CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the background of the study, current status, statement of the problem, theoretical and conceptual framework, the study area, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, operational definition of the terms used and the organization of the chapters.

1.2   BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Ethnic conflict has been prevailing in Assam as in most parts of northeast India for many decades and it is a past which has haunted people living in the region and is unfortunately repeated in various degrees. Ethnic conflict has affected children in all walks of life. Hundreds of children died of direct or indirect conflict in war each year. They died as civilians caught in the conflict of war, as combatants directly targeted, or in the course of ethnic cleansing. Children were exposed to situations of terror and horror during conflict- experiences that had left enduring impacts in posttraumatic stress disorder. Severe losses and disruptions in their lives lead to high rates of depression and anxiety in conflict-affected children. These impacts may be prolonged by exposures to further privations and conflict in refugee situations.

There were many deprivations of children due to ethnic conflict. Children were pushed into situations that can circumscribe the remainder of their lives. Many of them were forced to participate directly in the vicious cycle of conflict as soldiers. Ethnic conflict had disrupted families and social networks that support children's

physical, emotional and social development. It also rendered children vulnerable to trafficking and sexual abuse (NERSWN, 2014). Due to ethnic conflict, schools were burnt down together with their infrastructure; some schools were also closed down as others became camps for the armed forces and homes for the IDPs rendering delivery of education services impossible. Educational resources could not reach the schools as roads were barricaded and teachers and children fled the region for fear of their lives and that affected education of children (Wangechi, 2013).

There is an increased attention to lessen the direct consequences of conflict, such as unlawful recruitment, gender-based conflict, killing and maiming, separation from families, trafficking and illegal detention. It is found that, the number of conflicts in 2005 ranged from 17 to 56 worldwide. The lower figure pertains to conflicts with more than 1,000 battle deaths; the higher derives from a threshold of 25 battle deaths, allowing for the inclusion of lower intensity conflicts and those in which a State was not a party to the conflict (Machel). According to Poirier, there is a negative impact of conflict on education of the students and as a result, the dropout rate and enrollment rate of the students in the schools were found to be very high due to conflict.

Several studies have been already conducted on ethnic conflict in relation to different issues; locally, in the country and abroad but no such studies is found available on the present study. Therefore, it is against this background that the present study is taken up.

1.3   CURRENT STATUS

Ethnic conflict is still regarded as one of the major problems in Bodoland Territorial

Area Districts (BTAD), Assam, especially in Kokrajhar district. Kokrajhar district is the head quarter of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts, comprising of four districts namely; Baksa, Chirang, Kokrajhar and Udalguri. Kokrajhar district is inhabited by different communities like, Bodo, Adivasi, Santhals, Rabha, Bengali, Rajbongshi, Garo etc. Ethnic conflict had occurred in the district a decade ago, but its negative impact on the society is still remembered and cannot be forgotten by the people.

The 2012, ethnic conflict that had occurred in the district had shaken and panicked the common people in the society and especially, the school going students. This incident has left the students with fears, nightmares and chaos in their day to day living. Even today, fear lies in the minds of the students that conflict might occur at anytime. Most of the incidents that happened with the school students during ethnic conflict are unknown and hidden. Even today, no in-depth study has been made to know the various consequences of ethnic conflict on the school students in the district and there is also a lack of remedial measures to the affected students as well as the people. Therefore, a study on the impact of ethnic conflict on the high school students was taken up.

1.4   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kokrajhar district is one of the most conflict affected regions in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD), Assam. School students fall victims in any conflicts. They are tortured, raped, and left homeless. Innocent lives are taken away during ethnic conflicts. They are not able to fulfill their dreams in their life. Most of the school going students is not able to continue their studies after the incident. Most of them have to drop out from the school due to some problems. They are left with some

mental disorders, financial and family problems. Most of them might have lost their loved ones and are left behind alone with no one to take care of them. So the question arises now, whether the problems of the students those who had fallen victims of ethnic conflict are solved or not? Problems might not be solved fully but to some extent remedial measures can be provided to the victims. Students are the future builders of the society. Proper care and education should be given to them, to help them grow well and be a better person in their life.

