Conservation and Displacement: A Study of Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) Forest in Mizoram, Northeast India

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Abstract

Conservation projects and displacement are two facets of the relationship between the state and the environment. Conservation projects aim to address the threats to the environment and its biodiversity that are undoubtedly real in contemporary times. At the same time, they are based on an exclusionary framework in approach, practices, and understanding. They begin with the process of identification, distinction, division, and demarcation of what is to be preserved and conserved. Hence, state-led conservation becomes top-down, instrumental, and forceful. My thesis argues that such practices of conservation projects become untoward and unsustainable, victimising people, and destroying nature. It fails to both understand people and the environment and to address the problems. The approach denies an ecology whereby both the people and the environment share a symbiotic relationship, and displacement becomes a common outcome.

Displacement of people from a conservation project is not just about the physical removal of the people from their habitats but also the erasure of their history, memory, and representation (Schama 1996 cited in Brockington and Igoe, 2006) and fails to recognize complex and enduring human-nature interactions. Consequently, it disrupts ecosystems in the name of conservation. My thesis critically examines and analyses the issues of conservation and displacement from a bottom-up approach, that is, from the experiences of the displaced. It studies a prominent 'tiger conservation project without tiger', namely the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) in the state of Mizoram, India, its disruption of local ecosystems it was established to conserve and the resulting environmental and socio-economic crisis. I investigate socio-cultural and historical factors affecting the human-nature relationship in the DTR. The Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) conservation project demonstrates the importance of understanding local ecosystems and conservation that challenges the state-led conservation practices resulting in displacement of both people and nature.

Acknowledgement

The thesis on conservation and displacement from its conception to completion represents a remarkable journey of evolving ideas, events, people, and firsthand experiences. The detailed narratives shall run into pages and yet remain incomplete to write as an acknowledgement. I, being the first-generation learner of my family and the village, would like to thank the Felix Scholarship without which it would not have been possible to even dream of doing this thesis at SOAS. It is a privilege for me to thank Bimal Bhikkhu, a Chakma educationist whose vision and dedication towards education made it possible for me and many to dream and achieve. To mention the name of the people who helped and supported me towards my education and its opportunities are many from villages to cities. However, I would like to thank the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) government, especially Kali Kumar Tongchangya who was always ready to help me since the time of my journey to Melbourne, Australia to London, United Kingdom.

I dedicate the thesis to my late father, Chandra Ketu Chakma and my mother, Ananda Mukhi Chakma who did everything in their ability and supported me in the best possible ways and means for my education. Indeed, for me, it's a dream come true. The memories and experiences of hardships from hunger to diseases have largely influenced my thesis. I had two brothers (one is the eldest and another the younger) who my parents lost to diseases at an incredibly early age. One (the eldest) I cannot remember, and the other (the younger one) was so inspired to go to school and kept waiting for my return from school with joy. In the year and time when my parents were just preparing to admit him to school (kindergarten), he became a victim of a disease (I did not know what illness, but now, as I recollect the symptoms, it was malaria). Therefore, for every parent in my place after giving birth to children, every parent has no surety of living and survival for their children due to their harsh living conditions without medical facilities. In such a context, I do not see the relevance of state-led family planning for sustainable development. So, I am a winner in life among all the children who were victims of the uncertainty of life and made a journey up to my Ph.D.

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List of tables

Abbreviations

ASS	–	Assam Sahitya Sabha
ASSU	–	All Assam Student Union
APLC	–	All-Party Hill Leader
ACHR	–	Asian Centre for Human Rights
AFRA	–	Assam Forest Regulation Act
BADP	–	Border Areas Development Program
BPL	–	Below Poverty Line
BWC	–	Bru Welfare Committee
BNU	–	Bru National Union
BTAD	–	Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District
BNLF	–	Bru National Liberation Front

BADC	–	Bru Autonomous District Council
BSF	–	Border Security Forces
CBD	–	Convention on Biological Diversity
CHTs	–	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CADC	–	Chakma Autonomous District Council
CNRH	–	Council of Naga Rengmas Hills
DC	–	Deputy Commissioner
DTR	–	Dampa Tiger Reserve
DWS	–	Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary
HNC	–	Hmar National Congress
HPCD	–	Hmar Peoples' Convention (D)
IAY	–	Indira Awaz Yojana
ICDS	–	Integrated Child Development Scheme
KRF	–	Kasalong Reserve Forest
KNA	–	Kuki National Assembly
LHADC	–	Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council
MSU	–	Mizo Students' Union
MNFF	–	Mizo National Famine Front
MNF	–	Mizo National Front
MPC	–	Mizoram Peoples Conference
MCSU	–	Mizoram Chakma Students' Union
MZP	–	Mizo Zirlai Pawl
MHA	–	Mizoram Hmar Association
MGNREGA	–	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MBDPF	–	Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum
MsDP	–	Multi-sector Development Program
MIP	–	Mizoram Intodelhna Program
MSDP	–	Multi Sector Development Schemes
NEFA	–	Northeast Frontier Agency
NTFP	–	Non-Timber Forest Products
NDP	–	Net Domestic Product
NLUP	–	New Land Use Policy
NREGS	–	National Rural Guarantee Scheme
NABSSS	–	Nikhil Assam Banga Bhasha Sammelan and Sangram Samity

PA	–	Protected Area
PLRC	–	Pawi-Lakher Regional Council
RDP	–	Reang Democratic Party
RAW	–	Research and Analysis Wing
SSA	–	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SDPO	–	Sub-Divisional Police Officer
USA	–	United States of America
WWF	–	Worldwide Fund for Nature
YMA	–	Young Mizo Association

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Conservation and Displacement: A Study of Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) Forest in Mizoram, Northeast India

Chapter 2 Conservation, Displacement and Theoretical considerations

Chapter 3 Environmental History of Mizoram and the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR).

Chapter 1 Conservation and Displacement: A Study of Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) Forest in Mizoram, Northeast India

1.1 Introduction

Contemporary discussions and debates on conservation and displacement can be related to the magnitude of environmental problems and crises faced by people and nature around the planet. (P. Crutzen 2002). It is argued that since the invention of the steam engine or Industrial Revolution, the biosphere and its ecology have undergone radical changes (Zalasiewicz et al., 2008; Barnosky et al., 2012, Malm 2015). Conservation aims to address the threats to the environment and its biodiversity which is undoubtedly real. In 2002, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) set targets to conserve 10% of the geographical area of the earth. In the 2010 CBD held in Aichi, Japan, the target was further revised to 17% of land areas and 10% of oceans by 2020. Environmentalists and biologists like Edward O. Wilson (2016) argue for conserving half of the planet for nature (both terrestrial and marine). He advocates for setting big goals instead of aiming for incremental progress or goals with the due magnitude of the problem. The United States of America (USA) seems to be leading this initiative and in early 2021, the USA under the leadership of President Joe Biden officially adopted the 30x30 initiative to conserve 30% of the Earth's land area by 2030.[1]

The concern of the environmental activists about the environmental crisis could be best placed and understood in the backdrop of developmental discourses of economic growth which is limitless in nature. Consequently, there is immense pressure on the environment due to continued excessive exploitation of forests and their resources, leading to urgent search for solutions (Steffen et al., 2007, Ceballos et al., 2015). Conservation discourses and projects have become prominent ways to address environmental 'problems' at structural, institutional, and individual levels. However, there is considerable evidence that this model of conservation has victimised indigenous peoples and other marginalised sections of the society, primarily by displacing them. This is comparable to the magnitude of human evictions and suffering due to civil wars, mega-development projects, and other high-modernist

[1] EARTH.ORG (2023), "How Conservation Contributes to the Displacement of Indigenous People", on 8th March 2023, https://earth.org/conservation-indigenous-people/# accessed on 7th April 2023.

state interventions (Schmidt-Soltau 2005; Brockington et al. 2006: 250; West and Brockington 2006: 613). Accurate figures for displacement are not maintained, but estimates range from 8.5 to 136 million humans displaced because of conservation projects (Geisler 2003). For instance, in India between 1999 to 2020, a total of 13,450 families from 2 protected areas were displaced[2]. The stories of displacement from conservation projects continued in various parts of the world. For example, in early 2016, the Baka tribe in southeast Cameron with the help of the Survival International organization complained to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) about displacement and denial of their land by the establishment of protected areas. It is therefore not surprising that displacement has not been well received by tribe/indigenous communities, and it faces stiff rejections and resistance at different geographical locations.

In India, it is estimated that 90% of tribal or indigenous people live in or proximity to forests. The tribes have traditionally lived in about 15% of the geographical area of the country, in forests, hills and undulating inaccessible terrain areas (Madegowda C, 2009). As per the Forest Survey of India report (2003), about 60% of the forest cover of the country and 63% of the dense forests lie in 187 tribal districts. The steady rise in the number and geographical coverage of Protected Areas (PAs) in India has been accompanied by a rise in the number of conservation refugees (Asmita Kabra, 2009). If the target to conserve 17% of land areas set during the 2010 CBD, comes displacement, then the indigenous peoples around the globe shall be the victims of conservation. Fabienne Bayett (1998), a noted aboriginal writer argues that the establishment of national parks may be the "second wave of dispossession" which denies their customary inherited right to use land for hunting, gathering, building, rituals, and birthing rights.

The thesis brings about how forceful conservation is problematic for both the people and the environment. It also demonstrates how such a paradigm is becoming a mechanism for the state to act against its unwanted citizens. It shows how the question of conservation and displacement is inalienable from the complex realities of

[2] DownToEarth (2020), "'Protect & conserve model' displaced 13,450 families from 26 protected areas in 2 decades", on 5th October 2020, https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/wildlife-biodiversity/-protect-conserve-model-displaced-13-450-families-from-26-protected-areas-in-2-decades-73656 accessed on 10th January 2023.

the socio-political dynamics of a state and a region that dominate everyday life. The impact of this model is felt at multiple levels of the socio-economic and political life of the people.

My research interest in this issue is very deep and goes back to as long as I can remember since growing up as a child. First, from an early age, I was told by my parents that I was born in a place called 'Ponsury' which I never saw or visited and have no memory of. In the later stage of my childhood, I came to know that we cannot even go to see where I was born as it is inside the Dampa Tiger Reserve. Secondly, when I left my village and state of Mizoram for my education, one statement of the people remained in my heart and memory which is "till the last decade, there was a crisis of clothes but not food but now there is a crisis of food." At that time, I did not understand anything about it and simply thought that it may be due to poverty. Similarly, another such statement is, "we were bypassed by our leader who says that we won the case, and we will get back our lost lands from the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest." Thirdly, as a child, I remember fleeing from our home and the village and staying in an old Jhum field in Bangladesh due to fear of Mizos. At that time, as a child, all I knew was that not only us (our family) but everyone, especially women, children, and elderly people in the village were fleeing. I did not know why. As I grew up and accessed my undergraduate studies, I came to know that in the year 1992, about 380 Chakma houses were burnt down by the Mizos in several neighboring villages.

Finally, when I got an opportunity to do field research work during my postgraduate degree in development studies at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, I did my dissertation on the impact of displacement from the DTR forest. As an outcome of my fieldwork and the dissertation, I came to know that in the DTR forest, there are no tigers. This has further troubled and unsettled my mind. The fieldwork for my postgraduate degree research project was only for two months. The time and days of fieldwork were not enough. I always had the hunch that I could gather more information if I spent more time and days in the field and to understand the reasons for a tiger conservation without tigers. Hence, I made a research proposal to the TISS Research Council which got accepted in 2014 to conduct further fieldwork in the DTR forest. The outcome of this project is the findings that in the state of Mizoram,

there are discriminatory developmental and environmental practices based on identities, gender, and geographical locations. The conservation project in the form of the DTR forest in the Mamit district of Mizoram is the starting point of socio-political conflicts.

Therefore, it led to pursuing my doctoral studies at SOAS. The thesis addresses some fundamental issues and concerns of conservation and displacement which goes beyond the DTR forest of Mizoram and Northeast India. The thesis explores conservation and displacement in the context of complex socio-political and historical contexts. It utilizes different theoretical and methodological approaches to explore the practices of coercive conservation and their impact.

1.2 Scope of the thesis

1.2.1 Rationale for the study

The abstract and introduction of the thesis provide directions and guidelines for the thesis. The rationale for the study has three parts. One is that it theoretically and methodologically engages the need to understand people displaced by conservation projects, the environment, and ecosystems in which these projects are placed, and their histories. Secondly, it empirically demonstrates the twin victimizations of displacement of local communities and the environment due to coercive conservation. Finally, it explores how conservation has become a mechanism for the state to target the marginalised groups of people and insert them in the web of the larger state and regional political dynamics which decides their everyday life. It argues that conservation projects cannot be taken for granted as being 'good' for the environment or local populations, and their multiple effects need to be critically examined. In the thesis, I ask why and how a detailed consideration of socio-cultural and historical factors is essential to understand human-nature relationships. I study the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest and its people to explore the research questions of the thesis.

The thesis uses concepts such as market environmentalism (Anderson and Leal 1991), green neoliberalism (Goldman 2005), green capitalism (Heartfield 2008), and Neoliberal Conservation (Igoe and Brockington 2006; Sullivan 2006) to understand the political economy of conservation. This shows how conservation is not just a part

of a larger ecosystem but also of the market in which conservation practices are also located. In fact, while analysing the sustainable development framework as a response to the environmental crisis W. M Adams (2001) argues it has become a slogan than a basis for theory and is functioning like a 'win–win' situation for the state and the market agents in the pursuit of maximisation of power and profits.

Kunkel (2017) while reviewing the works of J. Davies (2016), The Birth of the Anthropocene, J. Moore (2015), Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital, and Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam-Power and the Roots of Global Warming (A. Malm (2015) argues that placing nature and society in separate compartments is indeed a peculiar mental artefact of capitalism and he goes on about the approaches of 'humanity-in-nature' and 'nature-in-humanity' rather than understanding humanity-and-nature. This is what Moore criticizes as 'Cartesian dualism.' He further argues that the human-and-nature understandings place nature outside society, so that nature may 'be coded, quantified and rationalised to serve economic growth." Such an approach helps to understand the significance of exploring how historically both humans and nature evolved together and are inseparable from each other. The understanding of conservation to conserve a distinct area without people is not only exclusive in its' nature but very problematic too. Although in the contemporary language of conservation, displacement is undesirable and the community (or indigenous people) participation is legitimized at the policy level against the backdrops of displacement and rights, such legitimization itself holds exclusionary processes like what Western and Wright (1994) describe as top-down, center-driven conservation whereby the local communities bear the cost and be part of it.

1.3 Research Questions

The overarching research question of the thesis

1. Why and in what ways do the socio-cultural and historical factors affect the human-nature relationship in the DTR, and how the displacement of people equally displaces ecology?

Sub-research questions and presentation of the chapters

1. What does seeing conservation like the state miss about the local populations and natural environments, and why does it matter?

2. Why is the relationship between nature and the local people's culture inseparable from understanding the environment and conservation?

3. How are conservation projects entangled in the local and regional politics of nativism and ethnonationalism that dominate everyday life in the state of Mizoram and Northeast India?

4. Why can the state-led conservation project with displacement be an instrument to marginalise both the people and the wildlife, and de-conservation of nature?

The DTR is in the region situated in the tri-junction of South, South-East, and East Asia and is rich in natural resources like water and forest and could be one of the wealthiest regions of India (World Bank, 2007). It is also in an area that James Scott (2009) calls the periphery of Southeast Asia, East Asia, and South Asia and at the centre of none. He described it as a 'shatter zone' and its people as 'Zomia' or the highlanders who are governed based on certain ecological regularities. Therefore, the overarching research question seeks to investigate the phenomena of displacement by state-led conservation projects and the rising conflicts between local communities and wildlife, between them and the state, and between communities from a socio-cultural and historical perspective. Furthermore, it seeks to explore and understand the historically evolved socio-ecological system, socio-political, and cultural relationships contextualized by state, market, and social relationships.

1.4 Location of the study

The Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest is in the western part of Mizoram state and is located at the tri-junction of Bangladesh and two Northeast Indian states of Mizoram and Tripura. The DTR is surrounded by the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to the west, and in the north is surrounded by the Indian state of Tripura, also Mamit and Kawrthah Forest Division of Mizoram state, and in the south and east is surrounded

by the Mamit Forest Division of Mizoram state[3]. The Sazek or Sajek Hill Range runs in a north-south direction and separates Dampa from the Kasalong Reserve Forest located in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh. The Sajek Hill Range runs in a north-south direction between Dampa and Khaslong Reserve Forest with a forested area of not less than 4,000 km (about 2485.48 mi) [22] in Bangladesh. This Reserve supports many wild animals, which migrate between Dampa and Khaslong Reserve. Due to such, it is considered to harbor tigers and therefore to be inviolate[4]. In the earlier times (pre-colonial and colonial), this was a shared space for wildlife and local indigenous people who kept moving from one place to another between India and present-day Bangladesh. It was also a region that was inhabited by different indigenous communities such as the Mizos, Chakmas, and the Reangs: these communities were split, and their members became citizens of two different nations after India's Independence from the British.

On 20th February 1987 Mizoram became India's 23rd state. Previously, it was part of Assam state until 1972, when it became a Union Territory. Presently, Mizoram has 10 Protected Areas i.e., 1 (One) Tiger Reserve, 2 (two) National Parks and 7 (Seven) Wildlife Sanctuaries[5]. The Dampa Tiger Reserve Forest is the biggest wildlife sanctuary in the state of Mizoram by covering 57.15% of the total areas of the wildlife sanctuaries of the state. It was first started as Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary in 1976[6] and was declared as a Tiger Reserve in 1994. The total area of DTR is 988 km (about 613.91 mi) [2] of which, 500 km (about 310.69 mi) [2] is as Core or Critical Tiger Habitat and 488 km (about 303.23 mi) as Buffer Area.

1.5 Methodologies of the study

1.5.1 Ontological Stance

In the field of study, I am positioned both as an insider and outsider. First, I was born and raised in my study's place. Secondly, I studied two communities such as the

[3] Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014), 2013 – 2014 to 2022 to 2023 prepared by the Field Director of Dampa Tiger Reserve, page 3.

[4] Tiger Conservation Plans: Dampa Tiger Reserve, 2013 – 2014 to 2022-23, prepared by the Field Director of Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram, page 47.

[5] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017 by the Environment, Forests & Climate Change Department, Government of Mizoram, page 128.

[6] Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014), 2013 – 2014 to 2022 to 2023 prepared by the Field Director of Dampa Tiger Reserve, Page 48.

Chakma and the Mizos. I am an insider to the Chakmas and to the Mizos I am an outsider. Finally, even though I was an outsider to the Mizos, there are significant differences because I belong to an 'arch-rival' community of the Mizos, the Chakma community. Historically these two communities are in conflict. Consequently, the issue of the DTR is extremely sensitive and controversial. The Chakmas do not like it (the DTR) because of displacement and loss of land to the conservation project. On the other hand, the Mizos do not have problems with it because it is not negatively affecting them (for livelihood and Jhum cultivation) as it is for the Chakmas and the Reangs communities. Moreover, given the Mizos' local domination of state and market structures, it is creating jobs and opportunities for them.

Therefore, I can say that I am both emically and etically part of the study or the insider/outsider of the research. Having said that, being an insider, posed methodological challenges, which could be different for a researcher being an outsider such as expectations to interact with the so called the 'good persons' who are the Buddhist monks, elected members of the village councils, teachers, students, and non-alcoholic people. At the same time, there were advantages for being an insider which might not have been the case for an outsider, such as language, knowledge of local culture, context, and familiarity with geographical terrain. I certainly experienced the differences of being a researcher in the same field study between the pre and in the doctoral research work. For instances, I hardly faced the challenges as I did in my Doctoral field study such as suspicion of commodifying information or data with foreign agencies, getting appointments to interviews, and over expectations that led to setting social norms like decision with who to interact and socialise. On the other hand, when I conducted my fieldwork in the Mizo villages it was either getting access to what I needed or denying information or data for being an outsider. I have not experienced interference in personal space as I did in the Chakma villages. Indeed, while conducting my field research, my mind kept debating itself about the advantages and disadvantages of conducting fieldwork as an insider and outsider which I shall elaborately explain in the following section (field study and methodology) of the chapter. At the end of my PhD fieldwork and still, now, it is still an inconclusive subject, but I did learn from such contradictions and situations.

The journey and events in my life reflect my ontological position of being both an insider and an outsider. For instance, I witnessed violence against members of my community by the social and politically dominant group, the Mizos. I grew up a child with the memories and stories of campaigns and social movements by the Mizos against the 'others' or the 'perceived' or 'constructed refugees or non-natives of the state,' who are non-Mizos. Among them are the Chakmas and the Reang (also known as Bru) that belong to the ethnic minority social groups in the state. I remember when the electoral rights of my parents were taken away and denied after getting removed (deleted) from the electoral rolls of 1995. This made it difficult for me to access my school education until my father could successfully enroll in the electoral roll in 1996 that enabled me to access my certificate of permanent residence in the state.

In the year 1997, I was lucky enough to gain an educational opportunity (schooling) in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, which was a dream come true for me and my parents. It also shows the appalling educational situation in rural Mizoram, especially for the non-Mizos. For instance, while the Mizoram state is consistently at the top on the list of literate states in the country, there are vast differences between the dominant social group (Mizo) and the other ethnic minorities such as Chakma and Reang. According to the 2001 and 2011 India's Census reports, the literacy rate of the Chakmas is 55% and 48%, while the literacy rate of the Mizos is 96.6 and 97.5% respectively. Indeed, while pursuing my higher studies, I was actively associated with the Students Unions to campaign and work against the human rights violation and denial of democratic rights.

I was an active member of the All-India Chakma Students' Union (AICSU) who fought against human rights violations. For example, the AICSU, won the court cases against an Act of a State's legislation to identify and treat the Chakmas as non-Indigenous peoples of Mizoram state and according to which only the Mizos are the Indigenous Peoples or the original inhabitants of the state. As per the state act, it shall deny state facilities and schemes to the non-Mizos. In 2017, the state government denied medical seats to the Chakma students who were selected based on their performances in the competitive examinations.

I was also actively part of the campaign against the eviction of Chakma villages. In a case where I was part of the team that extensively campaigned against the forceful evictions of a Chakma village, namely Toijongdor by the state government. I also visited the village after a primary school was burnt down to ashes by a group of Mizo student bodies known as Mizo Students' Union (MSU) in front of both the schoolteachers and the children who witnessed such (review your use of 'such' when it should be 'it') it with tearful eyes. The Guwahati High Court passed 'stay orders' against evicting the villagers and violating their rights. However, the final hearing of the case is still pending in the Guwahati High Court. I expect judgement in favor of the which people in its final verdict of the court.

As a part of social activism, I published in local, regional, and national newspapers, online news media and academic journals on the ongoing socio-political issues of the state. Some writings which directly connected with my PhD thesis are; the State of Exclusion, in the Himal Southasian Journal, The Bru-Mizo conflict in Mizoram, in the Economic & Political Weekly (journal), Citizens without citizenship, in The Statesman (national newspaper), Naturalizing everyday violence in Mizoram, in The Countercurrents (online media), No State for Chakmas: In Mizoram, a Minority Battles for Rights Against a Former Minority, in The Scroll (online news media), and Resignation of a Chakma minister in Mizoram: Has the oppressed become the oppressor?, in The Shillong Times (Regional Newspaper).

Therefore, ontologically, I am very much part of the Chakma people and have strong 'belonging' to the place of study, and this determines my positionality in insider/outsider debates. However, even though I enter the research as an insider, my research goes beyond my prior formation and experience. The answers to my main questions why and in what ways do the socio-cultural and historical factors affect the human-nature relationship in the DTR, and how the displacement of people equally displaces ecology, is an outcome of the fieldwork and not a priori knowledge. Such a priori knowledge is not an outcome of being part or insider of the study. As said earlier, although being an insider in many respects, I did face challenges throughout the fieldwork which led me to have internal debates in my mind about my positionality as insider versus outsider in the field. This dilemma, in fact, informs the study.

1.5.2 Field study and methodology

My fieldwork was carried out in both the Chakma and Mizo villages. I had different experiences in two locations. In the Mizo village of Phuldungsei, where I conducted my fieldwork, the challenge was that I belong to the Chakma community. The Mizos and the Chakmas share antagonistic relations with constant socio-political conflicts of exclusion and domination. Therefore, getting information or appointments to interview was quite trying, and requests were even denied. The names or identities of the interviewees had to be kept anonymous. All my interviewees' names have changed except for a few (of non-controversial topics). Written permission for the interviews was not possible but oral permission was taken before every interview and with a promise of not revealing their names. There are couple of interviews where the interviewees had no problems revealing their names, but I choose against revealing their real names because of the sensitivity and seriousness of the issue. There were times when I had to interact with my respondents without pen and paper. At every interaction or interview, I assured them that the report shall not reveal their original names. Therefore, the question of obtaining the interviewees' written consent and recording the interviews does not arise. It is one of the reasons I could gain my interviewees' confidence and trust.

This (trust of the interviewees) led to gathering critical and sensitive information and reports including their displeasures with the DTR project. For example, how hunting for sale evolved and developed after the conservation project of the DTR and its' displacement. It also reveals how so-called illegal hunting in the Mizo villages take place and how the forest guards never caught them despite knowing the facts. This is overly sensitive information because my interviewees may be in trouble. Therefore, I decided against giving their real names, even though some expressed or gave consent. However, there are few interviews whereby I have revealed their real names because of three reasons. Firstly, they verbally consent to use their real names in my report. Secondly, the topic of discussion is not controversial (such as about livelihood activities, incomes, and other households' information). Thirdly, the names are quite common in the villages, and it is difficult to identify without mentioning the details such as the father's and mother's name of the interviewees. However, the most

challenging part in the Mizo villages where I was an outsider and I 'was eyed', in suspicion of being a Chakma.

The experiences and challenges were quite different in the Chakma villages known as Hnahva and Silsury. I am not only known to that village but many of the Chakma villages in the state. People know me not only because I am doing fieldwork but also because of my earlier records of social activism and involvement with them for various social activities. Indeed, in the villages, many are relatives, friends, and family acquaintances. Most importantly, they see me as one of the most educated and as doing a PhD abroad. They have certain expectations, beliefs, feelings, and perceptions about me that resulted in my falling into inconvenient situations and dilemmas for being a researcher and known person.

For instance, when I was conducting fieldwork in a Chakma village, certain groups such as the political, educated, and service holders with their expectations towards me to meet them and get closer to them. When I met the so-called economically lower section of the village, it was not appreciated by the economically, educationally, and socially privileged group of people. Most of my social interactions in the village remained with the economically poor, who engaged with some livelihood activities inside the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR).

There were also times when critical information was difficult to get due to the fear factor of the DTR authority. Consequently, I spent more time with them, sharing food, smoke, and drinks. Expectations like spending time with students, teachers, and local social organizations to encourage, motivate, and inspire others. The fact that each person in the village knows me resulted in both advantageous and disadvantageous situations. Moreover, the fact that my parents or relatives are involved and related to certain political groups in the village made me more susceptible to thinking from the people that I am a supporter of a certain political party.

Hence, sometimes I was treated with suspicion–and most importantly I was often thought to be against the conservation project. For instance, when I requested to access the official village diary of the forest department where they maintain records of every forest-related conflict (between people, authority, and wildlife), I was denied.

It was so, not because I sound to be against the conservation project but when I started interviewing people and interacting with them, people thought that I am someone who can or will do something for them against their plights due to displacement and the DTR itself. Hence, the forest guards or workers in the village looked at me with suspicion. There were rumors about me that I get money from foreign states for interviewing them and making financial profits. Such rumors did affect my fieldwork as some interviewees either intended to avoid or campaign against taking part in my research as my interviewees. For example, at times, there were cases whereby people were reluctant to give interviews. It shows that they do not want their information to be commodified.

Such situations were very testing times for me as a researcher and a person who people consider me one of them. For instance, when I was getting married the villagers interfered in the decision-making of my parents in negative ways. Dealing with such a situation was difficult and put me in an inconvenient situation with dilemmas and confusion. Overall, being an insider, as discussed earlier, the expectations and displeasures over not meeting them also reflect the village and social reality. The fact that they want me to get close and avoid certain social groups reflects their desperation to come out of their everyday life struggles. They see me as a ray of hope to improve and influence the people on a better path for the welfare of the village. It can be clearly said that people want me to get involved with school students, teachers, and the ruling class and avoid certain groups such as the so-called illegal hunters. It also shows that they do not appreciate their hunting actions, though they certainly buy wild meats when they sell. Based on my observation and analysis, they still consider hunting as bad and linked with cultural beliefs and practices. The fact that they still buy shows they have no option as the villages are not properly linked to the town markets to get the supply of meats and fish as needed.

Throughout my fieldwork, my positionality as a researcher and a person of one community that conflicted with another (for example, the case with the Mizo villagers) remained in tension. For me, it was not an easy task to walk through the middle way, as my only intent was not just completing the fieldwork and running away from the place. Therefore, while I may have the advantages of being an insider but at the same time, the challenges were quite mentally and psychologically daunting.

Table No. 1 Number of qualitative interviews

Sl. No.	Interviewed	Number of interviews			Community		
		Semi-structured	Life history	Focus Group Discussion	Chakma	Mizo	Reang
	Senior citizens (age above 60) Men	9			6	3	
	Senior citizens (age above 60) women	8			5	3	
	Adult (18 to 60 years old) Men	6	4	14	16	6	2
	Adult (18 to 60 years old) Women	4		12	11	5	
	Forest guards	4			4	Denied	
	Former Forest guards		2	4	6	Denied	
	Members of village council			11	6	5	
	Total	31	6	41	54	22	2
		Total Numbers of Interviews: 78					

1.6 Approach of the study

Despite the challenges I faced in the field as an insider, I do acknowledge the advantages which might otherwise have been challenging as an outsider. For instance, the in-depth knowledge of socio-political dynamics of the state and how it relates to displacement from the Dampa Tiger Reserve project in the state of Mizoram. Hence, I adopted a 'grounded' theoretical approach to my study. Strauss & Corbin (1994) describes it "as a set of relationships that offer a plausible explanation of the

phenomenon under study", and as "grounded in data which are systematically gathered and analysed". It develops during the research process itself and is a product of continuous interplay between analysis and data collection (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Charmaz, 1983). In my research, the phenomenon under study is the issues of displacement by conservation and the people. It takes consideration of other socio-ecological, political, and political-economic theoretical aspects to explain and analyse the data.

To further illustrate and explain the phenomenon under study, I draw contradicting theoretical approaches which engages in the debates of state-led conservation practices. For example, neo-Malthusian approaches, which are normally very rightwing that sees conservation viz-a-viz sustainable development, profit for both the conservation and people and often justify displacement (both physical removal and denial to access the protected areas) for conservation. On the other hand, the neo-Marxist ones, which are leftwing engage and analyse the political economy of conservation and linked with other socio-political and political economies of the state and market. While the neo-Malthusian theoretical approach helps to investigates the ground reality of place, affected people/communities, and the conservation project under study and the neo-Marxists helps to understand the phenomenon of conservation practices relating to state and market but with the help of the data from the ground. The neo-Malthusian theoretical approach cannot answer the question of why the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest, a conservation project in the name of tigers without tigers and by displacing the local communities.

However, the neo-Marxists do not help explain who these local communities and their dynamics are. Indeed, both theoretical approaches cannot explain why certain communities with different identities get excluded and victimised by the DTR project and others benefited out of the project. Therefore, I bring the post-Marxist theoretical approach which includes feminist and post-structuralist perspectives that focus on non-economic and non-capitalist relations such as gender, ethnicity, and the socialised nature.

1.7 Field research

My first field research in the DTR forest was in 2012 for three months during my post-graduation studies at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. My earlier fieldwork experiences in the same field have quite different experiences. For instance, I spent one full year in the field for my doctoral research project, and this was not the case during the post-graduate research when I spent limited time. In this time, my social position and ethnic identity worked both to my advantages and disadvantages.

The doctoral degree fieldwork formally started in September 2017. I have used various ethnographic field methods such as participant observation, semi-structured and informal interviews, focus group discussions, content analysis, life histories, and case studies.

The fieldwork was in three different villages. Two of them are Chakma villages such as Hnhava and Sislury and one Mizo known as Phuldungsei. Among these villages, I kept Silsury and Phuldungsei as the main fields of study. I also visited villages neighboring Phuldungsei such as Pukzin, West Phaileng, and Damparengpui (all belonging to the Mizo tribe), where I did not spend a long time, unlike the above three mentioned villages. In the other villages, I used 'non-participant observant method' with informal conversation interview to understand the intend people and places relevant to the research such as Jhum cultivation practices, establishments of villages in comparison to the displaced villages and Chakma people doing Jhum cultivation in the Mizo areas.

