prem Singh Brahma was appointed as the new BAC chief when Basumatary resigned

from his office protesting against the non-fulfilment of the Accord. In June 2001, tripartite talks resumed the creation of Bodoland Territorial Council. On 13 February 2002, the state cabinet formally approved the formation of 'Bodoland Territorial Council' under the modified sixth schedule of Indian constitution. Those villages having 50% or more than 50% Bodo population were included in the BTC. However, for the sake of contiguity, some villages with less Bodo population were also included in BTC. However, a section of Bodo leaders considered the autonomy as puppet autonomy and continues an underground movement under the banner of 'Bodoland Liberation Tigers'(B.L.T). Finally, on August 6, 2003, the Constitution's Sixth schedule Amendment Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha in order to create the Bodoland Territorial Council Area District, that includes four districts, namely Udalguri, Baksa, Chirang, Kokrajhar. The Memorandum of Settlement(MOS) of the BTAD is the culmination of the Bodo movement for autonomous self-governing territory. As per the constitutional amendment provisions, BTC shall have the power to make laws on 40 subjects within its area. Under this scheduled area, Bodos tries to protect their land and identity from the infiltrators. The Bodo leader started a move towards getting a larger territory within Bodoland, which triggered a clash with the other non- tribal populations of Bodoland.

4.6. Fall out of Unrest in Bodoland: Bodo-Santhal Exodus:-

The long Bodo movement for greater autonomy came to an end with the establishment of Bodoland Territorial Area District that comprising of Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri. On the other hand, the several activist members of the B.L.T left their extremist activities and joined in the politics and formed a new political party, namely 'Bodoland Peoples Progressive Front'(B.P.P.F). Besides, another terrorist group 'National Democratic

Front of Bodoland'(N.D.F.B) has declared a ceasefire agreement with the government, which seems that the Bodo problem comes to an end. The creation of B.T.C began a ray hope in the minds of Bodo people that now under this new administrative structure their identity and culture will be protected, and after a long period, peace will be established in the region. The basic objective behind the establishment of B.T.C was to create a self-governing body for Bodos in order to fulfil their aspiration relating to their cultural and linguistic identity. But the demographic composition of Bodoland is posing a threat towards the establishment of peace in the region.

Like the mainland of Assam, Bodoland is also comprised of various ethnic communities that make the region heterogeneous in nature. At present, in Bodoland 46.8% of the total population are the Bodos, 5.2% are the Non-Bodo Scheduled Tribes including the Rabhas and a few numbers of Garos and rest 48% comprised of other communities that including Bengalis, Santhals, Assamese, Nepalis and a few Hindi speaking communities.²⁶¹The historic Assam accord, 1985 decided a historic move that all the people who crossed the border after 25 March 1971 will be treated as illegal immigrants and with the promise to implement the provisions of the accord, Asom Gana Parishad, the first regional political party of Assam came into the power in the state. But A.G.P. did not get any kind success in the process of implementation of the accord. Hence, the region has witnessed the continuous influx of immigrants from Bangladesh to Assam, especially to the Lower parts of Assam, where Bodos and several others ethnic community has been living since the time of immemorial. In official record showed that during 1994 to 1997 the population of Assam was growing at the rate of 16.4%, elsewhere the average population growth in India was almost

7%. Most of the border districts of the region had faced an inexplicable growth of population, especially the Muslim population. Unexplained Muslim population growth has been seen in the inhabited area of Bodos. The massive numbers of influx to the land gradually developed the numbers of immigrants in the region that may change the demographic composition of the state. Bodos seems to be a minority in their own land. The massive number of immigrants from Bangladesh changed the mindset of Bodos towards the other ethnic communities of Bodoland. Bodo gradually started to consider these migrants as a significant threat towards their local culture and identity. The perception regarding the migrants has produced a fear in the minds of Bodos that their ancestral lands will be taken away by the infiltrators illegally.²⁶² Bodo leaders wanted to safeguard their identity and land resources in the separate state of Bodoland without compromising the interest of other ethnic groups.²⁶³

Several social thinkers, local political leaders and scholars have presented various reasons for the conflict in Bodoland. Nirmalya Banerjee asserts that it is the alienation of land and natural resources that finally help in the emergence of conflict in the region with the Adivasis. Bodo leaders believe that the struggle against the outsider is all about rights and socio, economic and political deprivation of Bodos.²⁶⁴ Again, Nani Gopal Mahanta attributes that the Indian government is responsible for the unrest and violence in Bodoland. The Indian government did not take into account the structural issues of Bodos that confronting them.²⁶⁵ The government did not try to understand the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural nature of Bodo society; instead, they are continuing the policy of 'ethnic insularity' and ethnic homeland that were introduced by the colonisers.²⁶⁶ However, allowing territorial autonomy by the Central government to the Bodos, who are considered to be minority in comparison

with ethnic tribes of the region are posing a threat towards the identity and culture of other ethnic communities that are enjoying the status of majority in the region including the Muslims, Adivasis, Koch-Rajbongshis and Assamese that seems to be significant reasons for the unrest in Bodoland. Walter Fernandes asserts that the conflict between the Adivasis and Bodos in the region of Bodoland had its roots from the British colonial period when British brought them from outside Assam as indentured labour to work in the tea plantation on a contract basis. But after the end of the contract with the labourers, the Colonial administration did not send them to the original birthplace and in return British encouraged them to settle down in the forest land where Bodos have inhabited since the time of immemorial.²⁶⁷ There was no immediate result of such policies that were taken by the colonisers. But the result of such policies was seen after the emergence of Bodo identity and land consciousness during the decade of the 1980s and 1990s, and the result of such policies was the awakening of Bodo-Santhal exodus in Bodoland. Again 'All Adivasi Student's Association of Assam' offer their view that after getting failure in the formation of Bodoland Autonomous Council in the year of 1993 due to their minority status in more than 50% of the villages whom Bodos demanded under the jurisdiction of BAC that ultimately resulted in the form of 'Ethnic cleansing' of the other ethnic communities such as Muslims, Santhals in order to increase the percentage of Bodos in the region.²⁶⁸ This was basically done by the NDFB insurgent groups in order to create BAC.

Bodoland People's Progressive Front and Bodo leader considered Adivasi as migrants so that they cannot claim to be indigenous in the region. Several Bodo militant organisations such as Bodo Liberation Tigers, National Democratic Front of Bodoland were emerged to

protect the interest of Bodos. The Bodo militants first pointed the Bengali Muslims of Bodoland in 1993-94. After that, they targeted the Bengali Hindus and finally started attacking the Santhals. In 1993 and 1994, Bodos for the first time engaged in conflict with Bengali Muslims due to the massive amount of land grabbing incidents. In 1993, the first large scale butchering happened when 50 Muslim community peoples were killed, and 3,568 families consisting of 18,000 people were displaced in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon district.²⁶⁹In 1994, again 100 migrants were brutally killed, and 70,000 persons were homeless in similar violence in Bodo areas.²⁷⁰In B.T.A.D areas, a certain amount of land is occupied by the Santhals, who consider themselves as Adivasis, resulted in the alienation of land and resources of Bodos. This socio-economic and political deprivation of Bodos from their rights resulted in the form of dangerous Bodo- Santhal clash in Bodoland in 1996 and 1998. The Bodo-Santhal exodus reportedly began after the killing of 3 Bodo girls by the Santhal, which took an ugly shape in 1996 in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon. About 200 Adivasis were killed, and nearly four lakh people were internally displaced in the 1996 ethnic conflict.²⁷¹ Again about 100 Adivasi peoples were killed, and about two lakhs peoples were displaced due to the repeated attacks of Bodo militants in Kokrajhar in the months of May-September, 1998.²⁷²In July 2002, 9 Adivasis were exterminated, and five were injured in the district of Kokrajhar in the hands of NDFB militants.²⁷³Again on 23 December 2014, NDFB(S) massacred about 75 Adivasis with AK 47/56 weapons in Sonitpur, Kokrajhar and Chirang districts, which can be considered as one of most extreme and worst extermination in the history of North-East India.²⁷⁴Among the 75 peoples, 18 were children, and 21 were women. In that conflict, nearly three lakh people were internally displaced due to such retaliatory violence that led to the widespread public agitation across the different districts of Assam that resulted in the loss of

three lives in a police shooting in Dhekiajuli.²⁷⁵ The 2014 brutal massacre can be compared with Jallianwala Bagh massacre²⁷⁶ of 1919 under the command of Colonial Reginald Dyer. After that, a widespread denunciation occurred across the country against such brutality of Bodo militants that resulted in the launch of 'Operation All-Out' by the Indian Army to hunt down the Bodo militants.²⁷⁷ During this conflictual era, the terrorist organisation like NDFB, Adivasi Cobra Force were brutally violated the rights of both Bodos and other ethnic groups, especially the Adivasis and Muslims of the region.

The Bodos are an ethnic and lingual autochthonous group of Brahmaputra valley, mostly found in Udalguri, Chirang, Baksa, Sonitpur, Goalpara, Kokrajhar districts of Assam. Bodos are an agro-based community, who always needs land for their livelihood. But other communities in the region, whom Bodos considered as migrants, such as Adivasi, Bengali-Muslims, Konch Rajbangshi engaged in conflict with Bodos due to their cultural differentiation. Prof Rajib Handique while explaining the genesis of conflict that was happened in the Bodoland areas, asserts, "It is the land hunger and the problem of identity of getting marginalised in one's own homeland that leads to ethnic clashes and takes the form of ethnic cleansing."²⁷⁸

The continuous influx of illegal immigrants from outside the country makes the Bodos minority in their own region that they are comprised of only 29% of the total populations of the region, followed by Rajbonshis (15%), Bengali immigrants (12 to 13%) and Santhals(6%).²⁷⁹ This demographical complexity has produced a sense of fear in the minds of Bodos towards their own culture, identity and land rights. It is evident that migrants from

various parts of India as well as from outside India are posing challenges towards their identity issues.

To protect and promote the identity of Bodos, they started demanding separate statehood immediately after the end of historic Assam movement. As a result of this movement, an accord was signed in 1993 and finally in 2003 created Bodoland Autonomous Council with 200 villages and 25 tea gardens under its jurisdiction. The Bodo leader started a move towards getting a larger territory within Bodoland, which triggered a clash with the other non-tribal populations of Bodoland.

4.7. Victimisation of Adivasis in Bodo-Santhal Exodus:-

Violence in Bodoland is not an incident of communal conflict; preferably it has a complex socio-political and security dimensions. Due to the Bodo's agitation, the minority ethnic communities of the Bodoland are faced massive victimisation in the region. The large scale of infiltrators especially from the neighbouring country changed the perception of Bodos towards the other ethnic communities in the region. The Santhals who have been the inhabitants of the region since the time of British colonial era are mostly victimised due to the increasing agitation of the Bodos towards the outsiders. According to 2011 census data, in Kokrajhar district 16.70%, Udalguri 23% of the total population is comprised by the Santhal ethnic group, can be considered as an 'Adivasi.'

Repeated genocide in Assam is one of the crucial features of the unrest in Bodoland. The Adivasis that includes the Santhals, Mundas, Orangs, Bhils has faced repeated genocide by the Bodo insurgent groups. An Adivasi village that is located in the foothills of Bhutan

faced a massive number of persecution in the hands of National Democratic Front of Bodoland(Songbijit faction), where about 80 Adivasi people were massacred. Such type of killings by Bodo insurgent group provoked the Adivasis to help the police and army in busting the camps of Bodo insurgents. That again led to a situation where Adivasis became the easy targets of firepower of Bodo militants. In such a conflicting situation, they are living in a condition of extermination, where they always have the fear in regards to the sustaining their lives. The situation that was faced by the Adivasis in the era unrest can be compared to the lifestyle of Non-German people in the regime of Hitler. A considerable amount of Adivasis was displaced from their own home, and they were thrown into the shelters and relief camps. It is estimated that about 2.75 lakh of Adivasis people displaced during the time of unrest and are settled in about 250 relief camps in Chirang and Udalguri districts.²⁸⁰

Adivasis are considered to be the one of the most deprived and exploited section of the society. In Assam, both Adivasis and Muslims those are living in the ‘Char’²⁸¹ Areas are the most backwards community in comparison to other ethnic communities. Historically the Adivasis has been facing massive numbers of exploitation since the colonial era. Under British colonial administration, their rights are brutally suppressed and curbed. In order to increase the rate of revenue, the colonisers brought the Adivasis into Assam and after that British imposed lots of restriction over them through enacting several inhuman laws and regulations. After that, the national leaders gradually started suppressing the rights of the Adivasis with a weapon that is combined with extreme Assamese nationalism and Hindu communalism. Most of the people believe that the system of untouchability does not found in Assamese society. However, untouchability does exist in the composite Assamese society in

different ways. The growing violence signifies the attitude of the high caste extreme nationalist in the name of nation-building. Following the path of Assamese chauvinistic, the Bodo extremist is also doing politics of violence and genocide. Approximately, more than two thousands of the Adivasi people lost their lives in the hands of Bodo militants. Such type of incident can be considered as an 'Ethnic cleansing', that means to clean up one particular ethnic community. Politics of majority and resentment are gradually scanting the positions of Adivasis in the region. Over the 200 years, the Adivasis that comprised one-fifth of the total population of Assam are deprived of their fundamental human rights. The general people of Assam use the term 'Kuli' and 'Bangali' in order to describe the Adivasis that are working in the tea gardens.

The conflict in Bodoland increased the numbers of internally displaced people in the region. In the global domestic refugee list, India's rank is 11th.²⁸² The state of Assam produced a considerable number of internally displaced persons in comparison to other states of the country. In the words of Sanjib Baruah, "At the peak of the Bodo Armed movement, Assam accounted for nearly more than half of India's population of Internally Displaced Persons."²⁸³ After the historic move of the Bodo movement, the growing identity consciousness among the Bodos led to the emergence of ethnic cleansing of the minority ethnic groups that have been inhabited in the region. As predicted, more than 42,214 families including 2,62,682 people were displaced from their own home and land and were living in the relief camps that was established by the government in order to give necessary facilities; food, shelter and cloth to the conflict-affected people.

The conditions of Adivasis in the camp were very worst. They stayed in the camps as like as an inmate. They always had the fear in their minds regarding their safety of their lives, families and child. Social suffering, social alienation, violation of rights and human security are the major problems of Adivasis that they faced inside and outside the camps. In the camp also, they always had a fear of being shot due to the extremist attitude of Bodo militants. Again, they have limited access to employment. They had the fear to go outside the camps for work. The whole situation was entirely against the Adivasis. Most of the people in the relief camps were found to be unemployed, and a few were engaged themselves as daily wage labourers in the nearby areas. The lack of proper employment facilities also affected the health and educational facilities of Adivasis. Due to the lower financial status, they were not able to send their child to school for getting an education. Again, the government did not provide any education aid and assistance towards the child. Due to the inadequate number of schools in the region, many of the children were found to be working in the tea factories.²⁸⁴ Therefore, the educational status of Adivasis is deficient in the region in comparison to other communities. For most of the Adivasi, child education is like a dream. Simultaneously, low financial status also vastly affected in their health conditions. Due to lack of money, they cannot go for better treatment. In a survey, it is reflected that between December 24, 2014, and January 08, 2015; 2,884 diarrhoea and 3,159 dysentery cases were registered and provided treatment by the health authorities in the districts of Chirang and Kokrajhar.²⁸⁵ The chances of waterborne diseases and malnutrition in the relief camps are at an alarming rate. Interestingly, in most of the camps, there was no primary health centre. In comparison to the conflict-affected people, the numbers of relief camp were decidedly less in number. Even, most of the camps were unsafe and overcrowded, and there was a lack of adequate shelter for

all the people. The relief camps had neither proper electricity facilities nor had adequate sanitation facilities. Again, in the relief camps, displaced people faced the problem of hunger and impoverishment. However, the Public Distribution System was not properly working in the relief camps. The government provided only rice at irregular intervals.²⁸⁶ Again, it has been found that no families of relief camps had BPL cards.²⁸⁷ Thus, with the help of such type policies, the government indirectly forced the people to leave the relief camp. After leaving the camps, the people had no choice without their own land and home, and ultimately they started to encroach forest lands in order to sustain their life and became forest encroachers and thus became a prime suspect in the eyes of government officials according to Indian forest law. Many times it has been seen that again they faced the problem of displacement due to encroaching the forest lands, but this time not due to conflict; hence in the hands of forest department and they are repeatedly evicted and displaced from those occupying forest land. Thus, again and again, they are displaced, and their condition becomes very worst. It is seen that government is very much responsible for such condition of Adivasi people. The irregular and inadequate supply of foods by the government to the relief camp compelled them to leave the relief camps. The families faced the problems of accessing basic amenities. Again the problem of alcoholism devastated the happiness of several families. As the most of the male counterparts of the families were found alcoholic without having any source of income, that made youth and women helpless. The young star looked restless and stressed. They became frustrated with the political system of Bodoland.

Again the conditions of women were the most vulnerable one. Most of the women were found to be uneducated, and they were deprived of the participation in community

development activities. In the relief camps, most of the people deprived of the basic rights. Due to the scarcity of proper health amenities, most of the women faced the problems of malnutrition. As per the official data, in 2012 an expected 4,000 pregnant women and 2014, 888 pregnant women were living in the relief camps across the Chirang and Kokrajhar district.²⁸⁸ The child and women trafficking are higher among the Adivasis of Assam, basically among the Adivasis who were in the relief camps. On 5 September 2008, an inquiry group of National Child Protection Commission reached the Adivasi relief camps of Santipur of Kokrajhar district, and after seeing their condition, they prepared their report about the vulnerable conditions of the Adivasi child in the relief camps. In the report, they mentioned, "One of the most alarming issues concerning children is their nutritional health and access to education. Both are virtually non-existent."²⁸⁹ Again regarding the conditions of Adivasis in the relief camps, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) published a report in the year 2008, where they asserted, "Abject poverty had forced many to be trafficked to Bhutan and indulge as commercial sex workers. Children too have been forced to work for a meagre Rs. 10.00 per day. Rarely do they find work within/near the camps."²⁹⁰

While interviewing an Adivasi people of Kasugaon of Kokrajhar district, he expresses his experience of 1994 ethnic conflict of Bodoland. In his words, "On the opposite side of our village, I came out of my home while I had seen that many people are shouting at the yard in the courtyard. Standing in the yard, I saw many people in the village running and rushing. Well, looking at it, I saw the women of the village running with the help of small boys and girls, the men were running with a newborn child. I understand that the Bodo militants attacked our village. I did not waste time and, all of our family told me to escape, and I got

out of the house. We ran away and ran away from the village, along with other people in the village. Going a little while, I looked back to the village once again - I saw the flames, smoke. After a while, we all stayed there. But suddenly we saw many Bodo people coming towards us. At one time they stopped running away. We run towards the river. The river was known to all of us -- Hell. We had to stop there, at the bank of the river, because the water level of the river was extremely high. Many terrified villagers could not run away or swim although families with young children had no chance to flee. We elders could swim but what about our child, we could not leave our child like this.

