

# Politics of Development: ‘Pahari-Bengali’ Discourse in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

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## Abstract

*This paper analyzes the process of ‘Pahari (the hill people)-Bengali’ dichotomy related with the development programs undertaken by government and donor agencies in Bangladesh. There are twelve ethnic communities living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, namely, Chakma, Marma, Pankho, Khumi, Lusai, Murang, Bonojogi, Tanchanga, Bom, Kheang, Chak and Tripura. But the Bengali people treat them as ‘Pahari’ collectively. Therefore, the paper focuses on the interaction between the state policy and the ethnic minority constructing ‘Pahari-Bengali’ discourse in Bangladesh through the development programs taken by state and donor agencies covering historical as well as current trends. The authors explain how the state policy of the dominant class emphasizes and legalizes their power on the ethnic minority in the name of ‘development’ and the way of use of these development programs to wipeout the cultural identity of ‘pahari’ people. Although this article seeks to interpret the ‘development discourse’ of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), it is not simply an exploration of the practice of subsequent ruling parties in Bangladesh. This article is about the ‘local’ effects/ national power relations involving ‘Bengali’ people and ‘pahari’ people, about how those relations of power have normalized, to use Foucault’s word, certain practices, conditioned the nature of resistance/struggle to state repression.*

## 1 Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Its economy is largely agrarian. Most of the country is flat and populated by Bengali- speaking people who are predominantly of the Islamic faith. At 55,598 square miles, it is roughly similar to the size of England with a population of more than 120 million. The Chittagong Hill Tracts (hereafter CHT), an area of 13,295 square kilometers, is the southeastern part of Bangladesh, bordering the Arakan and Chin States of Burma, and Tripura and Mizoram States of India (Background of Jummas & CHT: 2002). The official population census of 1991 estimated 9,74,445 people in this area of which 51.34% were ‘Pahari’<sup>1</sup> people and



48.66% were Bengali people (BBS: 1991). But it is needed to add here that at the time of the independence of India in 1947, only 9% of the population in CHT was Bengali (UNPO: 2002). ‘*Pahari*’ population are distinct and different from the majority Bengali population of Bangladesh in respect of race, language, religion, social organizations etc.

The declining trend in the number of ethnic people is easily observed (Table-1). The drastic change in declining pattern is seen during Pakistan and Bangladesh period. Due to the resettlement program of government in different periods, the ethnic people have been evicted from their homeland and the area has already been dominated by poor Bengali people with the assistance of military forces.

**Table-1:** Changing Trend of Ethnic Composition in Chittagong Hill Tracts (1872 to 1991)

Year	Pahari	Bengali	Total
1872	61,957 (98.27)	1,097 (1.73)	63,054 (100)
1901	1,13,074 (92.81)	8,762 (7.19)	1,21,836 (100)
1959	2,60,517 (90.39)	27,171 (9.61)	2,87,688 (100)
1981	4,41,796 (59.17)	3,04,873 (40.83)	7,46,669 (100)
1991	5,00,190 (51.34)	4,74,255 (48.66)	9,74,445 (100)

Source: Shurawardi (1995:38)

Note: There are 12 ethnic communities in CHT. Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage.

In many writings (Kabir: 1998, Ahmed: 1998, Hossein: 1999, Masud, Rahman and Alam: 1997) and mass media, a general impression is found that the existing problem of CHT is caused by ethnic<sup>2</sup> conflict between ‘*Pahari*’ and Bengali. Such an impression, which is widely circulated, mainly strengthens the ideology of the dominant class. The rehabilitation programs<sup>3</sup> of landless Bengali through various development activities overshadow the actual role of the state. The state extends militarization<sup>4</sup> process in the hill areas in the name of security. ‘*Pahari*’ and Bengali people are involved in clash for land. In the disguise of ethnic conflict, the economical, ideological and legal power of the dominant class of the state has been made invisible.

To understand the development discourse of the state in CHT, we need to pay attention to the ways in which the state legitimize its intervention. CHT is a landscape, a repository of environmental service and an economic resource base for Bengali settlers. These are some of the ideal representations, symbolic constructions, through which the politics of rhetoric and managerial practices are justified. Such a representation is clearly observed in the activities of the structured organization of the state, Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB). Their dominance represents the power of the state.

In this paper, Foucault’s normalization concept will be used to understand the process of differentiation and exclusion of ‘*pahari*’ people in the CHT.

Foucault (1972) uses the term ‘discipline’ to refer to a type of power that it exercised by means of disciplines such as schools, universities, the mass media that present mechanisms of domination as normal, natural and even desirable, what Foucault terms ‘normalization’.