Another community known as the Reang (or Bru) were also displaced from the DTR forest. The DTR forest is one of the main reasons for the conflicts between the Brus with the Mizos and the Mizoram state. The thesis reveals their experiences of conflicts that are linked with the DTR. I initially aimed to conduct fieldwork in one of the Bru villages but had to drop it as it was not workable to conduct fieldwork in three separate locations of villages of three communities. During the rainy season, communication and transportation is a big problem in the state. For instance, the distance from Aizawl to Silsury is only 167 kilometers (about 103.77 mi), but it

normally takes 10 to 12 hours of travel. There were times when I had to spend nights in villages midway to Aizawl. In the rainy season, the journey to and from Aizawl, the state capital, to villages I was conducting research, often takes more than a day due to landslides, roadblocks, and problems with the vehicles while travelling. Therefore, selecting another village for my fieldwork was not possible which is in distinct locations altogether. The villages of my field study, such as Phuldungsei, Hnahva, and Silsury, share the same road to Aizawl and are neighbours.

I had to spend a significant amount of time in Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram, where I could communicate with my supervisor and access emails and the internet. In the villages, communication was exceedingly difficult, though there are mobile networks to make phone calls and sometimes it also supports access to internet, an exceptionally low bandwidth. One rainy day, the network vanished, making it difficult to even make a phone call. There is no telling when it might get restored.

The fieldwork also required access to secondary materials from various available sources. However, before the field visit in India, I had visited and spent times accessing and reading British Library, British Museum, and SOAS Library. In India, I spent times in various places such as Kolkata, West Bengal, Shillong, Meghalaya, and Aizawl. I spent a couple of months at the North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, to meet people and access their library. NEHU is a university known for its specialization in the region, and where I have maintained relations and communications since my post-graduate studies. During my fieldwork year, I spent considerable time in Aizawl to access the state libraries, government offices, and roadside community libraries. The list of libraries/places visited to collect data for research such as.

1. The North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, Meghalaya, and its' Library to understand about the region of the Northeast India.
2. The National Library of India, Kolkata, West Bengal to collect colonial and pre-colonial records and reports.
3. Aizawl State Library, Mizoram to read and understand about Mizo histories and records.

4. Roadsides Tribal Research Institutes Library to gather information and reports about local communities in Mizoram.
5. Office of the Environment, Forests & Climate Change Department, Government of Mizoram, and its' libraries to collect specific data and reports of the DTR.

1.8 Outlines of the thesis and sub-research questions of the thesis

Chapter 1, introduces and sets the background and direction of the thesis. It highlights the personal field experiences of being an insider and outsider at the same time. It explains the methodologies of fieldwork and the approaches to conducting ethnographic data collection methods.

Chapter 2 discusses and reviews a range of literature on conservation-led displacement. It brings out the conservation history in the United States of America (USA) and Europe, noting the differences and similarities with India's indigenous peoples, narrowing down on Northeast India. It introduces the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) which is the biggest conservation project in the state of Mizoram in the name of tigers without tigers. It then considers multiple theoretical frameworks to explore, discuss, and analyse the DTR.

Chapter 3 addresses a research question; what does seeing conservation like the state miss about the local populations and natural environments, and why does it matter? It highlights the impact of creating different socio-political geographical areas/zones and boundaries, and the formation of the nation-state, on the local people and the environment. This chapter explores how the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest in the state of Mizoram, Northeast India is connected to other geographies such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh and Assam in India. The chapter argues that in state-led conservation projects, the local people and ecology get excluded. The chapter also explores and explains the relationships between the people and the environment in the face of nation-state formations and struggles to establish political powers in different eras such as pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times.

Chapter 4 addresses the research question of; why is the relationship between nature and the local people's culture inseparable from understanding the environment and conservation? The chapter explores and discusses the socio-cultural beliefs and

livelihood practices of the Chakmas and the Mizos in connection with their human-nature interactions and relationships. For example, how Jhum cultivation intimately connects the Chakmas and the Mizos with nature based on their symbiotic relationship. At the same time, it also illustrates how environmental factors shape social values, ethics, norms, and practices. It argues that understanding the environment and conservation without the local people is not complete.

Chapter 5 addresses the research question of; how are conservation projects entangled in the local and regional politics of nativism and ethnonationalism that dominate everyday life in the state of Mizoram and Northeast India? This chapter explores and analyse how environmental events such as the bamboo flowerings played a decisive role in shaping the social and political movement in the state of Mizoram. At the same time, it also explains how the Mizoram state and Northeast India as a region, not homogenous space and stands for a complex socio-cultural and political dynamic. It further proves how everyday life in the Northeast region is dominated based on identity, nativity, and ethnonationalism. It further illustrates how marginalised ethnic groups get targeted and face systematic and state-sponsored discrimination.

Chapter 6 addresses the research question of; why can the state-led conservation project with displacement be an instrument to marginalise both the people and the wildlife, and de-conservation of nature? This chapter investigates and analyses the impact of displacement by the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) on the local people and the ecology. It illustrates how displacement of the local people results in the removal of wildlife and ultimately de-conserving nature in the name of conservation. This breaks the ecological relationship between the local people and the environment which so results in twin victimization. Therefore, displacing people results in the removal of wildlife and de-conserving nature in the name of conservation. The chapter also examines how displacement has brought forceful social change which negatively affected the local human-nature relationship. It then explores the displacement-led livelihood crisis in the people's lives and forced them to change their livelihood activities from subsistence to market-oriented. At the same time, it explores discriminatory conservation practices of the DTR based on ethnic identity, and so, it became a project wanted by some (the Mizos) and unwanted by others (Chakmas and Reangs). On the other hand, the chapter shows how the state economically benefits

from the DTR forest and its resources and exploits it to serve its political agenda of marginalising the marginalised.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter that reviews the outcomes of the thesis and shows opportunities for further research. It also recommends a way forward to conservation practices.

Chapter 2 Conservation, Displacement and Theoretical considerations

2.1 Introduction

This chapter understands the growing tensions between conservation projects and the indigenous people, both theoretically and empirically. This tension can be understood from the analysis of what Anna Tsing (2005) calls 'friction' between the environmental and social movements which fail to augment each other's universal aspirations, ideals, and claims. However, it is not just friction but a conflict between the conservation projects and their victims (the local communities). Indeed, the historical trajectories of conservation projects illustrate a pattern of systemic exclusion and marginalisation of the Indigenous peoples, best exemplified in their displacement.

Forcing conservation projects in the geographical areas of the Indigenous peoples is very much arbitrary and despotic. At the very least, the projects exclude them from all decision-making processes. The Indigenous peoples share symbiotic and harmonious relationships with nature, as I shall document, and are not the cause of the environmental problems.

Today, the operation of conservation projects with displacement is embedded in the complex socio-political, state, and market connectedness. The rights of the indigenous peoples and the implementation of conservation projects are beyond the binaries of people and the environment. Indeed, for the state, conservation project is not only about addressing global and local environmental problems but has even become a tool and mechanism to serve its' interest to dispose of the local people from their land and persecute the unwanted citizens. Therefore, it is very imperative to critically understand and analyse conservation projects and their displacement.

This chapter explores the historical trajectories of conservation and displacement of the indigenous peoples in the United States of America (USA), Europe, India, and Northeast India. It considers and offers a critical reading of multiple theoretical frameworks to explore, discuss, and analyse the DTR in the state of Mizoram and to build a framework for locating, understanding, and analyses.

2.2 Understanding Conservation

In the dominant literature, conservation could be understood in the philosophical interpretations of human and nature relations based on science and religion. For instance, an American historian Lynn White Jr. publication of "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" (1967), elaborated the thinking that justifies human domination could be traced back to "Judeo-Christian theology in Europe, which dominated everyday life by the Late Middle Ages"[7]. Such pattern of thinking, White argues, is evident in René Descartes's philosophical thought in the "Discourse on Method for Reasoning Well and for Seeking Truth in the Sciences (1637)" whereby he proposed to be the "masters and possessors of nature". This gives the license for human domination over nature and is considered to serve humanity[8].

In fact, the concept of Anthropocene by P. Crutzen (2002), while describing the contemporary global environmental crisis, indeed reflects and narrates how the nature is exploited and dominated as the means to enjoy its fruits and extract maximum for the materialistic benefits. Therefore, both humans and nature are seen and considered as two different entities whereby nature is objectified to serve the human, what Moore, and others note as 'Cartesian dualism.' This separation was seen as crucial to uncovering the 'secrets of nature' and gave rise to modern scientific enquiry. It divorced 'human nature,' with its "primary impulses and sense as foundation of his rationality and experience," from 'external nature' as an "existential environment" in which humanity forms society in a struggle with nature. In this way, the modern sciences were made possible. This view leads to thinking about conservation in a "people VS nature" way, and thus leads to creating reserves from which people are excluded and evicted.

On the contrary, there are views led by the cultural ecologists that the traditional societies do not treat the nature as an object to be dominated and shares a harmonious and symbiotic relationship with nature (e.g., White 1997; but also see Kerch 1999; Hames 2007). They argue that they care about their environment not just because of their love for nature but out of their epistemological and ontological social reality

[7] Noel Castree (2021), "Environmental Humanists" in the The International Encyclopedia of Geography.
[8] Jan Ludert (2010), Habermas Revisited: Indigenous Lifeworld(s) Today.

(Anderson 1996; Berkes 1999; Lentz 2000). In India, Verrier Elwin (1902-1964), a pioneer of ecological anthropology illustrates that "the forest provided the indigenous people food, fruit, medicine; materials for housing and agriculture; birds and animals for the pot. The forest's significance was economic as much as cultural, practical, and symbolic. All tribes had an intimate knowledge of wild plants and animals. Swidden agriculturalists, for which forest and farm shaded imperceptibly into each other, had a special bond with the natural world" (Guha, 1996). Hence, the idea of state led conservation in the form of 'reserve forest' or 'protected areas' is not relevant to them.

However, such cultural-ecological interpretation of people and nature is often described as 'ethnographic romanticization' of tribe and culture (Prasad, 2005). It is argued that the "women, forest dwellers and peasants were primarily the keepers of a special conservationist ethic" (S. Sinha et al., 2008). They further argue that to understand people and the environment, there is a need for a socio-historical approach, for instance how colonialism, modernity and development discourse was responsible for the degradation of nature. Moreover, the complex and inter-connected or relatedness of the world system is based on a flawed and generated interlinked crisis such as human repression and environmental destruction (Adams, 2011). Therefore, the thesis investigates the relationship of people and nature in terms of both social change and continuity in the paradigm of conservation and displacement.

The thesis also takes into consideration what Benjamin Kunkel (2017)[9] places as 'humanity-in-nature' and 'nature-in-humanity. He argues that placing nature and society in separate compartments is indeed a peculiar mental artefact of capitalism as nature is coded, quantified, and rationalised to serve economic growth. He further argues that the human and nature understanding interprets such nature exists outside the society. Hence, the paradigm of conservation without people can be best understood from this human and nature dichotomy.

The thesis argues that the state-led conservation projects are about a process of identifying what and how to conserve or preserve (for example tigers or wildlife) and

[9] While reviewing the works of J. Davies (2016), The Birth of the Anthropocene, J. Moore (2015), Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital, and A. Malm (2015) Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam-Power and the Roots of Global Warming.

demarcation of geographical areas or locations. It is also a process of legitimization that holds exclusionary processes like what Western and Wright (1994) describe as top-down, centre-driven conservation whereby the local people bear the cost. In such a process the displaced (both people and nature) are not either considered part of the system or get victimized even if it is a part of it. The thesis argues that–this is an outcome due to the misplaced conceptual understanding of conservation which is based on the concept of 'human vs and nature' and not human-in-nature or 'nature-in-human.'

2.3 Understanding conservation projects and displacement

Conservation projects aim to address the threats to the environment and its biodiversity. In the backdrop of the continued economic growth and excessive resource use and exploitations, which was highlighted by environmental activists' movements, it became imperative to address and solve the issues of environmental deterioration (Steffen et al., 2007, Ceballos et al., 2015) and thus conservation is seen as one of the ways forward. And it has become one of the mechanisms and institutional approaches to address the environmental issues both at structural and grass-roots levels. In the rise of 'conservation movement' the view of nature as 'wilderness as unpeopled space' became prominent in America (W H Adams, 2001) which later became a model for many other countries (M. Spence 1996). However, conservation projects with the displacement of local people around the world faced stiff rejection and resistance from the displaced. Consequently, the conservation policies adopted rights-based approaches to address the rights of the indigenous peoples and forest dwellers (Campese et al., 2009).

Indeed, historically (especially in the colonial periods), throughout the world, the forest and wildlife were considered both as an opportunity and challenges to economic development and expansion of permanent and settled agricultural practices. For instance, the European migration to America had witnessed excessive hunting and trading of wildlife (R.D Brown, 2007). In India, the wildlife was exploited for both economic and game hunting (Coltman et al., 2003). In India even in the 1940s, going out to bag a tiger was considered a 'must' for any aspiring forester (Mahesh Rangarajan, 1996). This led to extreme exploitation of forest and its resources and

abuse of wildlife which resulted in extinction and near to extinction of many wildlife species. Thus, the conservation project model was a respond to such environmental crises started in the United States of America (USA) was the leader for this discourse and influences in the other parts of the world. Most importantly, the separation between the environment and the indigenous people or other local communities was crucial in this discourse of conservation projects practices. Therefore, these peoples were always disregarded, excluded, and hence displaced throughout the world.

The discourse of state-led conservation practices did not change much in the post-colonial periods as the idea of it is based on the creation of spaces in the form of protected areas exclusively for nature and without people. It has denied the indigenous people and other local communities their rights (socio-cultural and economic rights) and physically evicted them from their land (Colchester, M 2004). For instance, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines conservation as any area where "the highest competent authority of the nation having jurisdiction over it" is vested with responsibilities to protect that area (R. Poirier and D. Ostergren 2003). It is argued and believed that the use of natural resources by the local communities is irrational and destructive which results in biodiversity loss and environmental degradation (Robbins, P and Doolittle, A.A, 2012). Guha (2007) argues that the tribal who formerly regarded himself as the lord of the forest, was through a deliberate process, turned into a subject and placed at the mercy of the neo-liberalists.

While protecting and saving wildlife and nature, for the displaced such as the Indigenous, displacement is not just about getting displaced from their land, habitat, and livelihood but removing them from their history, memory, and representation (Schama 1996 cited in Brockington and Igoe, 2006). Consequently, there is a growing social movement of the indigenous peoples against evictions for conservation (Dowie, 2005) including in the US in the Native Americans' movements about conflicts between the conservation and the indigenous people. These social movements of the indigenous peoples in the human rights discourse led to the recognition of their rights in the paradigm of conservation practices. Philips (2003), the former chairman of the World Commission on Protected areas comments that, "the opinions and rights of

indigenous peoples were of little concern to any government before about 1970; they were not organized as political force as they are now in many countries".

Though displacement is undesirable in the most updated language of conservation policies but as Colchester, M (2004) while reviewing the guidelines of the World Commission on Protected Areas in 199 said that it is easier said than done and they have deal with the competing enterprises and vested interest that confront the local communities everywhere. Tania Li (2009) noted that there are various interest groups in conservation practices which she described as "an assemblage that brings together an array of agents (villagers, labourers, entrepreneurs, officials, activists, aid donors, scientists) and objectives (profit, pay, livelihoods, control, property, efficiency, sustainability, conservation)". She further illustrates that the 'inclusive' notion of the 'common good' in the practices of conservation also promotes exclusionary outcomes not only around conservation zones and protected areas but in other areas too. She further states that "legitimacy and regulation are the main powers at work in these exclusionary regimes, but force also plays a role, as does the market, as systems of incentives are devised to shape policies and practices at multiple scales" (Li, 2009, p. 60).

Ramachandra Guha (2003:140) identifies five groups interested in conservation such as the City Dwellers and the Foreign Tourists, Ruling Elites, Biological Conservationists, and the Functionaries. According to him, for the first group nature is for pleasure, fun, and to relax from their busy life. For the second group it is for the retention or enhancement of national prestige, though without many ideas and knowledge of nature. The third group are self-appointed stewards of nature, who claim to know and understand nature and wildlife and exemplify what Mahesh Rangarajan (2001) calls the ecologically updated version of the 'White Man's Burden'. They are impatient with the villagers, tribals, farmers and the forest-dwellers and consider them as the ones who know nothing. The fourth group is motivated merely for power and spin-off benefits such as overseas trips and jobs. They believe that there should be more laws, policies, and police force to prevent the local people from poaching, hunting, and other so-called illegal activities inside the reserve forests. The fifth group is the biologists who believe in wilderness and species preservation for the sake of 'science' and have direct interest in species other than humans. They

consider the local communities as having destructive effects on the environment and an obstacle to their scientific research.

Since the 1980s, the conservation discourse attempts conservation practices without displacement to maintain a balance between the sustainable use of the forest resources by the local people and the maintenance of ecological process and biological diversity (Raman 1996, 1998, 2001). It envisions smaller, 'inclusive,' democratic, equitious, tradition – mediated resource use by underprivileged village dwellers in wildlife reserves as against the current swell of unscrupulous, city – driven, commercial exploitation (M.D Madhusudan and T.R Shankar Raman, 2003). Indeed, sustainable use and sustainable development have been a guideline in the conservation movements and to the solution to balance between the conservation and development needs (Terborgh 1999). It believes in the possibilities to balance between conservation and needs of local actors living in proximity to biological resources. It aims to extend conservation to areas outside protected areas; and to allow local actors' participation in the decision-making process concerning biological resources.

However, as W. M Adams (2001) says that it has become a slogan than a basis for theory and is functioning like a win–win situation for the state and the market in the pursuit of political economy. The framework of sustainable development approach to conservation involves different forms of environmental governmentality to operate and manage the conservation projects. Such as market environmentalism (Anderson and Leal 1991) which argues that the state's environmental policies are hurting both the environment and the sustainable development goals. It argues that offering incentives to the local people by inducing private property helps to protect the endangered species and the environment. It further argues that the absence of state actors fosters sustainable development. Green neoliberalism (Goldman 2005) is another model that believes in marketising the environment by creating markets in the management of land and natural resources and to promote sustainable development (Stilwell, 2012).

Unlike market environmentalism, green neoliberalism believes in considerable state power (Cahill, 2010). Green capitalism (Heartfield 2008) is an approach which consider the environmental problems including the loss of biodiversity due to the "failure of capitalist system to account for the financial value of environmental

services and the inability to value natural capital". It is based on the premise that "private property, entrepreneurial business, and economic growth can be good for the environment" (Beckerman 1974). Finally, the Neoliberal Conservation (Igoe and Brockington 2006; Sullivan 2006) which is about "reregulation of nature through forms of commodification" based on market such as ecotourism, payment for environmental services, green bonds, etc. Igoe and et.al (2006) argues that it has been the operational mechanism in the management of conservation and the environment. It is based on the concepts of privatization, decentralization, deregulation, marketization, and commodification. In doing so, it could only lead to the exploitation of nature and wildlife as it shall become a new avenue of capital that is to be accumulated and leads to a certain form of exchanges that not only marginalise and disempower the indigenous people and their rights but to the environment itself.

The other approach (Community Based conservation) aims for decentralised conservation practice involving the local communities. This model employs three main strategies such as a) providing compensation; b) promoting alternative livelihood opportunities and c) creating a direct stake in conservation for local people (Western and Wright, 1994; Hulme and Murphree, 1999; Hutton and Leader-Williams, 2003 cited in Krishnan at. el. 2012). The fundamental belief of this approach is that "local participation in decisions and benefits could reduce hostility towards conservation efforts" (Western and Wright, 1994: 4) and to form local conservation initiatives which are compatible with the interests of outsiders (Western, 1994a:500).

This approach is also influenced by the Common Property Resource that focuses on communities and collective action in the management of resources for sustainable and equitable use of resources (Agrawal 1999b; Baland & Platteau 1996; Bromley & Cernea 1992; Jodha 1992; Ostrom 1990, 1992, 1999; Wade 1988). In fact, the community-based conservation is an outcome in response to the social movements against displacement by the indigenous people for their rights and land (Veit, P.G and Renson C. 2004). The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Parks Congress recognized their rights (M. Colchester, 2004) and the community-based conservation involving the local communities started in the 1980s (D. Brockington, 2002). It was aimed at involving the local communities in the implementation of the conservation projects.

However, both sustainable development and community-based approaches are problematic. As Agrawal (1997) states that "community-based conservation is unavoidably about a shift of power as well as about how power is exercised, by which loci of authority, and with what kinds of resistance". It assumes that conservation today cannot be carried out by the local communities (Western, 1994a: 10). Besides, this does not conceptualize who is 'the community' and provides a homogenous understanding of community. Without understanding the community and the context and along with its exclusionary, external, or imposed model of conservation, this approach faces more challenges at theoretical, conceptual, policy and practical levels.

2.4 History of Conservation and displacement in the USA and Europe

The battle against species extinction has been the main driving force for the emergence of the global conservation regime (Adams, 2004). Historically, it is argued that the European migration to America had caused excessive hunting and trading of wildlife (R.D Brown, 2007). Brown argues that such state of wildlife hunting and crisis are recorded in Captain John Smith's report which records that as early as 1607, the French were supplying or shipping 25,000 beaver pelts per year to Europe and by 1650 much of the beaver pelts had been eliminated from the entire east coast. The French and England's Hudson Bay Company had exploited the furbearers in the northeast and Canada.

In the Pacific Northwest, the Russian – American Fur Company took seals and sea otters and by 1768 the Stellar's sea cow had been rooting out and destroyed completely (ibid.). Similarly, he further states that the "Bird populations suffered from being taken both for meat and for the plumage, which was used for ladies' hats in Europe. Deer and turkey populations also declined due to market hunting. In 1748 alone, South Carolina shipped 160,000 deer pelts to England". In 1833 the American Fur Company alone shipped 43,000 buffalo hides which were mostly traded from the Native Americans and the buffalo meat was also used for camp (ibid.). Such history does not only locate in America and even in the African history of conservation too, where hunting was carried out for commercial or economic purposes for ivory and skins in the initial phase, then meat for railway construction workers or to feed and

finance trade and missionary activity and a ritualised and idealised 'hunting', with the obsession of trophies, sportsmanship, and other ideals of British boys' education (MacKenzie 1989).

Thus, the rise of environmentalism led by the civil society groups such as the Boone and Crocket Club in 1887 and the Sierra Club in 1892 in America were among the leading conservation initiatives in America (Adam, 2001). Similar development of conservation initiatives was taken place in Germany (Conwentz 1914), Canada, South Australia, and New Zealand in the 1880s and 1890s (Fitter and Scott 1978)[10]. In Britain in the 19th century, there was the establishment of a few conservation organizations took places such as the Common Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society (1865), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (1893), the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty (1894) and Budapest in 1895. In Sweden, the foundation of the Swiss League for the Protection of Nature (1909), Swedish Society for the Protection of Nature (Adams, 2001). National parks were established in the 1880s and 1890s in Canada, South Australia, and New Zealand (Fitter and Scott 1978). At the end of the 19th-century conservation began in other countries (Groove 1987, McCormick 1992). The concern of forest depletion in Cape Colony, Africa developed in the early nineteenth century. Legislation was passed in 1846 in Cape Town to preserve open areas and preservation of forest in 1959 and Game in 1886 (Grove 1987, J.M Mackenzie 1987).

The conservation movement gradually developed in the 19th century after the scientific forestry methods initiated by Prussia (Germany) and France in the 17th and 18th centuries (Guha, 2005). Guha asserts that conservation was the 'gospel of efficiency' to use science to manage nature and natural resources efficiently and sustainably. The movement was led by Theodore Roosevelt, the "hunter" and John Muir, the "nature lovers" and considered nature to be sacred and human as intruders (Conover and Conover, 1997). The establishment of Yellowstone National Park in the United States of America was the first stage of public conservation which later became the model used by many other countries (Spence 1996).

[10] Cited in W. M. Adams (2001), Green Development: Environment and sustainability, p. 24.

In the 20th century, the concept of conservation practice was based on protected areas that established areas and borders which define exclusionary rights. However, in contemporary times, understanding conservation and its projects concerning environment and wildlife has not changed much over time. For instance, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines conservation as any area where "the highest competent authority of the nation having jurisdiction over it" is vested with responsibilities to protect that area (R. Poirier and D. Ostergren 2003). Thus, when it comes to state-led conservation and displacement from such projects, the history of conservation and displacement in the United States (US) of America remains the most important aspect which also became the model for many other countries (M. Spence 1996).

Indeed, the history of conservation projects is also accompanied by the history of exploitation of nature for economic development and victimization of the indigenous people with displacement and wildlife with excessive hunting. For example, the Yosemite National Park was used for economic and political gain and extractions of natural resources from the park (R. Poirier and D. Ostergren, 2003). The Yosemite Park Act signed by President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Park Act; served the economic purpose in the form of increasing numbers of tourists, construction of roads and railroads, hotels and so on (Rangarajan and Shahabuddin, 2006). Displacement of indigenous people is not a new thing and it started from the beginning of conservation projects such as the Yosemite National Park which was established in 1864. This project also narrates the history of the bloody war of extermination and forced eviction of the Ahweneechee indigenous people (Keller and Turek, 1998). The word Yosemite means "some among them are killers" referring to killings by militia around the time the Park was established (R. Poirier and D. Ostergren, 2003).

In another classic historical example of conservation and displacement is the establishment of the Yellowstone National Park in 1874, the indigenous Nez Perce were considered unwanted and undesirable for the management of the park (Jacoby, 2001). The Yellowstone, with its stunning natural beauty, was declared "reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale under the laws of the United States, and dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and

enjoyment of the people" (M. Spence, 1996: 55-70). Conservation practices with such approach established protected areas in the United States are in Indigenous peoples' areas (Keller and Turek 1998) which in the following century was exported to other parts of the world and was strongly influenced in the conservation movement and policy (Colchester, 2004).

Conservation and displacement are not well received in other parts of the world. For instance, in the context of Africa Raymond Bonner' comments (1993)[11], that "many African see that white people are making rules to protect animals that white people want to see in parks that white people visit". Why should the Africans support these programmes? An organization like World Wildlife Fund (WWF) professed to defer to what Africans wanted but then tried to manipulate them into doing what the 'Westerners' wanted, and those Africans who could not be brought into line were ignored. Africans do not use the parks and they do not receive any significant benefits from them. Yet they are paying the cost. There are direct personal costs like banning hunting and fuel collection or displacement. E. N Chidumayo (1993, p. 49), a Zambian biologist, states that "many conservation policies in Africa tended to serve foreign interests, such as tourism and safari hunting, and ignored African environmental values and cultures. The only thing that is African about most conventional conservation policies is that they are practiced on African land."

2.5 History of Conservation and displacement in India

The USA and Europe's model of conservation can also be related in the context of the conservation history of India whereby the British took control over the forest resources and the tribes (K. Sivaramakrishnan, 1995). However, in India, the literature on the history of conservation or environmentalism begins with the colonial and post-colonial eras. The history of conservation during the colonial era is the history of colonial control over forest resources and forest-dwellers for the exploitation of forest resources (K. Sivaramakrishnan, 1995). The post-colonial history of conservation in India especially from the 1970s onward presents coherent and relatively organized

[11] Bonner, R., At the Hand of Man: Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1993,
Page 35, 65, 70, 85, 221.

environmental movements and advocacy for conservation (Shiva, 1991). Sivaramakrishnan (1995) argues that the rhetoric of conservation, environmental protection and sustainable development generated as part of the colonial administrations led to the foundation for state management of the forest. It is also argued that the destruction of forests predated colonialism and according to Stebbing (1982) a large forest area was destroyed during the period between the advent of the Aryans and the advent of the English rulers. He further argues that commercial exploitation of forests in the Indian subcontinent was widespread even before the eighteenth century (Saravanan, 2003).

Unlike American conservation history, India was not a destination of white settlers, but the forest preservation or conservation complements the paradigms set in America which set the stage for game parks and reserves in India (Rangarajan and Shahabuddin, 2006). For examples, hunting was a pleasure and fun for both the Royal families including the kings and the English people in India. In colonial times hunting was a freestyle sport with pride and fame for the Kings and the British officers. The British officers, soldiers and civil officers were all keen on bagging at least one tiger before they retired. A few of them attempted to score a century of tiger heads and succeeded. A system of rewards and bounties was created in the first 90 years of colonial rule for wildlife extermination whereby more than 80,000 tigers were killed from 1875 to 1925 (Rangarajan, 2001).

Much wildlife such as hyena, dhole, jackal, tiger, and leopard were persecuted as agriculture expanded over time in India (Coltman et al., 2003). Even in the 1940s, going out to bag a tiger was considered a 'must' for any aspiring forester. The motto of Dietrich Brandis, the first Indian inspector general of forests, was 'bag your first tiger in your first year', and who himself accounted for as many as 50 animals. Mahesh Rangarajan (1996) in his elaborative works on the history of conservation in India precisely shows that even in the early 1950s such had important continuities in the attitudes and lifestyles of the elites. Hunting continued to be both a privilege and a pastime for officials, princes, and the landed classes as it had earlier in the century.

For instance, Prince Philip hunted in Ranthambore as a guest of the Raja (King) of Jaipur in 1961[12].

There were efforts to protect endangered wild animals and birds. The Indian Board for Wildlife had its first meeting at Mysore in 1952, with the Maharaja being the host. Among the key personalities in policy formulations in the early years were English tea and coffee planters like Randolph Morris and E P Gee, foresters such as P. D Stracey and the Princes of Bhavnagar (in Gujarat) and Sandur (Karnataka)[13]. As keen hunters themselves, they felt obligated to control those who were competing for the same resource that includes certain categories of wild animals. For example, Randolp Morris and Salim Ali called for increased rewards for killing Himalayan black bears to help build up the numbers of the Kashmir stags. They aimed to save the extinction of deer and not to hunt for trophies[14]. Similarly, Stracey praised the killing of jackal cubs to help game birds and eradication of wild dogs to help the herbivores[15].

Guha (1993) argues that the British colonial government not only exploited the forest for commercial as well as strategic needs of the empire at an unprecedented scale but also disregarded the rights of the forest-dwellers and users. Agrawal (2005) discusses four major ways towards widespread control over India's forested lands by the British after the 1860s. Firstly, the commercial and the strategic value of specific timber species was the reason for the keen interest of the British in establishing control over vast areas of forests. Secondly, it shows the burden such control would prove to be for many existing users and managers, as forests all over India had many competing uses, and colonial control often required exclusionary practices. Thirdly, it hints at the debates over different forms of private versus public control that framed the exploitation of forests for many decades to come. Finally, it indicates the willingness of the colonial state to change, and sometimes abandon, its preferred strategies of control when it confronted conflicts (Agrawal 2005, p. 28).

[12] Prince Philip, foreword to V Thapar, Tigers - The Secret Lift, Elm Tree Books, London 1989, no pagination. Kesri Singh, Hints on Tiger-Shooting, Jaico Books, Delhi, 1970, pp xvii-xviii. Tigers were not protected at the time in India, but the point is to emphasise the cultural continuities with the Raj days.
[13] S Ali, and R. C Morris, 'Wildlife - Its Conservationi and Control,' Journal of Bombay Natural History Society, vol 87 (1977), pp 192-96 and 'P D Stracey' on pp 191-92 of the same volume.
[14] R C Morris and S Ali, 'Game Preservation in Kashmir', JBNHS, vol 53(1955), pp 229- 33.
[15] Stracey, Wildlife, pp 47-48 and 58-59.

Guha (2001) notes that the Indian Forest Act 1878 allowed the state to expand the commercial exploitation and denial of forest rights to the local communities (indigenous people and the other forest dwellers) which provoked countrywide protests. He asserts that the participants of these protests were peasants and tribals against the colonial forestry such as in Chotanagpur in 1893, in Bastar in 1910, in Gudem-Rampa in 1879-80 and again 1922-23. In such cases, Agrawal (2005, p.1) narrates the history of Kumaon where in between 1911 and 1916, the colonial government reclassified nearly 80 per cent of Kumaon's forests into reserves and how the villagers' set fires in protest. "Nearly 2000,000 acres were burned in hundreds of separate incidents".