On the other hand, the headsmen gradually came nearer to us. The fear began to abate among the people. A kind of terrifying situation had captured the heart and minds of the villagers. All of us were constantly crying. In no time we were surrounded by those headsmen. They randomly started to kill us with the broadsword. We tried to escape, but they caught us. While some managed to escape, swimming across the river, but they were also killed. Those headsmen began killing the people at the bank, tossing them into the river. Somehow I managed to escape though I was hatted from the back on my head. I went far and was hiding under the water, behind some water hyacinth. Though I was already wounded, I was the whole incident. That evening, I somehow managed to get out of the water and started to walk towards a refugee camp of Serfanguri. I told the whole incident to the people living there. Some people in the camp admitted me to the hospital. I survived but lost everything, my family along with 48 villagers. In front of me, those headsmen killed my wife, my child, my relatives and the people of my village. Later I came to know that they burned the entire village.”

Thus, the ethnic conflict in the region triggers the massive victimisation of Adivasis that has devastated the socio-economic conditions of Adivasis of Bodoland. The gradual deprivation from their basic amenities may help in the appearance of socio-cultural consciousness for the protection of their unique cultural and identical characteristics.

4.8. Growing Ethnic Assertions and Articulations: A case of Adivasis of Kokrajhar:-

Identity plays a vital role in the sustainability of any ethnic community of the world. The relationship between an ethnic community and identity can be compared with the relationship between life and soul. Life is meaningless without the soul, likewise an ethnic community also meaningless without its identity. The movement based on West European regionalism and Civil Rights movement of the USA that raised the issue of the rights of black people led to the emergence of growth and development of the concept of ethnicity and identity. The impact of western ethnic and identity movement also reflected in the eastern countries like India. The growing ethnic and identity consciousness is one of the remarkable incidents that have been seen after the independence of the country. North- Eastern part of India is considered to be the hub of ethnicity and identity, as the region famous due to its multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic character. Since the time of colonial era, the ethnic consciousness has been growing in the minds of tribal communities of North-East. Following the path of tribal communities, the other ethnic communities of Assam raise their concern towards building their ethnic and identity consciousness.

Before coming to the Assam, the Adivasis had their own distinctive identity. They had their distinctive religion and identity. In the pre-colonial period, the Adivasi populations of Central India and Central-East India followed their own distinctive religion, commonly known as *Sarna Dharma*²⁹¹ that can be defined as an indigenous religion of Adivasi people. Again, they had followed their own language, namely *Sadri*.²⁹² In the colonial period, they have imported the British colonisers in order to work in the newly established tea plantation of Assam. Along with the Adivasis, the other communities were also imported for that purpose. After importing to the land of Assam, all those communities were commonly known as 'Tea-tribes', and they were given a separate identity in the new region. On the other hand, British imposed several types of exploitative laws, such as Workmen's Breach of Contract act, 1859 in order to dominate those labourers and to create a fear in their minds. After coming to the region, while they were entering in the plantation work, they lost all their roots from their original homeland. Under such an exploitative system of British colonisers, they gradually lost their original identity, and a mixed identity was gradually developed among the tea-tribes. While staying generation after generation in the Assam, they are assimilated with the composite Assamese culture and identity.

The question of identity is one of the most precious questions for the Adivasis of Assam. Most the Adivasi people face problems when someone is asking about their identity. It is very problematic for the Adivasis to the answer the question, "Who are you?", "What is your identity?" Basically, they have two identities, one as the tea-tribes and second as the Assamese. But the problem is that they do not have any fixed identity. The process of cultural assimilation brings an identical crisis that is the faced by the Adivasis of lower Assam. All the

tea-tribes cannot be considered as an Adivasi, because not all the labourers came from present-day Jharkhand. Among all the tea-tribes, probably 50 to 60% are Adivasis that are found in Lower parts of Assam, especially in the Bodoland areas and other communities are found in the Upper parts of Assam. From the study, it has been reflected that there is a massive difference in the case of their language, culture and identity. Walter Fernandes defines that such type of differences between Adivasis of lower Assam and the other tea-tribes is not due their origin, but due to their identity formation.²⁹³ Most of the tea-tribe communities of Upper Assam consider themselves as Assamese. They are fully assimilated with the native Assamese culture. During the time of the interview, it has been found that most of the tea-tribe families observe *Bihu*²⁹⁴ and other festivals of composite Assamese culture. Interestingly, most of the families of tea-tribes that are residing outside and inside the tea gardens have *Namghar*²⁹⁵ in their home. Again, they can fluently speak Assamese and use *Sadri* as their mother tongue. But in the lower parts of India, it has been found that a very few Adivasis are fluent in Assamese and they prefer to use Jharkhand based language while talking at home. While interviewing with the Adivasi people of village areas for the study, it has been reflected that they cannot fluently speak Assamese.

In comparison to the other tea tribe communities of Upper Assam, Adivasis that are living in the land of Bodos are relatively more isolated from their surroundings. After awakening the identity consciousness of Bodos in the region, the situation became very complex in nature. The Adivasis find it very difficult to deal with the other ethnic tribes of Bodoland in comparison to the other communities of tea tribe of lower Assam. The policy formulated by the Churches and the other agencies outside the region also help in the process

of identity formulation of Adivasis in the lower Assam. The exploitative nature of Hindu dominant section of society bound them to think for an alternative option. The so-called high caste Hindus exploit them socially and culturally. Even they are deprived of their basic rights and live a marginalised life in society. The Christian missionaries are taking advantage of such type situation of Adivasis. They motive them for adopting Christianity instead of Hinduism. It has been notified that most of the Adivasi people convert themselves from Hinduism to Christianity. The Missionaries play an essential role in the re-origination Jharkhand based identity among them. They provide free education towards the Adivasis and make them educationally developed that help in the emergence of educated section among them and those educated class of the society are continuously working for the re-growth of their original identity. Again the tribal activists from outside the region also aid in the origination of identity consciousness among the Adivasis. Many tribal activists from Jharkhand are coming to the region in order to promote a sense of solidarity and retain the Jharkhand identity among the Adivasis, many tribal activists have come to the region from Jharkhand.²⁹⁶Such type of pressure has been seen present day scenario that helped in the emergence of Jharkhand based identity consciousness among the Adivasis in the region. Simultaneously, it leads to the emergence of a negative feeling in the minds other ethnic communities of the region. Local people started considering themselves as the 'outsiders' in Assam despite their contribution towards making Assam famous for its tasty tea in front of the world, and they started considering it as their liability, not as the result of their hard works.²⁹⁷Such type attitude of the local people towards the Adivasis may hamper in the relationship among them. Since the time of colonial administration, they have been living peacefully living in the region. But such type of surprise activities of Adivasis compel to think

them separately, and that feelings and attitude may lead to the emergence of conflict of among them.

4.8.1. Ethnic Assertions and Articulations: A Comparative Analysis of Adivasis of North Bengal vs. Assam:-

The identity assertion of Adivasis in Assam is one of the most critical issues in recent day politics of the land. While re-defining history, it reveals the fact that Adivasi is not the original inhabitants of the land of Assam; hence they were migrated to this land during the time of the colonial period. Therefore, in order to understand the identity and self-image of the Adivasis in Assam, it is essential to compare with their counterparts in other states. In order to get a clear concept of identity, the comparison between the Adivasis of North Bengal and the Adivasis of Assam is a crucial one from a comparative perspective.

While comparing the conditions of Adivasis of North Bengal in comparison to that of the Adivasis of Assam, it has been noticed that both shared the same history of migration. The Adivasis of North Bengal also the product of British colonial administration. They were also imported to the North Bengal in order to work in the rubber and tea plantation. But in the study, it has been reflected that the sense of self-assurance and self-identity is much better in comparison to that of the Adivasis of Assam. Often a question has been raised regarding the better self-assurance of North Bengal's Adivasis in comparison with Adivasis of Assam. While searching the answer of such type question regarding the process of identity formulation, it has been found that after alienating from their ancestral land and resources which was the source of identity as well as the livelihood during the time of colonial period by the colonisers that would compel them to migrate to Assam in search of better lifestyle.

But after entering in the plantation work, they became dependent on management. They did not get any local support so that they could assimilate with the Assamese tribal culture and identity. Hence, the local always considered themselves as the outsiders due to their failure in assimilating with the composite Assamese culture. The locals always keep outside the Adivasis from the social process. Even they do not think themselves as the part of the Assamese culture; instead, they often use the term migrants to mean Adivasis. Thus, they are excluded from the process of formation of greater Assamese society as well as from the process of nation-building. In that case, Walter Fernandes asserted that the socio-economic and cultural segregation of the Adivasis of Assam including both tea garden Adivasis and other Adivasis is just a character, not the cause. The victimised character and low self-perception of the Adivasis are fundamentally responsible for the socio-cultural differentiation of Adivasis with the their ancestral counterparts of Jharkhand and with North Bengal that also had their migratory history from Jharkhand.²⁹⁸ While the Adivasis of North Bengal did not face such type of problems that faced by the Adivasis of Assam. Their condition is quite different from the condition of the Adivasis of Assam. There are several factors, such as the active role of Christian Missionary, the social activists of Jharkhand; the Left Trade unions etc. help the process of identity formulation of Adivasis of North- Bengal. While analyzing the socio-economic conditions of Adivasis of North Bengal, Walter Fernandes referred to the role of Christian missionaries of the Jharkhand, those were constantly struggled for the protection of the land rights of Adivasi tribesman from being alienated and they gradually felt that no option had left for their endurances. In the course of time, in order to rescue the plantation workers of the North Bengal from the brutal colonial exploitations and deprivations, several Christian missionaries were reached at the region. Due to the arrivals of

such Christian missionaries, they exploited labourers got the supervision of the missionaries for the development of their socio-economic condition. Under the guidance of missionaries, most of them are adopted Christianity and also get benefit while education, that may have a positive impact in their survivals and sustainability.²⁹⁹ Thus, the Christian missionary plays a remarkable role while retaining the original identity of the Adivasis. Again, the Left trade unions also play an essential role in the process of identity formulation through organising and helping them towards creating consciousness about their rights. Due to such identity formulation and active role of the Church and left-wing trade unions towards the uplift of the condition of the Adivasis that helped while getting the status of the scheduled tribe in North Bengal. With the help of the constitutional safeguard under the fifth schedule of Constitution, the rate of self-assurance and self-identity of Adivasis of North Bengal is much higher in comparison with Adivasis of Assam. Under such circumstances, most of the Adivasis were able to retain their land and tribal identity to some extent.³⁰⁰ But in the case of Assam, the role of Christian missionary and trade unions are not satisfactory. Only a few Protestant missionaries are existed in the region but do not have a connection with Jharkhand.³⁰¹ Therefore, the process of identity formulation is prolonged and weak in the region in comparison to the process of identity formulation of Adivasis of North Bengal.

In comparison to North Bengal in Assam, the existences of the tribal activists of Jharkhand that are dedicatedly working for the solution of the problem of land alienation of tribals in Jharkhand are decidedly less in number. The lower educational status, weak trade unions led to more exploitation over them. They do not come under the jurisdiction of

constitutional provisions of schedule. All such factors make them powerless in comparison to the Adivasis of North Bengal.

4.8.2. Growing Ethno-Nationalism and Indigenous Consciousness: Impact on Adivasis :

Historically the Assam land is famous for its diverse tribal communities that have their distinctive culture, language and identity. These tribal communities are generally non-Aryan. But after the migration of Aryan people into the region, the whole demographic situation was changed. Along with the Aryan culture, they also carried Hinduism into the land of Assam, and gradually they tried to control the indigenous tribal communities of Assam that has been living since the time of immemorial. The spread of Aryan culture helped in the process of cultural assimilation in the region. But such type of cultural assimilation process led to a complex situation, where tribal gradually started to lose their originality and identity. After the independence, the region of Assam has witnessed noteworthy changes in case of its social, political and demographic composition. Due to the exploitative and chauvinistic nature of the Assamese high caste people, bound the indigenous tribal communities of Assam to think for an alternative system, where their distinctive identity and culture would be in protective mode. Their identity consciousness is building on the basis of their land and forest that are gradually alienated from them due to the massive influx of people from inside and outside the country. Again the idea of self-determination also induces the tribals to raise concern for autonomy. The United Nations meet on Indigenous people is considered to be the global platform that aware the indigenous people about their identity and encourage them for the movement of self-determination. In that meet, some of the tribal leaders from India

participated and among the Bodo leaders were the prominent one, where they greatly influenced by the ideology of self-determination and they raised their demand for self-determination in the form of autonomy for the tribals of Assam.

The process of identity formation led to the emergence of violence and conflict in the region, for example, the Bodo-Santhal exodus in Bodoland. Due to the massive number of influx to the inhabited areas of Bodos led to the emergence of identity consciousness among them regarding their culture and land. The growing identity consciousness among the Bodos created a sense of fear in the minds of other ethnic communities of Bodoland, especially in the minds of Adivasis. During the time of conflict, their life and right were in threat. A large portion of Adivasi people was killed during the time of conflict, and their human security was extremely violated in the hands of Bodo insurgent groups. Again the negligence of the government and other dominant communities of Assam bound them to think alternative option. The greater Assamese society does not consider these Adivasis as a part of composite Assamese culture. Again, the Bodos does not consider these Adivasis as an indigenous of the land of Assam; instead, they consider them as 'outsiders' or 'immigrants'. Such type of attitude of the indigenous communities towards the Adivasis leads to the emergence of identity consciousness among them. In the case of the Christian Adivasis, the language of education and ritual has played a notable role in the growth of identity consciousness among themselves.³⁰² Again, the government of Assam recognises the Bodo and Assamese as the medium of instruction, but not the *Sadri* language that may result in the form of agitation against such discriminatory nature of government, which may help in the process of identity formulation of Adivasis in the region. Because they think that under such circumstances their

language is in threat. Therefore, they try to retain their Jharkhand based identity. In many cases, they use their own language that provides aid in the process of isolation from native culture and identity. Most of the Adivasi people think that the process of assimilation into the Assamese culture may hamper their originality and therefore the educated section of the community tries to rebuild their original identity so that they can alive their originality in the land of Assam.

4.8.3. Modernisation, Urbanisation, Industrialisation:-

The emergent process of modernisation, urbanisation, industrialisation and appearance of neo-liberal policy of the government also initiates in the development of ethnic deprivation and isolation. The process of modernisation brings cultural assimilation and homogenous culture to the society. But the minor ethnic groups are mostly deprived by the cultural assimilation and homogenous culture. The prevailing ethnic communities of the society always subjugate the minor groups. Such of deprivation has been seen in the Kokrajhar among the Advasis as their identity and culture are subjugated by the dominant section of the society. Again, the process of urbanisation also generates deprivation and alienation of identity and culture of Adivasis in the region. In the name of urbanisation, the Adivasis are dispossessed from their land that is their source of cultural and religious practices. Besides, industrialisation also brings alienation of Adivasis land in the region. Elite class is also responsible for the deprivation and isolation of Adivasis land in Kokrajhar. They always try to fulfill their own aspiration through subjugating the marginalised and victimised section of the society. The mere presence of such factors is responsible for the identity alienation and identity crisis of Adivasis in their own region. The cultural hegemony can be considered as an

important instrument through which Adivasis are continuously deprived from their traditional culture and identity. The imposition of Assamese as a medium of instruction is posing threat towards the linguistic identity of the Adivasis. Due to the problem of medium of instruction, most of the Adivasi have faced the problems while getting education. Due to cultural assimilation and cultural hegemony, they are constantly losing their touch and domination over their language. Thus, the governmental policy neo-liberalism, urbanisation, modernisation and globalisation are also responsible for identity crisis of Adivasis in Assam. Such type of alienation and crisis fundamentally leads to the emergence of ethnic assertions among the Adivasis for protecting and promoting their distinctive and unique identity and culture.

4.8.4. Adivasi Civil Society and Identity Construction: Its role:-

The identity formulation of a particular community is linked with an organisation. The organisation that may be of the student or other people of society is playing a remarkable role in generating constructive consciousness among the community members that may be helpful in the process of identity construction. While identity formulation among the Adivasis, All Adivasi Student's Association of Assam that was established on 2nd July 1996 due to the ethnic violence in Kokrajhar has contributed greatly towards the development of Adivasi's socio-economic and political condition. The organisation is continuously working for the protection and promotion of rights of the Adivasi people. Under the leadership of Justin Lakra, Joseph Minz, Bosco Chermako; AASAA was leading a strong movement against the government in demands of the Adivasi's rights.³⁰³ They were also actively working to provide relief and necessary facilities to the Internally Displaced People and to include the Adivasis

within the Sixth schedule of the constitution. While demanding for rehabilitation of Adivasi Internally Displaced Person's and scheduling of Adivasis under the Indian constitution a bandh was called by the AASAA on 25th July 2002, where 8 members of the organisation, namely Jiten Tanti, Arun Tanti, Nathenial Munda, Dambu Hasa Purti, Sanika Sawasi, Mangra Mund and Basudeo Kherwar flowed their expensive blood in the police gunfire, and hundreds were detained.³⁰⁴ Again, the movement of Adivasis for protection of their rights and identities led to the emergence of All Adivasi Women's Association of Assam (AAWAA), Munda Sabha, Kurukh Sabha, Santhali Sahitya Sabha, Saura Sabha, Khariya Mahasabha and Adivasi Sahitya Sabha(ASS) that are working for the uplift of the Adivasis. Several non-profit organisation such as Promotion & Advancement of Justice Harmony and Rights of Adivasis(PAJHRA), People's Action of Development(PAD), Action Northeast Trust, Seven Sisters Development Assistance(SeSTA) are vigorously and energetically working for the solution of the problems faced by the Adivasis in Assam towards their identity and rights, specifically in Bodoland area. Again, Adivasi Mahasabhas are continuously organising Adivasis in order to strengthen the Adivasis from backwardness and exploitation towards their culture, identity and land. Adivasi Mahasabha is considered to be the uniform platform from where they can raise the concern of their socio-economic and political development. In Assam every year Adivasi Mahasabha is organised by the AASAA in order to redress their grievances in front of the government. Adivasi Mahasabha set sustainable development goals for the uplift of the socio-economic and cultural condition of Adivasis that the Adivasi society strived to achieve it within 2030. In the proposed sustainable goals for Adivasi society, there are 15 proposed that may be related with Adivasis demand for scheduled status, their socio-economic and political condition, health issues, tea garden issues, their history, language and

culture etc. They are continuously demanding for the use of their mother tongue 'Sadri' in the educational system on the basis of mother tongue-based education system as prescribed by the Right to Education act, 2009.

