

"Garocommunity: A Diasporic Tension" A Comparative Observation

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ABSTRACT: *Diaspora means the people who migrate from their own community or country to other community or country due to various reasons but sustain an ontological attachment with their community or country. This is a burning issue of the present world. Garo community has first immigrated to Garo Hills from Tibet around 400 BC. They also shifted in different areas in India. Garos are mainly Christian. This research is a trial to portray a comparison between countries they migrated. To deal with this topic secondary data like literature, newspaper etc are used. This research will upgrade present concept as well.*

KEYWORDS: *diaspora, existential crisis, indigenous, ontological*

Central Question: *How does Garo community face diasporic tension resulted from language barrier, cultural exile, and identity crisis home and abroad?*

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I INTRODUCTION

At least 350 million people worldwide are classified as indigenous, and about two million indigenous people of 45 different districts ethnic (Muhammad, N.1, Chakma, S.2, Hossain F.2, Hossain M., and Oesten(2011)) communities migrated in Bangladesh (Costa & Dutta 2007, GOB 2008). Among the ingenuous people the Garo population is one of the largest indigenous communities in Bangladesh, comprising approximately 0.1 to 0.13 million people (Islam, 2008; Burling, 1997; Drong, 2004). They migrated in the north-eastern part of Bangladesh, with the highest presence in Gazipur, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Tangail, Sherpur, Jamalpur, and Sylhet districts. They first immigrated to Garo Hills from Tibet around 400 BC. Garos are mainly Christians. There are some rural pockets where the traditional animist religion and traditions are still followed. The Garo language belongs to the Bodo–Garo branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. As the Garo language is not traditionally written down, customs, traditions, and beliefs are handed down orally. It is also believed that the written language was lost in its transit to the present Garo Hills as a result of diasporic tension. Diaspora means the people who migrate from their own community or country to other community or country due to various reasons but sustain an ontological attachment with their community or country. These migrated people face one type of tension resulted from the threat of language extinction, the scarcity of livelihood, and the crisis of identity. Consequently, this language barrier, cultural exile, identity crisis create a threat to the existence of the whole community.

Rationale for choosing this topic:

According to the report of “The 1994 Human Development Report (UNDP, 1996)” a new concept on human security has been established where it shows that it examines both the national and global concerns of human security. There Personal security is dealing with an issue – threats from other groups of people (ethnic tension). This tension is among minority or we may say among the migrant people like indigenous Garo community.

Beside this kind of diasporic tension we see the community security is in tension. Traditional communities, particularly ethnic groups, can also come under much more direct attack from each other. Indigenous people also face widening spirals of violence.

As this is right now a burning issue relating contemporary tensions so is chosen a diaspora to portray the crisis.

The indigenous language speakers are often subject to domination by the majority language and culture. The indigenous people use their language less and less, which may consequently cause loss of the language in a matter of time. The whole cultures and knowledge systems including philosophical systems, oral and musical traditions, environmental and medical knowledge, cultural practices, and artistic skills of a group is lost if their language dies.

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This research is comprised of several theories from IR like social constructivism and radicalism and English Literature as well as anthropology. The "1994 Human Development Report (UNDP, 1996)" a new concept on human security has been established where it shows that it examines both the national and global concerns of human security .Their Personal security is dealing with an issue –threats from other groups of people (ethnic tension) .This tension is among minority or we may say among the migrant people like indigenous Garo community.