The physical displacement of tribals and the forest dwellers was rare, but they were deprived of their rights like hunting and gathering and often lost their control over their agricultural lands (Rangarajan 1996; Prasad 2003). The exclusion of local communities from their habitat was more with the growing numbers of National Parks and Sanctuaries than in the Reserve Forests (Kothari and Pathak, 1997). Displacement from conservation projects became a norm, especially in the early 1970s.

2.6 History of Conservation and Displacement in Northeast India

The history of Northeast India, especially Assam, shares a long history of external relationships with mainland India and other Asian countries. The interaction of the region with the British was as early as 1792 and after the Yandaboo Treaty in 1826, the British gradually captured the plain areas of Assam. Thus, the colonial expansion in the region took place with the growing industries like tea, coal mining, sawmills, railway, and oil (S. Ahmed, 2015). Arupjyoti Saikia (2009) provides a concise and critical aspect of the history of conservation of Northeast India and brings the narratives of junctures of history. He argues that Kaziranga National Park (KNP)'s conservation history provides a complex socio-economic and political journey of Assam.

Arupjyoti Saikia further looked at the ruthless killing of wildlife by the British and indigenous communities of Assam in that time that included both peasants' communities and the royals or the elites of Assam. He also illustrates the British

exploitation of the wildlife for both economic purposes and game or sport hunting. For instance, elephants and buffaloes were used and abused for revenue generations and many a time the buffaloes were a threat to agricultural expansion. On the other hand, the Rhinos or tigers killing were considered as pride and sport as privileged. Like in many parts of the country or the world, game hunting was regarded as a masculine exercise among the colonial civil servants and the elites.

Even among the Assamese elites like Tarunram Phukan (1877-1937) who was known for his shooting skills and who also trained the locals for hunting and accompanying him. The Shikar Kahini is a memoir about him which narrates about hunting by Phukan that captures his struggle of becoming a good hunter. Among different tribal communities, hunting was considered and treated in upholding social status and in such pursuit, the common victims were the rhino, elephant, and tiger. In Assam, Maharaj Nripendra Narayan killed no less than 370 tigers, 208 rhinoceros, 430 buffaloes, and 324 barasingha deer between 1871 and 1907 (Thapar 2003: 218). A. Saikia (2009) also illustrates the narratives of the tribal communities who made into the jungle for the killing of animals for several reasons such as livelihood and cultural practices. For example, the Singphos (now in the state of Arunachal Pradesh) tribe killed elephants by using poisoned arrows (M'Cosh 1975: 44-45), the Kacharies of Assam used wide-meshed net across the countryside and drive the animals into it and every animal run into the net is killed with spears and staves. The Naga tribes (now in the state of Nagaland) have virtually exterminated wildlife, even birds in their hills (Stracey 1963). These narrates how the indigenous kings and communities were also avid hunters, but in comparison to the colonial masters and the nature of state (their economic agenda and expansion of agricultural lands), it is a matter of further investigation especially when they claim themselves in live in harmony with nature.

Arupjyoti Saikia (2009) discusses about several people who took an active interest in safeguarding the wildlife and conservation in Assam and some tribes showed respect to wild animals which were not necessarily in the language of conservation as dominantly understood. On the other hand, as there were and are different tribal communities that have their indigenous methods of community-based conservation practices that do not fall in the understanding of dominant conservation practices.

Saikia further brings the concern for wildlife expressed in legislative language and media like newspapers.

The Bengal Forest Act of 1878 is one of such acts that vested the Forest Department with the power to regulate access to the government woodlands such as hides, horns, tusks, and skins. Then the Assam Forest Regulation of 1891 and The Wild Bird and Game Protection Act of 1887 and others that were introduced in India remained irrelevant till the early twentieth century. Simultaneously, there were formations of game associations such as the Darrang to coordinate with the Forest Department for wildlife protection. The Darrang Association also suggested rules and regulations for the control of the game and shooting in Assam in line with the Nilgiri Game Association. The Zoological Garden of Kolkata (Calcutta) also played a significant role in wildlife conservation in Assam, such as Rhino.

Nevertheless, the traditional kings and chieftains had evolved conventional mechanisms for the regulation of the forests and their resources (S. Bhattacharjee, 2016). In Assam, the rulers employed officials to manage and administer the forests and their resources (Bhuyan, 1993). In the pre-colonial Mizo hills, the Lushai Chiefs distributed lands for shifting cultivation and regulated the forest for sustainable use. They also established village reserve forests which are more of an evolved traditional form for religious and security purposes. Similarly, the Khasi and the Jaintia tribes had the custom of maintaining sacred groves based on religious beliefs (Shakespear, 1983; Gurdon, 1987). Such indigenous methods of forest management or conservation methods were in contradiction of colonial forests policy which was established to systematically exploit and conserve natural resources for commercial requirements (S. Bhattacharjee, 2016).

In the region, the inter-clan rivalries and different customary laws regulate the social interaction and behavior of a tribe. With the advent of British and Christian missionaries, the tribals' social practices and systems were hugely influenced towards modification and change in the best interests of the former. For instance, after 1857, in the Cachar of Assam and in the Kuki 'hunting grounds', the military department of Assam introduced the Elephant 'Kheda' system to chase or catch elephants (also known as the Khedas). According to the colonisers (the British), the forest was not

only a source of danger from the unruly tribes but also a source of economic resources like timber, bamboo, rubber, and the elephant[16]. Similarly, the Inner Line regulation between Cachar and Lushai Hills was introduced which led towards a strained relationship between the Khedas and the Lushais (R. L Ralte, 2005). The forest policy was implemented to enforce state domination over forest resources and to attain proper and systematic economic returns. Indeed, the 1864 forest policy established areas into three classes such as reserved, and others were designated as protected forests and un-classed forests. So, it is a matter of historical enquiries to understand the environmental histories of pre- and post-colonial.

2.7 Tiger Conservation in India and the Dampa Reserve (DTR) of Mizoram

In India, tiger is the national animal and is given high priority both at the policy level and in conservation efforts. In the post-colonial periods, especially after 1970 when the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) or World Conservation Union held its general assembly in 1969 in Delhi. It was followed by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment at Stockholm in June 1972 to build an outlook and principles "to inspire and guide the peoples of the world in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment"[17]. The then Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi set up a specialized group headed by Karan Singh to study and create a plan for tiger conservation. It led to the formation of a 'Task Force' and 'Project Tiger' in 1979 with the objectives "to ensure the maintenance of a viable population of the tiger in India and to preserve, for all times, such areas as part of our national heritage for the benefit, education and enjoyment of future generations". Meanwhile the World Conservation Union suggested the task force that "the best method of protection of the tiger is to have large areas of at least 2,000 square kilometres (sq km), with similar contiguous areas so that a viable population of about 300 tigers in each such area can be maintained" including for periodic controlled shooting"[18].

[16] Chatterjee, S. (1985). Mizoram under the British Ride, Mittal, Delhi, p. 4

[17] Task Force, Indian Board for Wildlife. 1972. Project Tiger: A Proposal for Preservation of the Tiger (Panthera tigris Linn.) in India. New Delhi: Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.

[18] Ibid.,

As a result, there were 15 tiger reserves in India by the early 1980s with an area of 24,712 Sq km and by 1990 India had 19 tiger reserves by encompassing 29,716 Sq. Km with 1,327 tigers (as per the 1989 tiger census). In the early 1980's the national budget for the tigers' reserves were rupees 167.7 crores (20,42,1583 USD) which is the highest for any other wildlife or endangered species and the next was only Rs 22.58 crores (2,74,966 USD) for the Elephants. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) carried out a critical review of the 'Project Tiger' in 1993 and in 1994, a Parliamentary Committee on Science, Technology, Environment and Forests recommended for an evaluation of the project tiger programme to make it more meaningful and result oriented. Then a high-powered committee headed by JJ Dutta was constituted and submitted its report in 1996. This committee "examines the issues of management as well as the interface with local people in reserves" and the report argues for the removal of the villages from the tiger reserves, and it was not a management imperative[19].

At the same time, on one side, there were campaign and advocacy for the rights of the indigenous people and other local communities who were evicted from their land and to implement the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. On the other, there were conservationists' groups who were campaigning for more tiger reserves and against the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act led by the Bombay Natural History Society, Wildlife Protection Society of India and the Conservation Action Trust who had been opposing against the act. They allege that the rights of the forest dwellers amount to support encroachment or encroachers against the wildlife, and they believe that by allowing the people to stay inside the national parks and sanctuaries it will be impossible to protect wildlife – especially the tigers[20].

In Mizoram, the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest was first established as the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary in 1976 with an area of 180 sq. miles and it was declared a

[19] Ibid.,

[20] See the Open Letters by the Campaign for Survival and Dignity to the Wildlife Conservationists groups in 2006.

Tiger Reserve in 1994 with 360 sq. km[21]. In and around the DTR forest, there are three indigenous communities, namely the Mizos, Chakmas, and the Reangs. The Mizo means the people of hills or the highlanders and represents the Mizo language-speaking tribes. The Chakma and the Reang identify themselves as distinct from the Mizo tribes and do not speak the Mizo language. The Mizo tribe practices and follow the Christian religion, the Chakma follow and practice Theravada Buddhism and the Reang who was known as a Hindu tribe, but many people follow the Christian religion. However, many of the Reang tribes in and around the Dampa tiger reserve are mostly Hindu by religion. Both Mizo and Reang use Roman script and the Chakma have their own script.

The protected areas under the DTR project kept increasing over the years and at present it is at 988 km (about 613.91 mi) ² of which, 500 km (about 310.69 mi) ² is as Core or Critical Tiger Habitat and 488 km (about 303.23 mi) ² as Buffer Area. The Core area is inviolate where no human activities are allowed, including entering the forest. In the buffer areas, people can enter and engage with their livelihood activities, including Jhum cultivation. In the initial stage of the project, it was challenged by the affected people led by Mr. Jaladhar Chakma in the Guwahati High Court and the notification was quashed by the court on 11th August 1982[22] in favor of the people. The judgement also states that "the impugned orders are not sustainable in law," and section 18 has not been published in the Official Gazette, an action sought to be taken under the said Act by the impugned notices cannot be sustained. After going through the records of the cases we find that the respondents have not followed any of the provisions of Chapter IV of the Act"[23].

However, again, on the 23rd of March 1985, the state issued a notification[24] to declare it as the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary with an area of 681 Km² and to displace fourteen villages. The then Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Aizawl district, H. Hauthuama, was appointed to inquire into the claims, rights, etc., from persons dwelling inside the

[21] Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014), 2013 – 2014 to 2022 to 2023 prepared by the Field Director of Dampa Tiger Reserve, Page 48.
[22] Ibid., page 48
[23] Guwahati High Court Judgment (1982), Jaladhar Chakma Etc. Etc. vs The Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl,..on 11 August, 1982.
[24] vide No. B. 11011/14/84 – FST dated 25th March 1985.

Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary in 1988. The DC reported that "as far as could be ascertained from the record of state government, no right of the above-mentioned people is found to exist in the said area. The people have been doing Jhuming in the area for the last few years. Out of the fourteen Jhumia villages inside the Sanctuary, four villages namely Serhmun, Dampa Rengpui, Silsury and Aviapui are established villages with a large population and situated on the peripheral portion of the Sanctuary. "

The D.C (Deputy Commissioner) also suggested to reduce the boundaries of the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary. In his report, it stated that "the total approximate area of the Sanctuary after deleting some portions[25] will be 462 Sq. km. Further, the DC suggested that the Govt. may consider giving financial assistance of about Rs 2000/- (25.56 USD) per household only on humanitarian grounds to move out of the sanctuary area to rehabilitate themselves in the new places"[26].

2.8 Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR): A Tiger Project without tigers.

As per the official records, the tigers in the DTR forest were 7, 4, 4, and 6 in 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000-2002, and 2010. However, there were continued efforts to probe tigers' presence and justify the project's significance. According to the Mizoram government, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Aaranyak, a society for biodiversity conservation, there were three confirmed tigers inside the DTR based on their DNA study in 2012. The Head of the wildlife genetics programme of Aranyak, Udayan Borthakur stated that, "out of nine tiger scats for the DNA analysis, three scats are confirmed of tigers"[27]. However, as per the Dampa Tiger Report of April 2012, the reports states that "out of the 26 scats from Dampa that they are analyzing in the lab, nine (9) are confirmed tigers' scats, eleven (11) as non-tigers and six (6) failed to produce any results (Shyamal Chakma, 2013).

[25] Some portions are deleted as stated in the report that it was due to established villages also of large numbers of populations inhabiting in these villages.

[26] Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl district, Dated 30th November 1988, Aizawl, No. D – 12011/43/88 – DC (A)

25, "Enquiry Report as to claims, rights etc. from persons dwelling inside the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary.

[27] Roopak Goswami (2012), Guwahati, 16 August, The Telegraph, Calcutta, India, "DNA test shows tiger presence".

Indeed, I doubt the authenticity of these so-called tigers' scats as during my graduate and post-graduate research fieldwork, my interviewees told me that there was a famous incident before the year 2012[28]. The incident was about two DTR forest guards who were caught in deep inside the forest of Bangladesh with cameras to take photographs or to get something (tiger scats). Initially, they were suspected to be of government's spy and were questioned, beaten and their cameras was chased by an underground/militia group known as UPDF which is an indigenous revolutionary group in Bangladesh. To confirm the authenticity of the incident, I interviewed a forest officer in Mizoram who initially denied it and questioned the relevance of the query to my research. Finally, admitted by stating that his predecessor "Mr. X wanted to see tigers, but people misled him with the believe that there are tigers in Bangladesh, so he sent forest guards to take photographs"[29]. In my doctoral fieldwork, I was told by the workers in the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)[30] department that the DNA samples produced by the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), Aaranayak and DTR office, were collected from a militant group based in Bangladesh. In return, they were paid a huge amount of money and free passage of weapons with the help of DTR authorities[31].

In fact, the government also deployed other methods to examine and probe the presence of tigers in the DTR such as camera trapping and predator-prey experimentation with domestic cows. In the year 2010, the forest department left three cows into different areas of Keislam, Seling and Chiklang (name of places inside the DTR) deep inside the reserve forest with the assumption that the tigers will kill and eat them. After a couple of weeks, the cows were found alive and healthy. However, the government neither recorded nor made this report public.

[28] The exact year could not be confirmed by the interviewers, but the incident was true as confirmed by the DTR forest official.

[29] I shall not reveal the date of my interview with the said officer, neither his identity nor the name of his predecessor, as this shall lead to problems for both.

[30] RAW is India's intelligence agency who deal with the so-called militant or rebel outfits in Bangladesh from Northeast India and their focus is also in DTR forest where according to them, supply of weapons take place.

[31] The names and position of the people from RAW, and the date and place of the interaction will not be revealed due to security reasons. However, this information is also known to the people at the local level but to confirm it, I made appointments to meet with people from the RAW.

In the doctoral fieldwork, my focus groups of senior citizens from the village Silsury and Hnahva, confirms that there were and are no tigers since last the three decades[32]. This was based on one of my research questions of, "have you ever seen a tiger in the DTR?" and they unanimously responded with the word "never" and indeed one of the interviewees said that, "ami jekke sigoun eloung, bhaggou nang hinibar o' dorei, ebar ei DTR forest sa nou darai, bhag nang hinile ragudede", (Translation: when we were young, we can't take the name of tigers because we all are scared of tigers but now the name tiger itself angers us because of the DTR forest.)

There are scattered reports of the DTR about the presence of tigers like the Biodiversity Conservation and Rural Livelihood Improvement Project, 2007 and it states that, "even tigers were occasionally heard, reported, and recorded through pug marks in areas such as Phullu ram, Varihaw, Zopui and Herhsel, but there are no direct sightings of tigers in the buffer zone. Besides the above record, there are reports of a specific trail which was followed by a tiger in Khawhnai village." The mentioned villages are inhabited by the Mizos who are allowed to do livelihood or economic activities including Jhum cultivation in the buffer areas. However, my interviewees from the Mizo villages confirmed that they have neither seen nor believed in the presence of tigers in the DTR. Either there is a strong belief about the presence of tigers or there are manipulations of reports for reasons such as income-generating strategies both legal and illegal and marginalising the marginalised in the name of tigers.

As per the so-called DNA studies of tiger scats, the state claims the presence of tigers but without any conclusive or confirmed numbers of tigers. Since 2006, the government with the help of WWF has installed 35 cameras inside the reserve forest to capture footage of tigers but failed to do so, and in its' tiger reports of 2012, the government promises to install more cameras (Shyamal Chakma, 2013). If tigers are captured in the state's camera trapping, there are chances that the number of tigers may vary as it shares national borders with Tripura and international borders with

[32] Interviews on 20th May 2018 in the village Silsury with Chandra Hasso Chakma of 65, Harishchand Chakma of 70, Guluk Dhan Chakma of 67, and Bulow Chakma of 67 years old. On 25th May 2018 interviews in the village Hnahva (Hnahva village was displaced in 1989-90 from the DTR forest) with Amarchand Chakma of 68, Dino Chakma of 69, Haraw of 60, and Bindu Chakma of 65 years old.

Bangladesh. Since the camera trapping methods fail to capture any tigers, therefore, the DNA studies of tiger scats could have provided a definite number of tigers.

Finally, in 2020, the state accepted that there are no tigers in the DTR[33] which is reported by different news media. According to the state government, the absence of tigers in the DTR is due to poaching which cannot be true as there were no tigers since its inception. During my master's degree fieldwork in six Chakma and Reang villages including interviews with the forest guards of the DTR, there was no such evidence that supports the presence of tigers in the DTR forest[34]. According to the state government's annual reports and plans, it states that "not much is known of the distribution of tigers and their co-predators in the buffer area of Dampa although there are frequent sightings of leopards and wild dogs from this area."

The camera trapping method to capture the images of tigers continued till 2019-2020 and in their annual plan reports namely, the tiger conservation plan of the DTR forest (2013-14 to 2022-24), the camera trapping method captured the following; five cat species such as common leopard, clouded leopard, marbled cat, Asiatic golden cat, and the leopard cat and two other cat species such as the jungle cat and the fishing cat based on secondary information[35]. It also has western hoolock gibbon (Mittermeir et al. 2009), rare stump-tailed macaque, northern pig-tailed macaque, nocturnal Bengal slow loris and the common rhesus macaque. There are other wild animals such as the gaur, sambar, serow, barking deer and wild boar. There are small carnivores and mammals such as the Chinese/Burmese ferret badger, hog badger, small-clawed otter, yellow-throated marten, large and small Indian civet, Himalayan crestless porcupine, brush-tailed porcupine, Malayan giant squirrel, and red flying squirrel[36].

There are many other wildlife species that live in the DTR. The flora of DTR comprises 654 species belonging to 451 genera and 153 families of vascular plants. Of these, 58 species, 43 genera, 30 families of Pteridophytes, one species, one family

[33] Different national news media carried out this report such as The Print on 2nd November 2019, Hindustan Times on 28th July 2020, Northeast Now on 29th July 2020, etc.
[34] S. B Chakma (2011), master's degree thesis on impact of Dampa tiger reserve conservation project at the department of development studies at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, India.
[35] Tiger Conservation Plans: Dampa Tiger Reserve, 2013 – 2014 to 2022-23, prepared by the Field Director of Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram, page 6.
[36] Ibid., page 7.

of Gymnosperm, 466 species, 314 genera, 103 families of Dicots and 129 species and 19 families of Monocots[37]. Two hundred and fifty (250) bird species were known from the reserve (Raman et al. 1998, 2001 and 2014, Pawar and Birand 2001).

2.9 Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) in Mizoram and theoretical considerations

The state of Mizoram and its people as described by James C. Scott (2009) falls into what he describes as the 'Shatter Zones' or 'Zones of refuge' and its' people as "Zomia". He analysed them as people who ran away from the oppressions of State-making projects in the valleys of slavery, conscription, taxes, corvee labour, epidemics, and warfare throughout two millennia. He argues that the internal colonialism within South-East Asia involved absorption, displacements and/or extermination of the previous inhabitants. "It also involved a botanical colonization in which the landscape was transformed by deforestation, drainage, irrigation, and leaves to accommodate crops, settlement patterns, and systems of administration familiar to the state and the colonists." However, I argue that environmental factors such as floods, famines, and other natural calamities are key factors behind migration from the plains to the hills and the life form between the hills and plains are of continuity instead of contradictions.

The DTR and its geographic area also falls in the Sazek or Sajek Hill Range of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh and is connected to the Kasalong Reserve Forest (KRF) of Bangladesh. Indeed, it was a space that was not seen as distinct geography in pre-colonial times. It was shared by different communities of Indigenous peoples who got divided into two different nation-states in post-colonial times. Today, this space has two conservation projects as the DTR in Mizoram, India and KRF in CHTs, Bangladesh. The DTR is the biggest wildlife reserve forest in the state of Mizoram without any tigers. The victims of the DTR in terms of displacement are the Chakma and the Reang communities.

The DTR and displacement operate in a dynamic and complex socio-political context with everyday violence connected to strong ethnic identity, ethnic nationalism,

[37] Ibid., page 27, 28 and 29.

profiling 'the others' or the 'perceived or constructed enemies' within the state, and the politics of domination. In such a context, the DTR project serves as a source of livelihood and pride for the Mizos[38] and unwanted for the Chakmas and the Reangs. It is also a source of resources, power, and domination for the dominant social and political groups in Mizoram. Therefore, to explore and investigate such empirical realities, the thesis takes support of different theoretical considerations to explore without adopting any theoretical framework of analysis.

2.9.1 Neo-Malthusian Approach and the question of population and displacement in the DTR

The neo-Malthusian approaches is one of the prominent theoretical perspectives of state-led conservation practices and displacement. In the claim for conservation of biodiversity (Hanngan, 1995), the conservationists specially led by the biologists considers the neo-Malthusian "explanations of global loss of biodiversity" such as conversion of land to agricultural and other uses which is happening very rapidly in the developing countries where human populations are at high increasing rates, and over exploitations of the humans resulting into loss of species (Guyer and Richards, 1996). It considers conservation projects as the means to protect both the habitat and the species backed by legislation and regulation (McNeely, 1995) and displacement of the local communities are justified.

In the 1970s, the neo-Malthusian theoretical understandings were fundamental in the debates between population growth, environmental critiques of conventional development and industrialisation strategies (Cole, 1978). Such an approach is based on the notion of eco-scarcity whereby an ecological 'crises erupt "when the demands of a growing human population overtake the capacity of an environmental system to support it" (Khan, 2013). Therefore, the underpinning of this theory is the need to control population is fundamental in tackling environmental issues such as ecological degradation (Robbins, 2004).

[38] During my fieldwork, when I travelled in and around the villages of the DTR, I saw people from the Mizo villages wearing T-Shirts with prints of "Dampa Pride of the Mizos." The photos taken were lost along with the phone. However, in a news report on the DTR, 'Administrative Failure at Mizoram's Dampa Tiger Reserve,' an interview dated 16th April 2021 with a wife of a Mizo Forest guard by a reporter, Rishika Pardikar (2021) states that the DTR as a pride. Accessed on 20th April 2021, https://www.newsclick.in/administrative-failure-mizoram-dampa-tiger-reserve

According to the neo-Malthusian theorists the environmental future is grim (Adams, 2001, p. 142) because of the population growth (Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1970, p. 2). Adams (2001) states that "some environmentalists seem to despair of existing political structures for change and have called for a technocratic political global government". Their ideas are based on some of the famous works such as Ehrlich and Ehrlich (1970 and 1972) on Population, Resources and Environment, the Population Bomb, and the global computer models (Forrester 1971 and Meadows et. al (1972), the Technocratic Notion of Political Globalism by 'global community (Myers and Myers, 1982) and the need of the world to be saved from the destruction of humankind (Polunin, 1994). It also Advocates for sustainable utilisation of resources and the realisation of the basic needs through an authoritarian state (Adams, 2001).

Although, my thesis empirically refutes and disagrees with the approach but consider this approach an important and significant to investigate the phenomenon of conservation and displacement. For examples, in my comparative analysis of populations and human habitations in and around the reserve (DTR) both in the pre and post displacement, the absence of the local people led to the absence of some wildlife like monkeys, tortoise, and river species. Further, the number of human habitations (villages) and populations has no relevance to the environmental problems that include loss of wildlife and river species as it is now. In fact, I did not find the relevance of the arguments of population growth and loss of species and the justification for displacement.

The DTR forest is a unique and complex conservation project. For examples, it is a tiger reserve without tigers, the state-societal relationship whereby one ethnic community, the Mizos are the beneficial of the project and other local communities such as the Chakma and the Reangs are the victims or for who it is an unwanted project. When it comes to displacement from the conservation projects, the neo-Malthusian theoretical approach becomes an important aspect of the research. In the DTR, however, the rising so called illegal hunting and fishing, and so on and so forth which the neo-Malthusian approach cannot answer. Therefore, it requires the support of other theoretical approaches to investigate and explore the DTR forest. In the

following, the thesis shall engage the neo-Marxist approach to understanding conservation practices in the form of the DTR relating to state and market.

2.9.2 Neo-Marxist and the political economy of the DTR.

The neo-Marxist approaches developed in response to the neo-Malthusian's apolitical understanding and approach of human/society/nature complexities. It became popular because it critically approaches the political and economic factors in understanding material power (such as capital, wealth, military power) mediates human/society/nature relations (Biersack 2006: 3, 10; Bryant 1998: 80). This approach helps to explore and understand the operation of the DTR project and how the negative outcomes are not due to the cause of local actions but to the external factors or agencies like the state and the market. The neo-Marxist framework can guide to investigates the problems of the research project in which the neo-Malthusian approach fails to do, as it mostly revolves around the notion of population growth and its' effect on the environment, biodiversity, and its' species and at most in the notion of sustainable development.

The neo-Marxists also argues and explains the environmental change in the context of underdevelopment and poverty from three major frameworks of thought such as the core-periphery dependency analysis, global capitalist system/world-system theory, and class inequality analysis (Bryant 2001). It further explained the argument that the global capitalist system theory uses the 'laws of capitalism' to guarantee a profit by leading to social and economic disparity, political and cultural oppression, and depletion of natural resources. The neo-Marxist also deploys the state-centric core-periphery framework analysis explains the structural subordination of third-world countries to the developed world through the exchange relation. The inequality approach focuses on the production of social relations where the emphasis is on profit and accumulation by the capitalist class at the expense of the natural environment, natural resources, and other classes (Bryant 2001: 152-153). It examines the injustice of 'underdevelopment' and 'poverty' from a political economy framework and links it with the issues of environmental change and exploitation in terms of class, gender, or subaltern status (Bryan 2001: 152; Biersack 2006: 9).

The neo-Marxist approach helps to investigates and explores the conservation practices of my field study, which is the DTR forest as it emphasizes as, "global-local dimension and linkages between a local community, such as a village in a developing country, and a nation-state, a region and even the global market and institutions" and it cut across different scales of analysis (Biersack 1999: 10). The DTR project is not an outcome of local action/effort but is part of the larger national and global initiatives to address global environmental crises and climate change. The DTR project operates in a complex and dynamic local community (of different ethnic group relationships), nation-states, national and international organizations, and donors together to successfully deliver wildlife conservation in the name of tigers. This approach is relevant while examining and analysing the impact of the displacement by the DTR project in terms of its' forceful social change and poverty, and inequalities.

The DTR project is in an exclusive geographical area by displacing the local people and regulated by defined policies of conservation practices. For example, the notion of inviolate spaces and buffer areas, so-called legal and illegal activities that includes livelihood activities, fishing, and hunting. The thesis reveals how the state benefits from the forest resources of the DTR forest which otherwise is illegal for the local communities or how the state denies the same (forest resources) to the local people. The DTR project also brings jobs and services opportunities, generates revenues apart from the national and foreign funding (for example, World Bank's 15 crores[39]/1,830,175 USD as first instalment in 2006) for the DTR. It illustrates how the DTR project became a process of owning and legitimising, commodifying, and monetizing the forest resources which is ultimately serving the political economy of the state and the market. In fact, the project is not only vicitimising certain social or ethnic groups, but it equally victimises nature in the name of conservation.

The neo-Marxist is the most fit theoretical framework to investigate the political economy of the DTR project but at the same time, it has limitation while investigating the local socio-economic, political, and cultural factors in the DTR. The local social group does not represent or belong to a particular homogeneous class, and it represents a complex and heterogeneous socio-cultural identity. For example, the

[39] The Telegraph (2006), "Dampa in World Bank".

local communities such as the Chakma, Mizo, and Reang are all indigenous peoples. While the local Mizo community is happy and welcomes the DTR project and the local Chakma and Reang gets excluded and victimised by the DTR project. Therefore, the thesis supports of the post-Marxists theoretical approach that focuses on non-economic and non-capitalist relations such as gender, ethnicity, and the socialised nature.

2.9.3 Post – Marxist and the local communities and the ecology

This theoretical approach includes feminist and post-structuralist perspectives and argues that production relations are not merely embedded in capital, and they are entrenched in "a set of non-economic and non-capitalist relations" (Castree et al. 2001: 2004). The post-structuralist perspectives also comprise of discourse in the sense of "ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes and social identities" (Gee, 1996). This theoretical framework guides understanding the complex realities of conservation and displacement that goes beyond the binary approaches of people and the environment. It helps to contextualised what Davies' (2016) refers to the societies and natural environments that continually 'co-produce' each other or to understand the problems synthetically as 'humanity-in-nature' and 'nature-in-humanity' rather than humanity and nature. The establishment of protected areas for conservation of nature involves both endogenous and exogenous actors who receive global priority against the backdrop of constantly metamorphosing relationships between the values and practices of nature conservation and neoliberal capitalism (Vocacaro et al. 2013). Concisely, the post-structural approach on the 'non-material dimension has broadened the horizon of political ecology (Khan, 2013).

This approach helps to investigate why and in what ways the socio-cultural and historical factors affect the human-nature relationship in the DTR and how the displacement of people equally displaces ecology. This framework also guides to engage and understand the meaning of the local communities that live in and around the DTR and their shared ecological histories and different social identities. For example, the social concepts such as "Zomia" of the Mizos and the "Jhummas" of the Chakmas which are defined or conceptualised on a lifeworld or epistemology

comprising nature. These concepts not only define the human-nature relationship of the Mizos and the Chakmas but also understand the environmental history of the Dampa and the state. In fact, my thesis explored how environmental events, or environmental histories played a determinant factor in social history and the state-making in all the three periods, I.e., pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. Furthermore, it (post-Marxist) allows me to understand problems and issues of social exclusion, inequalities and marginalisation which are based in or related to identity, culture, and language. For example, one cannot understand displacement by the DTR project without knowing the politics of identity and the history of exclusion and marginalisation. The conservation project of the DTR is a unique and yet a classic case of state-led conservation practices which is deeply embedded in the web of conflicting socio-cultural identities and politics, and state-societies and market relationships which neither neo-Malthusian nor neo-Marxist approach can help explore and explain.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter underpins the literature on conservation and displacement and theoretically guides the thesis to the research problems of coercive conservation practices. In doing so, I adopted more than one theoretical framework as the guide to explore the research problems. The first part of the chapter reviews the literature that includes the history and concept of conservation and displacement. The second part is about the consideration of theoretical frameworks to investigate the research problems and the research questions explained in both chapters.

The following chapters of the thesis are the outcome of my ethnographic fieldwork or the empirical evidence of the thesis. Each chapter deals with one or more research questions of the thesis and examines the field of study and the research problems from theoretical frameworks of analysis.

The next chapter is about historically understanding people and the environment of the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) Forest. It investigates the historical accounts of people and the environment and explains how the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest of Mizoram is connected and related to the environment of Assam, India, and Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh.

Chapter 3 Environmental History of Mizoram and the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates how in pre-colonial and colonial times, the people of the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) had a shared history and geography, until 1947, when the region was bifurcated into the Assam state of Northeast India, and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh. In the colonial rules, Mizoram was a district in the state of Assam till 1972, when it became a Union Territory. This chapter further explores the state of the environment and conservation projects in these two regions, i.e., the Assam and the CHTs both in the colonial rules and post-colonial times. The Assam and the CHTs share similar stories of people, environment, and wildlife in pre-colonial and colonial times. However, it might be wrong to say that the pressure on the environment and wildlife in both regions was absent especially when different Kingdoms and merchants fancied to rule over them and their space. At the same time, unarguably it was during colonial times that both the people and the environment were affected.

The chapter addresses the research question of; what does seeing conservation like the state misses about the local populations and natural environments, and why does it matter? It highlights the impact of creating different socio-political geographical areas/zones and the nation-states building on the local people and the environment. This chapter argues that to understand the local people and the environment, the colonial rules are critical as it has a negative impact and at the same time, the pre-colonial is also equally significant for the thesis. This chapter's main objective is to explore the environmental history of Mizoram and the Dampa Tiger Reserve, which would be impossible without the socio-environmental histories of CHTs and Assam. The chapter also supports the socio-political events critical to explore and explain the human-nature relationships in these regions (CHTs and Assam).