According to Foucault, power is productive and not simply a negative force, the sole function which is repression. He treats power as a net, like organization of relationships running through the whole social body. It exists only in action and must be exercised. This analysis enables us to see that power is not concentrated on state apparatus. The state has to rely on other knowledge producing apparatus to render its functioning possible. Foucault argues that discourse needs to be studied archeologically and

genealogically, so that we can uncover their effective formations through non-discursive practices. In this paper, following Foucault, the discourse of development that constitutes objects through the production of truth and power knowledge will be discussed. It is not only happened in colonial period, but also observed in new independent country. After the inception of the country, the dominant class of the state plays the role to rule like a new colonizer.

In this regard Said (1978) observes that to achieve national identity people have to fight against imperialist dominance. But newly independent countries again fall into the trap of imperialism by means of army parliament, special education system, and political parties etc. The elite class is profited by this system. Ahmed (1992) added that some countries under the colonial rule fight to become independent on the basis of socialist ideology. In the postcolonial era, the bourgeoisie class becomes dominant in these countries. And now state policy of these independent countries is complicated.

During the postcolonial period, especially after the independence of the country, the imperialist discourse remains specified. Depressed people suffer from the dominant discourse policy. The hegemony of the state policy has been occupied by newly aroused dominant group. According to Foucault, the logic behind the formation of a modern nation does not support this type of group domination. It does not mean that this logic wants to integrate among different groups of individual in the total political goal. Under this process cultural identity of the marginal or oppressed groups remain unidentified, unfamiliar and unrecognized in the name of law and order.

Several writings have examined the ways in which the people of Hill Tracts have been entering into the mainstream culture. There are some other writings that are based on classical texts, folklore, missionary accounts etc (i.e Alam: 1992, Zaman: 1982), provide truly the shared/conflicting aspect of national 'integration-disintegration'. While it is needed to acknowledge the major insights of Zaman (1982), Dewan (1990) and Mohsin(1997) as their works unveil the ways in which discourse is produced and operated in networks of power and domination of the state.

Zaman suggested that under the present situation, Bangladesh government has two options for the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It may either aim for a total submergence of tribal culture within the greater Bengali culture or it can genuinely provide policies and conditions under which traditional tribal autonomy is possible. His point of view focused on the political discourse of CHT (Zaman: 1984)

Mohsin (1997) refers to the hill 'problem' as majority domination in her research. But the question arises whether the entire Bengali nation shows this dominance or not. There is the word that dominance represents the dominance of the dominant class, not the dominance of the total community. In her analysis, the researcher has depicted the structure of state in a very abstract way, which has no specific character. She has presented military rule without discussing the role of the state. Military rule has been presented in an ahistorical way. The researcher has analyzed the role of military in the center of power where the state is absent. Thus she has observed the nationalist domination focusing on the politics of nationalism.

Dewan (1990) argued that Ethnicity and racial difference have ideological character to determine class when contradictory interest between the Bengali and '*Pahari*' becomes evident. In the research of Dewan, the role of the state has been ignored. Following the Marxist theory, he gave more concentration to class and ethnic construction in CHT. Dewan emphasized the importance of ideology that determines class.

Though the previous researchers analyzed the political and economic aspects of state over the ethnic communities of the CHT, they did not analyze the field of cultural discourse systematically. This paper

explains the cultural discourse of the state by examining the development programs under taken by the state and donor agencies in the name of the well being of ethnic minorities. The data used this paper are from population census, historical documents, reports of local agencies and field observation. The state discourse of development has been divided in this paper in three phases i.e. colonial period (1760-1947), Pakistan period (1947-1971) and Bangladesh period (1971-). Much attention, in this paper, has been given on Bangladesh period.

## **2. The State Discourse of Development**

A country, especially Bangladesh, discriminates ethnic minority in two ways. One method is to use force directly and the other is to enforce law or do in the name of national development. It is very often observed that the aggression of capitalist ‘development’ in the world has advanced in parallel with the development military aggression.

What happened in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the last few decades in the name of ‘development’ and ‘sovereignty’ has affected the whole system of the entire area, investment pattern, use of technology and above all human relationship. Development has been justified in Chittagong Hill Tracts by treating the tribal people as a ‘problem’ or ‘backward’ and policies were introduced to bring them into the ‘mainstream’ culture. Further more, they were ‘savages’ all the same in the eyes of British. They are treated as follows:

‘There is much that is loveable about them. They are very simple, and honest, and merry; but they have no sympathy with anything above the level of their bodily wants... these people could be taught to live according to Nature in the highest sense, this would be the wisest and the grandest ideal’<sup>5</sup>

Here the hill people are not considered according to their own history and culture. Theirs culture are always been measured by the European’s eyes in the eighteenth century.