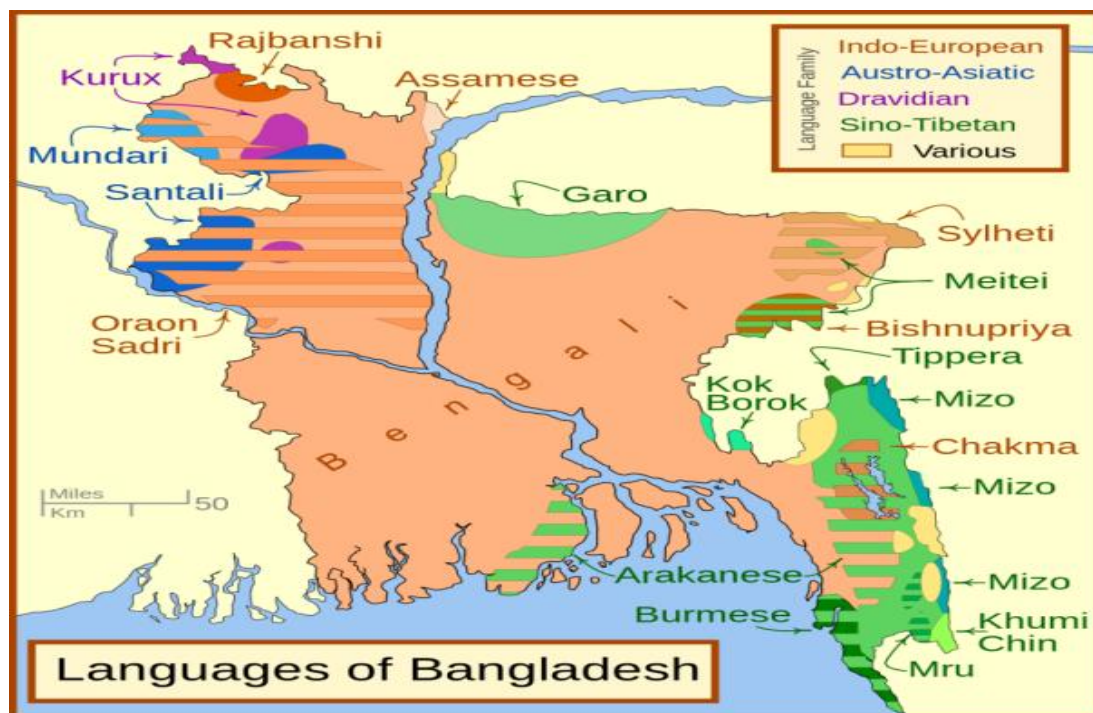
Qualitative secondary data from different sources:

Survey data

Motives of migration

	Total	Bengali	Garo
Poverty	43	38	5
Failed marriage	5	5	0
Avoid getting married	4	3	1
Continue education	4	0	4
Had to stop education	5	4	1
Wanting to help the family	17	14	3
Death of one or both parents	19	18	1
Desire for more freedom	2	1	1
Natural disaster /climate change	4	4	0
Learn a job	4		4
Difficult family situation	5	4	1

Beside this migration and its impact also highlights the relevancy with International and regional issues. Existentialcrisis is a modern concept represented as in relation with identity crisis. This diaspora had a long journey and still continuing. So we need to depend on historical approach and also behavioral approach. Ultimately it is a liberal thinking and the world is waiting to see the solution from social constructive ideologists.



Most of the Garo people are bi-lingual because they speak Bangla (the national language of Bangladesh) in addition to *Achchik Katha*, their own indigenous language (Bal, 1999). From very childhood, Garo children are habituated to speak both Garo and Bengali language. They usually speak Garo language although they talk in Bengali language while interacting with the Bengalese. *Achchik Katha* earlier it had a written form. But now, there is no Garo alphabet found.

The Garo language belongs to the Bodo-Garo branch of the Tibeto-Burman language family. As the Garo language is not traditionally written down, customs, traditions, and beliefs are handed down orally. It is also believed that the written language was lost in its transit to the present Garo Hills. They first immigrated to Garo Hills from Tibet around 400 BC. Garos are mainly Christians. There are some rural pockets where the traditional animist religion and traditions are still followed. However, the modern official language in schools and government offices is English and the modern generation is more inclined towards English.

Garo language has different dialects, viz- A·being or Am·being, Matabeng, Atong, Me·gam, Matchi, Dual [Matchi-Dual] Ruga, Chibok, Chisak, Gara, Gan·ching [Gara-Gan·ching] A·we etc. In Bangladesh A·being is the usual dialect, but A·chik is used more in India. A·we has become the standard dialect of the Garos. A·we is used in Garo literature and hence for the translation of the Bible. The Garo language has some similarities with Boro-Kachari, Rava, Dimasa and Kok-Borok languages. Garo literature mainly transformed from generation to generation and one place to another orally. Traditional song like Ku.daresala, Hoaring.a, Injoka, Koredoka etc now become the elements of Garo literature. One of the oldest books written by Major A. PlayFair 'The Garos' is the source of information on Garo which was published in 1909.