From the above discussion, it is felt that there is a need for a study to be undertaken to know the various problems faced by the school students during ethnic conflict and thereby draw some remedial measures to the problems. On the other hand, the growing situations in the district have also motivated the researcher to take up the present study entitled as "Impact of Ethnic Conflict on the High School Students with Special Reference to Kokrajhar District in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) Assam".

1.5   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

An ethnic conflict is a conflict between two or more contending ethnic groups. While the source of the conflict may be political, social, economic or religious, the individuals in conflict must expressly fight for their ethnic group's position within society. This final criterion differentiates ethnic conflict from other forms of struggle (Wikipedia). An ethnic conflict is a conflict between two or more rival ethnic groups. The origin of the conflict may be political, social, economic or religious. The individuals in conflict must expressly fight for the survival of their group within society. Ethnic conflict may be violent and may be non violent (Hashmi, 2018).

Ethnic conflict, a form of conflict in which the objectives of at least one party are defined in ethnic terms, and the conflict, its antecedents, and possible solutions are perceived along ethnic lines. The conflict is usually not about ethnic differences themselves but over political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial matters. Ethnic conflict is one of the major threats to international peace and security. Conflict describes a situation in which two or more actors pursue incompatible goals. It is not necessarily violent, but the use of tension, dispute, or unease is more common in a nonviolent context. A violent internal conflict is generally called a civil war or armed conflict when casualties and destruction are substantial, the conflict has certain duration, the protagonists are organized, and military operations are used to achieve political goals.

1.5.1 Theories of Ethnic Conflict

1.   Primordialist Theory

Proponents of Primordialist theory argue that ethnic groups and nationalities exist because there are traditions of belief and action towards primordial objects such as biological features and especially territorial location. Primordialist accounts rely on strong ties of kinship among members of ethnic groups (Wikipedia). Donald L. Horowitz argues that this kinship makes it possible for ethnic groups to think in terms of family resemblances. Clifford Geertz, a founding scholar of primordialism, asserts that each person has a natural connection to perceived kinsmen. In time and through repeated conflict, essential ties to one's ethnicity will coalesce and will interfere with ties to civil society. Ethnic groups will consequently always threaten the survival of civil governments but not the existence of nations formed by one ethnic group. Thus, when considered through a primordial lens, ethnic conflict in multi-ethnic society is

inevitable. A number of political scientists argue that the root causes of ethnic conflict do not involve ethnicity *per se* but rather institutional, political, and economic factors. These scholars argue that the concept of ethnic war is misleading because it leads to an essentialist conclusion that certain groups are doomed to fight each other when in fact the wars between them that occur are often the result of political decisions.

2.   Instrumentalist Theory

Anthony Smith notes that the instrumentalist theory "came to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, in the debate about (white) ethnic persistence in what was supposed to have been an effective melting pot". This new theory sought explained persistence as the result of the actions of community leaders, "who used their cultural groups as sites of mass mobilization and as constituencies in their competition for power and resources, because they found them more effective than social classes". In this account of ethnic identification, ethnicity and race are viewed as instrumental means to achieve particular ends.

Whether ethnicity is a fixed perception or not is not crucial in the instrumentalist accounts. Moreover, the scholars of this school generally do not oppose the view that ethnic difference plays a part in many conflicts. They simply claim that ethnic difference is not sufficient to explain conflicts. Mass mobilization of ethnic groups can only be successful if there are latent ethnic differences to be exploited, otherwise politicians would not even attempt to make political appeals based on ethnicity and would focus instead on economic or ideological appeals. For these reasons, it is difficult to completely discount the role of inherent ethnic differences. Additionally, ethnic entrepreneurs, or elites, could be tempted to mobilize ethnic groups in order to

gain their political support in democratizing states. Instrumentalists' theorists especially emphasize this interpretation in ethnic states in which one ethnic group is promoted at the expense of other ethnicities.