During the colonial period, the British used their ‘divide and rule’ policy to rule people. European civilization had been portrayed as the symbol of modernization and considered that behind this civilization there were various levels of cultural evolution and the tribal societies were thought to be at the bottom. The production of knowledge was implicated in a positive view of the progressive evolution of societies towards higher status of maturity, a nation with long tradition in the west and rooted in Darwin’s natural laws of evolution. Underdevelopment was thus considered as an unfold manifestation of development (Esteve: 1993).

### **2.1 Colonial Construction (1760-1947)**

From 1760-1947, the British policies had brought about profound and fundamental changes in the economic system of the Hill People. They challenged and ultimately displaced the age-old conceptions of the hill people regarding material ownership, economic exchange and sharing. The consequences were manifold but at a more apparent level, there began the process of social differentiation according to the material ownership. This was a phenomenon hitherto unknown in the Hills. At a more fundamental level it alienated the Hill people from their means of production and turned them into a dependent and marginalized population (Mohsin: 1997).

Before the colonization of the CHT in 1760, the population of the CHT - the ridge-top living as well as the valley-living people- had developed (including economy) system of their own which was in harmony with their ecological and social environment (Chakma: 1986-87; Tripura 1992a: as quoted in

Mohsin: 1997). Sharing and exchange of common ownership of all material resources, constituted the cores of their economic as well as cultural values. The concept of surplus and private profit was totally alien to them, for it was a subsistence economy (Lewin: 1912,187,1869; Hutchinson: 1906; Mackenjie: 1884; Hunter: 1876; Bessaignet: 1958). Besides, the difficult terrain of the area, lack of communication and high transport cost could not also make CHT a center of supplementary of processing facilities geared to the maximization of profit for British industries and trade (Huq: 1992).

The initial contacts between the Hill people and the British were confined to the collection of taxes. The tax was collected in the form of cotton locally known as 'kapas' and the amount of revenue varied. This collection was done through Bengali middlemen who served as the agents of the company. The Bengali middlemen usually collected more cotton than the amount they had to pay to the Company. Since the amount of revenue to be paid to the Company had not been fixed, at times these middlemen took the entire amount of cotton from the CHT people. Traditionally cotton was the mode of payment of the CHT people in their commercial transactions with the Bengalis (Committee of Revenue 1784).

The first direct assault of the British Colonial state on the economic life of the CHT people was on their mode of production. The British asserted that '*Jhum*<sup>6</sup> which was the characteristic form of agriculture in the CHT, was a 'primitive' method of agriculture; it entailed long fallow periods, which were considered to be a waste of resources by the British (Mohsin: 1997). They attempted to replace it by plough cultivation because it is economically more profitable and is considered to be technologically superior as well. With 'Jhum' cultivation and customary rights of the 'pahari' people in existence, such commercial interest and ill-intentioned development activities cannot fully realized.

## 2.2 Post Colonial Construction

Since the partition of India and the Independence of Bangladesh, a similar dichotomy is still being used not only for the 'divide rule policy' but also for the 'effects of truth'. This discourse was termed by Van Schendel (1992) as 'tribalism' and is akin to Edward Said's notion of 'orientalism'. As 'orientalism' represents the 'orient', 'tribalism' presumes that all tribes share characteristics that are fundamentally different from and sometimes even opposite to those of civilized people. As Van Schendel (1992) argues:

"Principal among these are 'childish' qualities that betray a lack of socialization immoderately emotional behavior (revelry, sensuality, extravagance, cruelty, fear of the supernatural), and natively (credulity, in the capacity to plan for the future)".

The above discussion has attempted to illustrate the hegemonic development programs taken by state and donor agencies, as like colonial discourse that established one of the most fundamental conditions of power over the 'tribal' people. For example, after independence of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of Bengali nation also followed the colonial code when the '*pahari*' people sought autonomy. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman always advocated for national integration and depressed an independent ethnic identity. Furthermore, he advised them to merge into Bengali nationalism and become Bengali (Mey: 1984). Similarly the present 'democratic' government of Bangladesh is still trying to bring the 'tribal' people into the 'mainstream' Bengali culture through several discursive practices (Ahmed: 1994), which will be mentioned in the following discussion.