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In Bangladesh diasporic tension seems less than the others according to the Journal of the Bangladesh Agricultural University in Vol 8, No 1 (2010)

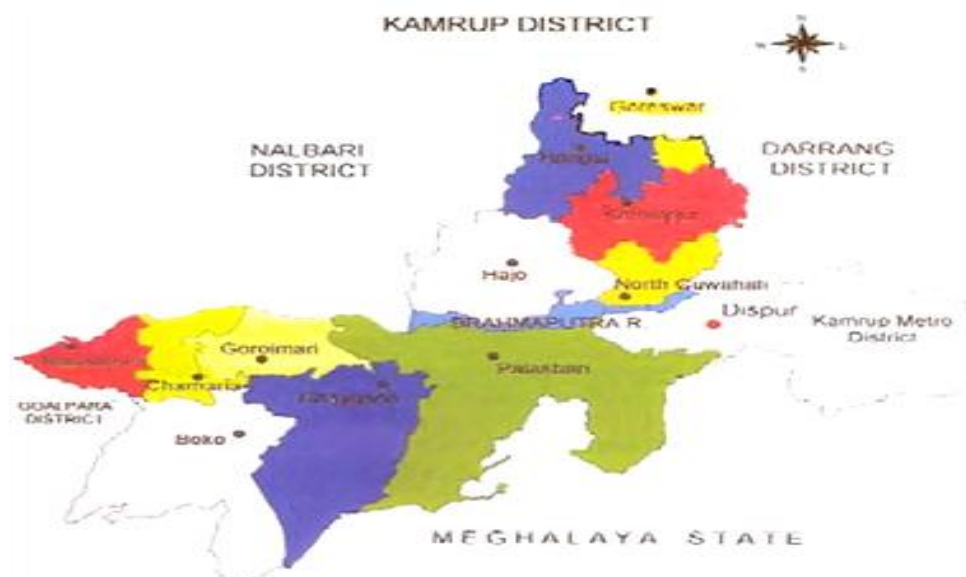
But several attack on different ethnic groups like Rakhain in Myanmar, Santals in Bangladesh, and many others in Rangamati cause tension around As the people of Bangladesh are believer of harmony among communities so these types of incidents are taken seriously by all communities as well as government.

Wangala in Bangladesh:**In Bangladesh diasporic tension seems less than the others:**



ThaGaro Wangala festival is a stunningly vibrant one. There are various minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh, and the Garo, who live near the Meghalaya hills to the north, number about 200,000. Their annual celebration is associated with the harvest, and falls in November or December, depending on the full moon. This is a particularly interesting occasion, as the people are so different from the Bengalis - they are more like people from Myanmar or Nepal. They have a matrimonial society, and were converted to Christianity over a hundred years ago.





Map of Kamrup District

Garos fear communal tension in India

Jan 12, 2016 16:06

Guwahati

Staff Writer

30

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HNLC Asks Garo Militants to Stay off Khasi-Land

Garos living in RabhaHasong areas covering Kamrup and Goalpara districts of Assam fear that some miscreants might create communal tension as the state government has decided to set up an autonomous council for people of the community.

On Monday, the Garo National Council (GNC) expressed fear that there can be communal tension to divert the main issue. "The Garos are one of the most backward and we have been demanding an autonomous council for long. We were also demanding exclusion of 430 Garo villages from the RabhaHasong Autonomous Council (RHAC) area. The state government has promised us that. But some leaders of RHAC are not happy with this," said GNC president Benedict Areng.

Areng added that in two districts of Kamrup and Goalpara, the Garo population is around 2.31 lakh. "If we talk about these people, they are extremely backward. The children are also deprived of proper education. There are 11 Garo-medium high schools in these two districts but their condition is pathetic," rued Areng.

He said under the present scenario, development is not possible for the people of the tribe.

"We are facing harassment for a long time. In 2011, riots broke out in which we had to suffer a lot. We don't want any kind of disturbance again. We want peace and development. So, we appeal to all our Rabha brothers and sisters to join the process," added Areng.