3.   Constructivist Theory

A constructivist set of theory stress the importance of the socially constructed nature of ethnic groups, drawing on Benedict Anderson's concept of the imagined community. Proponents of this theory point to Rwanda as an example because the Tutsi/Hutu distinction was codified by the Belgian colonial power in the 1930s on the basis of cattle ownership, physical measurements and church records. Identity cards were issued on this basis, and these documents played a key role in the genocide of 1994. Some argue that constructivist narratives of historical master cleavages are unable to account for local and regional variations in ethnic violence. For example, Varshney highlights that in the 1960s "racial violence in the USA was heavily concentrated in northern cities; southern cities though intensely politically engaged, did not have riots". A constructivist master narrative is often a country level variable whereas we often have to study incidences of ethnic violence at the regional and local level.

Scholars of ethnic conflict and civil wars have introduced theories that draw insights from all three traditional schools of thought. In *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, Monica Duffy Toft shows how ethnic group settlement patterns, socially constructed identities, charismatic leaders, issue indivisibility, and state concern with precedent setting can lead rational actors to escalate a dispute to violence, even when doing so is likely to leave contending groups much worse off. Such research addresses empirical

puzzles that are difficult to explain using primordialist, instrumentalist, or constructivist approaches alone. As Varshney notes, "pure essentialists and pure instrumentalists do not exist anymore".