### 2.2.1 Pakistan Period (1947-1971)

Pakistan government set up a paper mill at Chandraghona in CHT in 1953 with the loan taken from

World Bank. Three-fourth of the loan was spent for importing machineries from Europe and America. The rest was spent for constructing mills and residence for the employees (Govt. of Bangladesh: 1971). The mill created more than ten thousand jobs. But only 10-20 '*pahari*' people got job in the paper mill as lower class employees. The '*pahari*' people were used to cut bamboos from deep forest. Government started cutting the bamboos from the forest for making paper. Government earned foreign currency by exporting paper. But local '*pahari*' people lost their land as government acquired for constructing the mill.

Before setting up this mill, this area was inhabited by the Marma. They were evicted from this area without their concern. But they did not know how it happened. Now, 100% of the inhabitants of this area are Bengali. These Bengali people were migrated to this place after setting up paper mill (Chowdhury et al, 1979).

As part of development plan of Pakistan government, a hydroelectric dam was constructed at Kaptai village in Rangamati district in 1960. A vast reservoir of some 550 square miles which inundated most of the fertile Karnafuli valley and a large part of the Chengi, Kassalong and Maini valley which were famous for lush paddy fields and vegetable gardens. However, even before the construction of the Kaptai Dam, there was not sufficient cultivable land for the CHT population. The construction of Karnafuli reservoir aggravated the issue even further. With a very fast rise in the water level, the paddy fields in the fringe land become submerged in the water of the reservoir long before the harvest is due. On the other hand, if the water level of the reservoir falls too low, then the fringe lands remain dry and unsuitable for cultivation. The project uprooted about 100,000 people mostly Chakma (one ethnic group) that accounted for more than a quarter of the total population of the CHT and inundated more than 54,000 acres or 40 percent of the best plough lands of the CHT. In exchange, an inadequate amount of monetary compensation was paid out and at best one-third of the lost land was replaced. A large number of frustrated Chakma farmers migrated to India where they still remain as refugees.

In 1964, the government of Pakistan made a contact with a Canadian company, called '*Forestral Forestry and Engineering International Limited*' (Forestal) to survey the soil and topography of the land surface of the CHT. The survey found that, because of the steep slopes and other natural conditions, most of the CHT soil was very poor indeed. The Forestal report graded only 3.2% of the CHT land as 'A' class land suitable for all-purpose agriculture. The next graded class 'B' land accounted for about 2.9% of the CHT land and were found suitable for terraced agriculture in part and fruit gardening (Horticulture) in part. Then the class 'C' land which accounted for 15.5% and were found suitable mostly for horticulture and partly for afforestation. The following Grade, 'C-D' accounted for 1.4% and was found suitable ideally for a forestation but was said to be satisfactory also for horticulture after terracing the slopes. Finally, there was the class 'D' land, which constituted only for forestation. In short, the Forestal experts warned that the area of land available for economically sound was very scarce indeed and recommended that the uncultivated hillside land should be used extensively and in a planned manner for fruit gardening and forestation. They encouraged the hill people to make the gardening instead of '*Jhum*' and especially on rubber cultivation and teak plantation. The plantation of these plants is profitable. But it created land degradation and soil erosion. Till now, rubber plantation destroys the forest. In present, the forestation rate is 3.36%. So it will create lack of sufficient oxygen for human being very soon (Chakma and Hill: 1995).

Before independence of Bangladesh, an earth satellite center was set up at Betbunia in CHT. The construction of this center began with donation of Canada International Development Agency (CIDA). It

was finished after the independence of Bangladesh (Islam: 1978). This satellite center again made the people of the Marma community to leave their own place. Behind this project, the politics of international capital was active. Television manufacturing companies of Canada aimed at capturing the market of Bangladesh. As a result of this plan, the dominant elite class of Bangladesh is benefited.

### 2.2.2 Bangladesh Period (1971- )

Government with the declaration of ordinance 77 in 1976 established Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB). From the formation of this Board to 1983, the divisional commissioner of Chittagong division was appointed as the chairman of this board. Then General Officer Commanding (G.O.C.) of Chittagong Cantonment was appointed in the same post. Now the ruling party M.P is the chairman of CHTDB. The consultative committee of the board consists of three circle-chiefs (The Bengal Government had divided the CHT into three circles on 1 September 1881. The three circles were: the Chakma circle of 1658 sq. miles; the Bomang circle of 1444 sq.miles and the Mong circle of 653 sq.miles) and a few of local leaders. But they do not have any power to direct the activities of the board. The chairman is the supreme authority, directing all the activities of the board according to the plan of the Government with the help of civil and military bureaucrats. In this connection some remarks from the report of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission can be quoted:

The CHTDB was established in 1976 by the late president Ziaur Rahman to fight the Shanti Bahini<sup>7</sup>. It is a purely political organization to bribe the tribal. Loans are given for private purpose, to business and tribal leaders. They are showpieces of the Government. Yes, it is mostly a political bribe to tribal leaders to buy them off so that they would not help the Shanti Bahini'(Mey: 1991).