As a student organisation of the Adivasi, AASAA is actively working for the fulfillment of Adivasi's aspiration of getting scheduled status under the constitutional provision of the Sixth Schedule. For that purposes, they have conducted several protests and rallies against the political structure which always consider them as vote bank of electoral politics. The politician always wants their vote, but in return, they do nothing of the uplift of the community. Every political power comes to power with the help of the tea communities that comprised 17% of the total population of the state. Such type of political promise has been continuing since the time of independence, but they get nothing from the political parties. Under such circumstances, the Adivasi people realised that without their own effort nothing could happen. It is indispensable to express their feelings and aspiration in front of the government to capture the eye of the government towards their demands for scheduled status. Therefore, AASAA organised a rally in the capital of Assam in November 2007 on the demand of schedule tribe status which curved as a violent one due to the fight between the participants and the locals. In that conflict, five peoples were losing their lives, and about 250 were getting injured.³⁰⁵ Despite these, during the time of conflict, a teenage Adivasi girl and a woman were molested in the daylight in the capital of Assam. This incident can be considered as one of the disgraceful and scandalous incidents that were ever happening in the history of North-East India. This incident bound the Adivasis to think for the scheduling, and they realise that only scheduling can assist in the construction of their own identity.

4.9. Adivasis, Articulations and Search for Scheduled Status:-

The Indian society is heterogeneous in nature that is comprised of numbers of ethnic groups and among those groups the tribals the aboriginal one. According to the 2011 census, the tribals comprise about 8.6% of the total population of the country. Tribals have their distinctive identity and culture that makes them different from the other communities of the society. Historically they were the self-governing and self-determining community. But the exploitative and discriminative social structures make the culturally rich tribal community very backwards and deprive a section of the society. After independence government felt the importance of all-round development of all communities of the region. In that case, there was a need for special attention for the oppressed section of the society, which are economical, politically and socially disfranchised and marginalised. Among the deprived section, the tribals are the remarkable one. Therefore in order to shield the interest of the tribal communities, whose rights are suppressed by the upper caste people of the society, the constitution makers of India introduced the fifth and sixth schedule. These schedules are primarily made for the protection and promotion of tribal's interest. The policy of 'Protective discrimination' is formulated by the government in order to safeguard the deprived section of society from exploitation and oppression.³⁰⁶ The Sixth schedule is made for the administration of the tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. It provides tribal communities with considerable autonomy in all aspects of society. On those areas, the government powers are restricted. State government can only ensure the peace and security in those areas. District and Regional Council under the Sixth schedule have the power to make

laws on numerous legislative subjects. They also get funds from the consolidated fund of India in order to meet the financing schemes for the development of healthcare, education and roadways in their concerned areas.

Assam is considered to be a land of migrants. In the different period of history, different communities were migrated to this region that makes a complex social structure where it is very much difficult to define 'who is indigenous in Assam?' While discussing the Adivasis demand for scheduled status, the question regarding the indigenous is a remarkable one. There is no proper definition of indigenous people. The Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities Jose R. Martinez Cobo defines the term 'Indigenous' in his study on the problems of Discrimination against Indigenous populations as, "Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those who, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.

This historical continuity may consist of the continuation, for an extended period reaching into the present of one or more of the following factors:

1. Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;
2. Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands;

3. Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc.);
4. Language (whether used as the only language, as mother-tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);
5. Residence on certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;
6. Other relevant factors.

On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognised and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group). This preserves for these communities the sovereign right and power to decide who belongs to them, without external interference.”³⁰⁷ While determining the case of Adivasi demand for scheduled status, it is noticed that Adivasis does not fulfil the criteria to be indigenous of the region. Therefore, on that basis, they are deprived of getting schedule status in the region of Assam.

Generally, Adivasis are considered to be the ‘first people’ of the land of India. But after importing to Assam and North Bengal to work in the tea plantation and rubber plantation by the British planters, they lost their touch with the original birthplace. In the new region, new environment, they gradually started losing their original identity and culture. Because during the colonial administration while working in the plantation they did not get any chance to

think about their culture and identity. Extreme British rules and regulation compelled them to remain close inside the plantation. When all people in the country got independence from the colonial administration, but they remained dependent on the plantation management. In that case, the Adivasis of North Bengal are in a better position in comparison to the Adivasis of Assam. They are more developed than the Adivasis of Assam. They also have the schedule status under the Fifth schedule of the constitution.

While the socio-political condition of Adivasis of Assam remained same as like as the time of colonial administration. The difference is that during colonial administration they were exploited by the colonisers and after independence, they are exploited in the hands of government and a dominant section of the society. Despite the socio-economic and political disfranchisement of Adivasis in the colonial era, they had the schedule status. During the colonial period, they were enjoying scheduled status under 'depressed classes', known as Tea Garden Coolie Tribe and therefore four seats were reserved for them in the Provincial Council of Assam from 1934 to 1947.³⁰⁸ The colonial administration listed as a protected class within the protected areas of tribal belts and blocks. The president of Adivasi Sahitya Sabha, Wilfred Topno asserts, "Scheduling is our constitutional right, and this was denied by rescheduling in the year 1950. Expect Assam; we are enjoying scheduled status in the other parts of the country."³⁰⁹ After independence, they were deprived of their earlier scheduled status as an oppressed class. After implementing the new constitution in the year 1951, the process of rescheduling was taken away their scheduling status. Then Chief Minister of Assam Gopinath Bordoloi opposed the process of scheduling of the Adivasis in Assam on the basis that the scheduling process could disturb the existing socio-political structure of the region. Because

that time demand was raised for greater autonomy in the form of separate statehood among the hill tribes specifically among the Nagas. Keeping in view such political situation, Bordoloi committee refused to provide schedule status to the Adivasis of Assam and as a result Mr. Jaipal Singh Munda a member of the 'Schedule Tribe Identification Committee' who himself an Adivasi visited Assam and interacted with the President Lt. Francis Hans and Secretary Advocate I.S. Ekka of Adivasi Council of Assam in order to mobilise and create consciousness among the Adivasis regarding the needs of scheduling.³¹⁰ Thus a movement for scheduling was started among the Adivasis of Assam. The leaders of the Adivasi Council of Assam submitted a memorandum to the central government from time to time and also met then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi regarding their scheduling, and she assured them to provide schedule status. Due to such effort of the Indira Gandhi, nine tribes among the Adivasis were enlisted as a scheduled tribe. But the Tea tribe organisation and Adivasi Council of Assam refused the proposal of the centre in the meeting organised by the then Labour Minister of Assam government Barki Prasad Telenga; hence they demanded the inclusion of all tribes within the schedule status. Again, in 2006 Silvius Condapan raised the bill of scheduling the Adivasis of Assam in the floor of parliament, but the Tribal ministry refused the bill on the reason that in the state of Assam almost 97 communities are clubbed and together known as Tea tribes.³¹¹ As stated by the state government of Assam they do not have aboriginal characters and are not geographically isolated like the other schedule tribes of the region.

In Assam, the Adivasis who are the first indigenous community of India only enjoy the status of 'Other Backwards Classes'. They are not included in the schedule tribe list.

Hence, the Adivasis of North Bengal and Jharkhand are enjoying the schedule status. Thus, they raise their concern for inclusion into the Sixth schedule along with other five ethnic communities of Assam, such as Ahoms, Chutias, Morans, Matakas and Konch Rajbongshi. The demand for schedule tribe is growing after the formation of Bodoland Territorial Council in 2003. The massive numbers of violence and massacre of Adivasis in the Bodo- Santhal communities compelled them to think for an alternative way so that they can protect their people. Historic Bodo-Santhal exodus was the evidence of a massive violation of Adivasi's rights and security. Again after the formation of B.T.C., they were compelled to think that now their identity is in a very critical condition. The growing identity of Bodos under the regime of B.T.C. is posing a threat towards the identity and ethnicity of Adivasis in the region of Bodoland. The non-Bodo people were never happy with the Bodo accord that led to the formation of B.T.C. They always oppose the formation of B.T.C due to the minority status of Bodos in the region. Even, the non- Bodos of Bodoland area has filed petitions against the Bodo accord in the Guwahati High Court. They consider the rule of Bodoland autonomous council as the dominance of minority Bodos over the majority non-Bodos. Under the rule of B.T.C, the rights of other ethnic communities are extremely violated, especially the Adivasis whom Bodos consider as an 'outsiders' are facing lots of problems that may harm their identity also. Under such circumstances, the Adivasis realise the fact that their identity and rights will be in safe mode if they get schedule status under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution. Therefore, the schedule status can be considered as an essential instrument for safeguarding the identity and land of one ethnic community. The Adivasis demand for the inclusion into the Sixth schedule is related to their identity. They hope that self-determination and self-autonomy would bring a socio-economic and political structure through which they

can enjoy enormous freedom while using their own language and culture. Thus, the demand for inclusion into the schedule list is relatively linked up with their process of identity formation. In contemporary time, Adivasi leaders realise the fact that without the ST status they cannot get success in their original identity formulation and therefore, for identity formulation ST status can be considered as a necessary condition.

The Adivasis demand for inclusion into the schedule list under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution can be considered as one of a debatable issue in the contemporary politics of Assam. The national and regional political leaders politicise the whole issue. Political involvement in the demand for inclusion in the Sixth schedule makes turns the whole issue towards the politics of vote bank. Again the non-tribal, ethnic communities of Assam supports the Adivasi's demand. But the main hindrance is coming from the original inhabitants of the Assam. They consider such type demand is nothing but a conspiracy to destroy the distinctive culture and identity of existing tribal of Assam. Sriram Ananthanarayanan in his article "Scheduled Tribe status for Adivasis in Assam" articulated several arguments that are mean that Adivasis cannot claim to be indigenous in the region and therefore, therefore they do not have the rights to raise their concern for the inclusion into the Sixth schedule of the constitution. The most common point against the granting schedule status to the Adivasis of Assam is their migratory history.³¹² The indigenous tribals of Assam consider them as the product of migration. Because for them during the colonial period, when the British grabbed the land of Adivasis in the Chotanagpur region, that was the birthplace of Adivasis they were migrated to the land of Assam in search of better lifestyle and due to such reason, they do not have the right to claim themselves as an indigenous in the region. Again,

the tribals of Assam reveals that Adivasis of Assam especially who are residing in the lower parts of Assam are not fully assimilated with the indigenous culture and identity; hence they try to revert their own Jharkhand based original identity, which the tribals consider as a threat towards their distinctive identity and culture. Such type of attitude of the Adivasis may help in the emergence of enormous agitation and opposition towards granting schedule status to the Adivasis. Among them, Bodos are the notable one. Bodos think that granting schedule status towards the Adivasis of Assam may harm their identity and culture. Their culture and identity will be in trouble in their own land. Granting ST status to Adivasis may pose a threat in the dominance of Bodos in B.T.C. Out of 46 seats, 30 seats are reserved for the ST and out of 28% of the ST population, 20% are the Bodos that make them as the single largest ST community of the region. If the ST status is given to the Adivasis, then it may lead to a share of seats in the B.T.C. Therefore, Bodo leaders are continuously fighting against the granting of schedule status to Adivasis.

Again, the whole matter is entirely problematic in nature. In Assam, the Adivasis are generally falling under 'Tea-tribe' which is a politically given term in order to exclude them from the schedule list. Among the tea tribes, there is no uniformity about their culture and identity. Because during the time British colonialism, colonisers imported labour from various parts of India and all those labour who were brought by the British in order to work in tea plantation are popularly known as 'Tea-tribes'. All tea tribes are not tribal. While interviewing with the Kokrajhar district president of the All Adivasi Students' Association of Assam (AASAA), Satyanath Tudu, said, " In 2009, government-appointed 3 men expert committee to analyse the Adivasi's demand for inclusion into the Sixth schedule of the constitution and the

committee recognised 36 communities out of 97 communities of Tea-tribes as tribal community and other tribes as non-tribals. Among 36 communities, only six communities are presently found in Assam." Again, another member of Kokrajhar district AASAA committee said, "We are the aboriginal community of Assam. We have been living in the land of Assam since the time of *Narakasura*. We came to the land of Assam before the Mongoloid from where almost all the tribals belonged." But such type of justifications and claims of Adivasi intellectuals cannot be accepted due to the lack of proper historical evidence. Therefore, such type predictions and justification is irrational in nature. During an interaction with Dr Lipson Rongpi, an independent researcher from Diphu, Karbi Anglong district revealed, "On the basis of some predictions and irrational justification, we cannot accept anything. Everything should be scientifically accepted and proven. There is also a cultural resemblance between the Karbis and the tribes of Thailand. But on that basis, we cannot claim to be indigenous of Thailand." Another interviewer from the Kokrajhar said, "During the time of British, we were enjoying the status of tribal. Santhal blocks and belts in Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar is the example of this. However, after independence tribal status was withdrawn from us. The 1947 Bordoloi resolution made them only as the protected section in the scheduled area, and they became an unscheduled class in the Assam." Another activist of Adivasi community of Kokrajhar district said while interviewing him, "We are not tea garden labour. We came into the region before the tea tribes. In 1974, Assam forcefully included us in the category of tea tribes." Thus, the Adivasi leaders in the region of Bodoland raise their concern for ST status on the basis of the above statement. In 2014, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs of Central government of India had taken a step for the inclusion of certain communities within the scheduled list under fifth and sixth schedule of the constitution. The government has also recommended for including some

of the communities of Assam, specifically from the Adivasis communities, who are considered to be the outsiders or migrants in the region such as Bedia, Kharia, Gonda, Munda, Kil Oraon etc.³¹³ But in the recommendation of the ministry of tribal affairs of government of India, the Santhalis was excluded from the inclusion in the scheduled status in the region of Assam. Therefore, the All Santal Student's Union(ASSU) submitted a memorandum to the Mr Jual Oram, Union Tribal Minister of Ministry of Tribal Affairs of the government of India on 8th of July, 2014 regarding the immediate inclusion of Santal tribe in the scheduled list in the state of Assam. But till now, the government of India does not take any steps regarding on such issues.

The question regarding the inclusion of tea tribes in the ST list has been raised since 1961. The Scheduled Tribes Commission(1961), the Lokur Commission(1965), the Joint Parliamentary Commission of 1967, the 1978 Home ministry's Union Cabinet note, the 1994 Adivasi committee's report on scheduled tribes; all these reports denied the proposal of granting schedule status towards the tea tribes due to the non-fulfillment of the primary criteria that are essential in order to include in the schedule tribe list under Article 342 of Indian constitution.³¹⁴ Tea tribes do not have the uniformity like the other ethnic tribes. Recently, the Registrar General of India has delivered a statement that from the homogeneity and uniformity is found to some extent within some groups of tea community that may be considered for inclusion in the scheduled list with the approval from the state government. But the whole process is very rigid and complex itself. It is very problematic for state government to decide those relatively homogenous communities from the tea community and therefore government is failed to conclude, and still, the problems are continuing. The

continuous demand of AASAA regarding the inclusion under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution becomes a very problematic issue for the Assam government. Again, the politicisation of the whole issue and make it as an instrument of vote bank is turned the issue into a complex one. While attending the 11th Annual conference of the All Santhal Student's Union in Tezpur, present Chief Minister of the Assam Sarbananda Sonowal assures scheduled status to the Santhal. Again, recently the Prime Minister Narendra Modi also assures to provide ST status for 36 tea tribes communities that may include the Adivasis along with other five indigenous communities of Assam. However, the thing is that such status is not applicable in the Bodo Autonomous Council. Demographically, the majority of the Adivasis is found in the Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri, Bongaigaon district and the majority falls under the jurisdiction of the BTC. Thus, the whole issue of scheduling can be considered as an issue of complexity and uncertainty.

4.10. Conclusion:-

Thus, the chapter provides an extensive analysis of the emerging ethnic assertions of Adivasis in the region. The chapter basically tries to highlight the basic reasons behind the emergence of ethnic identity consciousness among the Adivasis. The evolving identity consciousness and ethno-nationalism among the native tribals of Assam also triggers in the growth of insecurity and uncertainty among the Adivasis in the state of Assam. The mere presence of modernisation, urbanisation, industrialisation and the evolving governmental policy of neo-liberalism are fundamentally responsible for the appearance of crisis towards their ethnicity and distinctive culture and identity. The chauvinistic attitude of the Assamese elite section of the society is also firmly responsible for the increasing assertiveness of

Adivasi regarding their ethnicity. The basic purpose of the Adivasi civil society is to protect and promote their distinguishing identity and culture from being alienated from themselves. Therefore, they are continuously fighting for attaining scheduled status and that can be considered as their only hope through which they can shield and stimulate their very distinctive identity and culture.

Notes and References:-

State, Land and Adivasis: Alienations and Deteriorations

5.1. Introduction:-

The chapter entitled "State, Land and Adivasis: Alienations and Deteriorations" is basically an attempt to have an analysis on sustainability of land of the Adivasis in Kokrajhar district of Assam. The chapter tries to explore the problems that are faced by the Adivasis in the region of Assam towards their land. Their land is often evicted by the other ethnic communities as well as state and various non-state actors taking advantage of their marginalised socio-economic and political conditions in the region. Already in the last chapter, the identity crisis and ethnic assertion of Adivasis are discussed briefly. This chapter provides a comprehensive platform to understand the inter-connectedness between the land and identity and how alienation and deprivation land is linked with the identity crisis of Adivasis in the region.

5.2. Conceptualising land:-

The land is considered to be one of the essential assets almost for all the communities of the world. Every human being and every community of the society more or less is connected with the land. In a simple sense, the land is primarily bio-physical cover surface of the earth. However, in board sense, land not only includes the bio-physical surface of the earth, but it also includes the river, forest and other resources of the earth. The land is the most precious resource for all. The land is considered to be the most important form of property that is essential for everyone. Henry George highlights the necessity and importance of land in his quote, when he says, "Land necessary to all production, no matter what will be the kind or form; land is the standing-place, the workshop, the store-house of labour; it is to the human being the only means by which he can obtain access to the material universe or utilise its power. Without land, man cannot exist."³¹⁵ The existence of man is fundamentally dependent on land. The land is not only a source of economic substances but also a source of their identity and culture. In this study, generally, the boarder concept of land is used while interpreting the various issue related to the land.