4.   Institutionalist Theory

In institutionalist approach, emergence of ethnic conflict depends on the strength of institutions. It should be noted at this point that this strength does not refer to a quantitative but to a qualitative power, which is determined in accordance with how democratic the institutional structure of a state is. The main premise of institutionalism is therefore that 'institutions define the rules of political membership, representation, and resource allocation'. Once institutions encourage inclusion of various ethnic groups into political and economic system, tendency to ethnic conflict arising from uneven and undemocratic policies decreases. An exclusive institutional system, in contrary, increases the chances of an ethnic conflict to emerge from the reasons of those grievances. Hence institutions are considered both the cause and the solution to ethnic conflicts. For instance, Premdas analyses the reasons of ethnic conflict from an institutional point of view, by arguing that colonisation is the source of malfunctioning institutions leading to ethnic strife. Accordingly, ethnic elements generated distrust among ethnic groups by colonial institutions, which placed inter-ethnic competition to the centre of political and economic life. 'The entire colonial administration', Premdas suggests, 'was economic in motivation and racist in the means of fulfilling its aims'. Communist political arrangements also illustrate the institutional theory of ethnic conflict. In this case, communism is believed to canalize ethnic conflicts into a class-based dimension. Therefore it is argued that
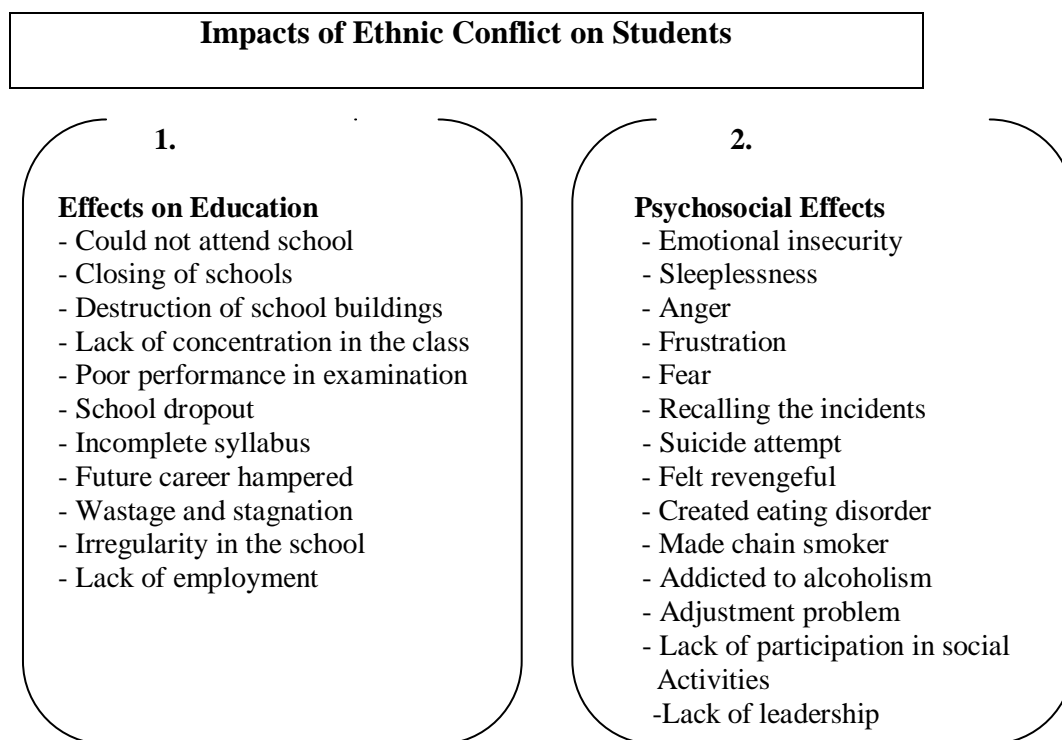
communism suppressed the expression of ethnic conflicts and thus caused an outburst of ethnic violence in the post-communist regions.
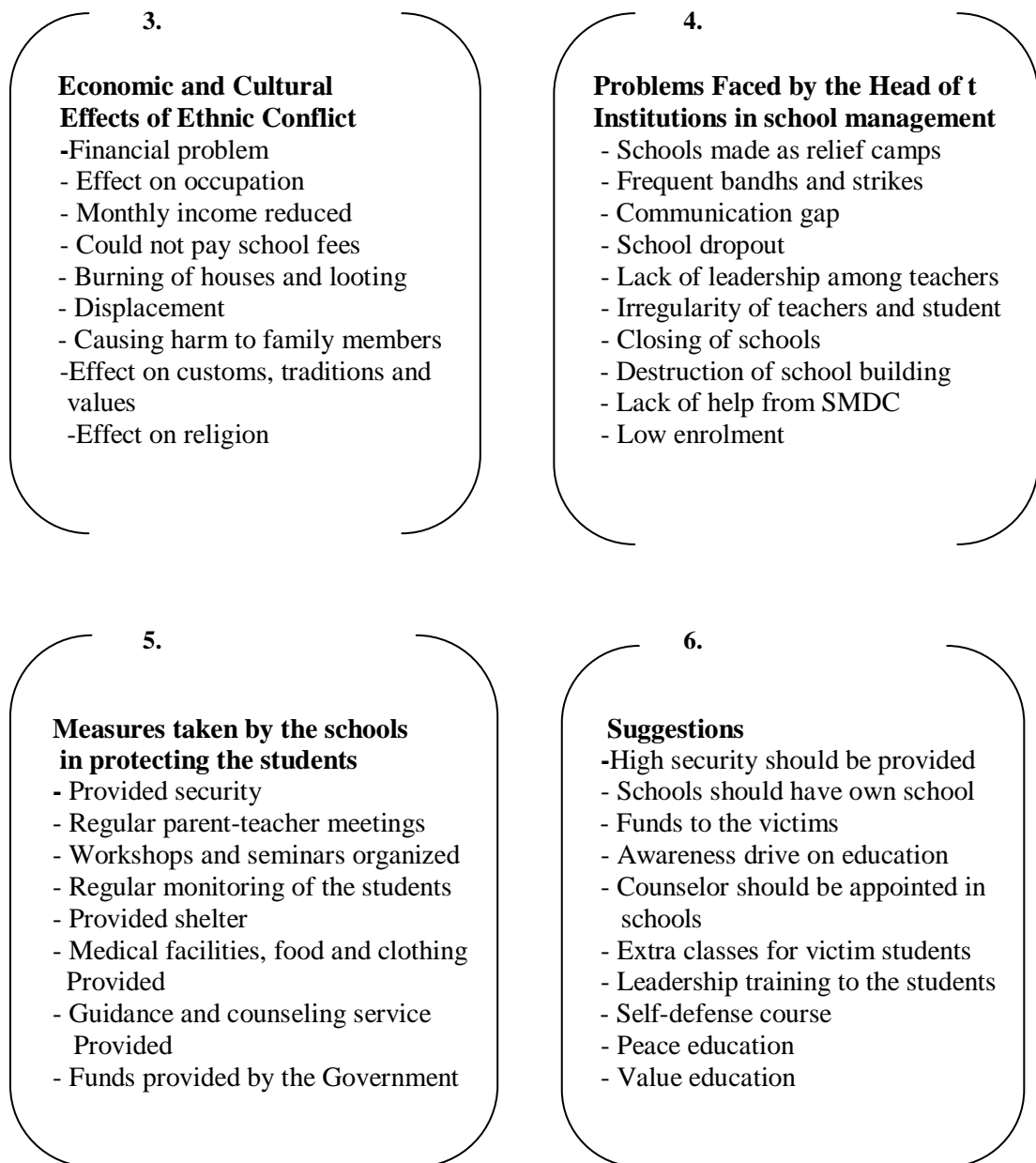