The chapter further explores and explains the local people and the environment both in terms of continuity and the changing socio-environmental relationships over different historical times. For example, it highlights the continued community-based conservation practices of nature since time immemorial and rejects state-led

conservation projects. The Apatani tribe of Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh is a classic example of community-based conservation practices that reject the idea of the conservation project. For instance, they were displeased when the government of Arunachal Pradesh attempted to declare their community forest under the 1976 Forest Act. However, not all the local communities in Northeast India and the CHTs of Bangladesh could be able to continue such conservation practices due to non-local factors such as the creation of nation-states, societies-state relationships, and the state-non-state actors in environmental politics.

3.2 The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) and the Assam in pre-colonial times

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) and the Northeast shares the South and Northwestern Borderland of Asia with distinct ethnic and socio-cultural identities. These regions share a long history of external relationships with India and other Asian countries. The people of Assam, especially in the Brahmaputra valley exchanged forest products with other parts of India till the 12th century (Gupta 1992-93). The Assamese societies shared monastic traditions of trade and matrimony with Tibet, Bhutan, China, and Nepal (Chatterjee 2013:117). The trade and exchanges of forest resources in the pre-colonial times has its' impact on the environment as discussed in the previous chapter in part 2.6 "History of Conservation and Displacement in Northeast India."

The CHTs also have similar environmental history as it too had continued interactions with different geographical regions such as with the Kings of Arakan (now Myanmar), Tippera (now Tripura), and the Mughals of Bengal. In fact, by the end of the 16th century Chittagong became a commercial centre. Jan Huygen van Linschoten (1598)[40], a Dutch merchant, it "the chief town of Bengala" and as per records the Portuguese historian João de Barros (1778), "Chatigan (also known as Chadigan and Chittagong) is the most famous and wealthy city of the kingdom of Bengal, because of its' part, at which meets the traffic of all the eastern region."

[40] The Voyage of John Huyghen Van Linschoten to the East Indies. From ..., Volume 1

This part of the chapter demonstrates how the local people, environment, and nature were far from isolated and were implicated in the struggles over the sovereignty of larger political powers. It argues that political power-struggles and the socio-political interactions, relationships, and exchanges of agricultural and forest products, illustrates a process or state of environmental dependence though it was not on the magnitude or scale that took place during the colonial rules.

3.2.1 Socio-political interactions and struggles in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs)

In pre-colonial history, the CHTs was a region of disputes between different rulers of India, especially the rulers of Trippera (now Tripura) and Arakan of Burma (now Myanmar). It is said that the people in CHTs often changed their master either to the King of Arakan or to the king of Tippera[41] (O'Malley, 1908). For instance, in 1711 the Chakmas and their King, Chandan Khan considered themselves under the suzerainty of the Arakan king[42]. It was also an area of interest and a place where commercial intercourses took place for the south-eastern seaboard of Bengal and the Arab of the Baghdad and Basorah in the early 12th century. Ain-I-Akhbari, a record on the administration of the Mughal Empire under Emperor Akbar, mentioned it as "a large city situated among trees on the banks of the sea, which is a great emporium being the resort of Christian and other merchants." Ibn-I-Batutah, a Moroccan traveler on his visit to Chittagong about 1350, described it as a "great place situated on the shore of the Great Sea". After 60 years of his visit and 80 years before the Portuguese discovered it, Chittagong was also visited by a Chinese General of the shores known as Ying-yai-sheng-lan (O'Malley, 1908).

The Arakan king invaded Chittagong in the 9th century A.D and later was lost to the King of Tippera around 1243 A.D. The river Meghna was a barrier for the Muhammadans (or the Muslims) till 14th century and it was Fakhr-ud-din Mubarak, an independent Muhammadan king of Sunargaon who pass this natural barrier into the Chittagong in 1340 A.D as far north as Sylhet, to the east into Tippera and Nokhali,

[41] Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers - Chittagong by L. S. S O'Malley, 1908. The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta.

[42] A. M. Sirajuddin and John Buller (1984). The Chakma Tribe of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the 18th Century, The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, No. 1 (1984), pp. 90-98.

and Chittagong into the south. The conquest took place during the reign of Megnai, the then king of Arakan, who was in alliance with the king of Thu-ra-tan (identified by Sir Arthur Payre with Sunargaon). In 1407 A.D one of the successors fled to Bengal and with the help of Bengal troops he restored his throne[43] . According to the Rajmala[44] the Raja (or King) of Tippera conquered Chittagong in 1512 by driving away Husain Shah's garrison. It was reconquered by Nasir-ud-din Nasrat Shah (1518-1532), "the son of Husain Shah, at the instigation, it is said, one of Alsa Husaini Shah of Baghdad, a merchant possessing great wealth, many slaves and 14 ships, who frequently visited Chittagong".

Chittagong also attracted the Portuguese and had failed attempts in 1517 and 1527. In 1517, John de Silveira, was sent to Chittagong but had to return to Goa without success. The Portuguese in 1527 led by Alfanso de Mello made a second attempt when their vessel was wrecked on the seacoast of Chittagong. They met some fishermen who promised them safety in the Chittagong but instead were taken to Chakaria where they were imprisoned. Later, they were ransomed by a Persian Coje Sabadin, who was one leading merchant at Chittagong. In 1538, the Portuguese governor of Goa sent Alfonso De Mello with 200 men in 5 (five) ships to Chittagong and they were captured and prisoned by Mahmud. However, in the subsequent events of conflicts among the Muhammadan rulers, leading to the deaths of Mahmud, the Arakan Raja, to maintain his power against the Muhammadan rulers of Bengal enlisted the help of the Portuguese[45].

In 1610, the Portuguese and the Arakan Raja concluded a treaty to cooperate to invade Bengal, but they were defeated by the Mughal troops. However, the Mughal did not show much interest and were occupied with their internal matters and interests in other parts of India and Chittagong remained a zone of conflict until 1663 when it was conquered by the Mughals. The Mughals' conquest of Chittagong also ended the domination of the Portuguese in the region[46]. Initially, the hill tracts of Chittagong

[43] Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers - Chittagong by L. S. S O'Malley, 1908. The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, p-21.
[44] The chronicles of the Rajas of Tippera.
[45] Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers - Chittagong by L. S. S O'Malley, 1908. The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta, p-23, 24 and 25.
[46] Ibid., Chapter - II

were outside of their direct control and their attempts were resisted until 1713, when the Chakma Raja, Fateh Khan, with a payment of a tribute of 11 maunds of cotton, obtained permission from the Mughal Emperors to allow trade between the hill and plain people[47]. However, as the collector of the Mughals was oppressive, the Chakmas stopped paying tribute and as a result, the Mughals attacked and destroyed the Chakma villages in 1724. In 1737, the Chakma Raja made peace with the Mughals and continued paying tribute to cotton[48].

Indeed, there was cultural interaction, social relations, and exchange of goods and commodities among groups of people[49] including the Bengalis of the plains. For example, Chaman Khan one of the sons of King Janu the 30th Chakma king had married a lady from the Wazir family and hence got the Muslim title of Khan as his surname[50]. During the time of Queen Manikbi in 1118th – 1119th, her husband allied with the Bengalis and fought against the "Maghs". Similarly, Jubal Khan's General Kalu Khan fought several battles with the Muslim Nawab and during Fateh Khan, the 37th King made peace with the Nawab in 1713 AD and obtained permission from the Mughal Emperor, Furrukshiya (1713 – 19) and subsequently from Muhammad Shah (1719 – 48) to allow the Bengali traders to trade with the Jhumias (Chakma farmers) on payment of a tribute of 11 maunds of cotton (about 440 kilograms)[51].

3.2.2 Socio-political interactions and struggles in Assam.

Assam was a sovereign Kingdom for nearly 600 years from 1228 to 1826 and witnessed many conflicts with different communities in the Northeast and outside. The Kingdom was surrounded by hilly tracts with various communities such as the Akas, Daflas, Miris, Mikirs, Abors, Mishmis, Khamtis, Singphos, Nagas, Bhutias, etc. Some of them were friendly as they traded with them, and others were hostile with raids and plunders in the plains/valleys for their necessities[52]. The Ahom king, Pratab

[47] P 40, Raikumari Chandra Roy (2000), IWGIA Document No. 99 Copenhagen 2000.
[48] Op. Cit. By A. M. Serajuddin and John Buller (1984), Proceedings of the Committee of Revenue, 6 May 1784
[49] This was also pointed out by Suhas Chatterjee (1970) and states that "it was Lushai Chief, Rutton Puiya had strong economic ties with the Chakmas".
[50] Chakma, S.B (2013): MA Dissertation at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, Chapter 5, Pp 90.
[51] Note on Raja Bhuvan Mohan's Account: The Chakma Raja's archives at Rangamati (available both in English and a Bengali version) and published by the Chakma Voice MCDF Vol II, Issue No. 4 Nov-Dec 2010.
[52] Gogoi, Jahnabi (2002), Agragrian system of medieval Assam.

Singha (1603-1641) adopted different policies to save the people of plains from the raids of the hill people. For example, the posa system or paying posa to the hill communities bordering plains. According to this system, the king selected some villages to pay certain commodities to the hill people to stop their raids. However, it was not the same for every hill community. Pratap Singha used different methods such as the Kotokis system with the Nagas and the Mikirs, he granted them fertile lands (known as Khats) in the foothills for cultivation and in return they paid annual tributes to the king. The king appointed several people known as Kotokis to look after the Khats and they were also empowered to deal with the hill people[53].

The seventeenth century also witnessed Ahom-Mughal conflict. The Mughal emperors wanted to extend their dominions in Assam and to seek routes to China and Tibet; and, to collect gold dust, long pepper, elephant teeth, musk, and lac. This resulted in a number of battles between the Mughals and the Ahoms. Such as the 1616 battle at Barali near Tezpur in which the Mughals were defeated, the 1618 battle at Hajo in which the Ahom king lost equal numbers of men and nearly 4,000 boats, and the 1648 battle in which the Ahom king Sutamla, also known as Jayadhwaj Singha with large army of infantry and cavalry supported by strong navy of the Portuguese and the Dutch, chased down the Mughals from Assam. In 1662, Mir Jumla of the Mughals attacked and defeated the Ahom king Sutamla whereby the Mughals took away large numbers of commodities such as elephants, coins in gold and silver, rice, gunpowder, etc.[54]

In the history of Assam, the Moamaria rebellion of 1769-1805 led to the decline of Ahom Kingdom. It started during the reign of Ahom king Lakshmi Singha and ended in 1805 in the reign of Kamaleswar Singha. Different scholars' views about the roots, nature, and the scope of this rebellion differently. Amalendu Guha (2001) and Dhrubajyoti Bora (1983) call it a "peasant rebellion" against the Ahom monarchy and Hiren Gohain and Dambarudhar Nath (2000), emphasizes on the ethnic as well as caste element. However, in this uprising different hill and plain communities participated against the kings of Assam. Later, the Assam also experienced the Burmese invasion during the reign of Chandra Kanta Singha (1810-1818) and from

[53] Ibid.,
[54] Gait, Edward A (1906), A History of Assam

1821 to 1824, it was also known as Burmese period. The Burmese "brought all kinds of land under assessment, imposed arbitrary taxes and realised money by force" (S.L Baruah, 1983).

3.3 The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) and Assam in colonial rules

It was during the British rule, when the terms "Chittagong" and "Northeast" were used to identify the people and their geographical areas. It was Alexandar Mackenzie who used "Northeast Frontier" to identify Assam and its adjoining hill areas and princely states of Manipur and Tripura in 1844 (Haokip, 2015). Similarly, the term "Chittagong Hill Tracts" were used during the formal annexation of the region by the British in 1860. It was the Arakan's King, who was an obstruction to the British rules in these two regions. The interactions between the Northeast region and the British were as early as 1792, at the request of the Assam king, [55] who asked for the help of the British to defeat the Burmese, who carried out attacks to occupy the plains of Assam from 1817 to 1826. The British wanted to seize and fortify Chittagong to make their Bengal trade headquarters in 1685 and 1689 but remained unsuccessful. It was during the famous Anglo-Burmese war in 1824, when the Burmese was defeated by the Britishers in 1824 that resulted in the 'Treaty of Yandaboo' in 1826 after which both two regions (Chittagong and Northeast) came under British rule. For instance, from the colonial records of Northeast, Haokip (2015) notes that the Burmese were forced to surrender the areas of Assam and Manipur they had seized by this treaty and eventually the British captured the entire region (Haokip, 2015:75).

The colonial history of these two regions is also considered to be the history of territorialization to completely bring the Northeast and Chittagong under the British rules (T. M. Chowdury, 2016). For instance, the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) were also used as a strategic frontier area to invade and rule the Lushais, Shendus, and others frontier tribes in the Northeast. It was also aimed to restructure the society and its' economy to serve their (British) colonial interest.

[55] Minutes of Cornwallis (October 3, 1792) cited in Bhuyan, S.K. (1949). Anglo-Assamese Relation, 1771-1826. Gauhati:Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, p. 301.

3.3.1 Socio-Political Interactions and Struggles in the CHTs

The resistances against the British rules in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) took place since the 18th century (before CHTs formal annexation under British administration) till the 19th century (colonial rules). In the 1760 A.D when the Governor of Bengal ceded the Chittagong (also known as Chadigang at that time) to East India Company (British) under Lord Clive, the cotton tribute was also transferred to the British. However, it was not well accepted by the Chakma Kings which resulted in several battles between them and the British. Two separate expeditions under Messers Lane and Trummers failed and the Chakmas fought many battles against the British with the help of Kukis and other tribes. For instance, in 1771 A.D with the help of the Lushais, the Chakma General Ranu khan fought against the East India Company (El Coy) and in 1777 A.D Chakma Raja Bhagyamanik fought against Capt. Lene in the downstream of Silak river.

In a letter from the Chief of Chittagong to Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, dated on the 10th April 1777, it states that a mountaineer named Ramu Khan, who pays the Company a small revenue on their cotton farm, has, since my being here, either through ill-usage from the revenue farmer, or from a disposition to revolt, for some months past committed great violence on the Company's landholders, by exacting various taxes, and imposing several claims on them, with no grounds of authority or legal demand[56]. A second report states that Ramu Khan has called to his aid large bodies of Kuki men, who live far in the interior parts of the hills, who have not the use of firearms, and who go unclothed. This rising was met by not allowing the hill people to have access to the bazaars or markets in the neighboring British District of Chittagong[57].

Indeed, the British rule over the CHTs was established only after the death of the Chakma Raja, Sher Daulat Khan in 1782 after which the British declared the Chakma throne vacant despite the inheritance of Jaun Baux Khan, the son of Daulat Khan. According to J. P. Mills, Jaun Baux Khan was dethroned due to his involvement in the

[56] Sir Robert Reid, History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam 1883-1941
[57] Ibid.

raids against the British, and 'had to be punished[58]. The headmen of the hill tribes could retain their authority, and our jurisdiction practically extended only to the collection of revenue from the hills in the shape of a tax on cotton[59]. On the 6th of May 1784, Government wrote to Mr Irwin, the Chief of Chittagong, desiring to have his opinion fully, whether, by lenient measures, the inhabitants of the hills might not be induced to become peaceful subjects and cultivators of the lowlands'[60]. In 1785 A.D the Chakma Raja Janbaksh fought against the groups of EI Coy and negotiated with Mr. Irwin that led Governor Lord Cornwallis to leave the Hill Tracts of Chadigang with the Chakmas. In 1815 A.D Raja Dharmabaksh had signed a Pact to give 501 Mounds of Cotton from the part of Chittagong Hill Tracts[61].

From 1832 to 1874, the Chakma tribe who were most populous among the other hill people was represented or ruled by a Chakma woman known as Kalindi Rani. She resisted against the British rule to protect the local self-governance of the hills and the people. Lewin writes that "the real rulers of the Hill Tracts were undoubtedly the chiefs, and they, I found, were highly suspicious and jealous of any infringement on their power and prerogatives"[62]. He furthermore writes that "I soon found that, with the best intentions for the good of the people, it was impossible to govern actively without raising enemies on every side. I was not satisfied to see things run in the old grooves, but when I perceived a fault, an error, or abuse, I attacked it boldly and took no rest until the thing was altered. Petitions and complaints against my administration began to pour in, but I was nobly supported by the Commissioner"[63].

Lewin writes that among all the Chiefs, Kalindi Rani remained hostile during his stay in CHTs[64] and has even been described as a thorn in the side of the British for forty years[65]. He explains how he was challenged, "the first attempt was in the Kutchery, or Law Court, sending up test cases and then appealing against my decisions, first to the

[58] Mey, J. P. Mills and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, p. 83
[59] Page 21, ibid.
[60] The Hill Tracts of Chittagong, and the Dwellers therein, by Captain T.H. Lewin, p. 22
[61] Chakma Jatir Itihas, Press Cuttings and Research Work of B. Rasabindu Chakma, Kamalanagar, Mizoram.
[62] P 310, A Fly on The Wheel or How I Helped To Govern India by T. H Lewin, 1885.
[63] P 311, Ibid.,
[64] P 326, Ibdi.,
[65] P 44, Raikumari Chandra Roy (2000), IWGIA Document No. 99 Copenhagen 2000.

Commissioner at Chittagong and afterwards to the High Court at Calcutta. Next, a very harassing mode of attack was adopted, and one much in favour of the East. Anonymous petitions were sent to Calcutta (now Kolkata), charging me with all sorts of crimes, and were returned to me by the Bengal Government for any reply or remark I might wish to offer"[66]. "The continual fire of anonymous letters and petitions had been disregarded, but at length, the Lieutenant-Governor received a petition duly signed by seven leading hill men, containing formal charges against me of various sorts of injustice and oppression"[67]. Finally, the Government did not like a stirring up of mud; they desired peace, quiet, and economy, and new brooms (grass) found no favour in Calcutta" [68] . The outcome was an independent inquiry into CHT administration, which found that the Regulations were not being sufficiently observed[69].

In the 1850s, the British administration in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) had to face raids from the hill people of the Mizo hills. In January 1859, the Kookies (Mizos) raided the CHT and attacked its fort. In the raid, the Kookies killed 186 British soldiers and took 100 of them as prisoners[70]. After successive attacks in the 1850s, the Chittagong commissioner recommend the annexation of CHT for its full control. Then the CHTs was formally annexed under the British administration in 1860. The hilly tracts were then placed under the control of an officer, with the title of Superintendent of Hill Tribes. In 1867 the official designation of the officer in charge was changed from Superintendent of the Hill Tribes to Deputy Commissioner of the Hill Tracts; and his powers, which had previously been directed mainly to the preservation of the peace of the frontier, were extended to give him full control over all the matters on revenue and justice throughout the district[71].

In the year 1892, under Sir Charles Eliott's (Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal) orders for administrative purposes, Demagiri was to be considered to be part and parcel of

[66] P 326, A Fly on The Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India by T. H Lewin, 1885.
[67] P 327, Ibid.,
[68] P 311, Ibid.,
[69] Lewin 1912: 250. Cited by Raikumari Chandra Roy (2000), IWGIA Document No. 99 Copenhagen 2000, p 43.
[70] Hunter, A Statistical Account, pp. 19–22.
[71] Page 22, Ibid.,

the South Lushai Hills[72]. On 1st April 1898, the South Lushai Hills together with Demagiri and other Chakma dominated areas of CHT in Bengal province was merged with the North Lushai Hills under the administration of Assam (Talukdar, 1988, Chakraborty and Prasad, 1994). Therefore, the boundaries of CHT were revised, and a strip on the east, including Demagiri with a population of about 1,500 was transferred to the Lushai Hills[73]. Before that, the CHT was annexed in 1860 under the Bengal administration and brought direct control of British India and CHT was an area with rich natural resources and revenue collection by the British administration. The district was divided into four valleys such as Pheni, Karnaphuli, Sangu, and Matamuri rivers and their tributaries, and marked out by chains of hills running from the south in a north-westerly direction. The Karnaphuli, or Kynsa Khyoung, as it is called by the hill people, rises in a lofty range of hills to the north-east, and after flowing by a most tortuous course through the Hill Tracts, enters the Regulation District of Chittagong at the village of Chandraguna[74].

In the pre-colonial times, the people of CHTs did change their acceptance of dominions to the victor but few major conflicts or wars were recorded against a Kingdom. One of the reasons could be that the invaders did not intervene in their local self-governance system or did not attempt to change their way of life unlike the British. The colonialists not only attempted to control their way of life but also systematically exploited their resources or land for commercial purposes or profits. Therefore, unlike before many tribal groups resisted the British from the Mizo hills or the CHTs at various times either in the forms of raids or confrontations.

3.3.2 Socio-economic policies and the environment in the CHTs

The indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts hill people traditionally practice Jhum cultivation also known as “slash and burn” or Shifting cultivation. According to a 1901 census, it was estimated that out of a total population of 124,762 persons, 109,360 were engaged in Jhum cultivation[75]. During the colonial rules, especially after the formal annexation of the CHT in 1860, plain land or plough cultivation was

[72] Letter No. 149-P dated the 17th of July 1897, The Provincial Gazetter of India, Volumn V at page 413.
[73] Sir Robert Reid, History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam 1883-1941.
[74] Page 27, Ibid.,
[75] Hutchinson, R.H. Sneyd, Superintendent of the CHT 1906. An Account of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, p. 50.

encouraged to increase revenue and for easy administration of the hill people[76]. Another way to generate revenue, contain and govern the hill people was by introducing reserve forests. Indeed by 1882-83, about one fourth which was 24% of the total area of the CHTs or to be more specific of 1,244 sq. miles were made as Reserve Forest. The principal reserves are as follows: Kassalong Reserved Forest (north-east part of CHT) 406,542 acres Rankhiang Reserved Forest (east-central part of CHT) 190,521 acres Sangu Reserved Forest (south-east part of CHT) 83,612 acres Matamuhari Reserved Forest (south-east part of CHT) 100,467 acres other minor Reserved Forests (central part of CHT) 15,018 acres[77].

As the reserve forests were created, there was a total ban on Jhum cultivation and within some of these areas, the Government cleared huge tracts of virgin forest to create teak plantations as raw material for commercial purposes[78]. Lewin, while describing the forests, notes that "Teak is not indigenous, but thrives if planted; it grows, however, plentifully in the forest on the other side of the hill range separating this district from Arraccan." During such time, the hill people used cotton and timber in the market and occasionally ivory and wax in small quantities. "About 50,000 cubic feet of timber per annum, it is calculated, is brought down yearly to the plains from the Hill Tract forests; and 55,854 maunds of cotton are estimated to be yearly exported by the hill people"[79]. The principal articles or goods that the hill people buy from the markets were salt, tobacco, piece goods, metal goods, trinkets, dried fish, pigs, and cattle[80].

Under colonial rule, the forests and wildlife played a significant role in hill people's life. Hutchinson (1905) writes that the people did not like to avail themselves of their medical treatment and, in most cases, preferred their treatment which according to Lewin (1885) is based on plants. Hutchinson states that "the fat of the tiger and a portion of its liver, the gall bag of the python, the testicles of the otter, the fat of a variety of black beaver, are all potent drugs amongst the hill tribes, and are supposed

[76] Roy, Raja D. 1995, op. cit., p. 56.
[77]Cited by Raikumari Chandra Roy (2000), IWGIA Document No. 99 Copenhagen 2000 in Page 71 and was originally written by Webb & Roberts 1976: 2.
[78] P 25, ibid.,
[79] P 7 & 8, Ibid., A Fly On The Wheel or How I Helped To Govern India by T. H Lewin, 1885.
[80] Ibid.,

to have wonderful effects in cases of impotency, barrenness and hysteria." "They make two or three dyes from the roots and leaves of plants and use certain creeper in catching fish; such plant, when steeped in a stream, and the water confined by a dam, has the property of intoxicating and stupefying the fish, which come floating, belly upwards, to the surface of the water, and are then easily caught"[81].

The abundance of wildlife as recorded during the colonial times can be understood as narrated by Lewin, "the gibbon monkey is found throughout the hills, and towards the south, on the coast, the fisher monkey is met with. The lemur is also frequently met with. There is also the small common monkey, which, in large flocks, does direct mischief to the standing crops of the hill men, and a long-tailed white-whiskered variety, - the Lungoor. The flying fox, the horseshoe bat, and the small house bat or filter mouse are all found in the hills; also, the must-rate, the badger, the Malay black bear, and several species of wild cats. Tigers are common, but they do not do much harm. The wild dog is said to be, but I have not seen it. The mongoose, the large dark-brown squirrel, the red squirrel, the yellow-bellied variety, the field rat, the bamboo rat, and the porcupine, are all frequently met with. Elephants and the Assam rhinoceros are common. The double-horned Sumatran species of rhinoceros was formerly thought not to be a native of this part of the country, but a specimen has recently been captured alive and brought to Chittagong by Captain Hood, of the Khedda Department. It was smooth-skinned and unmistakably two-horned. A small black species of the hog is found throughout the district as also the barking deer, the muntjak, and samber; guyal and wild buffalo are common.

There were varieties of birds species such as the beemra, shrikes, the bulbul, warblers, the water-wagtail, hoopoe koel, carriou crow (this bird is found largely along the western frontier, but ceases entirely on going far east), minah, hornbill, small, green parrots, a large blue kingfisher with a red neck, a small variety of the same species, the night jar, the anvil bird, the peacock, Argus pheasant, the matoora or the Arracan pheasant, the button quail, jungle fowl, green pigeon, the large wood-pigeon, ring-dove, kites, fish-eagles, and a few wild duck and snipe. I have seen one partridge, but

[81] P 9, Ibid.,

they are very rarely found in the district. The boa constrictor is common and is found of enormous size. Several kinds of poisonous snakes are also met with"[82].

During the rule of the British in the CHTs, the forest remained one of their main sources of revenue followed by the plough/plain land cultivations. Till the annexation of the CHTs, there were not any systematic attempts towards revenue generation except the capitation tax. For instance, as per the records in 1816-17, it was rupees 1,180 only[83]. The capitation tax or also known as Jhum rent was collected by the East India Company under the head of Kapas (Cotton) Mahal settlements and was done based on the head of each household or family who cultivated Jhum in the hills[84]. After the annexation, plough or plain land or permanent settled agriculture was introduced to generate more revenue. The identified land for plough cultivation and a settlement is made with the tenant which is known as an Amalnamah or Lease which is then granted for a period not exceeding ten years. In the first three years no rent is charged for the land; after that, the amount of rent payable is fixed for ten years. In calculating the amount of rent to be paid, the surroundings and capabilities of the land are considered. The rate of rent charged at present is purposely kept low, to offer every encouragement to the people to take up plough cultivation." When initially it was introduced in 1875, there was no revenue from plough cultivation and in 1903-04, a sum of rupees 22,000 was collected as rent for the ploughlands.

The British administration sources revenue from forests by taxing the forest produce removed from the reserve forest and the open forest when it is removed for trade. "Toll stations are placed on the rivers at the entry into the Hill Tracts, and as the produce is floated down the rivers it is taxed before being allowed to pass the toll station. These stations are offered by the Forest Department and are situated on the Collectorate side of the boundary." In 1902-03, the total revenue was 79,281 rupees. The other source of revenue generated from the forest was "Grass Khela Revenue" which was the sale of a variety of grass used for thatching houses. "These grass-fields or kholas (above you spell it as Khela. Please check.) situated about rivers are reserved by the Government and auctioned yearly. The Bengalis come up from the

[82] P 16, Ibid.,
[83] P 32, Chapter III, Ibid.,
[84] P 33, Ibid.,

regulation district of Chittagong, and the bidding at the sales for the right to cut and remove the grass each year is very keen." And in the same year 1902-03, from this source, the revenue amounted to rupees 9,642 (121 USD). There were other sources of revenue collected by the British administration such as excise, fisheries, pounds, administrative or legal process fees, criminal fines, cattle-grazing fees, ferries, and gun licenses. The total revenue realized during 1903-04 from all sources was rupees 1, 34, 028[85] .

3.3.3 Socio-Political Interactions and Struggles in Assam

The Treaty of Yandaboo (1826) created opportunities for the Britishers to penetrate the region and within a decade, the entire Brahmaputra Valley, Cachar, Jayantia (or Jaintia) and the Khasi Hills came under colonial rule. By the end of the 19th century, the Lushai, Naga and Garo Hills were brought under the British rules (P. Goswami, 2012). The people of the Northeast (especially, Assam) hoped that as the rule of the Brumese got over with the coming of the British (after the Yandaboo treaty), they would live in peace and prosperity. The British promised to leave Assam after the war (first Anglo-Burmese war in 1824). Indeed, this was not case as the British did continue to stay and started administering Assam by their social system and only to serve their economic interest (S.L Barua, 2020, p.465-468).

In 1828, Gomdhar Konwar, the prince of Ahom (now, Assam) and his associates (Dhanjay Borgohain and Jairam Khargharia Phukan), organised a revolt against the British administration and at the same time when other communities such as the Khasis and the Singhpos also preparing revolt against the British (S.L Barua, 1995). However, before they could start the revolt, the British administration led by Lieutenant Rutherford suppressed the movement. In fact, the resistances against the British rules in the region were strong. For example, in the present-day Meghalaya state, the British administration in 1827 wanted to construct a road to connect Brahmaputra valley with Sylhet (presently, in Bangladesh) which was vehemently opposed by the Garos and the Jaintias. As a result, the British had burnt down number of Garo and Jaintia villages (M. J Andrew, 2013). The Khasis led by U Tirot Sing

[85] P 34 – 40, Ibid.,

fought the British from 1829 to 1833 who was later imprisoned in Dhaka (D, R Syiemlieh, 1987).

In the 1860, when the British levied income tax in addition to house tax, it was not accepted by the local people. For instance, U Kiang Nongbah, a leader from the Jaintias community mobilised the people to revolt against the British administration and he was hanged publicly in 1862 by the British (M. K Andrew, 2013). During the colonial rules, the Northeast witnessed revolutionary local leader against the British from every corner of the region. For examples, Rani Gaidinliu Pamel who started political movement to drive out the British from Manipur and Nagaland. She was arrested in 1932 and sentenced to life imprisonment by the British rulers and was released in 1947 after India's independence. Resistance against the colonial rules spread across the region from the 1830s to the 1860s. B C Allen (2005) while describing the stiff resistances by the Northeast people against the British the Khasi War (1829-1833), the Jaintia rebellion (1862, and the Naga-Lushai struggles (1832 - 1898) against colonialism.

The socio-political resistances in the region could be understood from the fact that the colonial rulers wanted to bring socio-economic changes to serve their interest of extracting maximum resources and profits. For example, the British administration continued the Ahom King Pratap Singh's posa system with substantial change such as payment in cash instead of kind, entering into agreements between the tribes/hill people and the colonial administration, collect the posa from the designated officers instead of the cultivators (D.P Choudhury, 1970). The posa system indeed is a relationship between the hills and the plains whereby the dependence of the hill people on the plains for their livelihood or some necessities of life. In the pre-colonial period, under the posa system, the Ahom king exchanged necessary commodities and to prevent raids in the Ahom kingdom.

In the 1844 captain Gordon, Assistant Agent to the Governor General wrote to Major Jerkins, Agent to the Governor General, Northeast Frontier that, "I have always considered it (posa system) deregatory to our government, yielding to such demands, as were extorted from the Assam Rajahs, but custom of several of the Hill Tribes drawing their supplies from the plains, and receiving a share of the Revenue, having

long been sanctioned, I am therefore induced to advocate the system of granting an allowance…." (A. Mackenzie, 1884). I argue that in the colonial rules it was to prevent raids, pressurize the hill people to surrender and to protect the agricultural products. The prime objective was to protect the growing commercial activities, income, and revenues. For example, the tea gardens in Assam were expanded on a large scale by encroaching on the traditional hunting grounds of the hill people. It resulted in frequent raids by the hill people upon the tea gardens and the surrounding villages (J. Zahluna, 2011). Consequently, the British administration introduced the inner line regulation, or the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act was introduced in 1873 to protect the commercial interests of the British administration. The Regulation also laid down rules for the capture and preservation of elephants (B.C Chakraborty, 1981).

Datta Ray (1985) analysed the inner line regulation as the economic and commercial objectives with three folds such as; "to regulate the trade in Indian rubber between the hills and the British traders; to control the extension of tea plantation into the hill areas; and to regulate the transfer of land in these areas". The colonial rules in the Northeast have imposed a dichotomy between the hills and the plains which negatively affected the socio-cultural and political relationships and interactions among the communities in the region.