**Table-2:** Development Scenario Taken by CHTDB

Sector	CHTDB 1992-93 (Taka)	CHT Development Project 1992-93 (Taka)	Total amount (Taka)	Percentage
Agriculture	60,794	1,10,695	1,71,489	13%
Education	55,971	–	55,971	4%
Communication/ Construction	85,330	502,367	5,87,697	44%
Play and Games	24,311	–	24,311	2%
Social welfare	64,619	5,445	70,064	5%
Small Industry	4,491	24,225	28,716	2%
Highland Rehabilitation	–	2,84,610	2,84,610	22%
Forestation and Rehabilitation	–	31,487	31,487	2%
Development of the Board	36,170	69,099	72,716	6%
Total	3,31,686	10,27,928	13,27,061	100%

Source: Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (1996)

Note: 1 US \$ = 57.0 taka (Bangladesh Currency). According to the Exchange Rate on April 16, 2002. “-” indicates that there was no allocation of budget for these sectors.

For government interest CHTDB has been invested a huge amount of money in communication sector (Table-2). In 1992-93 fiscal year, 4 kilometers road was constructed from Matiranga Boroser Bazar in Khagrachari District to Borosera Army Camp. Here a question arises that whose interest is being emphasized in the development program of CHTDB. Military and administration are the two powerful

sectors in which government invests a large portion of budget. It is evident from various research reports (Dewan: 1990, Mohsin: 1997, Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission Report: 1991 & 1994) that a large portion of government's budget spent in defense sector for CHT remains hidden. The government statistics never shows the actual expenditure for military in this area in its published data.

Tribal Cultural Center is the part of CHTDB. When the 'plough cultivation program' initiated by government in CHT was accused for the destruction of cultural tradition of the hill community, government established this center to preserve (according to government explanation) the culture of the hill community. Susamay Chakma, in charge of the center in Khagrachari district said, "*Sarkar hadaay, sangskriti alo naach, geet. Museum bonebaak niyoto aachhi. naach, geet dhari rakhibak jaade haator na jaay.*" (According to Government, culture is the matter of dance, song. To preserve it, government will set up a museum. The ornaments of dance, musical instruments and other things will be kept in the museum. In this way, the culture of ethnic communities will be preserved).

Actually, the state undertakes various programs (like tourism, media representations, documentation, etc) in this way to transform the culture of ethnic communities as goods for exhibition. From the Pakistan period, CHT was targeted as tourist area. CHT has been sold focusing on natural beauty, exotic people and symbol of tradition. Tourists have an attraction to 'tribal' dance and their handicrafts, which show the simple and carefree life in the hill. And it is needed to add that 'the tribal girl's dance' is the most attraction of CHT represented by the media and state, which makes many leaflets and photographs entitled 'a tribal dancing girl', 'tribal life in CHT' and these type of representation expresses the state intention over ethnic minorities. State's real intention of non-recognizing the culture of the ethnic communities is unveiled here. Without recognizing the culture of ethnic communities, the state spreads its paramount dominance on the communities using its nationalist character. In this respect, the following two development projects (one initiated by government and the other by donor agency) can be considered to understand the real intention of the state.

### 2.2.2.1 The Resettlement Program

The CHT people were just beginning to economically recover from the effects of the Kaptai Dam when another severe blow struck them. In 1979, the Government made a drastic and ill-advised change to the land law of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Through an amendment to rule 34 (1) of the CHT Manual<sup>8</sup> the Government maintained most of the provisions of the earlier legislation, but with one important omission, namely, the restrictions with regard to settlement of Chittagong Hill Tracts land to outsiders. In addition, the hastily grafted amendment also did away with the definition of 'non- Hillman resident' the legal term used to identify resident Bengalis of the Chittagong Hill Tracts who were entitled to some of the privileges reserved specially for the indigenous hill people.