1.6   Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework highlighted the frame of reference for this study. The framework in this study contained five key elements all of which are interrelated. These concepts are; how ethnic conflict affects the education of the students, psychosocial affect of ethnic conflict on students, economic, cultural and family effect of ethnic conflict on students, problems faced by the head of the institutions regarding management of school at the time of ethnic conflict. The other concept is measures taken by the school in protecting the students at the time of ethnic conflict.

The conceptual framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.1 below:

Figure 1.1 Conceptualization of Impacts of Ethnic Conflict on Students, Schools and suggestions

Impacts of Ethnic Conflict on Students

1.

Effects on Education
- Could not attend school
- Closing of schools
- Destruction of school buildings
- Lack of concentration in the class
- Poor performance in examination
- School dropout
- Incomplete syllabus
- Future career hampered
- Wastage and stagnation
- Irregularity in the school
- Lack of employment

2.

Psychosocial Effects
- Emotional insecurity
- Sleeplessness
- Anger
- Frustration
- Fear
- Recalling the incidents
- Suicide attempt
- Felt revengeful
- Created eating disorder
- Made chain smoker
- Addicted to alcoholism
- Adjustment problem
- Lack of participation in social Activities
- Lack of leadership

3.

Economic and Cultural Effects of Ethnic Conflict
- **-**Financial problem
- Effect on occupation
- Monthly income reduced
- Could not pay school fees
- Burning of houses and looting
- Displacement
- Causing harm to family members
- -Effect on customs, traditions and values
- -Effect on religion

4.

Problems Faced by the Head of t Institutions in school management
- Schools made as relief camps
- Frequent bandhs and strikes
- Communication gap
- School dropout
- Lack of leadership among teachers
- Irregularity of teachers and student
- Closing of schools
- Destruction of school building
- Lack of help from SMDC
- Low enrolment

5.

Measures taken by the schools in protecting the students
- **-** Provided security
- Regular parent-teacher meetings
- Workshops and seminars organized
- Regular monitoring of the students
- Provided shelter
- Medical facilities, food and clothing Provided
- Guidance and counseling service Provided
- Funds provided by the Government

6.