3.3.4 Socio-economic policies and the environment in the Assam

After defeating the Burmese in Assam, the British immediate interest was exploring and mapping the forest and its resources and the wildlife. One of such reports is the Statistical Account of Assam by William Wilson Hunter (1879) records that in the Eastern Dwars of Assam wild cardamom was found and both in the Eastern Dwars and the Goalpara district Sal timbers were found in abundance. At the same time, in both districts there was an abundance of wildlife such as tigers, elephants, buffaloes, deer, bears, wild pigs, rhinoceros, etc. The colonial administrators also offered money to kill wild animals as they were an obstacle to the expansions of agricultural and commercial agendas to generate revenues. In rivers, crocodiles were plentiful and there were also other smaller animals such as jackals, monkeys, fallow deer, hog deer, hares, foxes, civet cats, wild cats, mongoose, etc., in the forest.

William Wilson Hunter (1879) in his report also noted that in the Goalpara district the forest yields good profit and the Sal timber trade contributed to the wealth and prosperity of the district. Wild animals such as tigers, leopards, rhinoceros, bears, buffaloes, and deer were abundant and considered game animals for hunting. The British also offered money to kill wild animals. There were bird species found in abundance such as florican, wild ducks, teal, wildfowl, wild geese, red and black partridges, common and button quail, snipe, golden plover, etc.[86].

In the Garo Hills, rich limestone of good quality was discovered in the valleys of the Sameswari and Bhogai rivers, and inferior qualities near Tura and Damalgiri[87]. The people used to exchange cotton, timber, boats, bamboos, firewood, vegetables, rubber, and lac with rice, cattle, dried fish, goats, fowls, pigs, cloth, ornaments, weapons, and iron implements[88]. In the Naga Hill district, coal and chalk are reported to exist in the Rengma hills, and limestone is found in abundance along the banks of the Nambar river[89]. Different wildlife and bird species were also found in the Garo Hills, Naga Hills as were found in the Goalpara and the Eastern Dwars. In the Naga Hills, other mammals were also found such as pangolin or anteater, porcupine, huluk, langur or hanuman, common monkey, bamboo rat, common brown rat, common striped squirrel, grey flying squirrel, and black hill squirrel. Among game, birds are found the peacock, pea or argus pheasant, jungle fowl, black Patridge, hill Patridge, and several varieties of geese and ducks[90].

In the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, coal and limestone of excellent quality were found in abundance and inexhaustible in supply. It is reported that the lower Bengal obtains nearly the whole of its lime supply from the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The lime is known as 'Sylhet Lime' and is obtained by quarrying from the beds of stone that line the base of the mountains along the entire length of the Sylhet boundary. Ironstone

[86] W.W. Hunter (1879), A Statistical Account of Assam, Vol. II., Trubner & Co., London, p-114 and 115.
[87] Ibid., page 141 and 142.
[88] Ibid., page 168.
[89] Ibid., page 170.
[90] Ibid., page 171.

exists almost everywhere throughout the Hills, but principally in the dependent States of Khyrim, Nongspung, Cherra, and Mylliem[91].

The coming of the British to Assam changed the land use pattern. They have cleared many forests for agricultural expansion (Handique, 2004). Subsequently, the expansion of tea, coal mining, sawmills, railway, and oil took place (S. Ahmed, 2015). These contributed to large scale degradation of forest land and its resources. To further control the forest and its resources, the British administration classified the forest into reserved forests, open forests, and protected forests. In 1874, the Forest Department was created to manage the forests in Assam which promoted systematic commercialisation of the forest and its resources.

In 1891, the Assam Forest Regulation Act (AFRA) was enacted to regulate and amend the law on forests and their resources. It empowered the state to constitute any land as a reserve forest. The Act also restricts or abolishes Jhum cultivation irrespective of local customary rules and forest protection practices[92]. Indeed, the legitimization of forest and its resources by different acts such as the Indian Forest Acts of 1865 and 1878, Assam Forest Regulation of 1891, and Assam Forest (Amendment) Act, 1931 hegemonized the British over the forest (Handique, 2004).

The colonial administration introduced the Mahal system for farming certain forests to the highest bidder for not exceeding five years. It also allowed the farmers to work as best suited to their interests[93]. Consequently, there were unrestricted fellings of trees that took place in the Sal Forest of Eastern Dwars in the Goalpara district. The Bengal woodcutters ``found exceedingly busy as they cut down whatever they wanted and a great deal of making up for the payment of the annual tax amounting to Rs 4.4 per axe" (Handique, 2004).

Under colonial rule, the forest was not only systematically exploited but also changed due to the introduced new land-use policy. Besides, the development of tea

[91] Ibid., page 221.
[92] Jitu, et al. (2009). RE looking at forest policies in Assam: facilitating reserved forests, Institute of Social Change and Development, MPRA Paper No. 29560. Retrieved on 11th May 2011 at https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/29560/11.
[93] Mann, Gustav, PRFA 1874-1875, p.2

plantations, agricultural expansion, and plantations of commercial trees also led to deforestation and environmental degradation. Land for the cultivation of tea under the Wasteland Grant Rules of 1838, Revised Fee Simple Rules of 1874, and the New Lease Rules of 1876[94]. As and when the demand for tea increased, the administration expanded its tea plantation areas which consequently reduced the forest areas[95]. Similarly, the rapid expansion of agricultural land also led to large scale deforestation. There were also plantations of new commercial species of trees such as the Indian Rubber at Kulsi and Charduar, Nahor in the Nambor, Teak plantations on the Kulsi river in Kamrup and the Dehing river near Makum in Sibsagar district between 1869 to 1872 (Handique, 2004).

Indeed, colonialism in Assam had an equal impact on wildlife due to its abundance as it was an obstruction to their economic policies over the forest. In 1870, the administration offered 10 shillings for killing snakes, and from 5 up to 30 Shillings to kill a tiger which was subsequently raised to 2.10£[96]. For instance, the Eastern circle of Assam's Forest Department issued gun licenses of some 4,500 guns to kill animals by 1917-18[97]. Arupjyoti Saikia (2009) narrates the ruthless killing of wildlife by the British and indigenous communities of Assam in that period and includes both peasant communities and the royals or the elites of Assam. He also illustrates how the British administration exploited the wildlife for both economic purposes and game or sport hunting.

3.4 The Northeast India - People, environment, and conservation in the post-colonial

The Northeast India is popularly known as "Seven Sisters" with a newly added eighth state, Sikkim. It comprises Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. Its geographic area comprises 262,179 Km² (about 7.7% of India's territory) and with a population of 39 million (2001 census) which is 3.8% of the total population of India. There are about 400 tribal, ethnic, and non-ethnic communities in the region (Biswas and Suklabaidya, 2006) and the region

[94] Das, J.N., An Introduction to the Land Laws of Assam, Gauhati, 1988, pp.4-6.
[95] Brandis, op. cit., p.10.
[96] 77. Hunter, op. cit., p.25.
[97] Tottenham, W.E.L., PRFA 1917-18, p.28.

is geographically connected with 'mainland India through a tenuous connection of 21-kilometre-long landmass of "Siliguri corridor" which is also known as the "Chicken's neck" (check your quote marks Haokip 2006: 41). It is characterised by extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity with distinct tribal and sub-tribal groupings and non-tribal populations speaking about 175 languages (Bhaumik 2010).

Northeast India region is of national and international interest for conservation because of its rich biodiversity (S. Chatterjee, 2008). In India, the Eastern Himalayas and Northeast India remain the prominent bio-geographic zones (Rodgers and Panwar, 1988) and identified in the priority Global 200 ecoregion by the WWF -World Wildlife Fund (Wikramanayake et al. 2002). The Conservation International which initially identified the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Darjeeling Hills of West Nepal, Bhutan, and Southern China as part of the Indo-Burma hotspots (Myers 1988, Myers et al. 2000), and now all the eight states of Northeast India are included along with the neighbouring countries of Bhutan and Myanmar, and the region of southern China (S. Chatterjee, 2008). The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) identified the region as a centre of rice germplasm, and the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) of India illustrated the region with the richness in the wild relatives of crop plants (Arora and Nayar 1984). The region is also rich in medicinal plants and rare and endangered species. In 1995, the Namdapha area in Arunachal Pradesh was identified as one of the centres of plant diversity by the IUCN - International Union for Conservation of Nature (S. Chatterjee, 2008).

The region is also of great interest for the Indian state to exploit its natural resources such as water and forest and is believed to be one of the "wealthiest regions" of India (World Bank, 2007). The Indian state developmental agenda in the region is based on newer political-economic relations (Banerjee-Guha, 2008) by identifying many areas for dam's construction, oil exploitation and other industrial development. It is India's 'future powerhouse' and according to the Central Electricity Authority of India, there are at least 168 large hydroelectric projects proposed for the region[98]. For instance, in

[98] Central Electricity Authority (2001), 'Preliminary Ranking Study of Brahmaputra Basin', Central Electricity Authority, Governement of India, New Delhi. Retrieved from https://www.conservation.org/priorities/biodiversity-hotspots.

the state of Arunachal Pradesh alone some 132 projects were signed till October 2010 with the private and public sector companies[99].

It has been estimated that if all the projects are implemented, 20 per cent of the total population of Arunachal Pradesh will be displaced (Hussain, 2008). Such change!! not only adversely will affect people but also the environment and biodiversity. The Indian state has been trying to attract private sector investment in the region by recognizing the potential of the region in terms of hydropower, forest, agriculture, trade, industrial development, etc.[100] The 'Look East Policy' which aims to forge closer economic integration with the Southeast Asian Nations, is going to exploit the unexploited resources like timber, biodiversity, petroleum etc. (Sivaramakrishnan and et al, 2016).

The Indian state developmental agenda has already severely impacted the environment. For instance, in 2015, 2017, and 2019 Indian forest surveys, it is reported that there is net deforestation of 628, 630 and 765 square kilometres respectively in the region[101]. In between 2001 to 2018, "75 per cent of the total tree cover loss outside the recorded forest area in India occurred in this region"[102]. Since 1982, economic development through the forest and there has been a rise of forest-based industries until the Supreme Court of India banned it, yet it secretly continues in the reserve forest (S. Chatterjee, 2008).

The state policies towards land use for commercial purposes with monoculture plantations such as Rubber and Palm oil has been alarming due to their negative effect on the environment. It also disturbs the biodiversity by replacing the original vegetation or ecology of the area. The expansion of monoculture plantations in the region such as the rubber led to the loss of ecosystems (Hu et al. 2008). The tea

[99] K. Handique, A. Dutta., (2014). Power and Northeast: The Hydro Power Scenario of Northeast. International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)Volume 3 Issue 12, December 2014.
[100] Northeast Business Summit in January 2013 by the Ministry of Department of Northeastern Region (DoNER) along with Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in New Delhi.
[101] Benerjee. S., (2020). Draft EIA 2020: How it may impact the North East. DownToEarth, Monday 10 August 2020. Retrieved from https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/environment/draft-eia-2020-how-it-may-impact-north-east-72742.
[102] Ibid.,

plantations have already exacerbated deforestation and destroyed the habitats of the wildlife species (Choudhury, 1988a), Choudhury (1995 and 1996).

Consequently, the wildlife in Northeast India is severely getting affected. A detailed report of Kaziranga National Park to the Guwahati High Court in 2014 provides an overview of the state of wildlife and forest in the region. The report submitted to the Guwahati High Court by the Kaziranga authority in 2014 reflects the state of wildlife in Assam and gives an overview of the emerging issues faced by the environment and wildlife. In the report, where poaching is also cited as one of the issues plaguing the parks and there are other serious issues and concerns such as shrinking of the habitat, soil erosion by Brahmaputra River, siltation of the water bodies, invasion of weeds and encroachment by tree forest over the grasslands, complete lack of protection of watershed of Kaziranga, lack of corridors around the park and so on[103]. And it informs that each of these issues has the potential of wiping out the Rhinoceros population.

The Report asserts that "if poaching was the only issue plaguing Kaziranga and threatening its survival, then Kaziranga would survive if the earth exists. However, it is not. Even if the poaching were arrested fully, Kaziranga would continue to be in danger." It further states that the development of profit companies or industries such as petroleum refinery, tea factories, bricks kilns, stone crusher units, etc.-that the state allow to operate in a regulated 'No Development Zone' (NDZ) posed a serious threat to biodiversity, ecology, and environment of Kaziranga[104].

Northeast India constitutes 25% of the total forest cover in India and has 63 state-led conservation projects in the form of national parks and sanctuaries[105]. However, the state-led conservation projects do face resistance. It is argued that the community forest institutions in the region have played a key role in protecting and conserving the forest, the forest use is limited to meet domestic needs, and the traditional resource

[103] M.K Yadav, Director of Kaziranga National Park (2014). Detailed Report on Issues and Possible Solutions for Long Term Protection of the Greater One Horned Rhinoceros in Kaziranga National Park to the Guwahati High Court on 5th August 2014.
[104] Ibid.,
[105] As per the official records of Ministry of Environment and Forest (2010)

management mechanisms are still functioning[106]. While reviewing the forest sector of the region, Poffenberger, et al. (2006) highlights the local communities' conservation practices by engaging themselves in forest protection and management. They also highlight the local communities' demands to retain control over their natural resources, which was hugely supported by over 20-armed insurgency groups. They argue that community forest protection has been a key mechanism in guarding the region's immense biodiversity.

At the same time, there are agencies to push the state-led conservation agenda in the region, and there is resistance from those affected by such projects. Such a contention between the community-based and state-led conservation could be well understood in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The Apatani tribe of Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh reject the idea of conservation or 'reserve forest' and are displeased with the attempts of the government of Arunachal Pradesh to declare their community forest as reserve forest under the 1976 Forest Act[107]. The Apatani tribe argues against their inherent rights and control over the forest for ages which they were conserving till today. They are even very apprehensive and reject the idea of mapping and surveying their area and argue that their boundaries already exist and are recognized under traditional systems. Moreover, they argue that there are no conflicts or disputes within and outside tribes (S. Chatterjee et al., 2000).

The Ziro Valley of Apatani tribe is under the tentative list of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage for its cultural landscape (UNESCO, 2014). The landscape is made in the list for its unique agricultural technique that includes optimum land use by the Apatani tribe and their efficiency in conservation of the valley[108]. It is stated that, "Ziro Valley presents an example of how co-existence of man and nature has been perfected over the centuries by the Apatani civilization" by the Indian representative to the UNESCO. The Apatani tribe worships nature and their relationship with and celebration of nature regulates their cultural practices. This relationship between nature, culture and

[106] Mark Poffenberger et al. (2006), based on research conducted by Community Forest Working Group in Northeast India (CFWG-NI) supported by Community Forestry international.
[107] S. Chatterjee et al. (2000), on Conservation and sustainable use of natural bioresource: A case study of Apatanis in Arunachal Pradesh", WWF.
[108] The Telegraph (2014), NE sites on UNESCO list, 20th of April 2014.

humans is of a timeless universal value[109]. The Indian representative described the valley as, "canopy cover of the mountain ridges around the valley has increased, the paddy fields are as placid as it was and so are the bamboo gardens. Apart from widening of traditional narrow streets, the old charm of the villages is intact. Characteristic socio-religious structures like lapañ, nago and babo are still the centers around which life revolves."

The attempts for advocacy to impose idea of 'reserve forest/areas' by the national and international organizations like WWF to the Apatanis[110] demonstrates the inherent interest of state and non-state actors without considering of local people and the ecology. The reasons could be to forcefully insert the dominant idea of conservation with the intent to reject the local conservation practices and their material interest in the implementation of conservation projects. The Apatanis also expressed distress about the Talley Valley Wildlife Sanctuary which impacted them as well and strongly believe that it is an extension of their clan-controlled forest land [111] and the government must have consulted them before declaring it as a wildlife sanctuary[112].

Conservation practices of the tribe are not only with forest areas but also to agricultural practices whereby the indigenous knowledge system of this tribes and socio-cultural values plays a significant role in up-liftmen of rural economy (Wangpan et al., 2014). The village elders believe that the 'exotic varieties' of food crops are not suitable to their local soil which is more fit for local varieties. They are against the subsidies being provided to attract cultivation of such varieties (Chatterjee et al., 200). In fact, they have exceptionally high outputs of rice which is 60 to 80 units per unit energy input (Ramakrishnan, 1992). This is also far superior to the traditional wet cultivation of rice of the Indian plains (Mitchell, 1979) and elsewhere in the Phillippines (Nguu and Palis, 1977).

The Apatanis case is a classic example of the continued local conservation practices of nature and ecology. At the same time, the ambitious Indian state economic developmental agenda from the 'Look East Policy to Construction of Dams' and

[109] The Indian representative to the UNESCO, 15th April 2014.
[110] Studies carried out by S. Chatterjee et al., of Worldwide Fund for nature (WWF), India, 2000.
[111] WWF, 2009
[112] S. Chatterjee et al., 2000.

commercialisation of forests and its' resources will challenge both the people and environment. Therefore, the critical aspect of addressing the present and the future environmental issues and problems needs a way forward without friction between people and environmental agencies.

3.5 The DTR and Conservation in Mizoram and the CHTs

The people and the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest of Mizoram share international borders with the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh and share the water of the same river, named Sajek. In Bangladesh, this area is known as Sajek valley, and the socio-political and economic activities of both sides have their impact on each other[113]. For example, the objection raised by the Bangladesh government to the Indian government stopped the extraction of sand from the river Sajek by the people of Mizoram. On the other side of the border, the Bangladesh government is in full swing to make it a tourist hotspot in the country and the construction of roads till the river Sajek is completed, and construction of houses and resorts with electrification is going on large scale[114]. There are visits to the Silsury village from the representatives of the Mizoram State Assembly to initiate international border trade centres[115]. At the same time, there is the International Indo-Bangladesh Border Fencing (IBBF) which is 318 km (about 197.6 mi) long international border fencing construction going on since 2005.

The IBBF project will be carried through 62 km (about 38.53 mi) of the DTR[116]. It shall restrict access to the river Sajek and habitat beyond the river for wildlife. The project also includes installing floodlights along the road, construction of helipads and digging of borewells at each border outpost[117]. The wildlife has already started

[113] I came to know about it in January 2021 by the people of Silsury village which was one of the fieldwork sites.
[114] It can be seen from the Indian side of the border and even the Bangladesh media carries such stories. For instance, Mamunur Rashid (2020). Once remote Sajek, now a thriving tourist spot, The daily Observer, 30 November 2020. Retrieved at https://www.observerbd.com/news.php?id=287111
[115] Visits had been taking place since January 2020 from the State Assembly starting from the Speaker of the Mizoram Assembly to Mizoram trade and commerce minister.
[116] News
[117] Nimesh Ved (2016). Dampa: caught in the midst of all. The Deccan Herald, https://www.deccanherald.com/ News 18th October 2016, Retrieved at https://www.deccanherald.com/content/576317/dampa-caught-midst-all.html.

suffering due to the fencing project. One daily labour in an interview during the field visits, states that "bonduk nou la ge jarbou era pa de, bannyea pottyea doul por o' somoi ge le ekkou noi ekkou uring bah songora ba sugor fencingno ha dat bessyea guri la got pai, hoi ekku moron hoi ekku ada je da ada mora lagot pai…thik nei siyen", after translation it means, "one doesn't need a gun or any weapon to get wildlife, just in the early morning if you go in the remote areas where there are no human habitation, one can find wild animals like deer, wild boar or stag stuck and injured in the fences"[118].

On the other side of the DTR forest of Mizoram, in the CHTs, colonial forest policies continued into the postcolonial era, changing forest and land use affecting the environment and wildlife. In the 1980s and 1990s, the government encouraged commercial and monoculture plantations of teak and rubber affected the wildlife and forest. In the CHTs out of 483,000 hectares (ha) under the Bangladesh Forest Department, 86,000 ha is under plantation land (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistic 2015) where teak (Tectona grandis) is the dominant type of plant. In 1992, the government leased out 4000 ha for rubber plantations in the CHT (Mohsin, 1997). The changing land-use patterns are for commercial and cash crops especially monoculture tree plantations by banning shifting cultivation which is leading to ecological destruction in the CHTs (Kid and Pimentel, 1992; Fox et al., 2000).

The government policies to ban shifting cultivation in the CHT is primarily to switch over to cash crop-based sedentary agricultural practices accompanied by developing extensive road networks (Rerkasem and Rerkasem, 1994; Turkelboom et al., 1996). In 1972, when East Pakistan became Bangladesh after its separation from Pakistan, the government's policy of migration of the plain or lowland people to the CHT has affected the land use in the CHT[119]. This also led to destruction of the reserve forests in the CHTs such as Kasalong, Sitapahar, and Reinkhyong reserve forests (Forestal, 1966). The Bangladesh government policy of migration from lowland to highland, and subsistence agriculture practices to commercial agriculture practices will not only

[118] The labour work in the international Indo-Bangla border fencing project some 20 kilometres away from the village Silsury. He further said that besides money, people are happy to work in the project because they get wild meats to eat which is not possible being in the village.

[119] Thapa. G. B., and Rasul. G., (2006). Implications of changing national policies on land use in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, Journal of Environmental Management 81 (2006) 441–453.

lead to ecological disturbances but will also displace the wildlife from their habitations. Once the Sajek valley projects to turn its' into a tourist destination is completed then there will be a human settlement on the riverbanks and other places in the Sajek valley and near the Dampa tiger reserve of Mizoram which is not there now.

3.6 Conclusion

The chapter explores how in the post-colonial times in both the regions, Northeast India and the CHTs of the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) continued the colonial policies of economic development. Besides, there is the construction of 130 kilometers (km) of national highways connecting Tripura state which even the forest officials believe to be destroying the ecology of the Dampa Tiger Reserve Forest. At the same time, the Indo-Bangladesh Border Fencing is also going to disturb the ecology of the Dampa region. This 60 km road construction with fencing goes directly through the core areas of the DTR. This will end the movement of wildlife between India and Bangladesh.

The chapter shows how a particular space and the environment such as the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) Forest is connected and linked with the environment of Assam and the CHTs. It illustrates the historically changing and continued relationships between the people and the environment in the face of nation-state formations and struggles to establish political powers. Like the colonialists, the Indian state too faces social and political resistance against the imposition of top-down notion of nation-states in the Northeast. According to Biswas and Suklabaidya (Biswas and Suklabaidya, 2008: 124), the Northeast region is merely a territorial integration by the Indian state with constitutional authority. It fails to create inclusive national identities and accommodate the ethnic life world of the region. They state that "the tribal lifeworld suffered heavily owing to the introduction of the state-sponsored agencies to govern development." They further argue that the construction and conceptualization of 'lifeworld in the Northeast illuminate the social discourse of identity which is non-measurable, invisible, and subjective, and that is historically and culturally embedded in their sense of place and belonging.

The next chapter explores how both people and the environment evolve together and the need to understand historical and cultural relations between social groups and nature. It also explores how the environment plays a determinant factor in the life of the people and guides their socio-cultural ethos.

Chapter 4 Understanding people and the environment in the Dampa of Mizoram

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research question of why is the relationship between nature and the local people's culture inseparable from understanding the environment and conservation? It begins with exploring and understanding the nature and culture of the Chakmas and the Mizos and their relationships with the environment. In doing so, I explore the myths and mythology to understand the local human-nature relationships and consequently how social consciousness gets constructed. For instance, the creation stories of the Mizos show their encounters with the environment and their worldview of nature. It explores the local nature and culture of the Chakmas and Mizos that includes their belief systems about nature, and their livelihood practices. For example, the practices of Jhum cultivation of the Chakmas and their interactions with nature. This demonstrates a human-nature relationship characterized by a symbiotic, and interdependence on each other.

It further illustrates how environmental factors play a determinant role in the life of these communities. For instance, in the Mizo history of migration and settlements over the hills, winds, mosquitoes, and healthy and productive living are the determinant factors. These factors are the consequences of their previous experiences with the environment while living on the plains and where they have suffered from floods, diseases, deaths, and poverty. For the Chakmas, rivers, availability of water, fish, wildlife, and productive lands are central to their settlement and migration. These determined their worldviews and lifeworld which governed their interactions and relationships with nature in reciprocal and symbiotic process. Therefore, I argue that nature and culture are inseparable in the understanding of the local people and their environment. Indeed, they both are dependent on each other, and it is a two-way process. For example, many wildlife and river species are dependent on the practices of Jhum cultivations which I shall illustrate in chapter 6 (six) while understanding the impact of displacement by the conservation project.

The second part of the chapter begins with the shared and fluid history of Dampa in Mizoram and its' significance to understand the environment and state-led conservation practices. In doing so, I discuss how the Dampa area of Mizoram in

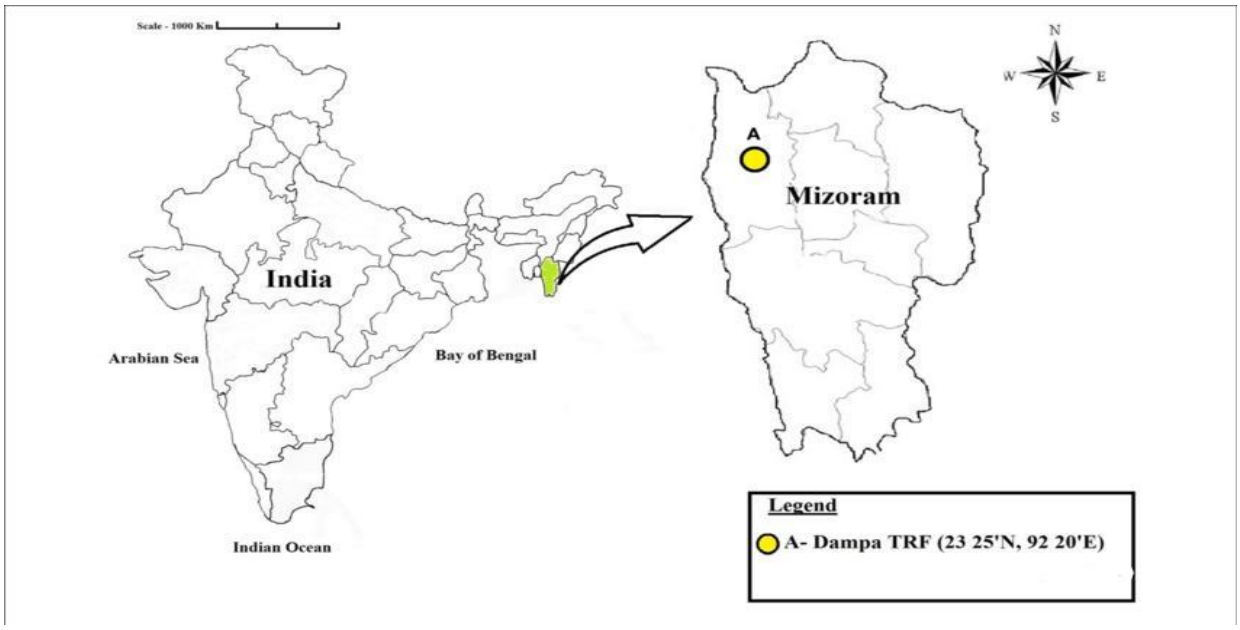
India, also known as the Sazek Hill Range of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) in Bangladesh, is historically a space shared between two nation-states. It illustrates how in peoples' consciousness prior to the creation and enforcement of borders, this whole hilly range was viewed as a landscape with its fluidity and continuity of life for both people and wildlife. Any socio-political and environmental phenomenon on one side of the borders directly impacts the other. For example, the construction of Kaptai dam and its' socio-environmental displacement equally disturbed the wildlife in the DTR (Dampa Tiger Reserve) forest. This shows the fluidity and continuity of life both for wildlife and people beyond the created borders. Therefore, I argue that understanding and treating the environment as a definite space that needs to be identified and demarcated for conservation is a misleading approach. Separation of people and nature and dividing the lands for conservation is nothing but creation of another boundary that restricts and stops the natural fluidity and continuity of life for both people and the wildlife.

This chapter discusses Mizo and the Chakma tribes who are dominant in the Dampa region and are the focus of the study. The chapter is based on ethnographic fieldwork in two villages namely Silsury, and Phuldungsei villages of Chakma and Mizo, respectively.

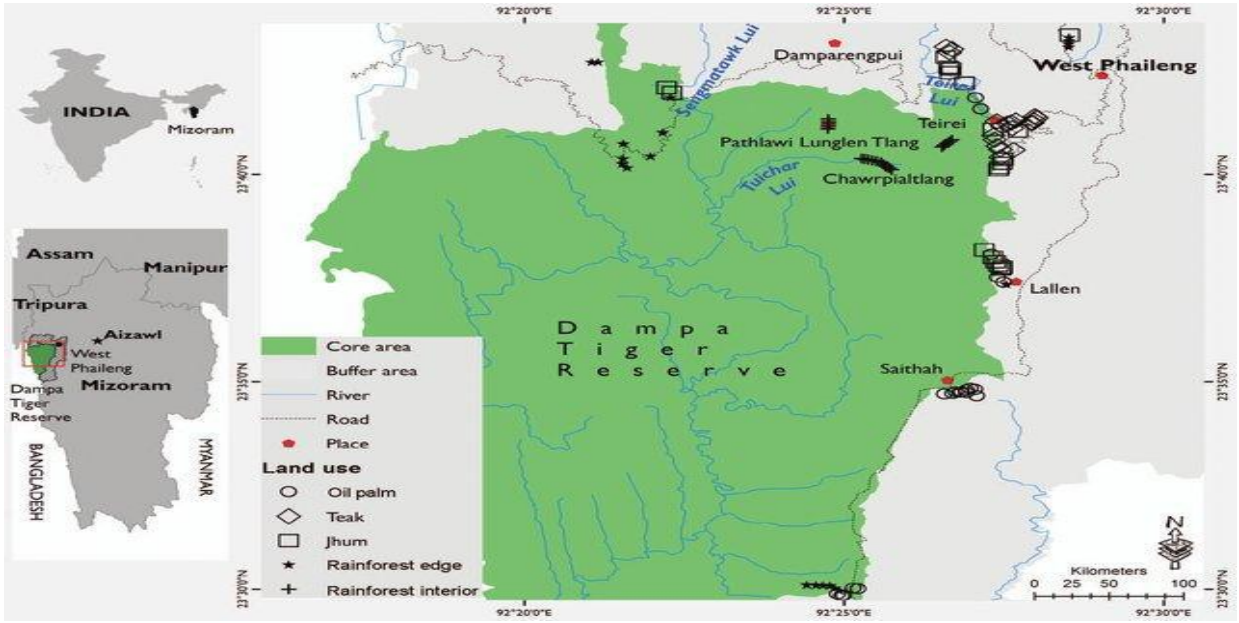
4.2 A brief introduction of DTR forest in Mizoram

Map 1, Locating the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) in Mizoram[120]

[120] This figure was uploaded by Bhim Pratap Singh, in an article by Ajit Passari et al., (2015). Isolation, abundance, and phylogenetic affiliation of endophytic actinomycetes associated with medicinal plants and screening for their in vitro antimicrobial biosynthetic potential, Frontiers in Biology, March 2015.



Map 2, Locating the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR)[121]



The Dampa Tiger reserve is in the western part of India's Mizoram state bordering Bangladesh, and it falls in the Dampa hill region landscape which is located at a

[121] The map was uploaded in an article by Shankar Raman, T.R and Mandal, J. (2016). Shifting agriculture supports more tropical forest birds than oil palm or teak plantations in Mizoram, northeast India. The Condor, Volume 118, pp. 345-359.

unique junction of Indian, Indo-Malayan and Indo-Chinese biogeographical realms as described by M.S Mani (1974)[122]. The landscape is also a part of the Indo-Burma (Myanmar) Global Biodiversity Hotspot, recognized as an Endemic Bird Area and is one of the Terrestrial Ecoregions of the World[123]. In the state of Mizoram, the DTR is in the Mamit district of western Mizoram.

It is surrounded by the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to the west, the Indian state of Tripura, Mamit and Kawrthah Forest Division to the north, and Mamit Forest Division to the south and the east[124]. In the DTR there are three major rivers in the western part of the state flows inside the core area such as the river Sazalui[125], Keislam[126] and River Seling and their tributaries like the streams of Tuichar, Charte, Lambachhora, Debasur, Sazuklui, Sialring, etc., in the north and Sairil lui, Chite Lui, Thuhruk lui, Hmarluang lui, Rawthla lui, etc. in the south. In the eastern boundary of the reserve area is the River Mar which flows south and River Tut which flows in the north[127].