It is a matter of record that the Government sought to provide 5 acres of high land, 4 acres of 'mixed' land and 2.5 acres of paddy land to each settling family from the plain in the early eighties. In the first phase of the Government's resettlement program, about 25,000 families were reportedly brought into the Chittagong Hill Tracts. For these settlers, the total land requirement would be as follows:

Hilly Land:  $25,000 \times 5$  acres = 125,000 acres

Mixed Land:  $25,000 \times 4$  acres = 100,000 acres

Paddy Land:  $25,000 \times 2.5$  acres = 62,500 acres

If we now look at the ratio of land in relation to the CHT population in the 1970s, i.e., before the settlers were brought in, and then look at the requirements for just the first to several batches of settlers that

eventually came to the CHT, we get a very dismal picture indeed. There simply were no paddy lands that were not already under the plough. For mixed land, the position was only marginally better. As for hilly land, we have seen that the available lands were inadequate even for the CHT residents prior to the advent of the settlers. According to the CHT Regulation of 1900- whose provisions favoring the indigenous hill people have been gradually eroded over the years - such a settlement program could not be carried out without the knowledge of the Circle Chief (Rajas) and *mouza headman* (Roy: 1995).

Under the resettlement program, the poor and landless people from different parts of Bangladesh have been migrated to the hill districts. The fight for land thus begins. The poor Bengali and '*pahari*' people are involved into a conflict in the issue of private ownership of land. For this ownership, market is essential. Those who control the production system, also control the market system. It is essential to understand who is supposed to control the market because market is a place of competition. Always a powerful class dominates the market. Now in Khagrachari, the dominant Bengali controls it. Since plough cultivation is adopted as the production system, the Bengali controls it. Under this process of severe competition, the distribution of class and professional status of '*pahari*' people has been changed remarkably. Out of the traditional dominant class, a new dominance has been appearing in this area for the last two decades. A new wealthy community or middle class<sup>9</sup> is emerging through businessmen, contractors, professionals, immigrants etc.

**Table- 3:** The List of Changing the Names of Various Places of Khagrachari

Previous name	Present name
1. Bangal Kathi* (Divided into two parts)	Shantinagarö, Muslim Para**
2. Pankheyoya Paraθ (Divided into four parts)	Milonpurö, Pankhaiyaparaö, Kallanpurö, Madampurö
3. Khagrapur	Islampur**
4) C.N.B Tila*	Kadampurö
5) Kamal Chari*	Battollaö
6) KhabongPuizza*	Khabong Pariaθθ
7. Khagrachari Bill*	Anandapurö
8. Majon Para* (Divided into two parts)	Mahajan Paraö, Narikalcharaö
9. Kawali Mura*	Kathali Paraö
10. Comilla Tila*	Ambaganö
11. Kanoongo Paraθ	Mohamadpur**
12. Uttda Chariθ	Rasulpur**
13. Pa-ong Kabari Paraθ	Fatemanagar**
14. Tai Kusumθ	Kalapani Charaö
15 Tai Bagla*	Tai Paglaö
16. Para Kalakθ	Lambaparaö

Source: ( Nasreen: 2000)

\*= Chakma name, θ= Marma name, = Tripura name, ö= Bengali name, \*\*= Islamic name,

ö= Mixed with Noakhali District dialectics, θθ= Distorted form of original language.

In this paper, nationalism has been treated as the process of destroying class in capitalist state. To avert class conflict regarding the controlling of land in the plain areas, the Government started rehabilitation program in the CHT. The poor Bengali and the '*pahari*' people started conflict with each other for land. The state treated it as the conflict of nationalism. Using the poor Bengali in the name of nationalism, the state is ignoring the cultural identity of ethnic minorities and creating cultural hegemony.

After the resettlement program, the number of Bengali people in CHT has been increasing and this indirectly influenced the local language of the ethnic communities. The dominance of Bengali language is seen not only in the official activities in CHT but also in other areas of life of people. The Bengali people of Khagrachari changed the names of various places, which were named earlier in Chakma, Marma and Tripura language. In some cases, religious dominance of Bengali Muslim has got importance in naming some places. Earlier the name of the district of 'Khagrachari' was 'Khakrachara' in Chakma language. 'Khakra' means the seed of one kind of tree. Later, the name was changed under the influence of Bengali domination. The nationalist dominance in the alteration of the name different places in the CHT can easily be understood (Table-3).

The resettlement program not only created language domination but also created land problem and religious domination in CHT. The poor resettled people and '*pahari*' people make conflict to be owner of the land. Though before the settlement the land of CHT belonged to the '*pahari*' people. But with the help of militarization resettled Bengali became more powerful. Furthermore, the people whom the state program settled, most of them are Muslim and they create religious domination in the CHT. And the numbers of mosque are increasing dramatically. There was a one mosque in Kharachari district in 1971, in 1982 it was 5 and in 2000 it was 20 (Source: field work). The picture showed us the effects of resettlement program by Bangladesh government in CHT.