5.3. Land and Tribals:-

Assam is considered as a hub of various ethnic communities. The region is not only rich in natural resources, but also rich ethnically. In N.E India, the land is the most important resource which is required as the best productive use for the welfare of the people. The modernisation process already touched the region, which had been causing changes in land

relations both because of some internal changes as well as the introduction of new laws, rules and restrictions by the government. Already an exploitative system of land relations had been emerging with rising landlessness among the tribals of some parts of the region. The region has diverse ethnic characteristics with multiple numbers of tribal communities. Almost 8% of the total tribal populations are found in the region. Assam is one the essential part of North East India, possesses a heterogeneous character comprises of different socio-economic groups. The greater Assamese society possesses multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic character comprises of diverse ethnic communities such as Bodos, Rabhas, Mishings, Tiwas, Karbis, Ahoms, Karbis, Dimasas, Lalungs, Deuris etc. The state of Assam is divided into two parts, namely hills and plains. Topographically can be divided into three district zones, namely the Brahmaputra valley, the Karbi Anglong (Mikir Hills) and the North Cachar hills and the Barak valley. The Brahmaputra valley from Sadiya to Dhubri is flood prone area, which is very fertile and is suitable for a variety of crops. Like Brahmaputra valley, the Barak valley created by erosion and deposition by the river Barak and its tributaries. Again, the Karbi Anglong (Mikir hills) geologically constitutes a part of the Shillong Plateau. The region is full of number of ethnic tribal communities. The existence of diverse ethnic communities with their distinctive culture and identity makes it heterogeneous.

The land is one of the essential characteristics of tribal society. The land is everything for the tribals. The land is neither just a 'means of property' nor just 'a form of property', rather it can be considered as the way of life. Back in history, tribals were the hunter-gatherer societies who dependent on forest and river for sustaining their life. However, due to the changes of time tribals evolved from hunter-gatherer societies to cultivation based societies.

Again for cultivation also they also became dependent on land. Land means a lot for them. For them, the land is not only economic sustenance, but also the hub of their culture, identity and religious belief. It can be considered as their heart and soul without which they cannot sustain their livelihood. While conceptualising land, it has been seen that there are three major dimensions of the concept of land that are land as a means of livelihood, a means of worship and of relating to the clan and their deceased members. Therefore their very identity is linked with the land. As an indigenous group, they are a land-based community. The land is everything for them. Their economic condition is also mostly dependent on land as they historically depended on hunting and agriculture. Again their traditional folk culture, their belief and faith are mostly dependent on land. They have land-based and nature-based culture and identity, so alienation from land and natural resources meant alienation from their culture, identity, religion and the whole universe. Without land they are nothing. A prominent bureaucrat, as well as scholars from North East region, says, "The proverbial attachment of a tribal to his land is a complex web of relationships, the primary force being no doubt economic. However, it is also related to traditions, family, ties and religion."³¹⁶ Again, another eminent police official who served in the region observes:

"Land, whether it be homestead land which is the habitation of the family or land for cultivation, constitutes the lifeblood of the tribal community, as much in the Christian as in the non-Christian villages. Particular locations are considered the dwelling place of spirits, good and evil, that have to be periodically placated. Other locations are associated with the shades of devoted ancestors and are held in special respect and reverence... for a tribal, every corner of his home has its associations."³¹⁷

Such type observation reveals the dependency of the tribals on land. The land is the birthrights for the tribals because it considers as the lifeblood of the tribal communities irrespective of culture and identity. Therefore, without land, the existence of a tribal community is not possible. However, the massive numbers illegal immigrants have posed a threat towards the land right of the tribals. Not only illegal immigrant is responsible for the deprivation and alienation of tribal land, several other factors such as the process of urbanisation and modernisation, the government's land acquisition policy are also responsible for the process of alienation of tribal land. The process of land alienation due to the government projects like the dam or the real estate sharks is very high after 1980's decade, when India adopted the principles of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation for its economic development. Alienation of land is not only meant deprivation from their land rights; rather it means deprivation from their culture, economy and identity. As described by the Marx in his theory of alienation due to the exploitation labour are alienated from his fellow man and himself. The process of land alienation also results in the alienation of tribal from his clans, from his fellow beings and also from his originality and identity that finally results in alienation from himself. When their land is grabbed by the non-tribals, infiltrators and by the government through their various land acquisition policy using the concept of 'eminent domain', then the tribals are alienated from their homes and their social and identical roots that results in the form of agitation in the minds of tribals.

5.4. State, Tribal and Land:-

Alienation of tribal land is one of the significant problems that develop a frustration among the tribals. As the tribal societies are agriculture-based so that the protection of tribal

land is one of the important responsibility of the state. However, very significantly the state not only fails in providing land security from the non-tribal encroachers towards the tribals but in many times state itself evicts the tribal lands for developmental purposes. The question regarding the protection of tribal lands is an age-old question that deserves to be mentioned. Since the time of pre-colonial era, the demand for the protection of tribal land has been raised in order to protect the tribal lands from the outsiders. As the tribal communities were not socially and economically developed one, therefore, the outsiders got very easy to encroach their land and natural resources. The simple nature of tribals also contributed to the encroachment of tribal lands.

Since the time of Ahom period, the state has been playing an active role while protecting the land rights of tribal communities of the land. Ahom rulers evolved a distinct policy to deal with the tribes some of which has been living in their territorial jurisdictions and some inhabiting in the bordering areas. The distinct policy of Ahoms had three main aspects, firstly not to interference with the internal affairs of the tribes, secondly supply of essential commodities to meet their day to day economic needs and lastly the regulation of the trade between the plain's people and the tribal people living in the neighbouring hills.³¹⁸ Thus, in the era of Ahom rule, tribal peoples were lived peacefully in the region. However, while British occupying the land of Assam through *Yandaboo* treaty of 1826, they developed the policy of annexation of tribal land and that time onwards, all these tribal lands fell under the jurisdiction of British colonial administration. In case of the other tribes like Akas, Miris, Abors, Mishimis, Khamtis and Singhpohs that were living in the North Eastern Tracts were also subjugated by annexing their kingdoms but allowing the tribal kings or chiefs to manage

their own internal affairs. Again the introduction of 'Inner Line Regulation act 1873' by the British government which had restricted free intercourse between the plain's people and the hill tribals, can be considered as an important mechanism in order to protect the tribal land from the infiltrators. Under the 'Government of India act 1935', Mizo district, Naga Hills district, North Cachar Hills, Balipara Frontier Tract, Sadiya Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract and Lakhimpur Frontier Tract were termed as Excluded areas.³¹⁹ Again the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, Garo Hills district and the Mikir hills tract were considered as Partially Excluded areas.³²⁰ After attaining independence in 1947, Excluded areas and Partially Excluded areas were done away, and the Constituent Assembly formed subsequently incorporated concepts like Fifth schedule, Sixth schedule and other provisions for the tribals. The constitution makers and the national leaders fully realised that unless specific provisions safeguarding the tribal communities, the people belonging to these communities would not be in a position to compete with the advanced section with the society. Thus, it has been seen that constitutional provisions present a comprehensive and well-designed concept for the welfare and development of the tribal communities of India and also for the protection of land rights of the tribals.

Tribal land alienation is one of the major problem faced by the tribals of Assam since the pre-independence period. The immigrants first came into the *Char* areas of the Brahmaputra that were virtually unoccupied in nature. When the occupation of the Char areas were bound to be limited, were more or less complete, the immigrants started to occupy the government reserves and even the land of the local people, especially the tribals. After realising the gravity of the problem of unauthorised occupation of land, the British

administrators introduced a system, namely Line system. According to this system, a line was drawn on the village map, and no occupation of land beyond that line was allowed. Under the Line system, villages were divided into three categories namely, 'open villages', 'closed villages' and 'mixed villages'. In 'open villages', the migrants had the right to settle in those areas without any hindrance. Again, the closed villages were completely free from the interference of the migrants where their settlement were not allowed in any conditions, and in the mixed villages, however, the migrants had the capacity to settle on one side of the line drawn in the map under some circumstances..³²¹ To ease the situation and also to discover an enduring resolution of this provoked problematic issue, the state government formed a committee, popularly known as Line-system committee in order to assess and re-analyse the affectivity and sustainability of Line system. After independence, the Congress ministry in Assam headed by GopinathBordoloi had taken steps for the creation of Belts and Blocks for tribals and backward classes excluding sixth schedule areas by amending the 'Assam Land and Revenue Regulation 1886' by adding 'chapter X' to it in 1947.³²² The main aim for the creation of the Tribal Belts and Blocks was to prohibit the transfer of land belonging to the tribals and other protected classes to non-eligible persons within these Belts and Blocks. The main reason behind it was to protect the land of indigenous tribes from the immigrants mainly from Bangladesh. Following the provisions of the act, altogether 35 Belts and Blocks(11 Belts and 24 Blocks) were created till 1964, which covered 3112 villages with a total area of 1,20,59,378 Bighas.³²³ Subsequently, 11 more Tribal Belts and Blocks were created in Assam beginning from the year 1977.³²⁴ So till 1991, there were total 46 Tribal belts and blocks in Assam that comprised of 1,25,69,595Bighas.³²⁵

Under the provision of Section 160(1) of the ‘Assam Land and Revenue Regulation amendment act of 1947’, tribal belts were constituted with larger areas and blocks were constituted with small areas. Again as per the provision of Section 160(2) of the act, the state has the power to choose the communities whom they consider as a protection class through notification in the official Gazette. Accordingly, vide notification no. RD. 2/47/43, dated 20.04.1949 state government declared six classes of people containing plain tribals, hill tribals, tea-garden tribals, Santhalis, Nepalis and Scheduled Castes as the protected classes within the jurisdiction of Tribal belts and blocks.³²⁶ In the year 1976, a report regarding the tribal belts and blocks of Assam was published and noted that;

“...the first and foremost duty of the revenue administration should be to eject all those ineligible encroachments both from *sarkari* as well as *pattaland*(in individual possession with proper deed) within all the tribal belts or blocks in a time-bound programme, and all such land made free from encroachments should be simultaneously handed over for possession to eligible landless persons in the blocks and belts.”³²⁷

Although all these tribal belts and blocks exist present day also, yet encroachment of tribal land is continuing within the tribal belts and blocks. While taking the advantages of the weak economic condition of the tribal, the non-tribal peoples try to purchase the lands of tribal people in the protected areas of belts and blocks. Thus they are continuously depriving of their land rights in the protected areas has created discontent among the tribal communities and the protection of tribal land has become one of the important issues of the autonomy movement of the tribal in the land of Assam.

5.5. Land, Adivasi and Alienation: Deciphering the Causes of Land Alienation:-

Adivasi is considered to be the 'first people' of the land of India. As historically, there is no proof of commencement of human species in India. Adivasi is the aboriginal community of the region that was migrated to India before the Dravidians. Adivasis are to be considered as a group of people that comprised of some tribes and castes. They have a distinctive rich culture and identity. Like other ethnic tribal communities of India, the land is too valued for the Adivasis. They consider land as a means of livelihood, a means of worship and as a mechanism for their socio-economic and political development. For them, the land is the life. Their root of life is linked with the land. As an agricultural community of society, there is an intimate connection between land and Adivasi. Most of the cultural practices and rituals of the Adivasis can be traced to agricultural backgrounds due to the intimate connection between agriculture and land. Therefore, there is a close link between hunting and agriculture. Again their traditional folk culture, their belief and faith are mostly dependent on land. They have land-based and nature-based culture and identity, so alienation from land and natural resources meant alienation from their culture, identity, religion and the whole universe. They can be considered as the 'son of the soil' of India. Their very identity is primarily related to land due to their more dependence on it socially, economically and culturally. As an indigenous group, they are a land-based community. The land is everything for them. Their economic condition is also mostly dependent on land as they historically depended on land they are nothing. They consider land as a means of relating to the clan and their deceased members. Therefore the alienation of land meant alienation from their clan and deceased members. Deprivation from their natural resources and land is not a present-day problem for

Adivasis. The problem of land alienation was started while the British occupying the political command of the country. Before British occupying India, Adivasis were the self-governing and self-determining community primarily inhabited in the forest and riverbank area. During that time, they lived a peaceful life in their own region outside the jurisdiction of the existing regime. However, after the British occupying the political command of the country, they introduced the system of private property, and they enacted several rules and regulations in order to legalise the formerly informal land system. They started to use land as an economic instrument while building their empire in India. Simultaneously, the naturally rich tribal areas fascinated the British colonisers. The tribal areas were not only rich in minerals, but also in raw materials. They considered all these resources that were found in tribal areas as state property and without any legal document the tribals did not have the rights over such resources. Thus, Adivasis got the status of encroachers in their own land due to the lack of any proper land document. Through introducing the Permanent Settlement act of 1793, British colonial administration turned their tax collectors, *Thikedars* and *Jathedars* into *Zamindars*³²⁸ or land lords.³²⁹ These, in turn, exploited the Adivasis. As a tribal community, they were fundamentally dependent on hunting and cultivation and during that time, they were not aware of the land *patta* and money; hence the exchange system was prevalent among them. Thus lack of land *patta* and money in order to pay taxes resulted in the form of eviction of Adivasis land. Again, the colonial administration enacted the Forest act in order to encroach the forest areas from the Adivasis. Accordingly, colonial administration imposed heavy taxes on the Adivasis while using the forest land and other resources as they were very well known about their economic condition. Walter Fernandes briefly elaborated the negative influence of 'Permanent settlement act of 1793' that was implemented by the British colonial

administration that gave birth to the system of Zamindari. The Zamindari system was that process, where most of the Adivasi tribesmen lost their land and CPR's that includes the land and forest resources of the villages. The legalisation of land fundamentally deprived them from their land ownership, known as *Khutkatti* which ultimately resulted in the form of impoverishment and exploitations of the Adivasis in their region. The gradual deprivation from their land also had a negative impact in their socio-economic condition. The land is not only their source of income, but also the source of their identity and distinctive culture. Since the time of immemorial, before colonisers formulated such type of exploitative laws, the Adivasis had been survived their sustainability from their forest resources, from where they collected almost 50% of their daily necessities. Again, British used the colonial dogma of eminent domain while occupying the land from the native tribesmen that considered the land and forest resources as the state property. The gradual eviction from the forest land and CPR's resulted in alienation and isolation of their ancestral rights on which their identity and culture was based.³³⁰

In such way, the Adivasis, the aboriginals of the land of India were alienated and deprived from their forest rights as well as from land rights. Such type of deprivation and alienation from their economic sustenance were compelled them to migrate to the other region, especially to Assam in order to work in the newly established tea plantation. The emergent deprivation from their own land and forest areas developed a sense of insecurity towards their survivals. Such derivation and isolation triggered a movement, namely Santhal rebellion against the exploitations of the colonial administration that were mainly responsible for the alienation of their land. In 1855 British imposed martial law in order to stop the

massive agitations of the Adivasis that resulted in brutal killings and exploitations. During that time most of the Adivasis people were annihilated and victimised by the imposition of inhuman martial law in the region of Chota Nagpur Santhalparagana. While observing such deprivation and victimisation of Adivasis, the Christian missionaries encourage them to migrate from Santhalparagana to Santhal colony. But, several historians argued that the basic reason behind such migration to the Santhal colony of Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar district to fragile the agitations of the native tribesman.

During the British colonial administration, the tribal communities had the national identity of tribal. Therefore, in Assam also they enjoyed the status of tribal in the colonial period. The colonial administration considered the ethnic communities whom they imported in order to work in the tea plantation and the Santhali people, who were migrated to the land of Assam during the time of Santhal rebellion, 1855 as the tribals and their land rights were protected through the establishment of tribal belts and blocks. The existence of tribal tea belts and Santhal belts reflected the fact as mentioned above. In the colonial era, they enjoyed the status of protected schedule tribe within the tribal belts and blocks. However, after independence, they lost their scheduled status. Moreover, they became a protected but non-tribal caste within the tribal belts and blocks.

Along with the Adivasis; the government was taking away schedule status from Nepali, Koch-Rajbongshi, Nath-Jogi also. After losing the scheduled status, their land is opened for all in the protected areas of tribal belts and blocks. There is no restriction on grabbing and buying the land of non-tribals in the protected areas, which resulted in the alienation of 75% of Adivasi's land within the protected areas. Again the 'Assam Land and

Revenue Regulation(1886) Amendment act of 1947’, a substantive measure for the protection of tribal land within the protected tribal belts and blocks is only applicable for the tribals, not for non-tribals. Alienation of land is one of the worst problems of the Adivasi community of Assam. As a protected class Adivasi wants the protection of their land under this act. Thus, depriving of scheduled status results in the form of a massive number of land alienation of Adivasis in the region of Assam. A sample survey that was conducting in some parts of Assam, which revealed the fact that every year the Adivasis are losing more than 2500 bighas of land which excludes the alienation of land and CPR’s by over 5000 Adivasi families in the 1996 ethnic conflict of Bodoland and the alienation of Adivasis land in the forceful eviction driven by the Forest department in Lungsung in the year 2010.³³¹

Some of the Adivasi intellectuals believe that they are the aboriginal community of Assam on the basis of several historical factors that are already discussed in the third chapter of the research study. Adivasi civil society, as well as the intellectuals, asserted that in the ‘Assam Land Revenue Regulation act of 1886’ also considered the Santhalis, a part of Adivasis as the tribes of Assam. The existence of Santhal Colony Tribal blocks during the colonial period and in pre-colonial revealed this fact that during the British period they enjoyed tribal status in Assam. Again, a notification revealed, “In exercise of the power conferred by the Section 161 of the Assam Land Revenue Regulation Act, 1886(Regulation 1 of 1886) as modified by the Assam Land and Revenue (Amendment) Act 1947, Assam XV of 1947, the Government of Assam is delighted to found a Tribal block encompassing the 43 Santal villages of ‘Santal Colony Mouza’ of Gossaigaon Circle of Goalpara district and

entitled as 'Santal Colony Tribal Block' with an areas covering 59,930 Bighas, 1 Katha and 19 Lessas that has constrained the transfer of land to non-Santals."³³²

While deciphering the fact of alienation of Adivasis land and resources, it has revealed that depriving of the scheduled status after the independence of the land as well as losing the national identity as tribals have led to other several problems in the region for the Adivasis that are enthused the process of land alienation.