4.3 People and their environment: Mizos and the Chakmas

Human-nature interactions or relationships are an integral process between people, culture, and environment. This interaction converges in many ways in the form of local people's culture, social values and norms, beliefs, livelihood, and conservation practices. It is a system whereby disturbances to one equally impact the other. For example, banning Jhum cultivation practices leads to the banning of wildlife from that space which is also a source of their livelihood. At the same time, if a medicinal plant is lost or destroyed it is also a loss for the local people on which they are dependent for a healthy life. Furthermore, they eventually lost the word in which the plant is identified and the language in which the local people describe or associate themselves with it. It is a two-way process which is symbiotic and reciprocal. Biswas, P and Suklabaidya (2008) while describing the people in the Northeast, described that the

[122] Ecology and Biogeography in India by Mani M.S in 1974.
[123] Ibid., Page viii
[124] Ibid., page 3
[125] Sajek in Chakma and Sazalui in Mizo languages.
[126] Hugisora in Chakma and Keislam in Mizo
[127] Ecology and Biogeography in India by Mani M.S in 1974, page 24

ethnic or tribal social construction is inherent to the human-nature relationship that is embedded in their cultural ethos, and their social and economic life world which is irreducible in its wisdom.[128]

This part of the chapter is based on field interviews, historical materials such as folksongs, folklores, historical memories, and narratives. For example, the folksongs of the Chakmas, especially the Jhum songs are part of their oral tradition, heritage, and culture which represents their close connection, relationship, and interdependence with nature. The Chakma Jhum songs are the source of cultural materialism of the farmers or reciprocal labour of Jhumia society and present their rich socio-cultural heritage. It narrates stories about historical events and conveys information about daily activities of the Jhumia[129] families among the Chakma society. Similarly, Mizo folk songs such as Mithi hla (sad) and Mithi Chawngchan hla (joy) narrate their social memories with nature. Mithi hla songs narrates their sufferings from floods, diseases, famines, and deaths. The Mithi Chawngchan hla songs are the expression of both sorrow and happiness and the social memories of migration from the plains to the hills in search of healthy and happy life.

4.3.1 Human-nature relationships: myths and mythologies

In this part of the chapter, the thesis explores the myths and mythologies of the Mizos and the Chakma that defines their culture, lifeworld, social memories, and human-nature relationships. This part discusses the folktales of the Mizos and the Chakmas narrating their interactions and relationships with nature also reflecting their socio-environmental histories. These are based on their available records, folktales, and folk songs.

4.3.1.1 The Mizos

The Mizos' Chhinlung and the creation myth - The theory of Mizos' migrations from Chhinlung[130] (coming from out of a hole) present their memories or relationship with

[128] See Biswas and Suklabaidya (2008), Chapter 1, Ethnic Life – Worlds in Northeast India, Chapter 1
[129] The term Jhumia is used to denote the people engaged in Shifting or Jhum cultivation.
[130] K.Zawla, *op. cit.*, p.5. The hmar have written it as Sinlung, Kuici (Thado) have called it Chiniung.

nature or the environment. It is also a common narrative of all the Mizo tribes though with different versions but coming out through a cave is common in all the stories. Lal Biak Thanga (1978) writes, "There was a big cave called Chhinlung which, translated, means 'closed stone'. The Mizos say that their forefathers came out of this cave, one by one they came out, and when a couple belonging to a Ralte sub-tribe came out, they talked so much and made such a noise, that the guardian god of the cave fearing the human population had grown too large, closed the cave with a stone preventing any further exit of human beings from the earth." Although the narrative is of Lusei version and believed to be evolved at a time when the Lusei chiefs had become more powerful than the other clans as the Ralte tribe is depicted as loud and talkative people in the myth (Lallainzuali Chhangte (2015:9). However, it shows their common connection with the earth and their ethnic homogeneity which was the basis of their closeness and proximity (Pachuau 2009:15).

Chhinlung is a place of their first migration though the location of Chhinlung is yet to be firmly established and agreed upon. It is believed to be either from the Szechuan Province in southern China (Sangkima 2000:20) or in the Kale Kabaw valley in present Myanmar (Burma) (L.K Liana 1994: 4). According to B. Lalthangliana (2001: 52), in the 4th century A.D the Mizo moved to Hukawng Valley and then moved towards the west and settled in Chindwin Valley in the 7th Century A.D. However, over time, they moved on to the upper Chindwin in the Kale-Kabaw-Myittha-Yaw-Valleys and Pandaung Hill (Vumson 2003:35).

However, in the Kabaw valley, they lived for nearly 200 years and then migrated to the Chin Hills at various times. The reasons for migrations are believed to be due to the autocratic and oppressive ruler, invasions from other stronger tribes, famine and natural calamities like floods leading to deaths (Lalrimawia 1995:14, Lalthangliana 2001: 56, Vumson 1986:47). It is believed that their departure from the Khampat valley took place in and around 1250 A.D (Zawla 1964:17) and their arrival in the Chin Hills is believed to be in the 14th century. However, the migrations from the valley were not a 'planned, concerted or uniform' (Vanlalruate 2004:91).

In Mizo cosmology, the Creation myth is about how everything on earth is related or connected. Lallianzuali Changte (2014) narrates about the creation myth that, "The

Mizo believed that earth rested on a huge tortoise. In the beginning, there was no land. The earth was full of rocks and pebbles through which flowed a river named tuihriam. This river was so cold and swift that no one dared to swim across the water to get soil from another side of the river. At last, a porcupine (in some versions, a wild pig) could swim across the river and get some soil from his upper lip. The soil was then eaten by an earthworm and multiplied through excrement. After a short while, the soil became sufficient to cover the earth. An animal named Chultenu (a man named Chhura in some versions) is said to have levelled the surface of the earth. At the Centre of the earth, there was a tree that touched the sky. It was decided to cut the tree. When the tree was felt, the smoothness of the earth was damaged and wherever the branches of the tree hit; it formed big rivers while smaller branches made small rivers and streams.

The falling tree and its branches also led to mountain formation on the banks of the rivers. Such narratives not only recount collective memories of the people but also their relationship with each other. Ken S. Coates (2004:28) states, "The creation stories[131] are typically rich in detail, tying critical events in the evolution of the physical and natural world to specific aspects of the local ecosystem. Operating without written sacred texts, indigenous people had a rich understanding of creation and history, available to them through reading and awareness of their natural setting." Such a world view, people depict or consider the animals as equal contributors or partners in shaping the earth and hence put them of equal importance to humans.

In the history of the Mizos, the environment played a key role in their everyday life. Their socio-cultural practices and polity are based on their interactions with nature. For instance, the Mizo folk songs and folktales reflect not only their histories but also their memories of experiences in encounters with the environment. Other folktales present the epistemology of the Mizos about nature. For example, why does the dog always bark at the goat? According to the story, it was the dog who had horns but due to its obstructions against eating food, one day the dog took them off and kept them beside him. However, a goat took the horns away and put them on his head, and the dog failed to chase them back, which is why the dog always barks at the goat.

[131] of the Mizos, in specific to the Chhinlung origin

Similarly, there are such stories as the tortoise and the monkeys, a girl who married a monkey[132]. These stories demonstrate their socio-cultural practices and belief systems based on their interaction with nature. These folktales were developed in the times of post-migration. Unlike their experiences and memories of histories in the plains and river valleys, their life experiences in the hills are about joy, celebrations, heroic acts, and festivities. Though they migrated from the plains to escape from floods, famines, and deaths, on the hills, they did face different environmental challenges such as bamboo flowerings which led to famines, diseases, and deaths. However, their experiences and environmental encounters did share their socio-cultural and political histories. These examples recall Arturo Escobar's point about indigenous cosmologies in which human and non-human life exist on a spectrum and not as opposed or separate from each other.

The memories of migration to the hills - The folk songs of sorrow and joy during migration and post-migration times narrate the stories and reasons of their migrations from the lowlands or the plains. In the pre-migration, the folk songs were born out of their sorrow and in need of consolation such can be seen in the Thuthmun Zai folk songs which were based on the famine known as Thingpui Tam. It was aggravated by pestilence and disease in which the lives of young and old were lost. When the Mizos were migrating from the valleys to the hills, one of the reasons for migrations was famine and natural calamities such as floods leading to deaths.

During the times of migration, the social memories demonstrate their encounters with environmental events such as rain, steep hills, and so on which influenced their settlements after the migrations. In the times of migration, both men and women used to sing while climbing uphill hand in hand; 'Ur ur tak kai,ur ur tak kai' (it's a kind of sound that a group of people uses for gaining more strength) When they climbed downhill, they would sing: 'Hnung hnung tak kai, hnung hnung tak kai[133] (just like another one for strength, it is used to be cautious while climbing down a hill, so they don't meet any kind of accident). When they encountered harsh weather such as rain,

[132] The Mizo folktales, compiled by Lianhmingthanga and V.L Fimate (2006), Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl.

[133] Laitanga, C. "Mizo hla hlui upat dan indawt." Thu leh Hla, A Monthly Literary Journal of the Mizo Academy of Letters. January 2016, p 17.

a folk song that narrates the event such as 'Ruahpui sur bum bumin, Vanrial a ko ve, Ka nauvi kal nan run tui a lian e,' it means; the heavy rain calls down the hailstones, the river run will rise, how will my baby go[134]. Most of the early Mizo folk songs reveal the times of difficulties and sorrow and the songs have the tone of consolation and hope for a better tomorrow. Therefore, such reflects their history which revolves around natural calamities, diseases, hunger, and deaths.

The encounters with rough environments either during or before migrations had determined their socio-cultural practices and relationship with nature. L.B Thanga (1978) describes the folk songs of pre-migration and post-migration. He says that in the pre-migration and the migrations times, the folk songs are mostly of sorrow such as the Mithi hla folk songs which are said to have originated from famine when many people died. For instance, the famous song of Ruangtea is in memory of his beloved who died in the famine. The other type is Longngaihpui hla folk songs which mean songs of great sorrow. Thanga describes that these songs are clear indications of the life of the Mizos when they were settled on the Chindwin River belt. The other type of earlier folk song is known as Mithi Chawngchan hla, which was sung only in times of sorrow and joy. It is believed that there was a river that divided the land of the living and the dead, and many songs composed in this song are about this river.

Vumson (1986:47) writes that when they decided to migrate to the hills, they climbed the hills and looked for suitable locations for settlement that would protect them from rain and weather. For instance, as per the account from the Ranglong tribe, who migrated from the valley to the hilly areas along with the Lusei tribe, when they moved down to the village of Chindwin River, they always faced with problems of the flood[135]. The frequent damage to their land and crops due to floods in the Chindwin River made them abandon the idea of longer settlement in the low land of Chindwin valley. Hence, they moved out in search of high altitudes of hilly areas where there are no floods and after a long journey from the valleys to the hills, they first settled somewhere in the hill range of Thantlang of the Chin Hills. However, they

[134] Lalthangliana, B. "Kum Zabi 20-na hma lama Mizo hla tobul leh a than dan". UGC Sponsored 'Seminar on Mizo Poetry' organised by Govt T. Romana College, Aizawl, Mizoram in collaboration with Mizo Language & Literature Teachers' academy (MILLTA), May 26, 2010, p 1.
[135] A Brief Account of Ranglong, Tribal Research Institute, Aizawl, Mizoram, 20th of February 1993.

kept on migrating and at present, they inhabit the states of Tripura, Assam and in the northwest part of Mizoram.

While settling in a new place, like other tribes, their priority is the consideration of whether the proposed site is free from disease and how many houses can be accommodated[136]. In settling, they prefer a village site which will be breezy or on the top of the hill to a low-lying land or river valley. In deciding to settle, five to six elders of the village will go to the proposed site. They take a bamboo pole with them. This bamboo pole is pointed at each end and then it is split in the middle into two. One of them will hold the split bamboo together and after chanting, he drops the split bamboo to the ground. When the split bamboo falls apart on the ground and if one is found lying upside down while the other in a reverse way, the site is said to be good. On the other hand, if the concave side of the split bamboo line turns downwards, the side is not worthy of human habitation.

While dropping the bamboo, the chant is.
Aw Pathian, si panthang tad an an zar zo ka hui,
Hiva hin kei a awm rang,
Hiva hin ka awmin, a reng leh a dam awm ning maw,
Hiva hin ka awmin khua a lianpa awm ring maw
A rill eh a taia, ei thui rang,
Hiva hin kei awm rang a ni zei.

It means, "oh god, we intend to settle on this pleasant hilly place, shall we be healthy in this place? Will this place be able to accommodate a large village? Let there be good village administration since we shall settle here."

4.3.1.2 The Chakmas

The famous Chakma folktale of "Radhamon and Dhanpudi" narrates the stories of coexistence and symbiotic relationship with nature and other societies. There are two parts of the stories; one is about their love story, and another is about the participation

[136] Ibid., page 20

of Radhamon in wars against the Mughals and the Burmese king. Radhamon was a heroic character among the Chakma community.[137]

In the recorded version by R.H Sneyd Hutchinson in the 1905, the story is "In the days when the Chakma tribe lived in the valley of the Matamari River, there resided in one of the villages' four young men named Saradhon, Nilakdhan, Kunjadhan and Radhamon, and a most beautiful girl called Dhanpadi and her three fair companions, Sarabi, Nilabi and Kunjabi. The girl Dhanpadi was a general favourite in the village, and there was great rivalry amongst the four friends who sought to win her favour. One day when the young girls were amusing themselves in the Youngea stream, they perceived some Bengalis of the plains coming along weeping and uttering lamentations. Dhanpadi and her friends hastened back to the village, and meeting Saradhon, she entrusted him to go and enquire about the cause of the Bengali peoples' sorrow. This Saradhon at once proceeded to do. They told him that they had been cutting bamboo for a day's journey upstream and that while at work a most delicious scent had been wafted to them by the breeze. Moved with curiosity they tried to trace the marvelous fragrance to its source, but after a fruitless search all but three gave up the endeavor.

The three, however, continued, and at last on a hill, they espied a tree with silver branches laden with golden blossoms, from which emanated the delicate perfume. The three Bengali people hastened to possess some of the blossoms, when suddenly a huge black tiger with a white star on its forehead dashed out upon them, killing two of them. The third escaped with difficulty and returned to the party, which then fled together. The men, they said, who had been slain were their near relations, and hence their sorrow. Saradhon returned and acquainted Dhanpadi with the story, but he discredited the tale of the golden flowers, as he was intimately acquainted with the whole neighborhood and had never seen or heard of the existence of such a tree. The news had a strange effect on Dhanpadi, who was seized with an intense craving to

[137] This can be found in the local folklore known as Gengkhuli with the name Radhamon-Dhanpudi palas. Palas means parts and the Radhamon-Dhanpudi has two palas. One is of their love story, and another is the participation of Radhamon in wars in Myanmars where he was captivated and against the Mughals.

possess a branch of the tree with its golden blossoms. She fretted in secret and wasted slowly away with the intensity of her desire.

The physicians were called in, but their treatment did not affect the mysterious disease the poor girl suffered from. Her girlfriends became alarmed at her condition and sought her to confide in them, and finally, she told them of her wild desire and said she would die if it was not gratified. The girls went and told Dhanpadi's parents, who were grieved and told to dissuade their daughter from the idea, but all in (useless) effect, and finally in desperation they proclaimed that anyone who could secure a branch with flowers from the enchanted tree should marry Dhanpadi.

At the time most of the youth were absent from the village, having gone to attend the Chief's court, where the annual display of archery, swordplay and athletics was taking place. The youth Saradhon, however, was in the village, and congratulating himself on the absence of his rivals, immediately started confidently in his powers of being able to secure the flowers and win the coveted prize. Armed with a sword he started on his quest and reached the bamboo cutter's shed and was searching for the tree when he was surprised and slain by the black tiger. In the meantime, the other youths, except for Radhamon, who had been detained by the Chief, returned to their village. Nilakdhon at once determined to attempt to win Dhanpadi as his bride and started in quest for the golden flowers: but he also fell prey to the black tiger. The news of these disasters reached Radhamon, who obtained permission from the Chief to return to his village. On his arrival, he at once announced his intention of fetching the golden flowers, but the parents of Dhanpadi besought him not to attempt the venture: but Radhamon refused to listen to reason. Armed with his trusted sword and a spear Radhamon quietly left the village, but he was no foolhardy person and determined to proceed with the greatest caution.

So, when he reached the bamboo cutter's hut he quietly slept there, and the next morning he cautiously approached the spot by a circuitous route. Arriving in the neighborhood he climbed a tree and perceived the enchanted tree with the black tiger asleep at the bottom. Radhamon then quietly got down from the tree and returned to his village to concoct a scheme for further action. He saw Dhanpadi and assured her that he would most certainly secure her the flowers, and after receiving her parents'

blessing, he removed himself to the court of the Chief, of whom he was a very great favorite. They consulted together, and the Chief caused a suit to be manufactured for Radhamon from the hide of the rhinoceros, and a shield from the same material. Radhamon, now determined to attempt to secure the flowers, went to the bamboo cutter's shed. Here he performed a puja to the spirit of the forest as also to Mothiya, the goddess who guards against the attacks of tigers.

He then laid himself down to rest for the night. He dreamt that a woman of extraordinary beauty came and sat by his side and said: "I am Mothiya and am pleased to accept your puja. I now endow thee with all my strength; the three you seek is an enchanted one that has been placed there by the King of the Genii to test your strength; remember that you must on no account pluck the first flower with your hand; it must be taken by the means of a string made from the hair of the maiden Dhanpadi, who must accompany you to the tree. You will find a squirrel to whom you will give the string, and he will tie it to a flower and give the end to Dhanpadi, who will then pluck the first flower, after which you can gather them freely. You will slay the tiger by the strength I have given you: skin him and then cut off some flesh from each limb. Then take five flowers from the tree, light a fire, and throw the flesh and flowers into it. The tree and tiger – remain will vanish, and you will find Saradhon, Niladhon, and the two Bengalis standing by your side." The lovely vision then disappeared. In the morning Radhamon returned to his village and told Dhanpadi the dream and persuaded her to accompany him to the bamboo cutter's shed where they slept the night.

In the morning they made a string from some of Dhanpadi's hair and then started for the spot where the tree grew. When they neared the spot, the black tiger charged down at Radhamon but protected by his armor he attacked and slew the brute with his sword. They then approached the tree and Radhamon saw a squirrel to whom he gave the string made from Dhanpadi's hair and commanded him to lower a flower from the tree to Dhanpadi. The squirrel obeyed, and then Dhanpadi cut off several branches laden with golden flowers. Radhamon then skinned the tiger, cut some flesh from each limb, and lighting a fire flung it, together with five flowers, into the flames. A dense cloud of smoke immediately enveloped them, and when it had cleared away, they were standing in the forest with Saradon and Nilakdhon and the two Bengalis

beside them. There was no sign left of the enchanted tree or the dead tiger. They hastened back to their village where the recovery of the missing men was celebrated with much feasting, and Radhamon and Dhanpadi were married amidst great and general rejoicing, at which the Chief himself was present. At the same time, the friends Saradhan, Nilakdhon and Kunjadhon were married to Sarabi, Nilakbi, and Kunjabi, and great happiness reigned in the village"[138].

This story, first, shows the plight of the Bengalis, who were coming to ask for help from the villagers. The Bengalis are non – natives of the place who come to cut bamboos and inhabit temporarily inside the forest till they can collect enough bamboos and woods and supply them in the market. The story can also be well connected to the fact what Hutchinson while talking about the Cholera disease along the Karnaphuli river and its tributaries suspect that it was introduced by the Bengalis from the plains who comes up to cut bamboos in the Kaptai reserve forest[139].

The interaction with the non-indigenous people could have also developed the local concept of Hattoun in Chakma society, whereby people especially the youths leave their homes and families to spend months in the forest to work and earn some money. Among the Chakmas, such situations arise mostly when a family is in debt or suffering from poverty but most famously when the youths in love and to be in-laws do not agree to their relations and put conditions of money that they do not have. This story depicts the indigenous and non-indigenous interactions and relationships, and secondly, it shows the supply of forest resources especially Bamboo and woods in markets.

In the story, the initial killing of two Bengali by a mythical tiger, and the two other local youths, indicates that the former, to earn maximum profits from the forest, does not regulate their acts of cutting bamboos and woods with the local tradition, belief and custom that goes against the exploitation of the forest. The latter, who ignore such practices due to their greed to impress the beautiful lady, Dhanpudi too became the victims of the mythical tiger. The story shows a symbiotic system of human-nature interaction. For example, even though the Chief had manufactured a strong suit and

[138] P 184 to 190, Chapter XI, Ibid.,
[139] P 81, Chapter VI, Ibid.,

shield to protect Radhamon from the tiger, ~~and~~ yet Radhamon perform rituals to the spirit of the forest and the Mothiya the goddess who guards against the attacks of the tiger and the tiger is depicted as the protector or guard of the forest and one of the imminent figures in the life of the forest.

Nature was part in the entire process to prepare Radhamon to pluck the flower which his beloved Dhanpadi wanted and needed. For instance, towards the manufacturing of the suit and shield, it was the Rhino's skin and then the Squirrels that were necessary to pluck the flower. This story illustrates the exploitation of nature by cutting bamboo and woods for months which was supplied to the outside market, regulation of it through local tradition, belief and practices, and the significance of nature in the life of the people (a social-nature epistemology).

During my fieldwork in December 2018, I made a trip to the DTR forest with permission from the office of the DTR in Aizawl and was accompanied by three people from the village Silsury. The first person's name is Ravi Ranjan Chakma, aged 60 years and knows every part of the DTR and was a Jhum cultivator in the present-day DTR. In his whole life, he experienced and witnessed social lives in the forest as a Jhummias (Jhum cultivator) before displacement and witnessing the vast differences of social lives after displacement. He also has rich knowledge about soil, trees, birds, wildlife, and so on including detailed knowledge of the river Sajek and fish. The name of another person is Paripuna Chakma who is 38 years of age and is a graduate from the capital city, Aizawl and himself did Jhum cultivation, was a schoolteacher, and now (in the year 2020) became the head of the village council after contesting the election. The third person is Bishingyea Chakma, 28 years of age, and he did not get the opportunity to go to school and is a father with two children. His childhood and most of his life before getting married were spent in the Jhum fields and forest with his parents.

One day we stopped to spend our night at the famous point on the Sajek river, namely Joggo mour. The water level at Joggo mour is very deep and the water flows slowly with the abundance of fish and other river species. The name of the Joggo-mour is derived from the river spirit Joggo. I was told a story attached to that Mour like any other stories which became a household story for the people,

especially the children. The story is about a man who was suffering from prolonged illness and prayed to the goddess of the river Sajek and assured her of sacrificing a buffalo if he gets well. However, once recovered, he went to present-day Bangladesh and while going to Bangladesh, he made fun of God of the river Sajek by saying that since he is leaving the river forever and going to Bangladesh, what will she (Goddess) do now? He also said that the hope of sacrificing a buffalo will remain a dream as he would not be returning anymore, and he left the place.

However, after a few years, he returned, as he was not able to settle in Bangladesh for reasons known to himself only. People believe that since he deceived and betrayed the river goddess, and because of her, he did not able to to settle in Bangladesh which made him come again. Soon he arrived in the Joggo-Mour, the water struck him down and he fell in the water and was not able to stand again and died. It is strongly believed that the reason for his death is not due to the water level as he died while crossing the river by walking and in the area where the water level was below the knees. In that area of the river, nobody had any kind of accident except him and was not found after he slipped in the river while crossing. Despite searches by the people, he was only found after a few days in the Joggo-Mour.

Such stories narrate the Chakmas' relationship with nature and how their environmental consciousness constructs their socio-cultural ethos and principal factors for social norms and values but also in their social epistemology. For example, the 'Sadenggiri Raja' folk song which is known as 'Sadenggiri Raja Song' and it is always used in the everyday life of the Chakma people. The song narrates the following story: A tortoise kept waiting for the King of Sadenggiri from war to his kingdom, but he never returned. However, the tortoise does not give up hope and keeps waiting by watching the river from above it. It also became cliché among people when someone keeps waiting with hope, but it does not happen, and people gesture at them (who are waiting) by saying 'why are you waiting like the tortoise for Sadenggiri raja or king.' The reference of the story is still often used while travelling by boat on the river or on foot near the river when people see a tortoise sitting on a tree or its branches above the water.

4.3.2 Nature and Culture: Beliefs and Practices

In the previous chapter (3) while discussing about the Apatani tribe worshipping nature and their relationship with nature also regulates their cultural practices. I shall add that it is not just regulating but also evolving their cultural systems based on their interactions with nature. The earlier part of this chapter demonstrates how the strong interaction or relationship between the local people and nature is developed through folk tales and songs. In this part, the chapter shall explain how nature also provides the social setting in which the cultural processes, beliefs, and livelihood practices develop and which indeed feed back to nature.

4.3.2.1 The Mizos

The migration of the Mizos from the plains to the hills also provides their social settings and interdependence with nature. T H Lewin (1984: 16, 17) observes that "it is the custom of the people to remain in the villages until cultivation season commences in May, and then the whole countryside moves up, every man to his patch of cultivation, on some lofty hill. It is to such custom, I consider that their comparative immunity from sickness may be traced, for hill men, on abandoning their usual mode of life, and taking to other occupations not involving the periodical move to the hilltops, are as much subject to fever as the people of the plains."

According to a senior citizen, Pu Lalsangkura[140] settling on the hills is a tradition of the Mizos that has been practiced for generations because "the top of a hill is of scenic beauty with sunset" and "is a place to celebrate and wash their sorrows." He says that the young couples in love, if for some reason we are not able to marry each other, would deal with their sorrow and often go and sit on top of a hill. He emphasizes that settling on hills is healthy, as hilltops are relatively free from diseases. Hence, they always prefer hills over river valleys or plains that are comparatively full of mosquitoes and diseases. However, it does not mean that they hate or dislike the plains or rivers. In their earlier days, they always travelled to the plains to sell their Jhum products and buy their home necessities. According to him, hills are good because of the weather, and more healthy sites of habitation.

[140] 72 years old in the village Phuldungsei of Mamit district, Mizoram during the PhD fieldwork in July 2018.

The Mizo society who mostly live on the hills and water plays an important part in cultural life. For instance, when water is available, any quarrels or assaults due to water is not an issue until during the dry season when people are affected severely due to the scarcity of water. Indeed, in the concept of Tlawmngaihna[141] which is the Lushai's code of morals and good form, a man who goes a long distance down the hillside and fetches water for others is doing his duty and practicing Tlawmngaihna. On a journey when one gets ill and falls behind, others are expected to wait and if they do not, then they are considered to lack Tlawmngaihna which simply means "helping others even at their inconvenience" and it is expected to reside in every member of the society. According to this concept "a person who possesses Tlawmngaihna must be courteous, considerate, unselfish, courageous and industrious." This is also practiced during cultivation. When a cultivator falls sick during cultivation season, the villagers weed his fields for him. In Mizo society, the Ramhual is a man of position in the village. The Ramhuals are the people who possess sound knowledge of forests and Jhum cultivations. They are the people who advise where Jhums cultivation should be done. In the cultivation season, the Ramhuals select the lands/forests areas that they think will be most suitable for Jhum cultivation for the year. After the village chief selects his plot for the Jhum field, and then the Ramhuals select their Jhum fields, after which the villagers select their plot of lands for cultivation.

Another senior citizen[142], said that historically, Jhum cultivation was and is still the major foundation of the Mizo society. He cites examples of the social spirits of bonding, camaraderie, empathy, mutual support, and collective efforts bringing a life of fun, happiness, and joy are the outcomes of their Jhum cultivation practices since time immemorial. He explained some of the social and cultural values and concepts such as 'Fehkawng Sial' which is a collective effort of clearing forest for road to connect the Jhum fields with villages. The concept of 'Lo Vah' is the collective efforts to construct a temporary house/shelter in the time when the forest is being cleared (slash) whereby everyone can use it to eat and sleep. It is built at a convenient location for everyone to go to their selected jhum plots and where water is available

[141] Ibid. p. 20

[142] Lalkima, an 80-year-old-man from the Phuldungsei village in an interview when I met in the month of March 2023, after my PhD Viva when I went to visit my native place.

for cooking, drinking, and bathing. 'Lo Hal' is related to the notion of common good whereby a gap is created between the Jhum field and the forest by clearing the grasses, plants, and trees so that the fire does not burn the forest.

This clearance often clears large numbers of local people and renders their services voluntarily also known as 'Hnatlang.' He further talked about the concept of 'Inlawm' means coordination and the origin of this concept was during the weeding stages of the Jhum fields. According to this concept the neighbouring Jhum farmers agree to help each other in weeding without any exchanges of goods and money. Similarly, the concept 'Inkhaichhuah' is a social support rendered upon the weak, especially the widow and her household who are lagging during various stages of Jhum cultivation such as slash, burn, weeding and harvesting. Initially the 'Inlawm' are carried out by friends and neighbours, but they are not capable of completing the works then whole villagers come forward to complete the works.

In fact, the strong Mizo social values and practices in the form of hunting, migration, facing famines or natural calamities, and practicing Jhum cultivation are based on their interactions with nature. For example, the Mizo proverb of "Dam leh mual khatah, thih leh ruam khatah," which after translation means, "If we survive, we live on the same field, if we die, we die in the same valley." Similarly, it is believed that failure to harvest the Jhum field is a disgrace for the family and failures of more than one family to harvest the field is considered shameful of their neighbors or even the whole villagers.[143]

For centuries, shifting cultivation has been an important farming practice of the Mizos in Mizoram. It has been the sole practice form of agriculture for ages and is still widely practiced. It is not only a mere livelihood but a way of life carrying 'symbolic meanings' to the socio-cultural life and ecological landscapes, an essential entity of survival and economic life of the Mizos. Patnaik (2008, 93-94) described it was also "intimately connected with their societal and cultural norms." He further states that the traditional cultural festivals such as Chapchar Kut, Pawl Kut, and Mim Kut were associated with the distinct phases of the Jhum cultivation. Kut means festival.

[143] Ibid.,

Chapchar Kut is celebrated when the forest is cleared and is kept for drying for Jhum cultivation. Pawl Kut is celebrated when the paddy harvest is reaped; and Mim Kut is when the maize harvest is almost reaped.

In Mizos mythology the origin of the festival is related to famine. It is believed that many years ago, there was a great famine that lasted for three years. In the next year, the Mizos had an exceptionally good and prosperous cultivation. They believed that this prosperity was due to the blessing of their god, Pathian. The Mizo chief instructed the people to honour the god and thus the beginnings of Kuts.[144] Among the festivals, Chapchar Kut is the most celebrated one and every year the 3rd of March is a public holiday in Mizoram. It is celebrated when the forest is cleared and kept for drying for Jhum cultivation. Just like the concept of 'Tlawmngaihna,' Chapchar Kut is also associated with good social values and norms for the conduct of people in the community.

4.3.2.2 The Chakmas

T.H Lewin (1885) while describing the relations of the hill people with the forest as; "The cane is the hill man's rope; with it, he weaves baskets, binds his house together, and throws bridges over the otherwise impassable hill torrents. The bamboo is his stuff of life. He builds his house of the bamboo; he fertilizes his fields with its ashes; of its stem he makes vessels in which to carry water; with two bits of bamboo, he can produce fire; its young and succulent shoots provide a dainty dinner dish, and he weaves his sleeping mat of fine slips thereof. The instruments with which his women weave their cotton are bamboo. He makes drinking cups of it, and his head at night rests on a bamboo pillow; his forts are built of it; he catches fish, makes baskets, and stools, and thatches his house with the help of the bamboo. He smokes from a pipe of bamboo, and from bamboo ashes he obtains potash. Finally, his funeral pyre is lit with bamboo. The hillman would die without the bamboo, and the thing he finds hardest of credence is, that in other countries the bamboo does not grow and that men live in ignorance of it"[145]. He even described the lifeworld of the hill people and how they enjoy it against the settled or plough cultivation. He, therefore, reasoned why the

[144] Lalsangkima Pachuau, Ethnic Identity and Christianity: A Socio-Historical and Missiological Study of Christianity in Northeast India with special reference to Mizoram (Frankfurt: Peter Lang G, 2002), 104. Hereafter cited as 'Lalsangkima, Ethnic Identity.'

[145] P 10, Ibid.,

people decided to continue living in hills despite efforts with forest conservancy by restricting them against Jhum cultivations[146].