#### **2.2.2.2 Food for Work Program**

Over the last three decades the ecology of the CHT has been severely degraded. The disappearance of forests and trees is causing soil erosion and land slides. Although the degradation of the forest in the CHT is acknowledged, the underlying causes of this degradation are completely ignored by the national government. Attempts continue to be made to attribute blame for the destruction of the environment onto indigenous groups practicing traditional '*Jhum*' cultivation. Referring to '*Jhum*' cultivation, a Bangladesh government official has stated that '*Jhum*' means destruction of the forest.'

In contradiction to this claim, there is evidence that the worsening ecological imbalance in the environment of CHT in last three decades is deeply rooted in so-called 'development' programs such as those for 'jungle clearing' and 'logging'. Loffler's report observes that the ecological imbalance has not resulted from '*Jhum*' cultivation: "My first idea that this deplorable state might be the result of '*Jhumming*' was soon thrown into doubt when I saw hill people slashing meager remnants of vegetation and burning the hillsides. In some cases at least this 'jungle clearing' as it is called, may be covered by the 'for work program' paid by USAID-imported food for work that has the inevitable effect of making barren and unsuitable for productive use the very hills on which, formally, the hill farmers produced all they needed for making a living..."(Loffler's Report:1991 as quoted in Chakma & Hill: 1995).

This 'Food for Work' development program, subsidized by foreign aid, and where the 'work' consists of 'jungle clearing' introduces a pattern, which will be repeated and reinforced in subsequent development project examples:

First, the development project is legitimized by definitions of poverty and development which effectively devalue the subsistence practices of the target indigenous group, making its restructuring toward some western model of a technologically advanced market based economy seem laudable. In this example 'Food for Work Project' the nature of 'Work' itself begins to be torn away from the form of work, which is found in a subsistence community and moved toward the form in which it is found in a market economy. In subsistence context the nature of the work performed is recognizably connected with the

outcome or benefit derived from that work. In a modern market economy the relationship between the work performed and the benefit received is circuitous or unidentifiable. In this project, work, which in this case is 'jungle clearing', is unrelated to outcome. The project is subtly empowered by the legitimacy of a market economic paradigm which not only does not notice that such an input-output relationship may be nonsensical, but sees the move from a self-sufficient subsistence paradigm to a market economic paradigm as constituting 'development' or 'progress'.

Second, the authority implementing the development process then introduces themselves agenda into the structure of the legitimized project. In this examples of projects in the CHT the development project is implemented with the authority of the national government and the power of the military. The additional agenda embedded in this particular development project include dislocation and intimidation of the indigenous community and entrenchment of the strategic situation of the military by forest clearing around camps (Chakma & Hill: 1995).

### 3 Conclusions:

In this article, the development discourse of CHT has been analyzed in a historical way. From British period, the state has been treating the ethnic community as '*backward class*' and thus justifying its intervention through development policies. But the nature of dealing of state with ethnic communities has been changed from time to time. During British period, the state controlled the ethnic communities through Bengali middlemen. But the nature of controlling has been shifted from Pakistan period when the state started controlling the ethnic communities directly under the banner of various development projects. Along with various government development projects, the state has been permitting the donor agencies to take their development activities. This development discourse has been working as a cultural discourse of the state because the ethnic communities have been losing their own cultural identities due to unfriendly development activities initiated by the state. They have been evicted from their motherland since the construction of a dam in the Kaptai River under the project of hydro electricity. After losing their home, they had started migration to the neighboring states of India. The resettlement program of government for the landless Bengali people in CHT also added a new dimension in the sufferings of ethnic communities. The effects of the intensity are easily observed in the decreasing trend of the number of ethnic people in CHT.

CHTDB is an institution of government that exercises power on the ethnic communities through development programs. The beneficiary of these development programs is not the ethnic people but the Bengali people and military forces. Military power is related to the development planning of this area. These programs are indirectly influencing the lives of the people of the communities as these programs are compelling them to merge with the greater culture of Bengali people. It is observed in this paper that the indirect exercise of power of state under the banner of development program questions the ethnic identity of the communities.