5.5.1. Land, Ethnic Conflict and Alienation:-

The land is one of a significant issue in the contemporary era that can be considered as an important cause of ethnic conflict. The massive numbers of influx to the region of Assam have resulted in the alienation of tribal land and other resources that led to the growth of agitation in the minds of tribal communities. The infiltrators, especially from the neighbouring countries, have grabbed the tribal land and that smashed their distinctive culture and identity. Therefore, alienation of tribal land has led to the ethnic tensions in North-East India. Over the last 40 years, alienation of land has been at the root of the terrible headline-gripping ethnic unrest in the region. In June 1980, in Mandai 300 Bengali Hindu were slaughtered by the tribals.³³³ After just three years, in February 1983 about 2000 Bengali Muslims were massacred by the Lalung tribesman in Nellie.³³⁴ In 1993, Naga militants exterminated about 87 Kuki Villagers at Zopui.³³⁵ This was just a starting of ethnic conflict regarding the issue of land alienation. While investigating the whole issue of extermination, it has revealed the fact that the involvement of militants turns the movement against illegal land grabbing by infiltrators into a violent one. High numbers of casualties have been reflected during the time of extermination due to the involvement of local peasantry as they lost their

lands in the hands of infiltrators.³³⁶ A large number of people were murdered by cuts and stabbed instead by the fire guns indicated the high amount of local involvement in the extermination process. While analysing the problems of land alienation, it reveals the fact that the local tribesmen are vastly affected by land alienation as the land lots for them from economic sustenance to the source of their identity. The militants such as armed Bodos, Assamese, Mishings, Karbis, Dimasas; they consider encroachers as their enemy because they deprived the tribesmen of their land rights and that resulted in the form of ethnic conflict in the land of Assam.³³⁷ Historic Assam movement from 1979 to 1985 is one of the remarkable agitations of the Assamese people against such encroachers. SubirBhaumik asserts, "Land alienation sowed the seeds of ethnic hatred, first at the level of the individual and then at the level of the collective. The fierce urge to recover lost lands has led to repeated bouts of anomic violence in the North East, at times degenerating into systematic ethnic cleansing with radical groups utilising the groundswell of hatred to promote an aggressive ethnic agenda."³³⁸

When tribesmen are deprived of their ancestral common property rights as well as alienated from their socio-cultural and identical bases, the feelings of hatred becomes a powerful social force against the non-tribals whom they consider as their threats for identity and CPR's leads to a situation of a high degree of violence in the society. They started attacking the other ethnic communities of the region whom they considered as the infiltrators and outsiders. The same type of circumstances has been seen in case of Bodoland. Bodos started their movement for a separate state in the year 1987 in order to get greater autonomy in their own region and simultaneously Bodo underground militants started attacking the other non-tribals of the region resulting in the process of 'ethnic cleansing' in the region, where the Bodos have alienated from their land and CPR's. Gradually the Bodo tribesman realised the fact that the

demand for a separate state in the name of greater autonomy will not be sufficient and resulting one due to the minority status in most of the parts of their proposed areas. Such type of fear became true, when in 1993, after the first Bodo accord Assam government refused to give the 3000 villages that were falling within the proposed territory due to minority status in most of the proposed villages. In those villages which Bodos demanded within their proposed territory, the Bodo population was less than 50 per cent. Sangsuma Khungur Bwismutiary, the former chairman of ABSU, argued, "The proposed territory was a tribal compact area, and we cannot be denied autonomy over it merely because of its changing demography."³³⁹ Again, the former military wing chief of the NDFB, D. Zabrang asserted that anyhow they will construct majority despite having plurality in their own areas due to their consideration regarding those land as their own and anyhow they do not allow any kind of illegal capture over their land.³⁴⁰ With such attitude, Bodo militants started attacking the non-tribals of the region such as the Bengali Muslims, Bengali Hindus and finally the Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, who had migrated to the region from Central India during the time of colonial administration. In 1993 and 1994, Bodos for the first time engaged in conflict with Bengali Muslims due to the massive amount of land grabbing incidents. In 1993, the first large scale butchering transpired when 50 Muslim community peoples were killed, and 3,568 families consisting of 18,000 people were displaced in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon district.³⁴¹ In 1994, again 100 migrants were brutally killed, and 70,000 persons were homeless in similar violence in Bodo areas.³⁴² In B.T.A.D areas, a certain amount of land is occupied by the Santhals, Mundas, Orans who regard themselves as migrants, resulted in the deprivation of land and resources of Bodos. This socio-economic and political deprivation of Bodos from their rights resulted in the form of dangerous Bodo- Santhal clash in Bodoland in 1996 and 1998. The Bodo-Santhal exodus

reportedly began after the killing of 3 Bodo girls by the Santhal, which took an ugly shape in 1996 in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon. About 200 Adivasis were killed, and nearly four lakh people were internally displaced in the 1996 ethnic conflict.³⁴³ In one of the report, Assam government state "more than 2,50,000 people were displaced, of which at least 2,37,668 people-1,81,932 Adivasis and the rest Bodos-had took shelter in camps."³⁴⁴ P.K. Narzary asserted the implication of the whole situation as, "Due to this incident, self-conscious Boros got furious. Thousands of Boros, especially youths gathered to see the dead bodies of those ladies. In the gathering, some of the Boro youth got furious and started beating few Santhals in Gossaigaon town itself."³⁴⁵ Again about 100 Adivasi peoples were killed, and about two lakhs peoples were displaced due to the repeated attacks of Bodo militants in Kokrajhar in the months of May-September, 1998.³⁴⁶ In 2014 again an ethnic conflict occurred in Kokrajhar and Chirang districts that witnessed the burn of 278 houses in Kokrajhar and 148 in Chirang.³⁴⁷ According to the data of Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), the ethnic conflict has witnessed the displacement of 4,85,921 people(including Muslims, Adivasis, Bodos and other ethnic communities) and 2,46,582 persons(including Muslims, Adivasis, Bodos and other ethnic communities) residing in the formal relief camps.³⁴⁸ While visiting an Adivasi village of Gossaigaon division of Kokrajhar district, an Adivasi old man has shared his experience of 1996 ethnic conflict and deprivation from his own land and homes. He said, "After burning my house in May 1996, I made my house three times, but all the three times my house was burnt by the Bodo militants. While living in the camp, both of my children died. Moreover, one day my wife died too. After staying in the refugee camp for several days, I went to my village in the year 2000, I saw that someone else has settled and captured my lands. And seeing me there, they forced me to leave from there. But where did I

go? I came here again. Later I built a cottage in Sristijhara forest near Mahamaya and stayed there. During those days if I got something, then I eat, but sometimes I did not. There was a time when I used to have six acres of land but now I have nothing. Even I lost my whole family. When we were in the village, we had a very good and friendly relationship with these Bodo people. We used to graze cows together, harvest crops and eat together in the cultivation field. But now everything is lost somewhere.”

The fundamental purpose behind these ethnic conflicts is the ethnic cleansing in order to create a majority needed Bodo areas. From the process of ethnic cleansing, the Adivasis are mostly affected. The aspiration of Bodo militants to establish tribal *raj* in the Bodoland triggered the process of ethnic cleansing. Adivasis, who are the aboriginals of Indian land are deprived and alienated from their land and CPR's due to the ethnic exodus in Bodoland. Already after losing the scheduled status, their land was grabbed by the other tribals within the protected areas of tribal belts and blocks, and the remaining the lands were also taken from them in the name of ethnic conflict. In that case of Adivasi, the transfer of land and CPR's is happened not from tribals to non-tribals, hence from tribals to tribals. It is one of most disgusting incident that two indigenous community of the country is confronting with each other in the name of saving of their own distinctive identity. While taking the advantages of the ethnic conflict the powerful and dominant class people, including both tribals and non-tribals, has taken the Adivasis land and CPR's. Such type of deprivation and alienation of land and CPR's of one tribal community by the other tribal community in the name of ethnic cleansing in order to create autonomous council is very painful, shameless, disgusting and dishonourable incident ever happened in the history of humankind. From a recent study it has

been reflected that almost 600 Adivasis of Takampur, Ranipur, Amritpur, Raimona, Auxiguri, Balamjhora, Saraigaon, Bangti, Kusumbil, Mothambil, Nasraibil, Dalgaon, Athiabari, Serfanguri of Kokrajhar district and Bengtol and Koilamoila villages of Chirang are now the daily wage earners in the Cemetery-Polton in Islampur area of North Dinajpur district in West Bengal who once upon a time well-off farmers in their own area.³⁴⁹ All the wage earners had about 8 to 10 *bighas* of fertile land in their own villages and all those lands were alienated from them during the 1996 ethnic violence between Bodos and Santhals in the region of Bodoland and after alienating from their own homes and lands they were bound to live in the hutments beside the 15 km long Islampur-Cemetery Polton main road. The native peoples of those areas are not allowed them to resettle in their own land. Almost all the people of those 600 families have included in the National Register of Citizens(NRC) in Assam. Regarding this issue, an Adivasi leader said, "Our people always want to resettle in our villages, which are our land, our property, but some vested groups do not let our people resettle. If our people cannot be able to settle in the lands, they will be derived from getting land *pattas* as per the provision of Forest Right act, 2006." Again he asserted that, already they had mentioned all the names of encroachers in the report, who forcefully occupied the land of Adivasis in Kokrajhar and Chirang district. The Adivasi civil society has warned the BTC government that if they do not take any steps towards solving this issue, the issue will be raised in the floor of United Nations. Till now the Adivasis are living with the hope that one day they will return to their original lands.

5.5.2. State, Land Acquisition Policy and Alienation:-

The state is considered to be the one of the essential institution and mechanism in order to protect the interest and aspiration of the citizens. The state has the prime responsibility while protecting and promoting the rights of the indigenous community of the country. Adivasis are the aboriginal community of the country that can be considered as 'son of the soil'. But due to their marginalised condition and the exploitative nature of state results in the alienation of land and CPR's that are considered to be essential in order to sustain their lives. Again, their so-called identity and origination are also related to the land and CPR's. The exploitative nature of the state has been revealed since the time of British colonial period. In order to get naturally rich forest areas and river bank areas for developmental purposes, the colonial administration enacted several laws such as Permanent Settlement act of 1793, Bengal Resolution I of 1824, Bombay Resolution I of 1839, Act XLII of 1850, Act XX of 1852, Act VI of 1857, Land Acquisition act of 1894 etc. The Permanent Settlement act of 1793 was introduced by Lord Cornwallis that imposed land revenue on the lands. They imposed heavy taxes on the lands of Adivasis that was resulted in the form of deprivation and alienation of tribal land. After that, British imposed heavy taxes on the forest and CPR's on which the Adivasis were dependent. But due to their marginalised condition, they were not able to pay taxes and gradually they started losing rights over their ancestral land and CPR's. After that British enacted several land acquisition policies for different region and finally in 1894 they enacted a common law for the whole country that is the Land Acquisition act of 1894 in order to take the private property for urbanisation, industrialisation and developmental purposes. From that 1894 to 2013, the land acquisition process of India was administrated by Land Acquisition act of 1894. But in 2013, in place of this colonial law, the Indian parliament enacted a new Land acquisition act in 2013, namely 'Right to Fair

Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement act, 2013' that governs the process of land acquisition in India and also provides compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement. Again the eminent domain also provides power to the government to acquire any land for public purposes through proper notifications and guidelines with fair compensation and proper rehabilitation and resettlement facilities for the affected people by acquisition. But in reality, such type of policy is never implemented while acquiring private land. That ultimately results in the alienation and deprivation of land of those affected people. Tribals and weaker section of the society, who are socially, economically and politically marginalised and disfranchised, are mostly affected by the land acquisition policy of the government. Adivasis are the most deprived section of society and the rate of alienation is high among the Adivasis. The study area of Kokrajhar, which falls under BTAD, Adivasis is deprived of their land rights. During interaction with SatyanathaTudu, an active leader of AASAA, he revealed the fact that once upon a time most of the land of Chirang and Kokrajhar districts were captured by the Adivasis. They have the land *patta* over their land. But gradually they lost their land due to their unscheduled status in the region. He also stated that in order to establish Chirang District Commissioner office, Chirang district Superintendent of Police office, Chirang Circuit house, Kokrajhar District Commissioner office, Kokrajhar Circuit house were constructed through acquiring the land of Adivasis and in return Adivasis did not get fair compensation. Those lands were the agricultural land on which Adivasis mostly depended and such type of alienation of land resulted in socio-economic marginalisation and deprivation of Adivasis in Kokrajhar and Chirang district. A public engineering institution, namely 'Central Institute of Technology' was established by the government of India, in 2006 at Kokrajhar district, which is spread

across 120 acres. While establishing 'Central Institute of Technology', the government acquired lands from the Adivasis and Bodos without giving them any fair compensation. Again the public companies and real estate are also contributing towards the alienation of land and CPR's of Adivasis in Kokrajhar district. While interacting with one Adivasi leader of Karigaon, Kokrajhar revealed that, one of the tea gardens of Kokrajhar district was acquired 1500 bighas of Adivasis for tea plantation. Along with, they illegally captured another 1500 bighas of land from the Adivasis. Thus, all total of 3000 bighas of Adivasi land was captured by that particular tea garden in Kokrajhar and for only 20% of the land, they got compensation. Almost 80% of the total land was acquired free of cost in the promise of giving them rehabilitation and resettlement. All these lands were agricultural land. Taking advantage of the simple nature of Adivasis, they acquired a vast amount of land from them in the name of providing permanent employment in the tea garden from where they will also get quarter, ration and other facilities. So that, they would jump at the opportunity in the happiness of getting permanent employment as well as other facilities and they transferred their agricultural lands to the tea management. But nothing was happened, as thought by Adivasis and in the tea garden also their condition remained the same. Again, in 2016 the BTC government has given 1,132 acres land of both Bodos and Adivasis to Baba Ramdev trust for free of cost. In an interview with the Indian Express, the president of ABSU, PramodBoro said, "The BTC told us that the unused land was given to Patanjali trust for free to prevent encroachment. According to BTC, another reason was the productive utilisation of the land."³⁵⁰ Again, during interaction with SatyanathTudu, he stated that in the name of 'Art of Living Society' more than 1000 bighas of Adivasi land is alienated from them. In the name of re-construction of Rupsi airport, BTC government provides about 300 acres of land of

Adivasis and Bodos to 'Airports Authority of India' and 'Indian Air Force'. Thus, it can be said that the ineffective policies of the government that acquiring private land for industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation ultimately resulted in the form of alienation of land and CPR's of marginalised and deprived section of the society. Thus, somehow the growing industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation are also equally responsible for the alienation of Adivasi land in the district of Kokrajhar.

'Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Amendment act of 1947' is predominantly meant for the protection of the land rights of marginalised and disfranchised sections of the society from the illegal migrants. For that purpose, the government established protected tribal belts and blocks in order to protect the aboriginal marginalised tribal classes of the society from the illegal eviction of their lands. As per the section 160(2) of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Amendment act, 1947, the government of Assam notified in the official Gazette about the list of protected tribal classes within the protected tribal belts and blocks, that included plain tribals, hill tribals, tea-plantation tribals, Santhals, Nepalis and Scheduled Castes. Within the protected belts and blocks, land of those classes is in safe mode. The immigrants and outsiders cannot evict the land of those classes within the protected areas. But in reality, the government failed to protect the lands of protected classes within proposed protected areas. A large scale of Adivasi lands, including the land of Santhals and some of the ex-tea labourers, illegally transferred to the hands of immigrants and outsiders. Despite of legislative measures for the protection of land rights of Adivasis, a significant portion of land is alienated from them. During interaction with an Adivasi leader of Karigaon, revealed that almost 75% of Adivasis land in Kokrajhar district was alienated from them and now they have

the rights over 25% of total lands earlier they had. Despite having protected belts and blocks, Adivasis lands are continuously transferred to the other communities of the region. Such type of facts exposed the government's failure to protect in the land rights of Adivasis that may result in the form of land alienation.

5.5.3. State, Forest Land Evictions and Adivasis:-

The state as the protector of the natural resources of the country has provided much importance to preserve wild animals and forest areas rather in preserving the indigenous communities of Kokrajhar district. Based on the satellite data from November 2008 to January 2009 the forests are covered 35.28% of the total geographical area of the state.³⁵¹ In Kokrajhar district out of total areas of 3,169.22 square KM, approximately 1,719 square KM are covered by the Reserved forest areas.³⁵² The Reserved forest areas cover approximately 55% of the total geographical areas of the district.³⁵³ The tribal land eviction from the forest areas has been continued since the time of Colonial administration. The tribals and several other ethnic communities who are marginalised and deprived section of the society are fundamentally dependent on forest land and their resources. But a devastating wave of forced forest eviction policy has been seen around the country that resulted in evictions of tribals from the forest lands. In the contemporary era, the government recognises many tribal communities as an 'encroachers' of forest land, because they have been using the forest land since the time of immemorial without any kind of proper land document. Dr Jean Dreze asserted that in many cases, the indigenous rights of the tribals are encroached by the forest departments.³⁵⁴ The forced evictions of the tribal communities from the forest land deprive them of not only from their birthrights but also pushback to a very marginalised and

disfranchised situation. As per the latter on 'Traditional rights of tribals on forest lands' that was issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests on 21st December 2004 reflects,

“According to the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the Government can constitute any forest land or wasteland which is the property of Government or over which the Government has proprietary rights, a reserved forest, by issuing a notification to this effect. Commercial interests of the then British Government motivated it to declare more and more lands as reserved forests, without ascertaining the rights of the tribals and other forest dwellers.

Even after independence in 1947, during the process of amalgamation of princely states, the activity of consolidation of government forests continued. The State Governments / UT Administrations proclaimed the lands of ex-princely states and the zamindar-lands as Reserved Forests. However, no effective steps were taken to settle the rights of tribals and other forests dwellers simultaneously. The absence of records of rights which never existed became the primary constraint for these people in resolving this issue. As a result, the rural people, especially tribals and forest dwellers who have been living in the forest since time immemorial, have come to be erroneously looked upon as encroachers of forest lands.”³⁵⁵

Generally, due to the eviction, the tribals and other forest dwellers, which are not the tribals but their socio-economic conditions, are mostly related with forest are ferociously exaggerated from their ancestral rights. A groundbreaking law enacted by the government of India in 2006, namely 'Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition

of Forest Rights) act' regarding the issue of non-recognizing and pre-existing rights of the tribals and traditional forest dwellers in order to recognise and legalise their ancestral rights over the forest land and resources. They have been living in the region since the time of immemorial and sustained their livelihoods from the forest. The act not only allows the scheduled tribes and other forest dwellers to hold and live in the forest areas, but recognises several others rights such as right to proprietorship, right to access, collect and dispose of minor resources and also provides right to defend, rejuvenate, converse or accomplish the community forest resources that has been conventionally protected and conserved by them for sustainable use.³⁵⁶ Despite of having such protective legislative measures, the tribals and other traditional forest dwellers rights are continuously victimised and their ancestral rights over the forest are taken away from them. On 16 August 2004, the Ministry of Environment and Forest has released a statement where they revealed the fact that, from 1.5 lakh hectares of land encroachers has been evicted.³⁵⁷ But a network of more than 200 organisation, namely 'Campaign for Survival and Dignity' concerned with the protection of tribal rights over the forest exposed that about 30 lakh tribal families have faced a threat from the forced eviction of government in the name of "encroachment".³⁵⁸ In July 2004, 50 houses were burnt during the time of eviction by the forest department in Bomiliaput village in Madhya Pradesh.³⁵⁹ Again, in 2004, forest department evicted another 73 families from the forest in the district of Betul, Madhya Pradesh.³⁶⁰ Recently in 2017, 400 families belonging to Mishing, Karbi, Rabha, Dimasa, Bodo, Koch and other ethnic communities were forcefully evicted and deprived of Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary by the forest department of Assam.³⁶¹ Such type of evidence is enough to show the government failures in the protection and promotion of the rights of the tribals and other traditional dwellers despite having legislative protection.