Suggestions
- **-**High security should be provided
- Schools should have own school
- Funds to the victims
- Awareness drive on education
- Counselor should be appointed in schools
- Extra classes for victim students
- Leadership training to the students
- Self-defense course
- Peace education
- Value education

Source: Researcher

Figure 1.1, highlights the impacts of ethnic conflict on the students. It shows how ethnic conflict affects the education of the students. Psychosocial, economic, cultural and family impact of ethnic conflict is also highlighted in this figure. Problems faced by the head of the institutions in school management are considered to be an important concept in this study. Measures taken by the head of the institutions in
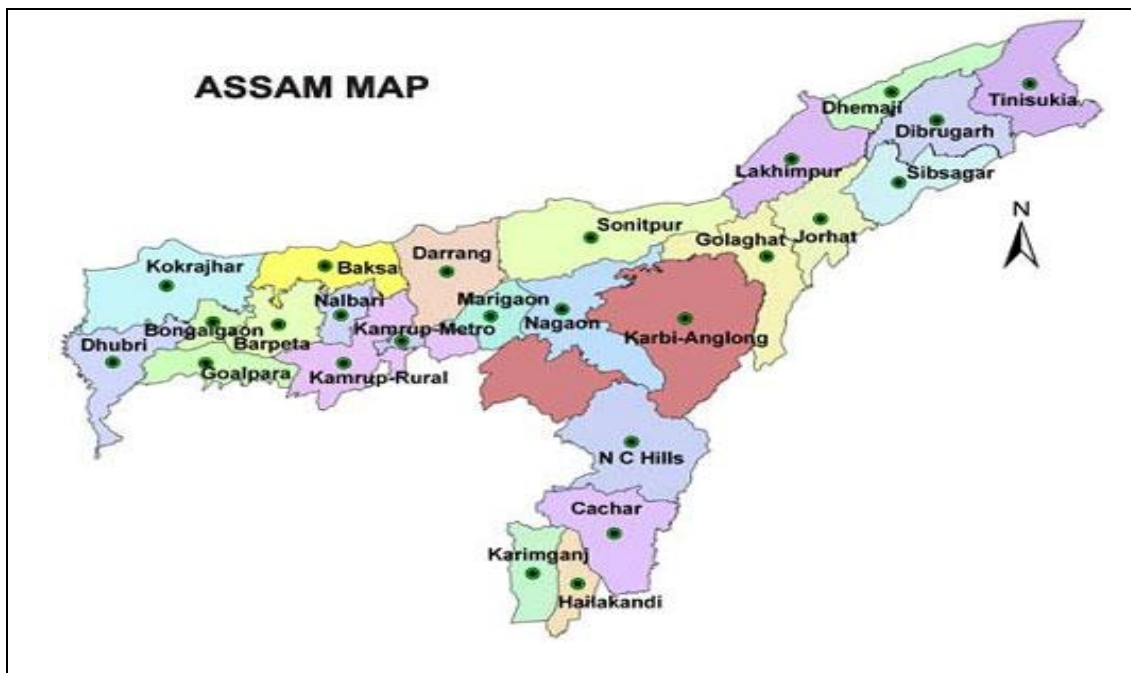
protecting the students at the time of incident can also be followed by the other teachers and people concerned whenever conflict arises in the region. The suggestions given by the researcher can also be put into practice by the school authorities in order to help students overcome the problems. Leadership training, self-defense course, peace education and value education can also be promoted among the students in the school for awareness and better environment. Occurrence of ethnic conflict in the region can disturb the congenial atmosphere in the schools. Schools environment should be maintained well in order to help students learn better. Proper planning should be made at the time of conflict in order to protect the students as well as the teachers from any harm.