### Notes

1. Though the word 'Pahari', 'is a local term of Bengal to indicate the ethnic minority but it does not express the identity of ethnic group. Power is important for understanding how it is that individual 'tribal' people may have multiple subjectivities or identities. During the colonial era the term 'Hill men' was constructed to refer to the

‘tribal’ people living in the hill Tracts. In other words, it was necessary for the British to classify who lived in the ‘hills’ and those who lived in the ‘plains’ (Ahmed, 1994). For details, Tripura (1992) .

2. The actual term derives from the Greek *ethnos*, the adjective of *ethnos*. This refers to a people of nation. In this contemporary form, ethnic still remains this basic meaning in the sense that it describes a group possessing some degree of coherence and solidarity composed of people who are, at least latently, aware of having common origins and interests. So, an ethnic group is not a mere aggregate of people or a sector of a population, but a self-conscious collection of people united, or closely related, by shared experiences. Those experiences are usually but not always ones of deprivation, characterizing immigrants and their descendants. The construction of ethnicity is very difficult to define. Several controversy runs over the term ‘Ethnicity’. Flora Anthias writes ‘A common experiences of racism may act to ‘Ethnics’ diverse cultures, as in the case of ‘Black’ category in Britain’. Anthias goes on to point out that ethnicity can militate against, as well as promote the advancement of, political goals, in particular goals related to class and gender. ‘Ethnicity’ can be a vehicle for diverse political projects’ she argues, adding that often ethnicity is antithetical of ‘The notion of emancipation’ and ethnic pluralism as a tool in the flight against racism. Ethnicity, then defines the salient feature of a group that regards itself as in some sense distinct. Once the consciousness of being part of an ethnic group is created, it takes on a self-perpetuating quality and it passed from one generation to the next. Distinct languages, religious beliefs, political institutions become part of the ethnic baggage and children are reared to accept these. Sometimes ethnicity was used quite openly as a resource to promote the feelings of ‘we’ and ‘them’. In this sense the term ‘Ethnicity’ is related to ‘otherness’.
3. The rehabilitation program was taken by Late President Ziaur Rahman (1979). Actually it was the political decision.
4. After the liberation of Bangladesh, ‘pahari’ people sought autonomy. But the Govt. of Bangladesh refused them. Under the above circumstances, on 7 march 1972 under the leadership of Manobendra Narayan Larma., the ‘Parboto Chottogram Jono Sanghoti Samity’( PCJSS) was formed The Party also added a military wing, the ‘Santi Bahini’, to it. To counter these movements, in the name of ‘National security’ the state subsequently embarked upon the militarization of CHT. The CHT was identified as a ‘national security’ problem, and a large number of the Bangladesh army and police forces was deployed in the region to carry out extensive search and destroy operations ( Dewan: 1990, Chakma: 1986, Mohsin: 1997).
5. Lewis wrote of the ‘Chittagong Hill Tribes’ ( Lewin, 1969, quoted in Tripura 1992)
6. ‘Jhum’ is the traditional cultivation process of ethnic communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is mainly slash and burn production process.
7. ‘*Santi Bahini*’ is the arm wing of the ‘Parboto Chottogram Jono Sanghoti Samity’ (Political Organization of ‘pahari’ people)
8. The British had abolished the pre-existing practices of debt bondage and slavery. This changed the traditional relationship between the notables and the commoners. Now the agricultural chores had to be performed by the notables and their family members. It also made the hill people dependent upon Bengali money lenders to pay their tax.. These moneylenders exploited them. Lewin’s accounts tell us that an interest rate of five percent a month or 60 percent a year was imposed by the Bengalis up on the money lent to the Hill people. On top of this, even after the entire amount, including interest, had been paid back, the Hill people had their land expropriated on charges of default through the manipulation of documents by the Bengali moneylenders. The Hill people were unable to defend themselves; they could neither read nor write not familiar with the proceedings of the court. (Lewin 1869:225-226). The Bengalis also came in, in search of agriculture land for themselves. By the 1890 more than half of the 3000 hectares of reclaimed lands were occupied by the Bengali migrants ( Mey: 1984). In order to ‘protect’ the Hill people from this exploitation the CHT Regulation of 1900 was promulgated which came into

effect on 1 May 1900 (Act I of 1900). The 1900 Act often known as the CHT manual amended the Act xx11 of 1860. These regulations still form the basis of the civil, revenue and judicial administration of the CHT, although there have been several amendments to the rules and several laws have been made applicable to the CHT between 1900 and up to the present. The important thing in the act that outsiders can not live without the permission of local administration.

<sup>9</sup> Middle class is not a class itself; rather it is a bourgeois class and the mid level of the labor class. This level is developed/organized in a capitalist process. This community is developed for the need of this process.

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