Adivasis, the aboriginal community of the land of India is mostly affected by the government policy of eviction from the forest land. Historically they were mostly dependent on the forest for sustaining their livelihoods. During the time of colonial administration, Adivasis were evicted and alienated from the forest land. British through Permanent Settlement act of 1793 evicted and deprived the Adivasis of the forest land. Again after coming to the region of Assam, the same condition had faced by the Adivasis in new land also. British brought these labourers from Central India in order to work in a tea plantation on a contract basis and after the end of the contract, the plantation management encouraged them to settle in the forest areas without having in any land *patta*. Again, historically they were related with forest and therefore, after the end of the contract with the tea plantation management, they had preferred to live in the forest areas despite having in any legal land document. In Assam, the Adivasis do not have the scheduled status; therefore they fall under the category of other traditional forest dwellers under the 'Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers(Recognition of Forest Rights) act of 2006'. According to the act, they have the right to live and hold in forest areas and also have the right to proprietorship, right to access, collect and dispose of minor resources, right to defend, rejuvenate, converse or accomplish the community forest resources that has been conventionally protected and conserved by them for sustainable use. But due to their non-recognition status, a vast number of Adivasi people were evicted from the forests by the forest department, where they have been living since the British colonial period. The forest department considers them as the 'encroachers; that they have illegally captured the forest land for centuries.

Adivasis again and again made victims of a deep-rooted conspiracy in the region. During the decade of the 1990s, they were faced with brutal victimisation and extermination by the Bodo militants. The Adivasis of lower Assam has been confronted by frequent violence and atrocities, especially in the BTAD area. Due to the recent eviction of Adivasis from the Lungsung forest block, where Adivasis were living in almost 50 villages under the Haltugaon forest division of Kokrajhar district near India-Bhutan border, a vast amount of Adivasi's land was alienated from them. These Adivasis were became the victims by the eviction due to burning of their homes, clothes and other furniture as well as due to the destruction of their stored grains like paddy and rice by the forest department on October 30 and 31, 2010 considering them as encroachers of the forest land and other natural resources. Again, on 20 November 2010, the forest department revisited the region and burnt down whatever was left. The local BTC government has not responded towards the plight and victimisation of Adivasis in the Lungsung forest area. This eviction resulted in loss and damages of a large number of properties and houses of the Adivasis that were residing in the Lungsung forest area. During an interaction with the Adivasi activist SatyanathTudu from Kokrajhar, it is learnt that Adivasis has been living in the Lungsung forest block since the time of the 1960s. He revealed the historical migratory process of the Adivasis from Gossaigaon to Lunsung forest block. During the time of Indo-China war, 1962, government transported a vast number of Adivasi people along with other communities such as Bodos and Rajbongshis to the forest land of Lungsung in order to help the armies. The war had come to an end in 1962 itself, but those communities never went back and started cultivation in the open and uncultivated land of Lungsung forest block. SatyanathTudu asserted, "As such, along with other communities, our people also started living in the area without having any legal land document." After

living a decade without any kind problems from the government, the government evicted those communities in 1974 on the ground that they were inhabited in the forest areas illegally without having the proper land document. As a result, a widespread agitation was emerged against such governmental decision on the reason that they were not willingly settled in the area, rather government imported them for their own interest and after fulfilling their interest, and government evicted them from the region that was totally unconstitutional and undemocratic. Due to such widespread agitation, the government then promised to allot land towards the forest dwellers of Lungsung forest block. Simultaneously, Samar Brahma, a Bodo people became the forest minister of Assam government and in order to fulfil the promised of the government, he started allocation of land in a phased manner and gave land allocation towards the Bodos and other communities. But during that time he was discharged from the ministry due to some other reasons before he could complete the process of land allocation towards the forest dwellers of Lungsung. Thus a vast amount of people, majorities were the Adivasis deprived of the process of land allocation that can be considered as another classic case of discrimination against the Adivasis by the government. Another local leader from the Kokrajhar district stated that, despite such discrimination, Adivasis continued to live with the hope that someday they would also get land, but nothing has happened as they would hope and therefore a portion of Adivasis returned to their original settlement during the year 1985 to 1990. Hence, a large number of people had no option to return to their original settlement and they just settled there. SatyanathTudu stated, “Again, in 2006 the forest department had visited the area and they gave our people a verbal warning to evacuate the forest land, but they did not cause any damage. Our people always live there with constant fear, persecution and extortion and such type of fear and persecution was seen when forest department

forcefully evicted our people from Lungsung forest area without any prior notice." The 2010 eviction resulted in major damage and destruction of properties of the Adivasis. The government team burned all of their houses and also destructed their cultivation as well as their food stocks. From this eviction, 6919 Adivasi people of 1267 were affected, out of which 3303 were males and 3646 were the females. The Adivasi leaders revealed that behind the eviction, there was a hand of Bodo militants. During the interview, an Adivasi leader said, "According to the victims of this incident in order to carry out the eviction the Forest Ranger hired 200 individual from the Forest Protection Force(FPF) and Eco-Task Force(ETF) that consist of the vast amount of surrendered militants of Bodo insurgent groups." Another Adivasi leader said that there was a big conspiracy behind this eviction, taking advantage of marginalised and disfranchised condition of the Adivasis, the eviction team attacked the Adivasi villages on Saturday, that was the local market, where most of the villagers were busy in marketing. Those who tried to prevent them from committing such atrocities, they were brutally beaten and molested, and finally, the police arrested 40 peoples and were sent them to the Kokrajhar jail. Thus, within two days, all entire 55 Adivasi villages were fully destructed and damaged. The eviction team did not stop in destroying and burning the homes and agricultural field of Adivasi, but they also were destroying and burning a Catholic church at Kodomguri village, a Pentecost church at Gadatola along with 3 Hindu temples within the Lungsung area. The incident of eviction deprived and alienated Adivasis from their legislative land rights that were given in the 'Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers(Recognition of Forest Rights) act of 2006' that resulted in massive amount Adivasis land alienation in the Lungsung forest area of Kokrajhar. The people who were deprived and

alienated from their land and homes took shelter in the relief camps of Sapkata, Srirampur, Kochugaon, Bismuri, Joypur, Sidli, Amguri, Ranikhata and Deosri.

5.5.4. Land Capitalism, Land agreement and Temporary Land Alienation:-

The land agreement is often used to describe the land related agreement in order to take the land for lease or for purchase. During the Ahom period, the land was belonged to the king and no personal rights were recognised regarding land. After British entering the region, the process of private ownership of land was begun and land became a saleable, purchasable and inheritable commodity. The transfer and alienation of land is one of the significant problems that are faced by the Adivasis in Assam especially in the Bodoland area. According to the official records, the formal transfer of land from tribals to non-tribals is minor, but actually, a vast amount of tribals and protected class land is alienated from them.³⁶² Due to non-regulative and ineffective nature of the land agreement related to land leasing and land purchasing is mostly responsible for the alienation of Adivasis land in the district of Kokrajhar. From a recent study, the Tribal Research Institute reveals the fact that through the system of *Paikas*, *SuktiBandhak*, *Koi Bandhak* and *Mena*, a large amount of tribal land is temporally transferred to the hands of the capitalist section of the society and after generation they ultimately lost their ownership over their land due to their marginalised and impoverished condition in the society.³⁶³ Such type of temporary land agreement among the individuals also leads to the alienation of land of weaker section of society. The terms and conditions that are followed for the cultivation of land by cultivators and the land allotted to them by the landowners under different systems gradually leads to temporary land alienation.

There are several forms of temporary alienation of lands that ultimately results in a full-flagged alienation of land and CPR's.

Paikas: The *Paikas* system seems to be very much responsible for temporary alienation of land, especially in the case of tribal. As mentioned by the Dr Lipson Rongpi, “Under the *Paikas* system, a landowner takes an advance from a cultivator and instead of the advance taken; he alienates his land temporarily to the cultivator for a period of one or two years. At the end of the period, the cultivator is required to vacate the occupied land. But in practice, it does not happen, as the landowner takes another advance from the cultivator even before the stipulated period comes to an end.”³⁶⁴ Once a tribal enters into this vicious cycle, he can hardly get out of it and the alienation of cultivation land becomes perpetual.

SuktiBandhak: In *SuktiBandhak* system, land is primarily given to the cultivator in lieu of payment of a certain quantity of paddy to the landowners per year in per *bigha*, after executing a formal agreement to this effect and during that period of agreement, the landowner shall have no right to cultivate in his land or to raise question its utility, while the cultivator becomes the temporary owner of the land like the *paikas* holder.³⁶⁵ As like as the *paikas* system, if a tribal landowner once enters into this system, he can hardly get out of it that finally results in the form of alienation of land.

KhoiBandhak: KhoiBandhak system is also firmly responsible for the alienation of land of the tribal. JeutiBaruah mentioned, “Under this system, a land owner temporarily transfers his land for use and occupancy to another person for a minimum period of five years against the certain amount of money calculated at a certain rate per *bigha* per annum. The entire amount in cash shall have to be paid to the settlement holder only once at the

beginning. At the end of the period of an agreement, the land automatically comes back to the owner. But before the period of agreement comes to an end, the landowner again enters into another contact and thus his land is temporarily alienated again.”³⁶⁶

Mena: B.NBordoloi asserted, “Under this system, the un-reclaimed virgin lands in possession of the tribal families, suitable for cultivable, are given to non-tribal’s for recuperation and agriculture for some years varying from 3 to 5 years. In return, the landholder gets nothing except the reclaimed plots of land at the end of the period of the agreement. The incidence of this system is gradually declining because un-reclaimed virgin land is decreasing at a faster rate.”³⁶⁷The system of *Mena* boost in the process of alienation land of the tribal community.

Adhi:*Adhi* is considered to be one of the important factors for alienation of tribal land. While elaborating the system of *Adhi*, Bordoloi asserted, “Under this system, the settlement holder temporarily transfers his right of use and occupancy of land to another person for a specific period. The cultivator cultivates the land and provides half (50%) of the crops or products to the landowner and the other half (50%) is kept for himself.”³⁶⁸ This system is quite prevalent among the tribals that also result in the alienation of tribal land.

In the case of Kokrajhar district vast amount of land are alienated from the Adivasis due to such type of land agreement and this alienation can be considered as temporary land alienation. These factors of alienation are helpful for understanding the problem of tribal land alienation. In Assam, the Adivasis cannot be considered as a scheduled tribe, but on the basis of national identities of the tribal, they can be understood as a tribal despite having constitutional status in the state of Assam. Therefore, while understanding the problems of

Adivasi's land alienation in the Bodoland, specifically in the district of Kokrajhar, these factors of temporary land alienation are instrumental. The formation of BTC in the year 2003, made a remarkable contribution towards the alienation of land of Adivasis in the region. BTC area is comprised of both Belt and non-Belt area. During an interaction with SatyanathTudu, he revealed the fact that after 2003, a vast amount of Adivasi land outside the Tribal belts is transferred to the Bodos and Muslims. Even, after the establishment of BTC, the protected status of Adivasis including the Santhals and tea-tribals are gradually isolated from them that result in the transfer of a large amount of Adivasis land to tribals as well as to the non-tribals. The marginalised and impoverished condition of the Adivasis in the land of Assam makes the process of transferring their land to others very easiest one. The 1996 and 1998 ethnic cleaning in Bodoland devastated their socio-economic condition and a large portion of them took shelter in the relief camps. After returning from the camps, only a few amounts of land have remained in their hands. But due to the lack of money, they preferred to earn their livelihood from daily wage earning, instead of agriculture. Therefore, such type of circumstances bound them to transfer the land to others in a temporary manner for getting some money. The social maladies in the form of *Paikas*, *Bandhak*, *Mena*; adversely affected in the land ownership system of Adivasis in the district of Kokrajhar. The *Paikas* is a system by which a person gives his land to another person in return of money for the period of two or three years without conferring the land ownership to others. In Kokrajhar, many Adivasis people lost their land under this system. Once they enter into this malicious cycle of the system of *Paikas*, they can hardly get out of it and the temporary alienation of cultivation land becomes perpetual. Due to the economic impoverishment, many Adivasis are unable to return

their money to the individuals, whom they give their land against money and thus they gradually alienate from their land.

In many cases, their land is forcefully grabbed by the others with the help of fake land document and thus, the illiterate and deprived Adivasi people can do nothing for safeguarding their land from the encroachers. During an interview with an Adivasi villager of Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar, he expressed that after seeing such type injustice to them, BTC government has done nothing for protecting the lands of Adivasis because a maximum of the Adivasi's land encroachers are the Bodos. Again, due to the system of *Bandhak*, including *Shuktibandhak* and *Khoibandhak*, *Mena* and *Adhi*, a large amount of Adivasi land is shifted to the others. While interviewing with an Adivasi villager of the Gossaigaon, Kokrajhar he stated that due to the *Bandhak* system he is gradually deprived of their land rights. He alleged, "My grandfather gave a large amount of land in *bandhak* to an individual of my locality in return of money. But during that time they had not done any legal document of this *bandhak* and my grandfather submitted the land document to that individual with trust. Eventually, my grandfather passed away and my father also passed away a few years ago. Two years earlier, when I claimed that land from the family of that individual, they told me that those are their own land, which their grandfather bought from my grandfather. Due to the lack of land document, I cannot go to the court. Because the court will ask me to show my proof for the claiming over the land, but I have no any kind document related with that particular land. Thus, I lost the ancestral land due to my grandfather's fault." This is just a simple story of an Adivasi villager of Gossaigaon area, who has lost their ancestral land due to the system of *bandhak*.

Simultaneously, land can be considered as an important instrument and mechanism of capitalism. In the contemporary capitalist society, land also becomes an essential asset of capitalism, where a vast amount of land is transferred to the hands of the capitalist class of society. In that particular society, not only the labourers and poor peasants are deprived of their legitimate rights, but also deprived of the fundamental rights. Karl Marx, in his theory of alienation and class struggle, did not give special preference on land. But nowadays land becomes that type of commodity for which most class struggle has happened in society and thus, land alienation becomes one of the major problems for almost all the caste. Alienation of land becomes a class-based discrimination issue in the recent day socio-political structure of the society, where the capitalist acquired a vast amount of land taking advantage of impoverishment and disfranchisement of weaker class of the society. The development of capitalism is also helping in the growth of individual land ownership. Earlier people were not that much aware of the necessities of land. But in the present-day capitalist society, the individual becomes hungrier for land, because having more land assist in the advancement to their economic condition that leads to the development of the concept of individual land ownership. The significant outcome of individual land ownership is the concentration of land in the hands of a few individuals and that results in a consequent disparity in the existing social structure. In Assam, most of the Adivasis live a much-marginalised life. According to a report of the Human Development Indices, Adivasis are the lowest and most deprived section of the society and almost 55% of the total displaced people of the country are belonging from the Adivasi community.³⁶⁹ A large amount of Adivasi land in the society is transferred to the hands of a few capitalists. Most of the tribesman of the Adivasi community face the problem of alienation of land and CPR's, especially in the region of the Assam due to their

marginalised and disfranchised condition. Thus, due to the capitalisation of land, most of the Adivasi communities are gradually alienated and deprived of their ancestral land rights in the sense that when few individuals acquire huge land this obviously at the cost of making others landless. If those few individuals belonging to the other community that in question, then land alienation becomes more problematic. While interviewing with SatyanathTudu regarding the problems of land alienation that are faced by the Adivasis in Kokrajhar, he shared his own experience of facing land alienation. He held, "Near the Karigaon area of Kokrajhar district, in the year 2010, I had 27 *bighas* of non-cultivation land. But when I have recently visited the Revenue office to know about my land status, I come to know that I have only one *kothaland* out of 27 *bighas*. Those are my land, my ancestral property. Due to some reason, I am not able to take care of my land and taking advantage of such conditions, almost 26 *bighas* of my land is grabbed by the encroachers, who are mainly Bodos and Muslims. When I asked about my land to the Revenue officers, then they said that they were not in a position to share such type of confidential data with me. They suggested me to visit BTC headquarter for more enquiries. Finally, I realised that I would never get my land back because BTC would never give me the land record and I am not so much powerful that I can forcefully take my land from those encroachers. This is just an example of me. I am educated. Hence I cannot do anything. Then think about the other people, who even don't know what is happening around them. The incidents of grabbing of Adivasi's land are uncountable." This is the story of SatyanathTudu, who himself is an activist leader but could do nothing in protecting their land from the encroachers. After the formation of BTC, it is impossible for the other non-tribals of the Bodoland to purchase land; hence they are continuously losing the existing land that they have.

5.6. Linking Identity with Land:

The land is considered to be the blood life of every tribal community. For very human beings land is regarded as one of the important assets for sustaining their cultural, educational and social rights. One of the leading analysts from North East region asserts, "The land question in Assam is extremely complicated and even more than the ethnic dimension and threat to identity is was the land question that invested the Assam agitation with a measure of legitimacy."³⁷⁰

For Adivasis, the land is their life. Their root of life is related to the land. There is a cordial relationship between land and Adivasis. Historically, they were the hunter gathered communities and after that, they were transformed from hunter-gatherer societies to agriculturally based societies. But in everywhere land becomes an essential asset for the Adivasis. The relationship between the Adivasis and land can be understood from three dimensions- land as a source of their livelihood, land as a source of their belief, culture and customs and land as a source of their relationship with their ancestral people. The social-cultural behaviour of Adivasis is primarily related to the land. The relationship between nature and Adivasi has been reflected through their behaviour, social system, religious system, festivals etc. For them, the land is their fundamental source of identity and therefore deprivation and alienation from their land means alienation from their culture, religion, ancestors and also from world environment. If the Adivasis are alienated from their land, the existing relationship among the man-nature and identity will be hampered. For Adivasis land is not the only source of income, but also an instrument through which they express their

behaviour, distinctive culture and traditions in front of the world community actually who they are? As a nature-based community and as an agriculture-based community, the Adivasis identity and culture are primarily related to land and other CPR's.

Alienation from the land and CPR's can be understood as one of the fundamental problems of the community. The community is gradually alienated and deprived of their land and CPR's due to forced migration, governmental evictions for building industry and infrastructure, land grabbing, illegal eviction of land by the non-Adivasis. Simultaneously, industrialisation, urbanisation and due to the process of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation, Adivasi tribesmen are continuously evicted from their land. The land is not only an economic asset for them; instead, land can be regarded as the fundamental source of their identity and ethnicity. For them land as a means of livelihood, a means of worship and a means of relating to the clan and their deceased members. Therefore their very identity is linked with the land. As an indigenous group, they are a land-based community. The land is everything for them. Their economic condition is also mostly dependent on land as they historically depended on hunting and agriculture. Again their traditional folk culture, their belief and faith are mostly dependent on land. They have land-based and nature-based culture and identity, so alienation from land and natural resources meant alienation from their culture, identity, religion and the whole universe. Without land they are nothing.