Source: Times of India

September 30, 2005: Black Friday

By Willy

On September 30, 2012

In Modern India, Tribal India

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On the morning of Friday, September 30, 2005, dual demonstrations in Tura and Williamnagar—the Garo Hills' two most populous towns—erupted into violence. In both places, police fired on demonstrators; by official counts, the police killed four demonstrators in Tura and five in Williamnagar. All were teenaged students. (Unofficial counts placed the total death toll at eleven.) This tragedy would become known as Black Friday. It continues to be commemorated and memorialized in the Garo Hills to this day, seven years later.¹

The demonstrations in Tura and Williamnagar were just two of many protests staged in the Garo Hills in response to the Meghalaya state government's plans to restructure the Meghalaya State Board of Education (MBoSE). Earlier in 2005, the Khasi Students' Union had placed pressure on the state government to move the education board's headquarters from Tura to Shillong. A State Level Committee (SLC) submitted its report on August 29, stating that MBoSE should be split between Shillong and Tura. The state government agreed to act on these recommendations in full.²

The killings caused an immediate uproar in Meghalaya.. Despite reports that the talks had gone well, tensions continued to simmer between the state government and Garo groups. The MBoSE bill passed in the state legislature the following March, leading to the creation of a regional education board office in Shillong.⁷ Efforts to commemorate and memorialize the victims of the killings began shortly after the day that was to become known as Black Friday. When Tura was still locked down by curfew after the shootings, hundreds of students in nearby towns marched silently with black flags to show their solidarity with the victims. A week later, the residents of Mahendraganj⁹ held a condolence service and prayer meeting. On the first anniversary of the killings, six thousand people gathered at Chandmari playground in Tura to unveil a cenotaph inscribed with the names of the shooting victims. Residents of Williamnagar unveiled a similar monument.¹⁰

Although Black Friday was an important part of cultural memory in my part of the Garo Hills, my school's commemoration of the fourth anniversary was perhaps superficial. We did not spend the day in mourning and reflection for the lives lost. Rather, most of the teachers sat through a committee meeting, while I went to Guwahati for shopping.


1. "Nine killed in student protest," *Calcutta Telegraph*, October 1, 2005; "Police says they fired in retaliation," *Times of India*, October 1, 2005; "10 killed in Garo Hills police firing," *Hindustan Times (HT)*, October 1, 2005. [↔]
2. "Lapang defends report on MBoSE," *HT*, September 8, 2005; "MBoSE controversy behind violence," *HT*, October 1, 2005. [↔]
3. "Garos hit hard by GSU non-cooperation," *HT*, September 15, 2005; "Garo students' non-cooperation continues on 2nd day," *HT*, September 16, 2005. [↔]
4. "11 students die in Meghalaya firing," *HT*, September 30, 2005. [↔]
5. "11 students die in Meghalaya firing," *HT*, September 30, 2005; "Non-cooperation movement by GSU in Garo Hills today," *HT*, November 6, 2005; "Garo Hills NGOs strike over MBoSE starts today," *HT*, November 16, 2005; "GSU to launch hunger strike in Garo Hills from Monday," *HT*, December 1, 2005; "GSU gives time to Garo MLAs to prove sincerity," *HT*, December 15, 2005; "MBoSE bill passed amidst resistance," *HT*, March 24, 2006. [↔]
6. "Probe holds Tura firing 'irresponsible,'" *HT*, April 19, 2007. [↔]
7. The southwesternmost town in Meghalaya, Mahendraganj is located in the flatlands at the foot of the Garo Hills. [↔]
8. "Partial relaxation of curfew in Meghalaya," *HT*, October 5, 2005; "Mahendraganj holds public condolence meet," *HT*, October 12, 2005; *HT*, "Sept 30 victims remembered in Garo Hills," October 4, 2006. [↔]

Conclusion: This diasporic community is suffering from language barrier, cultural exile, identity crisis and as a whole the whole livelihood are in threat. This qualitative research had to depend on secondary data from different papers, newspaper, journal etc. to portray a comparative or a vivid picture where human rights are violated and jolted. This kind of existential crisis is never expected in any community around the world.

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