1.7   THE STUDY AREA

The area of the present study is Kokrajhar district of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD), Assam. Kokrajhar is one of the 27(twenty seven) districts of Assam with 2.85% of the state population and is the gateway to Northeast India. Both the rail and road network touch this district at Srirampur on the way to the rest of the region. The district is located on the north bank of the mighty Brahmaputra and stretches to the international border with the kingdom of Bhutan. It is bounded on the north by Bhutan and by West Bengal on the west; the district of Dhubri in the south and in the east by Chirang district. Kokrajhar district lies roughly within 89^0 46' East to 90^0 38' East and 26^0 19 North to 26^0 54' North Latitude. Kokrajhar town is the headquarter of Bodoland Territorial Council, created on 10th February, 2003 comprising of four districts viz. Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri on the north bank of Brahmaputra within Assam. The kingdom of Bhutan is intricately linked with the district in many vital aspects of life. There is hassle free movement across the international border
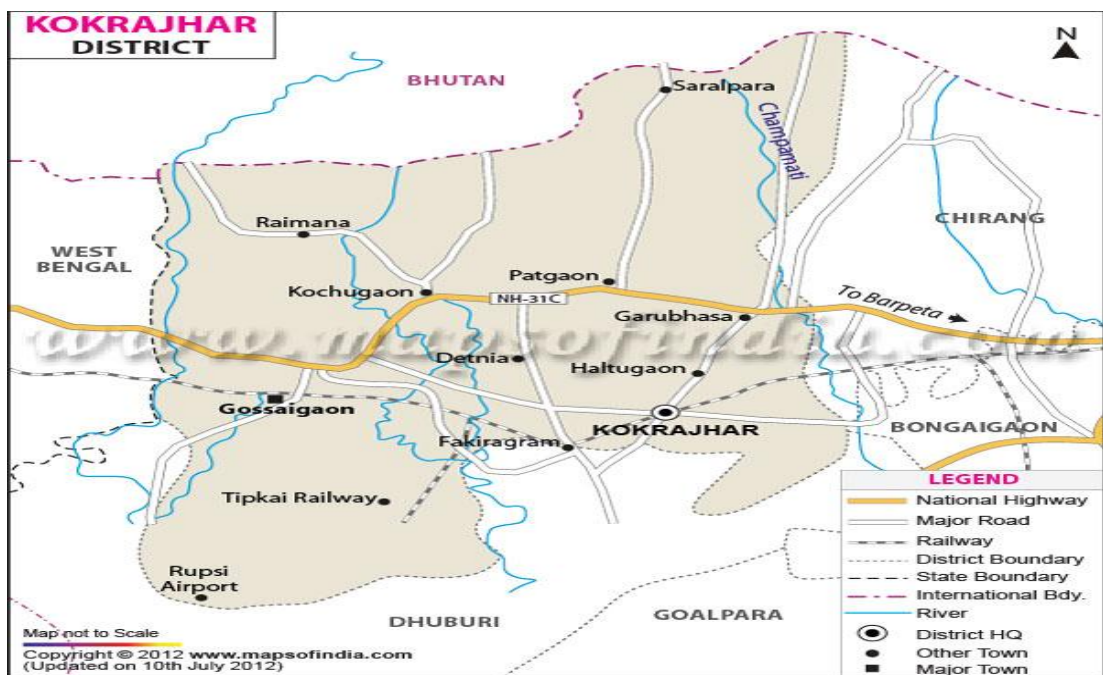
with Bhutan.

Map of Assam

Source: https://www.traveldealsfinder.com/assam-maps.html

Map of Kokrajhar

Source: www.mapsofindia.com

Kokrajhar was originally the part of the undivided Goalpara district. In 1957 it was curved out as a civil Sub-division from the then Dhubri sub-division of Goalpara district. Till then it was merely small town with a railway station. On 1st July, 1983 it was upgraded into a district. At that time, there were four police station viz. Bijni, Sidli, Kokrajhar and Gossaigaon with a total area of 4065.88 Sq. Km. spreading from the river Manas in the east to the river Sonkosh in the west. Later on Nayekgaon G.P. of Dhubri district with an area of 40.22 Sq. Km. was merged with this district. Again on 10th February, 2009 Chirang district was created by curving out parts of Kokrajhar district and some parts of Dhubri district were merged with Kokrajhar district. The present area of the district is to be 3,169.22 Sq. Km.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the objectives of the study the research questions are as follows:

1. How did ethnic conflict affect the education of the students in the district?

2. What were the effects of ethnic conflict on the psychosocial status of the students in the district?

3. In what way ethnic conflict has affected the economic and cultural status of the students in the district?

4. What were the steps taken by the schools in protecting the students during ethnic conflict in the district?

5. What were the problems faced by the head of the institutions towards management of schools during and aftermath the conflict?