The alienation of land of Adivasis is posing a threat towards the identity formation of Adivasis. The identity formation and ethnic assertion are primarily dependent on the economic condition of a community. Therefore, when an individual has lived a marginalised and disfranchised life in the society, he or she even can't think for their culture and identities.

In case of Assam, due to the constant deprivation and alienation from the land and CPR's, the Adivasis are not in a position to think for their culture and identity. The condition of most of the Adivasi families is beyond imaginable. Even they do not have adequate food, cloth and shelter to sustain their day to day life. So the marginalised and disfranchised conditions of Adivasis are posing hampered in the process of identity formulation.

Thus, the alienating fromland and CPR's ultimately results in losing identity. Again, Adivasis not only have geographical territory, instead they have cultural territory, which means that their very culture and identity is mainly related to territory. While talking about the Adivasis, archaeologically, historically, culturally and linguistically they have connected with land. There is an intimate connection between land and Adivasi. The question regarding their identity and actually "who they are" is tied with their land. Their cultural survival is mostly dependent on the sustainability of the land. The Adivasi civil society tries to revert their identity through attaining the scheduled status in the land of Assam. The attainment of scheduled status is not only intended for getting the power of self-determination but also intended for safeguarding their identity and culture from being alienated. Therefore, for the process of cultural revivalism, the existence of land is very obligatory.

Noticing the growing necessities of land, it can be considered that in contemporary time land becomes an essential fundamental right along with food, cloth and shelter. Because food, shelter and cloth; these fundamental rights cannot be existed without having land. Therefore, the land becomes an important asset for every human being to sustain their life.

Here, it is very essential to examine the role of the Adivasi civil society while protecting the land and identity of the Adivasis of Assam. The Adivasi civil society of Assam

has realised the fact that without land their identity cannot be protected due to cultural dependence on land. Therefore, the Adivasis civil society comprised of AASAA, All Adivasi Women's Association(AAWAA), MundaSabha, KurukhSabha, SanthaliSahityaSabha, SauraSabha, KhariyaMahasabha and Adivasi SahityaSabha(ASS) is continuously working for safeguarding the land and forest rights of Adivasis in the region. The inception of Assam Adivasi Vision 2020 at Adivasi Culture, Research and Training Centre, Dhekiajuli in the year 2010 is considered to be an essential milestone for protecting and promoting the land rights of Adivasis. The AAV 2020 has four important visions or it may be called as targets, firstly 70% of the Adivasi families will have land with land *patta*, secondly, the land will be retained and utilised with proper scientific method of cultivation, thirdly, 50% of them will become the owner of small tea gardens and 80% of the Adivasis in the tea garden will acquire the land under tea plantation and lastly the 30% of the wasteland will be captured by the Adivasis. For proper utilisation of these goals and visions, the Adivasi civil society is dedicatedly working. They often pressurise the Assam government as well as the BTC government in order to take proper policies and rules and regulations for the protection of the Adivasis land in the region from being alienated.

5.7. Conclusion:-

Both identity and land can be considered as the important assets for the Adivasis tribesmen due to their socio-cultural and economic dependence on the land. Their identity such as their language, culture, beliefs, and religious rituals are fundamentally related to the land. Therefore, the importance of land cannot be denied in the survivals of Adivasis. But in

the state of Assam, their land is gradually taken from them by the state and various non-state actors through the proper structural way in the form of land acquisition and neo-liberalisation process. The process of neo-liberalisation, modernisation and industrialisation devastate the socio-cultural and economic conditions of Adivasis in the region of Assam as their land are gradually taken away from them. Again, the political turmoil, emergence of ethno-nationalism and the growing ethnic cleansing in Assam, specifically in the region of Bodoland in which the Kokrajhar district belong also lead to the large amount Adivasis land alienation that throwing them towards the darkness. Along with the alienation from land and CPR's, they are continuously deprived of the identity and culture. The mere presence of dominant chauvinistic nature of the indigenous tribal communities is mostly responsible for such alienation. The chapter is concluded from the statement of the Frederick Douglass, "Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organised conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrades them neither persons nor property will be safe."

Notes and References:-

Conclusion

The present study entitled "Politics of Ethnic Assertion and Sustainability of Land: A case of Adivasis in Kokrajhar District" primarily has primarily dealt with identity construction of Adivasis, their ethnic assertiveness and sustainability of land that specifically emphasised

on the socio-political structure of Adivasis in the district of Kokrajhar, Assam. The questions regarding the problematic issues of Adivasis in Assam are quite debatable. The general perception regarding the identity of Adivasis is not a satisfactory one. They are primarily considered to be the migrants or outsiders of the land of Assam. During the Colonial administration, they were forced to migrate to the region by the British tea planters as plantation labourers. Among them, almost 50 to 60% of the labourers were the Adivasi, the original inhabitant of the country. However, they were historically deprived and exploited in the new region as a labourer. They always live a very marginalised and disfranchised life in the new region not only in the time of colonial administration but after the independence also. They have inhabited in the region since the time of 1850, but nowadays also, the local tribesmen and other ethnic communities of Assam consider these people as outsiders of Assam, and they consider them beyond the Assamese social structure. The local peoples always ignore their contribution towards the enlargement of tea plantation, towards the economic development of the state and their contribution in making Assam famous for its tasty tea in front of the world view. However, despite of their contribution towards the economic, social and political stability of the country, they have been facing continuous injustice and deprivation in the region of Assam since the time of colonial era. Despite of such exploitation, the ethnic clash of Bodoland of 1990's can be considered to be one of the darkest chapters in the history of Assam. The level of victimisation and extermination of Adivasis is very high during that time. Due to the ethnic cleansing, they are not only faced extreme victimisation and extermination; but, are also posing a threat towards their culture, identity and land rights. Their very identity and land are at a critical situation, and this is mainly because of the appearance of Autonomous District Council, specifically the Bodoland Territorial

Council in the lower parts of Assam, where almost majority of the Adivasis inhabit. Keeping in view such type of issues regarding the identity and land sustainability of Adivasis, the study tries to analyse the politics of ethnic assertion and their sustainability of land in the region of Bodoland, deals explicitly with the district of Kokrajhar.

The entire study is based on several objectives that the study tries to elucidate. Firstly, the study tries to explore the various dimensions of the historical migration of Adivasis to the region of Assam. It is reflected from the study that mainly in two phases the Adivasis were migrated from their original inhabited place Chotanagpur to the Assam as a wage labourer to work in tea plantation and as like as the others for attaining a better life in the new region. Such type of historical analysis helps while understanding the Adivasis demands for inclusion into the scheduled list of Indian constitution. Secondly, the study tries to highlight the socio-economic and political condition of Adivasis during the colonial and post-colonial period. From the study, it is revealed that the socio-political condition of the Adivasis in Assam is mostly related to their issue of identity and land alienation. The rate of land alienation is higher among the Adivasis due to their marginalised and disfranchised socio-economic condition that is analysed briefly in the fifth chapter of the research study. Thirdly, the study tries to focus on the impact of growing identity consciousness among the tribal communities of Assam, specifically the Bodos on the sustainability of Adivasis. The continuous emergent awareness of the tribal communities regarding their land, language and identity are responsible for genesis of autonomy movement in the region. Simultaneously, the insurgency is also developing in the region along with autonomy movement that ultimately results in massive violence and ethnic cleansing in the region, where the non-tribal communities specifically the Muslims and Adivasis become

victimised and deprived. Fourthly, the study tries to explore the probable factors that are responsible for the growth of identity consciousness among the Adivasis in the lower parts of Assam. Retain of original identity of Adivasis is one of the significant issues of present-day socio-political structure of the region. The Adivasi civil society believes that in the region of Assam their identities are at a critical position and so they always try to revert their original Jharkhand based identity from where they migrated to Assam during the colonial period. The fourth chapter that is explicitly based on identity issues of Adivasis briefly elaborates the various factors that are responsible for the growth of identity consciousness among the Adivasis. Fifthly, the study seeks to elaborate on the factors that are responsible for the alienation of Adivasis land and CPR's. The report of Human Development Indices mentions that Adivasis are the most underprivileged and abused section of society in comparison to other ethnic communities of the region. The state and non-state actors often evict them from their lands. Due to the ethnic conflict, eviction policy of the government and temporary land agreement their land is gradually alienated from them. At last but not least, the entire study attempts to highlight the inter-relationship between land and identity and consequences of alienation from land and identity in the survivals of Adivasis. As an aboriginal community of the country, religion, culture and identity of Adivasis are fundamentally related to land and forest. The survivals of Adivasis are mostly dependent on land and identity. Without land and their distinctive identity is not possible to think about development. Due to the alienation of land and CPR's and losing identity, they become the most deprived and marginalised section of society.

The very first chapter of the study entitled "Introduction" basically tries to provide an introductory understanding regarding the entire research study. The chapter genuinely provides a wide outlook of the research problem on which the entire research is based on. It tries to highlight the

problematic conditions and brutal victimisations that are faced by the Adivasis in the political turmoil of the state of Assam and its devastating impact towards their identity and sustainability of the land. The chapter also inserts a systematic analysis of the review of related literature, numerous research questions and specific objectives that the entire research tries to explore. Again, the chapter includes the various types of research methodology that are used while conducting the entire study. The study also highlights an understanding of the research area in which the research is confined and also signifies the importance and significance of the research study. Thus, the chapter is trying to reflect the comprehensive skeleton of the research plan that contains the proclamation of the problems, review of related literature, research methods, research queries, objectives as well as the implication and consequences of the study.

The second chapter entitled “Understanding Ethnic assertion and Sustainability of land: The Theoretical Framework” is primarily dealt with a brief understanding of the theories that are used while conducting the whole study in order to explore the objectives of the study. The chapter fundamentally provides an outlook of the theories of ethnicity and identity in order to elucidate the critical conditions of Adivasis, specifically the crisis towards their identity and ethnicity and also to understand the process of identity construction and their overwhelming struggle for Scheduled tribe status. Again, the chapter is trying to provide a brief outline about the concept of alienation and perception of the various philosophers such as Hegel, Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx and also to focus on the concept of land alienation in order to properly understand of the problems of alienation of Adivasi's land, collective property rights and identity. The deprivation and alienation from land are also related to their identity due to their overwhelming cultural and religious dependence on land. The fundamental reasons behind the deprivation from their identity and land are the constant ethnic

conflict in the region of Bodoland. The problems of ethnic unrest can better be understood from the concept of relative deprivation that is considered to be the primary reasons for the emergence of ethnic turmoil in the region. Again, the chapter tries to analyse the concept of eminent domain while understanding the problem of alienation of Adivasis land in the district of Kokrajhar district. This chapter provides a conceptual framework of the concept of identity, ethnicity, alienation, eminent domain, deprivation and relative deprivation for better realising the problems that are faced by the Adivasis in the region of Bodoland in general and in Kokrajhar in particular.

The third chapter entitled "Migration, Victimization and Adivasis: A Historical Analysis" basically attempts to analyse the migratory history of Adivasis to the land of India. India is a land of migrants and therefore, there is no proof of inception of the human being in the land. All the communities had their migratory history. The Adivasis are considered to be the first aboriginal community of the country. Historically, they were the self-governing and self-determining community. During the pre-colonial period, they were a part of the 'Unknown Frontier' of the respective regime, that fundamentally means, they were excluded from the territory of the respective regime. Despite of their marginalised condition, they were peacefully living in their own areas without any disturbance of the others. However, the entire scenario was changed after the appearance of the British in the region. The colonisers in order to fulfil their interest introduced the system of individual land ownership and also reformed earlier process of revenue payment through in the enactment of Permanent Settlement act of 1793. British realised the importance of natural rich forest areas in order to meet more economic development. The basic reason behind the enactment of Permanent settlement act and forest act to get the Adivasi's land that was highly beneficial, and as a result, huge numbers of Adivasis were alienated from their land and CPR's. After isolating and

alienating from their own land and primary inhabited areas, they became way less as the land and forest can be considered as their source of economic sustenance as well as their culture, identity and rituals. The chapter also highlights the migratory history of the Adivasis to the land of Assam that is fundamentally related to the commencement of tea industry and also related with Santhal Rebellion of 1855. In 1837, British for the first time established first tea garden in Chabua, Assam and after 1840, tea planters started producing tea on a profitable basis. The commencement of tea plantations requires huge numbers of labourers due to its highly labourintensive nature. For the first time, British recruited the local tribesmen in the plantation work. However, the British found them very lazy and undedicated towards their work. Therefore they were searching for a better option so that they could meet dedicated and hardworkinglabour for plantation work. In order to solve the scarcity of the labour, British opted to import the rootless and landless labours from the Chotanagpur region of Central India. Thus, the colonisers started importing the labour from the then Bengal and Madras presidency in order to work in the tea plantations of Assam. Already, the Adivasis lost their land and home due to the enactment of Permanent settlement act of 1793 and Forest act. From 1840 onwards from the Adivasi region of Central and Eastern India, the process of forced migration was started to the land of Assam. While importing the labour, they introduced the Transport of Native Labourers act of 1863 in order to regulate the transport of labour from then Bengal and Madras presidency and also to legalise the formerly informal recruitment system. Again, under the amendment act of 1870, *Sardari*system was introduced by the British planters for the recruitment of the labour in the plantation. There exists another migratory history of Adivasis to the land of Assam that was related to Santhal rebellion. After the implementation of Permanent settlement act and Forest act, the Adivasis of SanthalParaganas alienated and deprived of their land and ancestral forest rights and for such reasons they launched a movement against the exploitation of the Colonial government, and thus

Santhal rebellion occurred in the region. This was the first agitation of the indigenous tribesmen against the colonial exploitations. In order to stop such type of agitations of the Adivasis, British imposed martial law that resulted in the huge killings of Adivasis in the Santhalparaganas. In order to rescue and to provide relief with the Adivasi tribesmen of then Santhalparagana from destructive famine and the exploitation of the Zamindars, Rev. Skrefsrud started a process to import such deprived tribesmen to the then Undivided Goalpara and Kokrajhar district of Assam. The core reason behind such migration was too weak the Santhal mass rebellion against the British exploitative system. After migrating to the region, they were given land for personal use in order to develop their socio-economic condition. Thus, the Adivasis had migrated to the region of Assam into two different phases of history. The chapter also attempts to provide a brief understanding of the socio-economic and political conditions of the Adivasis that were brought by the British in order to work in the tea plantation and also to weak the Santhal mass rebellion in the Santhalparaganas. During the colonial period, the conditions of the tea garden Adivasis was not good as they lived a very marginalised and deprived life inside the tea gardens. British enacted several exploitative acts, such as Workmen's Breach of Contract act in order to rescue the management from the scarcity of the labour in the plantation. During the colonial period, the health, economic and educational condition of the tea garden labourers was feeble. Again, the Adivasis outside the tea garden specifically in the lower parts of Assam lived a peaceful and better life in comparison to the Adivasis of tea gardens. During the colonial time, they enjoyed scheduled status as their land was protected under the provision of tribal belts and blocks. While, after independence, the socio-economic and political conditions of the tea garden Adivasis remained the same. They were deprived of the constitutional rights by the state and other non-state actors. Again, the other ethnic communities of Assam always try to subjugate and suppress their rights. Even still they are victimised and exploited by the tea management. On the

other hand, the Adivasis who were never engaged in tea plantation are also deprived of their legitimate rights. After independence, the scheduled status was taken away from them on the recommendation of 'One member committee' under Gopinath Bordoloi. They were deprived of scheduled status in the state of Assam that they have enjoyed in the other states of the country. Thus, the third chapter of the study provides a brief analysis of the migratory history of Adivasis to the land of Assam and their socio-economic conditions in the colonial and post-colonial period that is helpful to understand the ethnic assertion and sustainability of land of the Adivasis of Assam specifically in the district of Kokrajhar.

The fourth and fifth chapter entitled "Ethno-Nationalism, Identity and Adivasis: Articulations and Assertions" and "State, Land and Adivasis: Alienations and Deteriorations" are dealt with the growing ethnic assertions and sustainability of land of Adivasis particularly in Kokrajhar district. The revival of ethnic consciousness among the Adivasis is the growing issue of contemporary politics of Assam. The third chapter delivers a widespread analysis of the rise of sixth schedule politics in the region that are profoundly associated with the process of identity construction among the Adivasis. During the time of colonial era, the hill tribes launched their movement for greater autonomy basically by the Naga people that demanding for separate state. Such type of movement in later time inspired the other hilly tribes of North East India for expressing their aspirations for greater autonomy within Indian state. The Segregation policy of the British and spread of Christianity among the tribal communities of Assam also had a remarkable contribution towards the growth of ethnic assertions among the tribal communities as the colonial administration enacted Scheduled District act of 1884 and Frontier Trait Regulation act of 1880, by which Excluded and Partially Excluded areas were created. The growing demand for autonomy ultimately lead to the formation of separate state of

Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh Following the path of hilly tribes, plain tribal communities also raised their voice for separate territorial arrangements. The establishment of Plain Tribal Council of Assam provided a momentum towards the plain tribal's movement for greater autonomy as they raised the voice for the separate statehood for plain tribal communities of Assam in the name of 'Udayachal'. After the historic Assam movement (1979-1985), Bodos, the largest plain tribes of Assam launched their movement for the autonomy separately. Under the initiative of ABSU and BPAC, the movement took an ugly shape in the region and observing such situation, a memorandum of settlement was signed in 1993 between the Government and respective Bodo organisations. But Bodos were not able to form the autonomous council in the year 1993 due to the non-fulfillment of the Bodo accord. Bodo leaders thought that these were happened due to the massive influx of migrations to the region and as result they started attacking the other non-tribal communities of the region that may be called as 'Ethnic cleansing'. In that ethnic cleansing, the Adivasi people were mostly victimised and exterminated. Massive amounts of Adivasi community were brutally killed in the ethnic violence of Bodoland in the decade of 1990s. Again, a major portion of Adivasis were alienated and displaced from their land and CPR's due to the ruthless termination by the Bodo militants. A large amount of Adivasis were taking shelter in the relief camps, where lived a very unhygienic and marginalised condition. Historically, there existed a connection between the land and identity of the Adivasis. Most of their religious practices, customs, and ceremonies are attached with land and forest. So isolation from the land can be considered as an alienation from their distinctive ethnic identity. This is not the only cause of identity crisis of the Adivasis in the region. The governmental neo-liberal policy, urbanisation, modernisation and globalisation are also responsible for identity crisis of Adivasis in the region. Again, the inclusion of Adivasis with in Tea community also has a negative impact on their identity. The chauvinistic

attitude of the Assamese elite section is also responsible for segregation from their identity and culture. The medium of instruction also creates problem for the Adivasi children in getting education. Due to the medium of instruction as Assamese, their linguistic identity is in threat. Thus, gradual deprivation from their identity generates fear in their minds regarding their survivals. Therefore, the Adivasi civil society is continued their struggle for revival of their original identity so that they can sustain their lives. 'Scheduling is the significant mechanism through which they will achieve their earlier status', which is the popular faith of the Adivasi civil society. They firmly believe that through scheduling their distractive identity and land can be protected. The fifth chapter basically deals with the alienation of Adivasis land in Kokrajhar district in particular. The chapter highlights the land status of Adivasis in the colonial period and probable causes for the alienation of Adivasis land in the region. The mere presence of ethnic violence is not fully responsible for the alienation and isolation of Adivasis land in Kokrajhar. Apart from this, the governmental policy of modernisation, neo-liberalisation, urbanisation are also fundamentally accountable for the continuous expulsion of Adivasis from their land and CPR's. Capitalisation of land is also responsible for massive amount of alienation of Adivasis land in Kokrajhar. Taking the advantages of marginalised and impoverished condition of Adivasis, capitalist section of the society has evicted from their land. Again, the governmental policy of land acquisition is also questionable in nature. Major portion of Adivasis in Kokrajhar are evicted from their land by the government for illegal occupation over the land. All these factors are responsible for the massive alienation of Adivasis land in Kokrajhar that resulted in identity crisis. Thus, the fourth and fifth chapter of the study fundamentally dealt with the growing ethnic assertiveness and the problematic land issues of Adivasis in Kokrajhar.