T H Lewin descriptions denotes the intimate relationship of the hill people, especially while referring to the Chakmas, with the forest and why they resisted against the colonial policies of forest conservancy. His comparison of the hill people with people of other countries where bamboo does not grow demonstrates how nature shapes or determines the hill people's way of life which is not understood by other societies or the state. This intimate human-nature relationship is also recorded by Lewin in the following.

Lewin further records that "On the one hand, the hillman works in the shade of the jungle that he is cutting; he is on a lofty eminence, where every breeze reaches and refreshes him; his spirits are enlivened, and his labour lightened by the beautiful prospect stretching out before him: while the rich and varied scenery of the forest stirs his mind above a monotone. He is surrounded by his comrades; the scent of the wild thyme and the buzzing of the forest bee is about him; the young men and maidens sing to their work, and they laugh, and the joke goes around as they sit down to their mid-day meal under the shade of some great mossy forest tree. On the other hand, consider the moiling toil of the cultivator of the plains. He maunders along with pokes and anathemas at the tail of a pair of buffaloes, working mid-leg in mud; around him stretches an uninterrupted vista of muddy rice land; there is not a bough or a leaf to shelter him from the blazing noon-day sun. His women are shut up in some cabin, jealousy surrounded by jungle; and if he can afford a meagre meal during the day, he will munch it solus, sitting beside his muddy plough; add to this, that by his comparatively pleasurable toil, the hillman can gain two rupees for one which the wretched ryot of the plains can painfully earn. It is not to be wondered at that the hill people have a passion for their mode of life, and regard with absolute contempt any proposal to settle down to the tame and monotonous cultivation of the dwellers in the lowlands"[147].

[146] P 14, Ibid.,
[147] P 11, Ibid.,

Thomas Herbert Lewin (T H Lewin) was a soldier-cum-administrator, stationed both in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the Northeast India. He was sent to rule the hill people and represent the British administration. As discussed in the chapter 3, how the British rules were resisted, and Lewin must have studied the reasons which resulted in such details records and description of the hill people's lifeworld which is so different to other societies (as Lewin was referring to) and regulated by their human-nature interactions and relationships. He acknowledged that this is the reason the hill people wanted to protect and continue their lifeworld and did not want to accept a new way of life that the colonial rulers wanted to impose.

This intimate relationship with nature among the Chakmas can be best understood in their Jhum cultivation practices. It is not just a livelihood practice but the most significant aspect of life. It has become a way of life as it easily connects them with nature. For instance, when I asked a middle-aged person from a village near the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest that; why do you want to do Jhum cultivation despite having no land for cultivation as your communal land is taken by the DTR? His response was that "son, you won't understand as in your life you are busy with your studies, and you never experienced doing Jhum cultivation." He further said that "Jhum cultivation is not only about agricultural productions of rice, chilies, cotton, and so on but when I go to any Jhum field, I get peace of mind and happiness. It is also something to which I can connect and identify myself with".[148]

In fact, most of the Chakma folksongs and even the modern songs are drawn from nature and livelihood practices of Jhum cultivation. The Jhum folksongs are not just songs with rhythm, music and instruments but also represent the socio-ecological development of the Chakmas over times. It narrates stories about historical events and conveys information about daily activities of the Jhumia[149] families among the Chakma society. For example, one of the Ubho Gheet folksong as.

Jhumo lejat hamarang ghassot agolulkko dogorer,
Ekka guri hobor pedung Ajhu higorer.

[148] This was an informal interaction after my PhD Viva with Bir Chandra Chakma, with an age of 47 on the 10th of January 2023.
[149] The term Jhumia is used to denote the people engaged in Shifting or Jhum cultivation.

Uring songora pake sagala ama aei Jhumonot,
Monot udee baap bei maa bhon Jhummo jebonnot.
Chin porisoi gojha guthi arou aadam noui,
Beggotun besh dangor hudum jhummo jinghaniloui.

(Translation: the meaning of the song after translation is.
At the end of the Jhum field, a bird is singing while resting on a tree,
It would be nice to know what grandfather is doing.
There are numbers of birds, deer, and other animals near the Jhum field,
Remembering my Jhummia brothers and sisters and wondering what they might be doing now in their Jhum fields.
Definition of a relationship based on belonging to certain clans and villages are not enough,
The true definition of relations and relationships are based on the shared Jhum life.)

This song reflects the time in the Jhum field when the people must render arduous work as the Jhum season is getting over and people need to go back to their respective villages with the Jhum products such as rice, paddy, sesame, cotton, chilies, and other fruits and vegetables from the Jhum field. The song is sung at night-time after ardous work and while resting on the 'ejoor'[150] of the Jhum house. The song does not refer to any gender and anybody can sing it. In this song, the man/woman is remembering his/her grandfather who used to tell him/her stories and is now in the village. Reference to the birds and wild animals in the song means that since the time of going back to the village is nearing, the wildlife is preparing to take over the field to eat the remaining fruits and vegetables. In this song, the man/woman also remembers his/her people doing cultivation and wondering what they might be doing during this time.

In another modern song known as "Dhan hele murot ja" which means if you want to eat rice, please go up the hills of the Jhum paddy field.

The details of the song are.
Dhan hele Murot Ja, pani hele sorat ja,

[150] Ejoor is a long extended of the house which is kept open or without rooftop and walls. It is used to dry paddy, rice, chillies, and vegetables from the Jhum field.

Tomomu ejer bhadol duri..poi….owei…..ori ja.
Jumot elo dhan sijeai..pege helo..addek,

Boide boide ekkha guri..bhakko duri tai..,
Pek bhaguli dabedongar mui gorot puri,

Pek bhaguli dabedongar durot suri ja,

Ma jeyea pani ana, baba jeyea bazarot,
Moree toiown pek raga..ei Jhummot ei Jharot..

Bhadol aadot guli marong..gulit uri jha uri jha,
O pera tui bhadol aadot more dele nou dorash..
Bare bare tag tagongor toh dow pera noh doh jash..,

Maa elea hoi dim, baba elea hoi dim, jadi jadi jha jadi jha.

(Translation: the meaning after translations is.

If you want to eat rice, go to the hills of the ripened paddy and if you want to drink water, go into the stream.

Your maternal uncle is coming with a catapult, fly away from the field.

Half of the paddy in the Jhum field is eaten by the birds.

While sitting at home, I need to protect the rest of the paddy.

I am making noise in the field with bamboo with a string attached from home.

I am making noise in the field with bamboo with a string attached from home, please fly away from the field.

Mother went to fetch water from the river and father went to the market,

I am asked to guard the Jhum field.

Catapult and soil marble on my hands and shooting in the direction of the Jhum field, please fly away.

Oh, birds, why are you still not scared of my catapult and soil marble?

I am shooting, repeatedly, you are still not flying away,

If you do not fly away, I will complain to my mother and father on their arrival, so please fly away).

In this song, a young boy who was left at home to guard a side of the ripened paddy field against wild animals and birds while his parent is working on the other side of the field, allows the birds to feast upon the paddy in the Jhum field. In this song, though the boy must guard the field against further loss of the grain to wild animals, yet he understands and accepts the need for food for them (animals/birds). When

people do cultivation, they stay in the Jhum field for four months and after the cultivation season is over, they return to their village by leaving the field after which it is known as "Rannyea" in the Chakma language. As people leave their Jhum lands to their respective villages, after the harvest season is over, there are still crops in the field which become a source of food for the birds and animals. The concept of Rannyea among the Chakmas is a cultural connotation and there are common local stories that narrate stories of couples wanting to get married against the wish of their parents and fleeing away from home and staying in Rannyea[151]. There are songs like "ai ai oh bon, rannyea bera jei" – come oh sister or friend (female), let us go to visit Rannyea which indicates that Rannyea is a place of meeting for youths of men and women.

This kind of Jhum song provides the nature of relationship between human and wildlife which shapes the cultural ethos of human behaviour. In the song it indicates that 'half of the paddy field was already eaten up by the wildlife demonstrates that Jhums is not only meant for the mere production for human consumption but about sharing with others (animals/birds). In this song, with the portrayal of the boy's uncle as the uncle of the birds too, an illustration of the intrinsic nature of the human-nature relationship is made. Jhum remains a system and means of co-existence between human and wildlife which naturally fosters conservation in its' instinct rather than artificial human interference over wildlife and isolating from each other by ignoring their co-existence.

The interactions with nature are central to the life world of the Chakmas. For example, the song, "Ai tungobi malogei" describes one such interaction. The song,

Ai tungobi malogei hangara dora jei,
Sora parot jhumo lejhat luro lobong dore,
hangar dora jei,
Sorai sorai berebong, mas hangar duribong,
Ajhi ronge gheet gainei luro lobong dorei..
hangar dora jei,
Junon udele ebong piri..ama gorot jebong,

[151] Based on an interview with Biro Kumar Chakma, Age – 78 on 15th of January 2018.

Siguun redot rani bhattei, bujiree jagebong,
Mili muli bekkonee somara paribong hei.. hangar dora jei.

(Translation: Oh dear, join me and let us go and catch some crabs,
We shall take bamboo torches when we reach the riverbank near the Jhum field,
Let us go and catch some crabs,
We shall roam in the riversides, catch fish and crabs,
We shall merrily sing song and enjoy under the lights of the bamboo torches,
Let us go and catch some crabs,
We shall come home when the moon lights become brighter,
We shall awake sister in laws to cook the catch,
We shall awake everyone and eat them together,
Let us go and catch some crabs,)

This song represents a social interaction between two friends during the Jhum cultivation at the end of the day during sunset. This song can be also interpreted in terms of friendship of the same sex or opposite sex. In the first line one is telling another 'Come dear; let us go to catch some crabs and fish, in the streams of the Jhum we will make a bamboo torch with joy, cheers, and singing songs, let us go to catch crabs. Catching fish and crabs is an opportunity to socialize or a moment for romance and to have fun, enjoyment, and refresh with singing songs, enjoying the traditional bamboo torch and full moon lights after a day's arduous work in the Jhum field. In the next line of the song, he/she says that they 'will travel across the river and will catch fish and crabs and once the moonlight comes out fully, we will come back to our home.' In the song, while asking his/her friends to go catch crabs and fish, it says that they will be back home once the full moon lights arrive. This shows that their concern is not the quantity of catch but creating an opportunity to be together and go for a catch meal after the day's arduous work. The song depicts the subsistence economy part of the Jhum and co-existence with nature, which is not based on the exploitation of animals or wildlife to the market economy but as a way of life that is fully in tune with nature.

Apart from folktales and folksongs of the Chakmas, there is an index of happiness among the Chakmas which is still practiced by the people. In their social dimension of

happiness, the environment plays a key factor in the measurement of happiness. It has three segments of the proverb such as; the first one, “Ga de gu de Jhum man oak, aari aadh unou oak”, means the Jhum should be in the valley of the river or stream and the house should be near to the stream so that water is available for drinking, washing and fishing after coming back from works in the field even if you get less production from the Jhum. The second one is “Hosjha (Debt) tollot nou touk” which means one should not be behind payment of a loan. If you do not pay back a loan, everyone will talk about it, and you will not get peace of mind as you are a loan defaulter. If you do not have to pay anyone, then you can do what and where you want. For example, if you owe a debt, then even if the person does not ask for repayment, that will always be in your mind, and you will also fear when he/she will ask for the money.

And the final one is, “Sal toule pani nou porouk” which means the rain should not fall inside from the covers of the house. It means the house should be constructed or covered so that water does not come or fall from the cover of the house during the rainy days and so that they can sleep soundly. After working hard in the field for the entire day, if you cannot sleep and rest properly at night, then there is no peace. For instance, if the house or the cover of the house is not strong, at the end of the day working in the Jhum field, and after coming when the sky is dark and windy, one will not be able to sleep properly with the fear that if rains come where will s/he sleep.

The human-nature interactions of the Mizos and the Chakmas, and their relationships with nature is fundamental to the approach of understanding the environment and conservation. It demonstrated to why the local people and nature are inseparable. The next part of the chapter shall locate the Dampa area and the DTR Conservation project in Mizoram. It will also explore and explain how the Dampa is just a part of an ecology that cuts across state, national borders, and people.

4.4 Locating the Dampa and the DTR Conservation Project

After India’s partition in 1947, the CHT became part of then-East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and the people living in Dampa areas became part of India. People of both these countries share common histories and memories. As mentioned earlier, the Dampa geographic area falls in both India and Bangladesh. In the Chittagong Hill

Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh, it is recognised under the Sazek or Sajek Hill Range which runs in a north-south direction between Dampa and Kasalong Reserve Forest with a forested area of not less than 4,000 km (about 2485.48 mi) ². Wild animals migrate between Dampa and Kasalong Reserve[152]. In the pre-colonial and colonial times, this was a shared space for the wildlife and the people who kept moving from one place to another, across the borders, established in 1947, between India and Bangladesh. There were movements of people from hills to plains or lowlands and vice-versa whereby goods and services were exchanged, and the forms of life were neither distinct nor different 'in contrast' as 'hills' or 'valleys.' Even in the colonial rule, this region represented a particular space without any boundaries of any country.

However, under colonial rule the process of identification and demarcation of areas and thus fixing of populations took place. For instance, the Bengal government during the colonial times described the Chakma kingdom as "running along the whole course of Sajek river (which is bordering Tripura) to its junction with Karnafuli river……"[153], a little north of Demagiri; then it continues eastward along this stream up to the junction of the Tuichawng river, after which it follows the whole course of this river…." Such demarcation and identity of geography was done in the pursuit of governing the hill tracts and Northeast India by the British administration.

Historically, people never maintained such a boundary. This can be seen from the fact that after the coming of nation-states, when claims of absolute and relative space took place, this space was claimed by all the tribes such as Mizos, Chakmas and Reangs who inhabit both sides of the border. People in India and Bangladesh still have relatives on both sides of the border. For instance, in the state of Tripura which in the modern time is also known as the land of the Tripuris (that includes Reang) but members of the Reang tribe also inhabit Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh and Mizoram. Similar is the case with the other tribes too. In earlier times, people moved for agricultural activities starting from Jhum cultivation to lowlands livelihood activities[154]. The Dampa represented fluidity and continuity between the hills and

[152] Ibid., page 47

[153] Government of Bengal dated the 30th of June 1879

[154] In all the interviews with the senior citizens, they maintain that during their previous generations and times, they moved from one place to another in search of fertile land for Jhum cultivation and to

plains for the people and wildlife. Any socio-political and environmental phenomenon in Bangladesh has a direct impact in the Dampa. As discussed in the previous chapter about how the environment got affected after the construction of Kaptai Dam in Bangladesh.

A senior citizen recalls that many of the displaced got settled in the Khaslong Reserve Forest due to scarcity of food and shelter.[155] The displacement created problems and suffering from poverty to diseases. He states that after the Kaptai Dam construction, the Bangladesh government had to open the reserve forest for the settlement of the displaced. In addition, the then East Pakistan and now Bangladesh state policies towards the Chakmas and other tribes were not good. Consequently, in the later decades when human rights violations against the indigenous people were increasing over the years, a rebel group known as the Shanti Bahini was formed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Since their inception and active operations in the CHTs, the Bangladesh state lost control over the reserve forest. He further narrates that before the construction of the Kaptai Dam, especially in the 1950s, the Kasalong reserve forest was a popular destination of works which is referred to in the stories of Hattoun[156] in the Chakma language. The concept narrates stories of youths who used to go to the forest to earn money by cutting and selling trees and bamboo. There are even folktales such as the famous story of Tanyabi Firti where a youth falls in love with a woman from a wealthy family, but her parents do not accept the man as he belongs to a poor family. However, upon failing to convince their daughters against their marriage, her parents invited the man and asked Dhaba (dowry) from him of an amount which was not possible for him to pay. To earn and pay the Dhaba, he goes to Hattoun. On his return to the village after earning the said money, he learned that the girl already committed suicide by drowning herself in a specific place call Firti off a river. Among the Chakmas, the river is considered as God and the woman wanted the river god to be the witness of her love for him. She committed suicide because she was forced to marry an older man and someone wealthy and powerful in the village.

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maintain the Jhum cycle. They did not have the notion of India and Pakistan or Bangladesh and were very new to them.

[155] Based on an interview with a senior citizen aged 81 years old of Silsury village and named Mrinal Khanti Talukdar.

[156] Hattoun is a famous social concept of the Chakmas whereby people go to forest to cut and sell bamboo and trees as described in the following part of the chapter.

The senior citizen in his interviews says that after the displacement due to the Kaptai dam, such activities have increased and the Shanti Bahini upon being able to control the area, levied a tax on the people to fund their movement against the Bangladesh government[157]. He believed that since then the pressure on wildlife has increased tremendously in their habitation and hence it has migrated. He says that from Khaslong to the border of Tripura, it was a forested area or zone and well connected for wildlife. He strongly believes that the pressure on the space for the wildlife increased, leading to their displacement. He recollects that in the 1970s, people used to see tigers, which is not the case from the 1980s onwards. According to him, the reasons for the absence of tigers in this area could be because the tigers migrated to other places or states due to their loss of habitations[158].

The narrative of this senior citizen is also found in Rahaman 1995; Salam et al. 1999; Parveen and Faisal 2002; Karmakar et al. 2011; Barua and Haque 2011 described that the "construction of the Kaptai Dam in 1962 had multiple effects on forest and environment, such as inundation of forest, croplands, villages, and habitat for wildlife (e.g., sambar and barking deer, leopard, Bengal tiger, panther, etc.). This resulted in the local extinction of the tiger, and major decreases in the elephant population."

The construction of a hydroelectric power dam known as the Kaptai Dam and from the year 1962 onwards has affected both the environment and the people with displacement on a large scale (Bushra Hasina, 2002; BHDRC, 2009:2). The Kaptai Dam in the 1960s by then East Pakistan which resulted into massive floods affected the ecology of the area due to submerging of land and forest areas. The dam has flooded two fifth of total plough lands and displacement of an estimated 100,000 indigenous people. Among the total displaced, 52 percent settled in the vicinity of the reservoir, 29 percent moved to Kasalong reserve forest, 14 percent moved to the Chengyi-Myani valley and 5 (five) percent moved elsewhere in the hills (ALARD:

[157] Based on an interview with a senior citizen aged 81 years old of Silsury village and namely Mrinal Khanti Talukdar.

[158] Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014) 2013-14 to 2022-23 by Field Director of DTR, Mizoram Forest, Environment and Climate Change Dept., Chapter 5, page 62.

1995, p 91). In the latter times some of the displaced came to Northeast Frontier Tracts or Agency (NEFA), India (Parveen & Faisal, 2002).

The narratives of my interviewee can also be found in the works on "ecology and biogeography in India" by Mani M.S (1974, p.24) that reports that the wild animals migrate between the Kasalong Reserve and the Dampa area. Therefore, the magnitude of the impacts due to the ecological displacement by the construction of Kaptai dam has directly impacted the Dampa area. Politically, the Dampa and Kasalong are two distinct areas but ecologically it is just one geographic area that represents a distinct ecology with its' fluidity and continuity for wildlife. The created geographic division and demarcation by the formation of nation-states and the conservation projects has no relevance to wildlife. Therefore, the impacts on the Kasalong reserve area by the construction of the Kaptai dam have equally affected the Dampa area. The absence of tigers in the Kasalong also means the absence of tigers in the Dampa area. Therefore, narratives of my interviewee about the presence of tigers in the Dampa area in the earlier times (pre-DTR) and the absence of tigers especially in the 1980s onward is true.

The development of constructing dams divided people and wildlife and affected the environment. Moreover, the creation of the Dampa Tiger Reserve Forest by displacing the people has further affected both the people and the environment. The next chapter explores its negative impact. The next part of the chapter shall explore how social consciousness gets constructed based on the interaction and relationship with nature. It also explores how environmental events played a determinant factor in the life of people which includes their histories and socio-cultural ethos.

4.5 Conclusion

The thesis in general, and this and the preceding chapter 3, illustrates how people in the hills were not in isolation and away from the reach of the state as argued by James Scott. The thesis narrates the fluidity between people of hills and plains. Locating people in absolute space and specific and exclusive social groups is a misplaced understanding of them. This may lead to the rise of a narrow and exclusive ethnic consciousness and sentiment. In North-East India, historically the attachment or belonging to a particular geography or land was absent and developed during colonial

times. People kept moving from one place to another for several reasons such as environmental disasters, inter-tribal conflicts and conduciveness for habitation based on their socio-cultural beliefs and practices. Therefore, today we can find that members of one ethnic group reside permanently in more than one state and country. For instance, many indigenous communities of India's Northeast can also be found in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh.

The memories, lifeworld, and the worldviews of the Mizos and the Chakmas demonstrate their intimate relationship with nature or the environment. The reasons for their migrations from the valleys to the hills are due to their experiences with environmental events. In the concept of 'Zomias' by James C. Scott (2009) which was coined by William van Schendel (2002), defines the hill people as the 'run away' people from the oppressive state. According to James Scott, the peoples of the hills are the people who run away from the state and the lowland areas or valleys to avoid becoming the state's subject and being governed with slavery, conscription, taxes, epidemics, and warfare. However, the outcome of my fieldwork contradicts such an argument and presents the main reasons for migration as the environmental factors such as floods, famines, and other natural calamities. Migrations due to the oppressive state could be one of the reasons.

This chapter strongly demonstrates to the research question of; why the relationship between nature and the local people's culture is inseparable from understanding the environment and conservation. It explores and explains the myths and mythologies of the Mizos and the Chakmas with folksongs, folktales, belief systems and livelihood practices. This chapter demonstrates how both nature and the local people share reciprocal and symbiotic relationships that evolves over time. Human-nature interactions also regulate, guide, and develop the belief systems, cultural and livelihood practices of the Chakmas and the Mizos. It elucidates the need to understand and locate conservation projects in broader aspects of social and environmental history, statecraft, human borders, nation-states, socio-cultural relations between people and nature. They narrate the fluidity of people and space and the intimate relationship between people and the environment that evolve together. They show the importance of adopting a comprehensive understanding of the

environmental issues and problems, and failure to do so will only victimize both the people and the environment.

The next chapter discusses the state of the conservation project that gets entangled with the complex socio-political relations of people and the functioning of the state. It further illustrates how the conservation project serves as an instrument for the state actors who exploited people and the environment.

Chapter 5 Environment, Politics and Conflicts in Mizoram

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is about how the state of Mizoram and the Northeast India as a region is not a homogeneous space and represents a complex socio-political dynamic. Everyday life is represented by the politics of dominance based on identity, nativity, and ethnonationalism. In Chapter 4, I showed how environmental events such as floods, famine, and natural calamities led people to migrate from lowlands or plains to hills, and as sedimentary memory guides their beliefs and action. This chapter explores how such kinds of environmental events have further defined the histories of the Mizo society. For instance, the phenomena of Bamboo flowerings played a decisive role in the advent of colonialism and the political movement for statehood in post-colonial times. At the same time, it also explores how policies of the colonial and postcolonial state, the social dynamic of different indigenous or tribal communities in Mizoram resulted in serious disruption. For instance, in pre-colonial times, the inter-tribal and intra-tribal conflicts were fluid and without a defined notion of opposition or an enemy. In those times, the presently considered rival groups used to fight together against a common enemy.

Now, even the notion of citizenship is defined by the politics of identity which is based on ethnonationalism and nativism. Such as, the citizenship of a citizen shall be either denied or suspected if he or she belongs to an ethnic minority like the Chakma and the Reang or Bru. This chapter addresses the question of how are conservation projects entangled in the local and regional politics of nativism and ethnonationalism that dominate everyday life in the state of Mizoram and Northeast India? It further illustrates how conservation projects, and their displacement, are used by the state as an instrument to marginalize the unwanted citizens and exploit the environment. It argues that conservation projects in Mizoram and Northeast India must be understood in the context of inter-tribal conflicts and the politics of citizenship. It further argues that the understanding of conservation and the environment needs to be understood from the histories of people and the environment and their socio-cultural and political perspectives.

5.2 Historical Accounts of Bamboo Flowering in Mizoram

Chapter 4 of the thesis explored how environmental events such as floods, famines, and natural calamities led to the migration of the Mizo people from the plains to the hills. However, the hills were not a sanctuary against such environmental disaster and when the Mizos arrived on the hills, they encountered other environmental events such as the Bamboo flowerings which became the defining factor in the socio-cultural and political life of the people.

The migrations into the present-day Mizoram or the Mizo Hills took place in three phases. The first batch took place in the mid-16th century A.D and was known as Kuki, a term used by the Bengali people to distinguish them from the plain settlers (Reid, A. S 1893: 5). They were also known as the Old Kuki, another term used by the British Army Officer, James Shakespeare to distinguish them from the New Kukis or the Lushai tribes (1912; p 147). The second batch is known as the New Kukis and the third batch is known as the Lushais[159]. The New Kukis and the Lushai tribes arrived in and around 1724 A.D from then Burma or present-day Myanmar. In 1719, the Old Kukis migrated to other places because of famine in the hills due to the Bamboo flowerings.

The bamboo flowerings or the Mautam and Thingtam (in Mizo) are ecological cyclic events that occur every 48-50 years. Once it occurs it is followed by a plague of rats. There are two types of bamboo flowerings; one is known as Mautam which is due to the flowering of muli bamboo or *Melocanna baccifera* and the other one is the Thingtam which results due to the flowering of *Bambusa tulda* also known as Indian Bamboo or Bengal Bamboo. Both two varieties of bamboos have a periodic life cycle of 48-50 years when these bamboos are rotted, flowered and growing of seeds. These seeds are delicious foods for the jungle rats and consumption of them led to an increase in their numbers into millions. Once the rats ran out of bamboo seeds, they attacked crops in the fields, resulting in food scarcity, starvation, diseases, and deaths (S. Nag, 1999).

[159] B. Lalthangliana, op. cit., p. 22

It is said that due to famines in the 18th century, the Mizo Hills were "evacuated leaving it totally to the incoming Mizos" (Hodgson: 1925; Sangkima:2000). The Mizo Hills also experienced continued hostilities and chaos between the villages, clans, and tribes, which led to wars and continuous feuds. The Bamboo flowerings were the main reasons that forced the end of the inter-tribal conflicts and sought help from the British to fight famines led by the flowerings (Mackenzie: 1994).

In those times, three principal Mizo Chiefs, Poiboi, Khalkom, and Lalhai, met and agreed to a cessation of hostilities even with the colonial administrators, and at once sent men into the Cachar district of Assam to obtain supplies of food. (Elly: 1893; Rev.Lorraine: 1925; Needham: 1925; Parry: 1925; Lalbiakthanga: 1978; Rokhuma: 1988; Mackenzie: 1994; Chakraborty: 20 12). Massive amounts of rice and paddy were carried from the plain areas of Assam including Silchar, Cachar and others, but they proved to be insufficient. Hence, many times during famine caused by the Bamboo flowerings, there were raids in the plain areas due to a shortage of food (Mackenzie, 1884). The people in the plain areas were the subjects of the British who paid revenues or from where the British generated incomes. Indeed, the raids by the Mizos to their subjects and the areas that they governed, had annoyed the British.

Therefore, the British undertook several expeditions, but they neither were able to control the raids fully nor could be able to bring the Mizos under British rule, until one of the major famines that took place was in 1881 where 15,000 people perished[160]. The severity of the famine could be understood from the fact that due to it, many fled to the plains and even settled temporarily; reliefs were sought from the British. The British administration supplied about 18,000 maunds of rice and 2,000 maunds of paddy in the Mizo Hills in1881-1822[161]. Cooked foods were also supplied by the British administration and the missionaries to the starving famine victims. Doctors from the plains of Chittagong and Silchar were sent to treat the disease and private traders were encouraged to send rice up to the main markets of Tipaimukh on the east and Changsil on the west. Security and protection were provided by the Frontier Police against attacks from other tribes[162].

[160] Suhas chatterjee, Mizo Chiefs and Chiefdom (New Delhi, 1995), p.13
[161] Mackenzie, 1884
[162] Ibid.,

After 1881-1882, the Bamboo flowering led to a famine strike again in 1911 in the Mizo Hills. In 1911-12, W.N Kennedy, the Deputy Commissioner of the Lushai Hills, borrowed a sum of Rs 80,000 from the British government to help the Mautam famine victim[163]. The bamboo flowering and famine of 1911 was bigger than the one of 1881 and it spread to other parts such as the Chin Hills of Burma and Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh (Bhangre: 2001; Behari: 2006). However, this time the rats were used as a source of food by killing them in thousands which started by the Burmese government and followed by the British to deal with the populations of rats and famine (Agarwal, Chopra, & Sharma: 1982; Gadgil, Prasad: 1984; Palen: 2006). The famine resulted in acute shortages of food and forced the people to live on forest products such as roots, jungle yams, and other edible forest products. It was reported that the entire forest in many parts of the Lushai Hills was seen with yam pits and sizes of "four to ten feet deep and large enough to admit the body of a man or two" (Banik: 2000; Behari: 2006; Bhangre: 2001). Indeed, the Bamboo flowerings that led to famine was an opportunity for the British including the Christian missionaries to bring the Mizo under their colonial administration and rule.

The British with the help of the Mizo elders studied events such as Mautam 1862, Thingtam 1881, and Mautam 1911 and based on this calculation, Thingtam was expected to happen in 1929. Therefore, the British administration with the help of Christian Missionaries started preparing for the 1929-30 famine (S. Naj, 1999). The Bamboo flowerings also have an impact on the socio-cultural practices of the Mizos. For instance, every year they performed a religious ritual known as Chakalai in June against the evil spirit of the famine and performed in the nighttime. On the night times of the day of the ritual, every householder throws out their half-burnt woods from their houses and shouts Chakasila, chapho sila, hiakha thlong la, thlatla tlongla which means go away famine to Haka or Thlatla. Haka or Thlata is a place in the present-day Chin State of Burma[164]. The day was observed with fasting, in the night women would not weave, rice would be cooked with little water at dawn and people eat as much as they can (Agarwal, Chopra, & Sharma (eds) 1982; Gadgil, Prasad: 1984;

[163] Ibid.,

[164] Michaud and et al., Historical Dictionary of the Peoples of the Southeast Asian Massif, p. 302, The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, London (2016).

Palen: 2006; Nag: 2008). Such social awareness also helped the British administration in the preparedness to face the famine. For example, people prepare baskets to store food grains so that they can prevent the rats' attack on their foods. People also repair or construct new houses because when the bamboo flowering starts, there is a scarcity of bamboo.

By the year 1925, people were already experiencing signs of famine. In December 1924, it was reported that 45,000 to 50,000 rats were killed in the subdivision of Aizawl alone[165]. The Baptist Mission led by J. H. Loarrain informed and suggested measures to be taken by the Superintendent of Lushai hills. It is interesting to note that the administration very logically negated the suggestions. On his suggestion to order people to save food grains the administration responded that when the people themselves do not produce except for subsistence living and to order would mean to create more hardship and promote the reaction. And on his suggestion of the Liverpool virus to destroy the rats totally, the administration responded that there was no such virus. Instead, the administration suggested using rat traps and poisons to prevent the rats from damaging the crops in the Jhum fields and to stop the food supply available to the rats.

The British administration also suggested clearing and burning the bamboo forests before they produce any food for the rats (Rokhuma: 1988; Alam: 1995). However, the measures to contain the rat populations did not use full form throughout work and the administration continued its' famine relief work by providing food and other relief measures. The relief measures had a profound effect on the overall image of the British administration as kind and merciful. The positive impact of the relief measures can better be understood in the post-colonial times when both the Assam state and Indian government ignored the suffering of the 1958-59 Mautam famine (S. Nag, 1999).

5.3 Historical Accounts of Bamboo Flowerings in Post-Colonial Times

In the post-colonial times, after India's independence from the British, following the Bordoloi Sub-Committee, the Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council came into

[165] N. E. Perry, Suptd. of Lushai hills to the Commissioner Surma Valley and Hill Division, Silchar 19 January 1925.

being in 1952 under the Assam state. In 1958, the Council passed a resolution to take precautionary measures against the famine that was predicted to be in the next year. The Council also asked rupees fifteen lakhs (1500,000) for relief measures (Liangkhaia: 2002; Parry: 1925Shah: 2000; Shyam: 2004). However, the Assam government rejected and ridiculed it by stating that such prediction or anticipation of famine is not scientific, famines could not be predicted, and the connection between bamboo flowering and increase in rodents and the consequences of it as famine is a tribal belief. The Mautam or the Bamboo flowering struck the Lushai Hills District in 1959 and the Assam government was taken by surprise (Dhamala: 2002; Dokhuma: 1999; Ghosh: 1997; Hluna: 1994; Lalchungnunga: 1994; Lalrawnliana: 1995).