1.9 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To find out the impact of ethnic conflict on the education of the high school stage students in the district.

2. To investigate the impact of ethnic conflict on the psychosocial status of high school stage students in the district.

3. To find out the impact of ethnic conflict on the economic and cultural status of high school stage students in the district.

4. To investigate the steps taken by the secondary school stage in protecting the students during ethnic conflict in the district.

5. To find out the problems faced by the head of the institutions in school management during ethnic conflict in the district.

6. To give suggestions to the problems found in the present study.

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study deals with the impact of ethnic conflict on the high school students in Kokrajhar district of Bodoland Territorial Area Districts of Assam. It is hoped that the study will promote awareness among people regarding the consequences of ethnic conflict on the school going children and try to find out some solutions. The findings of the present study will bring light to the Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, other organizations, policy makers and educational planners to frame and improve the school curriculum of children in this conflict affected region.

From the literature survey, it is found that, many studies have been conducted on ethnic conflict in the district, elsewhere in the country and abroad but no literature has been found available on the present study. Therefore, the investigator felt the need to undertake the present study. This study will also fill the gap that exist in literature

survey and contribute its findings to the society. It is hoped that this study will bring light to the Government, policy makers and readers about the consequences of ethnic conflict on the schools and students and thereby, make better policy and take some preventive measures. It is hoped that the findings of the study will bring out some qualitative changes in the field of education and the society. The findings of the study will help the future researchers to conduct better research and encourage for further research relating to this problem in other parts of the country.

1.11   DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1.   Only the high schools affiliated to Board of Secondary Education Assam (SEBA), is taken for the study.

2.   Only class nine students are taken for the present study.

3.   The findings of the study are based on 2012 Ethnic Conflict.

1.12   OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

The definitions of the terms used are given below:

1.   Ethnic conflict

Ethnic conflict refers to dispute over important political, economic, cultural or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities and it can also be defined as conflicts between ethnic groups within a multi-ethnic state, which have somehow happened, which may seem insoluble for the parts trapped in them.

2.   Students

It refers to students studying in standard IX and X of Government, provincialised and private high schools affiliated to Board of Secondary Education Assam, (SEBA).

1.13   CONCLUSION

Kokrajhar district has always been regarded as one of the ethnic conflict zones in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) Assam. During ethnic conflict, mostly, school going children are being affected in various ways. The researcher has taken up this study in order to know and make people realize the effect of ethnic conflict on the students and thereby bring mutual understanding among the people in the society. Eradication of ethnic conflict is very important in order to create a fair and just society. Education is regarded as one of the most powerful instruments for social change. Therefore, education can only change the mindset of the people and thus provide a congenial environment in the society. Proper education should be given to the students so that they can develop their personality and become good citizens of India. The researcher feels that, this study would be a fruitful one and bring benefit in the society.

1.14   ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTERS

The organizations of the chapters for the study are given in the following:

1.14.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter highlights the background of the study, current status, statement of the problem, theoretical and conceptual framework, the study area, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, delimitation of the study, operational definition of the terms used, conclusion and organization of the chapters.

1.14.2 Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

The second chapter discusses the general overview of ethnic conflict, effects of ethnic conflict on education, psychosocial effects of ethnic conflict, effects of ethnic conflict on children and conclusion.

1.14.3 Chapter 3: Methodology of the Study

The third chapter deals with research design, method, population, sample, sources of data, research tools; questionnaire, interview schedule, focus group discussion, pilot study; validity and reliability, data collection and data analysis.

1.14.4 Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Interpretation of Data and Discussions

The fourth chapter presents the data analysis, interpretation of data and discussions of the study.

1.14.5 Chapter 5: Major Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The sixth chapter contains the major findings, conclusions and recommendations for further research.