From the entire study, it has been revealed that the conditions of Adivasis are quite pretty in the region. Since the time of migrating, they have been facing brutal victimisation and extermination by the state and non-state actors. Adivasis of Assam can be divided into two categories, one those were imported by the British for plantation purpose in the decade of 1840s and 1850s and another those were migrated from the Santhalparaganas to Santhal colony of Assam in search of better lifestyle under the initiative of Christian missionaries. Therefore, before independence, the socio-economic conditions of Adivasis of Santhal colony and the Adivasis of tea gardens were quite different from each other. However, amazingly, after independence, all became under one community that is 'Tea tribes' through which the Adivasi of Santhal colony deprived of their earlier schedule status. In the post-British era, the land of Adivasis is no more protected due to various reasons. Again, the growing identity consciousness among the tribal communities of Assam is also posing a threat towards the culture and identity of Adivasis. The study provides a comparative analysis of the identity construction of Bodos and Adivasis in the region of Bodoland. After the historic Assam movement (1979-1985), the identity consciousness of Bodos is growing at an alarming rate. Again, the changing perceptions of native communities of Assam towards migrant people are also responsible for the identity crisis of Adivasis in the region. The granting autonomy to the Bodos has had a diverse impact on the Bodo-Adivasis relationship in general, and the growing identity consciousness among the Bodos and their changing perception towards the outsiders is reflected in the form of brutal Bodo-Santhal exodus in the decade of 1990s. Such type of situations has led to strengthening the Adivasi's demand for the status of ST. Again, the attitude of the Assamese chauvinists regarding the Adivasis bound them to think for the alternative option, and as a result, the Adivasi civil society tries to revert their original Jharkhand based identity so that they can sustain their lifestyle. The granting autonomy to the Bodos in the form of an autonomous council called

BTAD has been established in order to fulfil the aspirations and demands of the Bodos can be considered as another means of state-sponsored discrimination towards the underprivileged. The granting autonomy to the Bodos can be understood as a means of wealth accumulation in the hands of a few and exploitation of the majority. Identity differentiation is the major problems that Adivasis face in the region while constructing their identity, which has been revealed from the entire study. There exists a vast differentiation among the Adivasis. There is no similar perception among them. The civil society also has different perspectives towards their identity that can be reflected from the role of AASAA and ATTSA. Both the organisation believes in the different ideology as their pattern of work also differs from each other. AASAA leaders believe in the revival of Jharkhand based original identity. On the other hand, the ATTSA leaders always work for the socio-economic development of the tea garden labourers. Again, there exists a vast socio-cultural and economic difference between the Adivasi of upper Assam, who are basically Tea garden labours and Ex-tea garden labours and the Adivasis of lower Assam, who are never engaged in the tea garden brought by the British in a later period for different purposes. Such type problems may hamper in the process of greater identity construction among the Adivasis. In the wake of Bodo-Santhal exodus, most of the Adivasis people lost their land and CPR's in the district of Kokrajhar. As an aboriginal community of India, they can be considered as "Son of the forest"; therefore land means a lot for them as their identity is related to land and forest. Thus, there is an intimate connection between the land and identity. The alienation from the land can be considered as alienation from their very identity. The land alienation is higher among the Adivasis in the region of Assam. The Bodo-Santhal conflict induced a large amount of Adivasi's land alienation in Kokrajhar. The only conflict is not responsible for the alienation of Adivasis land in the area, the other factors such as the governmental policy of modernisation, rapid urbanisation, capitalisation of land, the temporary land agreement are also

responsible for such alienation. The alienation has a negative impact on the lifestyle of Adivasis. The alienation from their ancestral land and forests areas make them way less and hopeless. Again, the governmental policy of eviction is also questionable in that particular case. A portion of Adivasis also lost their land in the name of modernisation, urbanisation and due to the commencement of neo-liberal policy of the government. The discriminative political distribution in the autonomous council is also responsible for such type of victimisation and extermination of Adivasis in Kokrajhar. Their problems are unable to fascinate the interest of the politicians of the state as well as of the government, and as a result, the government takes only a few measures for the protection of the rights of Adivasis in Kokrajhar. Almost 75% of the Adivasis in Kokrajhar have lost their land in the conflict and after the post-conflict era. The ethnic conflict in Bodoland devastated the economic backbone and thrown them towards an impoverished and marginalised life. Due to their impoverishment and social discrimination, their land is taken away from them by the capitalist section of the society. From the entire, it has been revealed that the alienation of land has an adverse impact on their very distinctive identity. Again, in order to establish to the autonomous council and to make Bodoland as a non-tribal free zone, Bodo uses ethnic cleansing as an instrument to clean up the immigrants and outsiders so that they can establish tribal raj in the region. Such attitude of the tribal communities bound the Adivasi civil organisation to retain their original identity. Awaken of tribal consciousness and establishment Bodo autonomous council lead to a situation where Adivasi's identity and land are in threat. In order to protect their identity and land from being alienated, the Adivasi civil society opts for scheduled status under the Sixth Schedule of the constitution. Since the time of independence, the Adivasi Council of Assam has been continuing their struggle for ST status. However, they are politically trapped by the politicians as the politicians use their aspirations and demands for the political benefit. While attending the 11th Annual conference of the All Santhal Student's Union in

Tezpur, present Chief Minister of the Assam SarbanandaSonowal assures scheduled status to the Santhal. Again, recently the Prime Minister NarendraModi also assures to provide ST status for 36 tea tribes communities that may include the Adivasis along with other five indigenous communities of Assam. However, the thing is that such status is not applicable in the Bodo Autonomous Council. Demographically, the majority of the Adivasis is found in the Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri, Bongaigaon district and the majority falls under the jurisdiction of the BTC. After analysing the Adivasis conditions in the Bodoland, it is reflected that granting scheduled status can stabilise their life and can protect their distinctive identity and land from the socio-political turmoil of the region. However, the entire issue of scheduling to the Adivasis is like a political trap through which the politicians want their votes to remain in power. The BTC head HagramaMohilary also use the same kind of things in order to get the votes of Adivasis due to a large number of populations in the region. He also assures the Adivasis to granting permanent land to those who lost their land in conflict and by the state and non-state actors. However, all seem to be a false promise in order to get support from them in the election. Thus, the complete issue of ST of Adivasis is politicised in the contemporary era that makes their condition worst. Almost a large amount of Adivasis are now living in very backward areas of Kokrajhar for sustaining their life without proper health, medical, water, sanitation, education, electricity facilities. After alienating from their land and CPR's they become a more marginalised and deprived section of the society than earlier. Most of the child unable to get proper education due to their impoverished condition and medium of instruction as they use Jharkhandi language in their day to day life. Women and child trafficking are higher among them. Several cases have been reflected during the filed visit in Kokrajhar regarding child and women trafficking. The transport and communication facilities from urban to their inhabited areas are inferior. In the

contemporary era, though the ethnic conflict has ended, the tribals have not been freed from the fear of the ethnic conflict due to which they are living away from the general population area.

Thus, the entire study reveals that Adivasis in the Kokrajhar are living a very marginalised and impoverished life after alienating from their land and CPR's. Again, the deprivation and isolation from their land and CPR's lead to an identity crisis as their distinctive identity and culture is related to land and forest. Gradually they isolate from their original Jharkhandi indigenous religion *Sarna dharma* and *Sadri* language. Their very distinctive identity and culture can be protected through granting constitutional protection in the form of scheduled status. But this has not appeared yet due to their migratory history as they do not fulfil the criteria to be indigenous of the land of Assam. Land alienation is one of the significant problems that are faced by the Adivasis in Kokrajhar. Their land can be protected through granting ST status.

Here, national identity for the ST's can be an option in a way to get scheduled status in Assam under the constitutional provision. In India, the state government has entrusted the power to determine and select scheduled communities. On that basis, the Adivasis in Assam is lagging from the ST status due to the lack of strong political representation from their community. Even the Adivasi civil society also fail while fascinating their aspirations and demands in the upper level of the state administration. Lack of proper political platform is another reason for their present marginalised and deprived condition from where they can express their aspirations and demands in front of politicians. The cultural revival is another way to save their distinctive identity and culture from being alienated. Due to the emergence of ethnic conflict, modernisation, urbanisation, commencement of neo-liberal policy and tribal, ethnic consciousness, their identity and culture are in threat. Therefore, cultural revival will help in the protection of their distinctive identity. Cultural revival can

be considered as an essential instrument of the minorities for the protection of identity and culture. Again, cultural and identity similarities are also essential in order to protect their distinctiveness. Cultural unities can help in the solution of the problems of cultural differentiation among the Adivasis in Assam so that they could construct their identity. Ethnic clash in Bodoland between Bodo and Santhals is not only a communal conflict; instead, it is a conflict to secure the socio-political status. Due to the ethnic conflict, the identity and land of Adivasis are in trouble. The unrest and clash in Bodoland resulted in the massive number of killings, violation of human rights and challenges towards the land rights of both Bodos and Adivasis.

Therefore, the first step is to prevent the violence in Bodoland. Every ethnic clash has the political motive. Every movement, every ethnic clash are started from grassroots level. But actually, the conflict or movement is piloted by the political frontrunners. The government of Assam, as well as the administrative authorities of BTC, should have to work for the peace negotiations between the Bodos and Adivasis. Authorities should have taken specific steps to create a cooperative relationship between them. The clash took a bad shape in the hands of militant organisations as they are engaged in the violent activists that threaten the security and rights of people, which triggering and spreading of conflict. Therefore the government should have to take ceasefire arrangements, surrender policies to end the Adivasi and Bodo militancy in Bodoland. It is not only the responsibility of the authorities but also the prime duty of the every student organisations, humanitarian organisations and general people to work for peace in Bodoland. Because of the initiative of government, negotiations with various militant groups are happened, which are reflected in the ceasefires and surrenders of the insurgent's groups. According to the data provide by the Institute for Conflict Management, NDFB(R), NDFB(P), Adivasi Cobra Force, Adivasi People's Army, All Adivasi National Liberation Army, Birsa Commando Force, National Santhal Liberation Army and Santhal Tiger Force are

involved in the Ceasefire agreements with government that can be considered as the most enormous success of government in minimizing the conflict situation in the region. The prime responsibility to create a peaceful society in which Adivasi culture and identity are in protected mode is in the hands of civil society. Both the Bodo and Adivasi civil society should work together to establish for the commencement of peace in the region that is very required for protecting their culture and identity.

The study has numerous inadequacies and limitations. The entire study is grounded on the ethnic assertion and sustainability of Adivasi's land in Kokrajhar district. The study is restrained only to the ethnic assertion and land issue of Adivasis in Kokrajhar district. It overlooks the evaluation of other perspectives related to the Adivasis of Assam. Unavailability of related literature and ground level data are the significant problems of the study. The study is lagging behind the analysis of Adivasi traditions, culture and language, their relation with Jharkhandi Adivasis and the socio-cultural dissimilarities among the Adivasis within Assam. The Adivasis are not only dispossessed of their rights and identity in Kokrajhar but also in other parts of the state. Other perspective of future study may contain socio-economic status of Adivasis, the socio-cultural differentiation among the Adivasis of Assam, children abuse and human trafficking with special focus on Adivasi women in the region.

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- ¹⁷⁴Topno, W. (2014). Adivasi JanagosthirBuronji. *Adivasi Awaz*, 14.
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- ¹⁸⁴Fernandes, W. (2003). Assam Adivasis: Identity Issues and Liberation. *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 1.
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- ²¹⁴Ibid. Op. Cit.
- ²¹⁵Ibid.
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- ²¹⁸Ibid. Op. Cit.
- ²¹⁹Ibid.
- ²²⁰*Santhali* language basically is used by the Santhal communities that are the original inhabitants of the region of Jharkhand.
- ²²¹Mundari language fundamentally is used by the Munda tribes that are considered as an essential part of Adivasis.
- ²²²*Kurukh* and *Orao* language is used by the Orans of Central India that is included under Adivasis.
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- ²²⁷Ibid
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- ²³⁰Bodo Movement in Assam: An overview. (1997). In G. Phukon & N. L. Dutta (Eds.), *Politics of Identity and Nation Building in North East India* (p. 179). New Delhi: South Asian Publications
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- ²³²Ibid. p.4
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- ²³⁴Identity and Nation Building in North East India. (1997). In G. Phukon & N. L. Dutta (Eds.), *Politics of Identity and Nation Building in North East India* (p. 101). New Delhi: South Asian Publications.
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- ²⁴⁴Ibid. p. 132

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²⁷⁶ Jallianwala Bagh Massacre is an incident which has had the biggest impact on the Indian freedom struggle and this incident is considered to be the beginning of the end of British rule. The incident took place on 19th April 1919 in Jallianwala Bagh near Golden temple in Amritsar Punjab, India. A rally was organised to protest the Rawllat act in which an British officer named General Dyer unnecessary fired bullets on the crowd at the gathering, in which more than 700 people were killed and more than 2000 injured.

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- ²⁸²Dutta, A. (n.d.). Living in post-conflict relief camps- A study on internally displaced persons in Bodoland. *JONER*. p.4
- ²⁸³ Ibid. p.4
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- ²⁸⁶ Ibid. Op. Cit. p.6
- ²⁸⁷ Ibid. p.6
- ²⁸⁸ Ibid. Op. Cit.
- ²⁸⁹Sharma, D. (2014). *Gosthi Sanghat: 1996-1998* (1st ed.). Jorhat: Ekalabya Publications. p.46
- ²⁹⁰ Ibid. p.47
- ²⁹¹ Adivasis understand all the virtues and ruled of nature and follow all the rules of nature. In Sarna dharma, natural property like trees, mountains etc. are worshiped. Sarna religion is the tribal religion of Jharkhand, but the tribals of each states consider this religion with different names and obey it. Munda, Santhal, Ho, Bhumij, Gond, Baiga and Kurukh tribal people believe this religion.
- ²⁹² Sadri language is the present language of Nagpuri people of Chota Nagpur region. Also Sadri language is mostly spoken in Indian states like Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa. Hence, it is used as a common language by a large number of tribal groups and spoken by tea tribes of Assam, West Bengal and Bangladesh. Groups such as Kharia, Munda, Bhumij, Kurukh etc. also use this language. Sadri language is also a variety of Hindi language.
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- ²⁹⁴ Bihu festival originated in the ancient Assamese cultivators responses to agriculture at different times of the year. There are three Bihus. Rongali Bihu observed in April, is the preparation for the coming cultivation. The Kongali Bihu, observed in October, is the Bihu of scarcity. The Bhogali bihu, observed in January is the harvest festival of Assamese farmers.
- ²⁹⁵ Namghar, a prayer house, is a place where people are absorbed in devotion. The Vaisanvaite Saint Sankardeva and his associates had set up namghars to promote Eksarana Nama Dharma associated with Assamese community, where devotees unite and worship God. This house also functions like a gathering place, can be considered as a social institution.
- ²⁹⁶ Ibid. Op. Cit. p.4
- ²⁹⁷ Ibid. p.4
- ²⁹⁸ Ibid. p.1
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- ³⁰⁷Indigenous Peoples at the UN | United Nations For Indigenous Peoples. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/about-us.html>

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- ³⁰⁸Topno, W. (2015). Scheduled Tribe status for Adivasis in Assam. *Adivasi Awaz*, 42 & 43.
- ³⁰⁹Topno, W. (2017). Assam Adivasi: Sustainable Development Goals. *Yadgar*, 43.
- ³¹⁰Topno, W. (2015). Scheduled Tribe status for Adivasis in Assam. *Adivasi Awaz*, 42 & 43.
- ³¹¹Ibid.
- ³¹²Ananthanarayanan, S. (2010). Scheduled tribe status for Adivasis in Assam. Retrieved from <https://www.google.co.in/url?q=https://apps.cla.umn.edu/directory/items/publication/292772.doc&sa=U&ved=2ahUKewiJmOSR2fLfAhWRWX0KHRPiD4UQFjANegQIAhAB&>. p.14
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- ³¹⁴Gohain, H. (2007). A question of identity: Adivasi militancy in Assam. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 15. Retrieved from <https://www.epw.in/journal/2007/49/commentary/question-identity-adivasi-militancy-assam.html>
- ³¹⁵Kerketta, J. (2013). Adivasis and their land. *Adhikar*, 38.
- ³¹⁶Bhaumik, S. (2009). *Troubled Periphery: The Crisis of India's North East*. New Delhi, India: SAGE Publications India. P.63
- ³¹⁷Ibid. p.63
- ³¹⁸Bordoloi, B. N. (1991). *Transfer and alienation of Tribal land in Assam, with special reference to the Karbis of the Karbi Anglong district*. Guwahati: Saraighat Offset Press. pp.60 & 65
- ³¹⁹Ibid.
- ³²⁰Ibid.
- ³²¹Ibid. pp.78 & 79
- ³²²Ibid. p.80
- ³²³Ibid. pp.80 & 81
- ³²⁴Ibid.
- ³²⁵Ibid.
- ³²⁶Ibid. pp.82 & 83
- ³²⁷Bhaumik, S. (2009). *Troubled Periphery: The Crisis of India's North East*. New Delhi, India: SAGE Publications India. P.65
- ³²⁸Zamindars can be considered as a that was primarily introduced by the British colonial administration in order to regulate the land revenue system of the society through the Permanent Settlement act of 1793.
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- ³⁵³ Ibid
- ³⁵⁴Dreze, J. (2005). Tribal Eviction from forest land. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23778006_Tribal_Evictions_From_Forest_Land
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