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**THE MAIN CAUSES BEHIND MIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH to
COOCH BEHAR, WEST BENGAL 1947 TO 2011**

SABEDUL HOQUE

Research Scholar, Ph.D. in History,

CMJ University, Jorabat, Meghalaya, India

ABSTRACT

Migration has become a continual phenomenon in India-Bangladesh relations. There are many social, economic, political, environmental and ethnic reasons that are responsible behind this migration from Bangladesh. This is the only country in the world that pushes its citizens at gunpoint across its borders. Some of the main factors that force Bangladeshi citizens to migrate are as follows.

After the independence of Bangladesh, the new governments tried to suppress the demand for ethnic identity placed by the indigenous people of CHT region by inhabiting outsider Bengalis in the hilly region. The Hill people opposed this action which took shape of a movement for more administrative autonomy. As a consequence, the Government deployed military in the region to protect the Bengali settlers against the Hill people. This led to the collapse of Hill people's security, which in turn created a cause for the Shanti Bahini to carry out armed insurrection against the settlers and military. To counter this insurgency the military and para-military forces often resorted to unwarranted arrests, looting, rape, torture, and other forms of physical and mental violence, all directed against the Hill people. Organized killings or massacres against the Hill people also took place in order to silence them. All this forced a large number of Bangladeshis to migrate for their survival.

Soon after the liberation war it became clear that the secular identity of Bangladesh is not going to last long. 15 years of military rule gave a firm base to the process of Islamization in Bangladesh. Islam has reemerged as one of the main structural components of Bangladesh Nationalism. This has made the non-Muslims of Bangladesh secondary citizens in their own country. The government has also supported the antiminority activities in the country to drive out the minorities from there. The



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government backed terrorist slogan was ‘leave this country and flee to India’. The activities of minority harassment are not considered serious and are being passed by the authorities as stray incidents. The grass root level workers of BNP-JIB alliance that won with a large majority in 2001 elections used to think that the minority Hindus should be suppressed since they vote for the rival Awami League. The question of justice becomes a misnomer when terror is unleashed under the protection of the government. “The underlying policy is ‘don’t kill them, molest their women’ so that they are compelled to leave Bangladesh, gradually and slowly out of mental agony, in view of the fact there may be adverse international reaction and Indian government and people may not view it lightly if they are driven out in one go. Due to the violation of Human Rights a grave situation exists in Bangladesh. This has led to a continuous decline in minority population. Minorities feeling unsafe in this country escape to the neighbouring states of India.

There are a number of people who migrate from Bangladesh for economic reasons in search of employment and better chances of livelihood and better economic benefits in the receiving country. The cause is that there is a lack of employment in Bangladesh and the level of living is also very low.

The ISI is today playing a very massive role in Bangladesh by using it as a base for anti-India movements. It is not only running training camps for insurgents of the northeast states of India but also sending them in India. In that manner it is causing illegal infiltration.

Natural calamities like flood, cyclone drought are the yearly phenomena in Bangladesh. Every year each of these events, sometimes all together inflict huge damage to the lives, properties and the economy of the country. These natural causes also make a ground for migration from Bangladesh. When flood comes it washes away the crops and habitats of poor Bangladeshis. The uneven development and regular occurrence of natural calamities like floods and droughts exacerbates this phenomenon; according to official reckoning, 18-20 million people are displaced by floods in Bangladesh every year. They cannot afford this calamity every year, so they migrate to some safer places like India, where they can get comparatively stable conditions of living and food security.



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Despite its small size Bangladesh is the 7th most populated country in the world. All projections clearly indicate that by the end of the first decade of 21st century, Bangladesh will face a serious crisis of lebensraum (living space). There are a number of thinkers who think that the root cause of migration from Bangladesh is the density of the population and the scarcity of living space. According to Sanjoy Hazarika Bangladesh presents a Malthusian nightmare with too many people on too little land.

Sometimes family reunion and joining of friends, relatives and neighbours, and low costs of cross-border migration also constitute major components of continuing migration process.