The famine brought deaths in large numbers due to starvation and food could not be sent as there was hardly any road connecting the district (Mackenzie: 1994; Veghaiwall: 1951; Verghese: 1996; Verghese: 1997; Zakhuma: 2001 Statistical Handbook of Mizoram: 2006; 2008; 201 0; Chatterjee: 1995; Vanlalhluna: 1985). Even within the district, there were no roads to facilitate the airdropped food supplies to the remote villages (Lalrintluanga: 2008; Lalthangliana: 2003; Liangkhaia: 2002; Parry: 1925; Shah: 2000; Shyam: 2004). The Mizo cultural society, which was formed in 1955, changed into the 'Mautam Front' in 1960 where Laldenga was the secretary. The prime objective was to demand relief and highlight the problems that people were facing. It was the Mizo Youths who were involved in relief works in towns and the remote villages led by Laldenga. They became popular among the people.

The Assam state did not know how to handle the situation and sought help from the Indian Air Force to carry out relief measures. However, the supply of wheat to the rice-eating people and the faulty supply chain further created anger and hatred against the Assam government among the Mizo people. Rupees 190 lakhs (190,00000 rupees) were sanctioned for the relief works by the Assam government, but the cases of starvation and deaths kept increasing (Banik: 1998; Arya, Sharma, Kaur & Arya: 1999). The Assam government failed to understand such environmental disasters and the Mizo society and did show little empathy towards the Mizos[166]&[167]. On the one

[166] Sajal Nag, 'Tribals, Famine, Rats, State and the Nation,' Economic and Political Weekly (24 March 2001), p. 1029.
[167] Bareh, *Encyclopaedia of North-East India: Volume 5*, pp. 183–187.

hand, neither the Assam state had no idea how to respond to such natural calamities, nor did the Indian government. At the same time, the Assam state came up with the imposition of the Assamese language by introducing law and making Assamese a state language that was not spoken in the then Mizo district by the people. This led to great disappointment in the Mizo district and the political movement to demand separation started[168].

In September 1960, the Mautam Front was renamed the Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) and gained popularity among the people in Mizoram and outside and on 22nd October 1961, the MNFF converted into a political party as Mizo National Front (MNF). The MNF political objectives were to serve the highest sovereignty and to unite all the Mizos to live under one political boundary, to uplift Mizo position and to develop to the highest extent and to preserve and safeguard Christianity. Thus, the birth of Mizo nationalism took place which is based on Mizo ethnic line. The MNF also envisioned the independence of the Mizos based on the idea of 'Greater Mizoram and Mizo Nation.' It comprises all the Mizos in Mizoram, Manipur, Cachar, and Tripura and across international boundaries of Bangladesh and Burma.[169]

On the 28th of February 1966, the MNF formed the Provisional Government of Mizoram[170]. The slogan of the MNF, 'For God and our country,' influenced the cadres to sacrifice for the Mizoram state and Christianity and Laldenga convinced them that "India was a land of Hindu and Mizoram, a land of Christian"[171]. On the 1st of March 1966, the MNF declared the independence of Mizoram from India with an armed revolution, famously known as 'Operation Jericho' when the military wing of the MNF occupied the town [172]. And on the very next day, the Assam government declared the Mizo district as a 'disturbed area' under the Assam Disturbed Areas Act,

[168] C G Verghese and R L Thanzawna (1997), "A History of the Mizos, Vo. II", Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., Chapter 1

[169] T.K Oommen, Nation building and Diversity, Unity in Diversity Learning From Each Other Volume 1, p. 27.

[170] Panwar, Namrata (2017). "Explaining Cohesion in an Insurgent Organization: The Case of the Mizo National Front". p. 973–995.

[171] S.N. Singh, Mizoram: Historical, Geographical Social, Economic, Political, and Administration, p. 203.

[172] 2 Lalthakima, 'Insurgency in Mizoram: A Study of its Origin, Growth and Dimension', PhD thesis, Mizoram University, 2008; Bareh, Encyclopaedia of North-East India: Volume 5, pp. 208, 212–232.

1955 and the Armed Forces Special Power Act, 1958 and on 6th March 1966, the MNF was declared an unlawful organization[173].

The Indian state responded with extreme measures to attack and dismantle the MNF and their movement. On the 5th of March 1966, the government responded with attacks by fighter jets and bomb the Aizawl town and other parts of the Mizo district till the 13th of March 1966. The MNF retreated into the jungles of Myanmar and Bangladesh[174]. However, such extreme steps by the Indian state could not destroy the movement and resulted in guerrilla warfare between the Indian Armed Forces and the MNF rebel group and the Mizo District completely became a militarized zone for 20 years[175]. The Lushai Hills District Council was given the status of Union Territory in 1972 and finally, after twenty years of struggles, the movement succeeded in achieving statehood on 20th February 1987.

5.4 Bamboo Flowerings after the statehood of Mizoram

After Mizoram state formed, the first Bamboo flowerings took place in 2007-2008. Like before, this resulted in a dramatic increase of rats who attacked the crops and other agricultural products. The timing of peak period was around 7:00 to 10 PM to the paddy, maize, and other vegetables (Govt. of Mizoram, 2009). According to the Agriculture Department of Mizoram (2009), the Bamboo flowering also known as the Mautam of the 2007-2008, has affected 1,30,21 hectares households in 769 villages and the rats, also known as the rodents, have damaged 12,93,476 quintals of Jhum paddy cultivation. An expected yield of 12,93,476 quintals of Jhum paddy, only 2,66,469 harvests, against the expected yield of 3,22,570 quintals of wet rice paddy and the actual was only 67,084 quintals. The department has estimated the losses at Rs 411.38 crores. While the loss in paddy was 89.76 per cent, the loss in other crops such as maize and vegetables was about 60 percent (Talukdar, 2008). The total

[173] Dr. Lalthakima, MNF in Mizoram Tan Zalenna A Sual, p. 57 in Mizo National Front Golden Jubilee Souvenir (22nd October 1961-22nd October 2011), Aizawl, MNF General Headquarters Mizoram, Rinawmna Press, 2011.
[174] Zamawia, Zofate Zinkawngah, pp. 295, 297.
[175] 6 Zamawia, Zofate Zinkawngah gives the most detailed account of the various campaigns, clashes, and encounters.

number of rat tails collected in 2007 was 24,55,568 from all the districts of Mizoram (Govt. of Mizoram, 2009).

The Mizoram state started planning and preparation in advance in 2004 to combat the 2007-2008 bamboo flowerings. The state government launched a special programme named Bamboo Flowering and Famine Combat Scheme (BAFFACOS) with the help of the central government (Trivedi *et al*., 2002). The plan included keeping a close eye on the rats' populations, mapping of non-flowering bamboos, fast regeneration of bamboo forest flowering, provision of food relief and medical supplies to the affected people (Sethi, 2004; Katwal and Pal, 2004). The BAFFACOS included 15 state departments to deal the bamboo flowerings and its' consequences with proposed financial help of Rupees 564.55 crores to the central government against which 125 crores were sanctioned. The state government allocated the said amount of 125 crores (Government of Mizoram, 2009). The BAFFACOS also includes alternative crops that the rats do not eat or attack such as ginger, cotton, oilseeds, turmeric, etc.

D. Zaitinvawra and E Kanagaraj (2015) alleged that despite the years of preparation, the response by the State government was inadequate and "it suffered large scale corruption, with possible political repercussions". They further alleged that the state government failed to provide funds and livelihood security to the affected people. It consequently became a political issue in the 2009 state election. As a result, in the 2009 State Assembly Election, the then Mizo National Front (MNF) government suffered by winning only 2 (two) seats out of the 40 seats.

The Bamboo flowering shows how the environment played a defining moment in shaping the socio-cultural and political life of the people and their relationship with nature. This part of the chapter also reveals how the British were not able to bring the Mizos under their rule till the famines due to the bamboo flowerings. It also illustrated how the MNF party lost the state assembly election due to mismanagement of the 2007-2008 bamboo flowerings event.

The next chapter shall explore how the British attempted to bring the people of the hills under their control and subsequently it will also explore how their intervention has changed the course of inter-tribal conflicts. The next part of this chapter will

explore and discuss the impacts of colonialism on the relationship between the different tribal groups. It also discusses the Mizo movement and the exclusionary concept of Mizo-nationalism. The Mizo leader, Laldenga even served notices to the non-Mizos to leave Mizoram in 1974 (Nandini Sundar, 2011).

5.5 Inter-tribal conflicts in Mizoram

When the Mizo leader, Laldenga served leave notice to the non-Mizos in Mizoram and at the same time, he also demanded to abrogate the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). Upon his demand, the then Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi told him in a rally in Aizawl that "if the Mizos expect justice from India as a small minority, they must safeguard the interest of their minorities like the Chakmas" (Benerjee et. al., 2005). The question is, what happened that the inter-tribal conflicts became so intense unlike before.

In pre-colonial times, the inter-tribal conflicts were dynamic and were not defined by distinct social identities. For example, the Mizos and Chakmas resided in the same village and together they have defended themselves and their villages; such as, in 1830 in the western belt of Mizoram near to the border of Tripura, a combined force of Zadeng, Sailo and Chakmas attacked and destroyed the very big village of Purbura, a very powerful Pallian chief at Pukzing which is now in Mamit district (C. J Shakespear, 1912). Even during the colonial times, both the Mizos and the Chakmas together fought the British. For instance, the Chakma king, Ramu Khan with the help of the Mizos fought the British in the 19th-century [176].

The British rule in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh changed the nature of intra and inter-tribal conflicts. For example, the negotiation between the Chakma queen Kalendi Rani and the British were opposed by another group of the Chakmas led by Nilo Chandra Dewan who allegedly hatched a conspiracy against her. She then took the help of the Mizo tribes to crush the revolt, which led to the murder of hundreds of Chakmas at the hands of the Mizos (Talukdar, S.P, 1988). This has remained in the social memories of the Chakmas and even there was a proverb that

[176] As per a letter from the Chief of Chittagong to Warren Hastings, the Governor-General dated 10th April 1777.

says, ‘Jarot gelle bagou dor, gorot tellea hugi dor’ which means “there are fears everywhere If you go to the forest there are fears of the tigers and if you stay at home, there are fears of the Mizos as you never know when they may come and attack.”

Both the bamboo flowerings and colonialism have changed the discourse of inter-tribal relationships and conflicts that got hardened and the social boundaries of enmity and friendship were drawn (Shyamal, C and Aseem, M, 2017). According to Chakraborty P and Prasad R. N (1994), during the colonial and post-colonial era, the animosity between the Chakma and the Mizo tribes grew even deeper on the ground of religion. The Lushai accepted Christianity and the Chakmas refused it strongly. Subir Bhaumik (2009) further adds that the introduction of the Roman script also played a significant role in the deepening of the conflicts. He states that the promotion of the Roman script was crucial, for the Mizo language has never been challenged by other smaller tribes in Mizoram as an official language. On the other hand, Chakmas resented the imposition of the Mizo language because they had their language and script. In 1986 while signing the Mizo Peace Accord between the MNF and the Indian state, the MNF leader Laldenga asked the Government of India to abrogate the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) to which the Indian government did not agree.

The animosity between the Chakma and the Mizo is not only with the eruption of conflicts or killing in the name of ethnicity, but it is also when people use words like ‘Hughi,’ ‘Takkam,’ ‘Foreigners’ or ‘Bangladeshi’ (in a derogatory sense) in day-to-day interactions. The word ‘Hughi’ literally means naked and uncivilised in the Chakma language which is often used as a sign of anger and hatred. The word ‘Takkam’ means beheaded in Mizo language which is used out of anger or disrespect. It is also a kind of historical reminder to the Chakmas that they were once beheaded by them. The word ‘Foreigners’ against the non-Mizos and the word ‘Bangladeshi’ is directly used against the Chakmas to refer to them as citizens of Bangladesh and not of Mizoram. According to Biswas (2016), in the process of ‘being Mizo’ the historical process of inclusive and exclusive framework of it ends up sounding increasingly ethnocentric.

In the movement against the Assam state and the Indian government, the MNF has continually campaigned in the formation of Mizo state and Mizo Nationalism which

excludes the non-Mizos such as the Chakmas and the Reangs or Brus. Even within the Mizo tribes, there are groups of people such as Hmar, Lai and Mara who refrain from identifying themselves as Mizo[177]. Indeed, the birth of Mizo Nationalism did not occur during the MNF movement but in colonial times.

5.6 Political movements in Mizoram

Apart from the colonial legacy of strengthening the already existing inter-tribal conflicts, 'Mizo Nationalism' further ignited and solidified the conflicts. The ethnic minorities in Mizoram too had parallel political movements to secure their autonomy at the same time when the Mizos were fighting for a Mizo nation for the Mizos. In 1946, the Mizo Union was formed and demanded full self-determination within the province of Assam with their constitution. The Chakma leaders strongly opposed the formation of the Mizo District Council or also known as Lushai Hills Autonomous District Council (LHADC) in 1952, as did other non-Mizo tribes or the ethnic minorities such as the Lakhers (Mara), Pawis (Lai). They persuaded the Government of India to establish separate autonomous district councils due to their cultural and language differences. Hence, in 1953, Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (PLRC) was created under the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution for the Chakma, Mara, and the Lai tribes (Chalnghingluaia 2001: 2-3).

In 1971, the LHADC was converted into a Union Territory of Mizoram under the North-eastern Areas Reorganisation Act 1971. The leaders of the Chakma, Lai and Mara too demanded to convert their Regional Council into a Union Territory, but the demand was not strongly advocated. The reason was the absence of common language for administrative purposes, and no one (Chakma, Lai, and Mara) understood each other's language when they ran the PLRC. Therefore, instead the PLRC was tri-furcated into three autonomous district councils into Pawi, Lakher, and Chakma Autonomous District Councils. However, the other tribal groups who refused to identify themselves as Mizo such as the Hmar and the Bru also demanded autonomy (Sen 1992: 78, Lalrinawma 2000: 28).

[177] B. B. Goswami, the Mizo Unrest, p.23.

In the case of the Hmars, they identified themselves as a distinct tribe until the Mizo movement for the creation of the Mizo District in 1946. In 1935 and 1939, they formed the Hmar Association and Hmar Students Association, respectively. Despite their ethnic consciousness, they did not assert themselves for political self-determination. Instead, they wholeheartedly participated in the Mizo Union movement for the creation of an enlarged Mizo District started in 1946 which sought to unite all cognate Mizo tribes under one administrative unit. The Mizo Union campaign appeals to all the Mizo speaking tribes and the Hmar believed that their socio-cultural and developmental aspiration shall be accommodated. In 1954 after the formation of the Mizo District Council, they formed their political organization known as the Hmar National Congress (HNC). The HNC continued their political demand to create a Hmar Hills District which they envisioned to achieve by integrating Hmar inhabited areas of Manipur, Assam, and Mizoram[178].

The MNF suppressed their movement, most of their office branches were closed, and many of their official papers were confiscated or burnt by the MNF. Even the Hmar language was not allowed to be used in the church services in the Hmar dominated areas in and around the Sakawrdai village which later became the headquarters of the Hmar People's Convention (Challien, 1995). Thus, soon after the signing of the Mizo accord on June 30, 1986, the Hmars in Mizoram formed Mizoram Hmar Association (MHA) on July 4, 1986. This organisation was later transformed into a political organization and renamed as Hmar People's Convention (HPC). On 18th December 1986, the Mizoram Hmar Association became the Hmar People's Convention (HPC) with the prime objective to fight for Autonomous District Council for the Hmar dominated areas in the north and northwest of Mizoram. The HPC resolved to an armed struggle which lasted till 1992 and in 1994, the HPC and the Mizoram Government signed the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) and created Sinlung Hills Development Council in 1997 (Vanlalliena. P, 2018).

The Reang or the Bru was the last tribal group to demand an autonomous council in the state of Mizoram. They formed a Political Party called Reang Democratic Party (RDP) in June 1990. At the same time, Bru Student Association (BSA) and the Bru

[178] HNC Memorandum, 1954

Welfare Committee (BWC) were also formed to promote the welfare of the Reangs (Brus) in Mizoram. In 1994 the RDP, BSA and BWC at a joint conference formed a new Political Party called Bru National Union (BNU) by emerging the three Associations. In the BNU's conference in September 1997 at Saipuilui village adopted a resolution for the creation of Autonomous District Council (ADC) for the Brus in the western part of Mizoram. This was strongly objected to by the Mizo in the concerned area and a militant wing which was formed by Vanlaliana of Tuirum village in 1996 to pressurize the State Government to concede to the political demand of the Reangs (Brus).[179]

The Mizoram government in response to the political demand of the Reangs (Bru) states that "in view of political demand made by the leaders of the Bru Migrants currently lodged in the camps in Tripura and the stiff opposition offered by other communities who called themselves the son of the soil especially in the North-Western belt of Mizoram".[180] It further states that the Reangs (Brus) in the western belt, especially of the Mamit District are not indigenous people of Mizoram.

According to the Mizoram government, the origin of the Reangs in Mizoram dates back only to the year 1940 – 1943 when they migrated from the neighboring State of Tripura after their three revolts against socio-economic exploitation and oppression by the Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, the then Raja (King) of Tripura[181]. (If you have not described this, please do so briefly) On receiving reports of large-scale migration of Reang, the then Lushai Hills Superintendent, Mr. A.R MacDonald issued an order vide No.4123-58G dt 6th December 1944 for the prohibition and not to allow the Reang (Bru) from doing Jhum cultivation inside Terei Forest Reserves. He also ordered for the cancellation of all allotments of Jhums to the Reangs by the Mizo chiefs and ordered that the Reangs shift to the Mizo village before the end of 1945, or the Reangs should leave Lushai Hills (Mizoram). The order also imposed a fine of

[179] Ibd: para 4 of page 4 and para 1 of page 5.

[180] See, para 1 of page 1, of the NHRC case No. 10/16/0/09-10/0C (2012), "Plight of Reang (Bru) migrants in Tripura", responses by the Home Department, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, No. C-18018/50/2012-HM (HR), 4th December 2012, by speed post.

[181] Ibd: para 2 of page 1.

Rupees 200/- on the 9 Mizo chiefs mentioned below and specifically stated that they pay this amount from their pocket[182].

However, the assertion and argument of the state government that the Bru are migrants from Tripura are not true. The Rengdil lake and a fort in Lungkulh are in the Mamit district of Mizoram[183]. The report (2011 Census Report) states that Rengdil lake was made by a 'certain unknown Reang Chief who once reigned over the surrounding areas along with the Hachhek Hill range'. Physically, the lake can be divided into two parts and is around 300 ft in length and 100 ft across and about 15ft at its deepest. Not too far away from the lake is an old fort, known as Lungkulh also believed to have been built by the same Chief. Yet another important site is the Rengdil puk, a small cave measuring 2.10 m in depth, 2.5 m wide and 1.5 m in height. The same reports add that 'this cave is the handiwork of the Reang Debarma Chief, who reigned in Tripura.' Some say it is the Manipur Reang Chief who built it. However, the report also admits that 'without a doubt that Rengpuk was carved-out around 1600 AD'. Therefore, these two historical sites prove that they are one of the indigenous (as they use it in terms of the notion of the 'son of the soil') tribe who were inhabiting much before the Mizos did (Shyamal. C and Gogoi. S, 2018).

This part of the chapter illustrates the problematic notion of identity and citizenship based on ethnonationalism and the politics of nativism, evidenced, for instance, in the slogans that "Mizoram is for Mizos." Therefore, it argues that conservation-led displacement, or, for that matter, any political events, or developments, are inalienable from such a complex socio-political state. The next part explores the ethnic conflicts in Mizoram with reference to the ethnic conflicts in Northeast India, especially the Assam state where the politics based on ethnonationalism, and nativism started. It is particularly important to understand the ethnic conflicts as it establishes the nexus of conservation and conflicts in Northeast India. It helps to decode why certain ethnic communities support and why others get displaced or oppose the creation of conservation projects. It also shows how the paradigm of conservation does not function apolitically.

[182] Ibd: para 2 of page 4.

[183] Census of India 2011, District Census Handbook of Mamit, Series 16, Part XII-B

5.7 Ethnic conflicts in Assam and Mizoram

Northeast India is inhabited by highly ethnic-conscious communities and has seen frequent ethnic conflicts that have overshadowed the long history of coexistence among the myriad ethnic groups of the region. Intermittent occurrence of conflicts between Naga and Kuki, Naga, and Meitei, Karbi and Kachari in Karbi-Anglong districts, Kachari and Hmars in North Cachar Hill districts of Assam, Mizos and Brus (Reangs), Mizo and Chakma, tribal and Bengali in Tripura, etc., dominate the news in the region.

Ethnically related movements have occurred repeatedly in many parts of the region. The Bodos, Karbis, Dimasa, etc in Assam; the Chakmas, Brus, Reangs, Hmars in Mizoram; the eastern Nagas in Nagaland and the tribal groups in Tripura have unequivocally voiced for distributive justice as far as development is a concern. What do they mean, specifically? The creation of Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD) in 2003 is an outcome of a fervent struggle for the self-assertion of Bodo identity outside dominant Assamese nationalism.

In colonial times, the Assam state consisted of Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and Meghalaya and was the homeland of many tribal societies. It also represents a rich ethnic diversity of both tribal and non-tribal populations. The state has often witnessed conflicts between the Assamese and Bengali Muslim, Bodo and non-Bodos (consisting of Central Indian tribes such as Santhal, Munda and others who were brought by the British to work on the Tea Estates, and the Bengali Muslims) and the Karbi and Dimasa. Among many such conflicts, the infamous Nellie massacre in Assam on 14th February 1983 remained the most egregious event of violence in Northeast India where 4000 Bengali Muslims were murdered by Lalung tribes in Nagaon district (Barooah, 2013).

The conflicts in Northeast India are based on the aspirations of the ethnonationalism movements. In the state of Assam, such a movement can be traced back to the 1950s led by the Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS) and the All-Assam Student Union (ASSU). In 1959, the Assam Sahitya Sabha, the literary body of the Brahmaputra valley

demanded the Assamese language to be declared as the official language of the state (Goswami 1997:48). In 1960, in a demonstration of support for the ASS by ASSU, one student (participant in the demonstration) was dead during their clashes with the police. This resulted in communal violence between the Assamese and the Bengali Muslims in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam. On 17th October 1960, the Assam state Legislative Assembly passed the Official Language Act. The hill tribes under the banner of the all-Party Hill Leader Conference (APLC), the Bengalis under the Nikhil Assam Banga Bhasha Sammellan and Sangram Samity (NABSSS) protested the hegemonic imposition of the Assamese language.

The construction of narratives by the upper-class Assamese that its culture is in danger has resulted to detect, disenfranchise, and deport the alleged foreigners and outsiders (Amalendu Guha, 1980). The Assamese movement (1979-1985) used different slogans and communal profiling such as 'Foreigners get out', 'Drive out foreigners', 'Ali, coolie, Bongali (Bengali) / Naak sepeta (blunt-nosed) Nepali'. Ali was for Muslims, coolie for Bihari labourers, the word 'Bongali' carried a tone of abuse for the community, and Nepalis who came for livelihood from North Bengal were also seen as encroachers[184].

The Assamese movement had encouraged more ethnonationalism movements in different states of Northeast India. The Assam movement has its impact in the state of Mizoram too. As per the Mizoram Official Language Act of 1975 and its' Recruitment Rules, the Mizo language is compulsory for recruitment[185]. After Mizoram achieved its statehood in 1987, the discourse of native or 'son of the soil' and outsiders started as it did in Assam. The non-Mizos or the perceived enemies are considered 'foreigners' or 'Bangladeshis' and outsiders. For example, the Chakmas are profiled as Bangladeshis, the Brus as non-natives, and non-tribal (workers from outside the state) are called as 'Vai' literally meaning 'outsiders' in a derogatory sense[186]. And in the 1990s, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP, apex Mizo student

[184] Manash, F. B., (11th August 2018). Decades of Discord: Assam Against Itself [Editorial] https://thewire.in/ Retrieved from https://thewire.in/rights/assam-nrc-anti-foreigner-bengali-assamese .

[185] 43rd report (2004 – 05) of the National Commissioner Linguistic Minorities (NCLM)

[186] The word vai is commonly used in Mizoram for the non-tribals and it is used in a derogatory sense which one only can feel or understand upon disagreement or a conflicting situation between a Mizo

organization) undertook a similar movement like that of the AASU to 'detect, delete, and deport foreigners. This led to physical violence, burning of houses and displacement of people in thousands.

In August 1992, about 380 Chakma houses were burnt down by the organized mobs of the Mizos in the villages of Marpara, Hnahva, Sachan and Aivapui which are in and around the Dampa Tiger Reserve Forest. In the 2009 Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) report, it states that on "30th January 1995, the MZP served "Quite Notice" to the Chakmas to leave Mizoram by 15 June 1995".

The report further states that "thousands of Chakma voters who were included in 1980, 1983, 1991 and 1993 Electoral Rolls were omitted and deleted from the subsequent electoral rolls published in 1995 and 1996. In the Aizawl district alone, 2,886 Chakma voters were deleted from the Final Assembly Electoral Rolls published on 2nd January 1996. The entire populace in some villages was omitted and deleted from 1995/1996 Electoral Rolls based on complaints by a few individuals. In one side, the government expressed to enumerate the deleted voters from the electoral rolls and on the other hand, it has provided vehicles to the activists of the MZP, Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo National Front (MNF) and Mizoram Peoples Conference (MPC) to pressurize the enumerators in the process of identifying the alleged foreigners (ACHR, 2009). It further states that these activists decided who should be on the electoral rolls. The Mizoram Police remained mute spectators to the unlawful activities of the MZP, YMA and other non-state actors. Against such backdrop, the Chakma social leaders, Snehadini Talukdar and Subimal Chakma demanded the creation of a Union Territory for the Chakmas. In response, the central government in 1997 made a Rajya Sabha Petition Committee, which then recommended for extension of the CADC to include all the Chakmas in their Autonomous District Council. However, the recommendations are yet to be implemented.

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and a non-tribal. During my fieldwork, I tried to get the meaning of it but upon my question, different people say different meanings. For example, it is said to be a brother or plain people. However, on 4th July 2009, the Pune Mirror published an article - Pot Calling the Kettle Black by Jeremy Williams confirms it. https://punemirror.indiatimes.com/pot-calling-the-kettle-black/articleshow/32561694

In 2014, when more than 40 non-Zo (other than Mizo tribes) students were selected to do their higher studies under the state' quota, the government amended the Mizoram Selection of Candidates Rules in 2015. The amended rules divided the citizens of Mizoram into three categories such as 1. Zo-ethnic group (the original inhibitors of the state, i.e, the Mizos), 2. non-Zo ethnic group (Non-natives such as the Chakma and Reang) and 3. Others (people from outside Mizoram, who have been living in Mizoram for government services and so on).

In response, the Mizoram Chakma Students' Union (MCSU) approached the Gauhati High Court in 2015 and challenged the new rules against which the high court has given a stay order. However, the rules were amended on 22nd April 2016 and notified to reserve 95% seats for Zo ethnic people/Mizos (Category I) while the "non- Zo-ethnic people of the State" were given 4% seats. The Chakma student body once again challenged the notification in 2016 in the high court and the court passed yet another stay order on 24th June 2016. The Chakma student body namely, Mizoram Chakma Students' Union (MCSU) challenged the notification in 2016 and it has stayed this notification.[187]

On 15 November 2015, the Mizo Students Union (MSU) and the Mizoram Police asked 49 families of 224 people and the residents of Tuichawngdor (Tuichawngchhuah in Mizo language) village in Lunglei district to vacate their villages by 31st December 2015 as it is illegal[188] and they also burnt down the village primary government school in front of the school children and teachers. The villagers argued that this village is not illegal and showed their Land Pass, Garden Passes, financial assistance issued under New Land Use Policy (NLUP), a primary school under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2004, Electricity since 2012, Ration Cards and Job Cards to avail the benefits of Public Distribution System and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). However, they were not satisfied and asked them to leave and not to return. The state government served an eviction notice[189] on 17th December 2015 with no grounds of eviction. The MSU

[187] (PIL No. 49/2016) in the High Court

[188] This was a case where I visited, saw the burnt school, and involved helping the villagers filing case in the Guwahati High Court.

[189] No. K. 23012/2/2013-DCLO

threatened the villagers that if they do not vacate, they will use force. Against the Guwahati High Court 'Stay Order 'and six weeks to respond, the Mizoram government served another eviction notice on 21st January 2016. [190]

The Mizoram government try to defend the notifications under the Lushai Hills District (Village Councils) Amendment Act, 2014 under the sub-section (2) of Section 26 of the Principal Act, the following clauses shall (a) In case any Sub-Village or Thlwhbawk other than the Sub-Village or Thlawhbawk set up by the State Government under sub-section (1) is established and if the State Government thinks that a situation has arisen demanding stoppage or closing of any Sub-Village or Thlawhbawk or any sort of settlement at any place, the State Government may issue notice for eviction to vacate the site or location or place.

The news of resignation in August 2017 by the elected Chakma representative, Mr. Buddha Dhan Chakma, from the state Assembly, was covered by the state, regional, and national media. He was the only Chakma minister in the Mizoram government and the reason for his resignation was racial discrimination faced by members of his community (Shyamal Chakma, 2017).

The conflicts in Mizoram can be understood from two aspects. One is the impact of colonialism, and another is the regional effect of ethnonationalistic politics in the state of Assam. However, there is a difference between these two states. Assam is inhabited by the tribal or the indigenous peoples and the non-tribal groups including migrants during the colonial times as labourers. Mizoram is inhabited primarily by the indigenous communities with 94.5% of the total state population (2011 Indian Census). The campaigns against so-called Bangladeshis or foreigners are based on the imagined or the considered enemy tribe such as the Chakma and the Reang. It is simply a replica of the style deployed in Assam. In the earlier part of the chapter, I explored the dynamic of inter-tribal conflicts and the politics of autonomous movements by different tribal groups in Mizoram. The next part of the chapter shall discuss the specific case of the Chakmas' autonomous council, which is vehemently opposed by the Mizos, the similar demands of autonomy by the Reang tribe and why

[190] No. B. 14016/39/2015 – LAD/VC

the DTR (Dampa Tiger Reserve) project is the epicenter of conflicts in the western part of Mizoram.

5.8 The Chakma ADC, Reang, and the DTR project

The opposition to the formation of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) can be understood from the fact that from 1985 to 2000, 21 private Members resolutions were submitted in the State Assembly for the abolition of the Chakma Autonomous District Council, out of which 7 were rejected, 14 were admitted of which 2 resolutions were discussed and negated (Benerjee et. al. 2005). The depth of antagonism between the Chakmas and the Mizos can well be understood from the derogatory concepts against each other which were formed during colonial times such as 'Hughi,' 'Takkam' which was discussed in the previous part of the chapter. This could be the reason, why after India's Independence, the Chakmas were quite active in political representations and to persuade the then Assam government and the Indian state for their autonomy.

For instance, for the formation of the Mizo District Council, in 1952 the Chakma leaders made numerous visits to the then Chief Minister of Assam when they demanded a Regional Council for them. Their demand was not accepted, and they were accommodated in the Pawi Lakher Regional Council that was created in 1953. P. Chakraborty (1994) states that the "election of two Chakma members to the 10-member Regional Council at the very first election was significant and was in confirmation of the Chakmas being a major tribe in that region from the very beginning." However, the PLRC could not function because there was no common language among the three tribal communities, namely Chakma, Mara, and Lai. Mizo was introduced as an official language, but the Chakmas and Maras did not understand anything and hence in 1958, the Maras did not attend any meetings of the Council and it virtually stopped functioning.

In the Memorandum submitted to the Union Home Ministry in 1967, the Chakmas complained that "during the Mizo Revolt which burst out in February 1966, 18 Chakma houses were completely burnt down and 139 Chakmas were killed. Immense properties, large numbers of cattle, a considerable quantity of food grains were looted

and, in some places, burnt"[191]. It further states, "we the Chakmas felt very much insecure when the Mizo Union and the Mizo National Front were carrying on their political activities, Mizo Union aiming at the creation of a separate State and the Mizo National Front fighting for independent Mizo land. Having apprehended such, we have been demanding a regional council for the Chakmas since 1954 for the preservation of our tradition, culture, social customs and laws besides our economic development and fulfilment of our aspirations. But our demand has not yet been fulfilled, nor have we been protected from the atrocities perpetrated on us."

In November – December 1971, a memorandum was submitted to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by Kristo Mohan Chakma and Hari Kristo Chakma and it stated – "While we welcome the decision of Government of India to constitute Mizo Hills into a Union Territory, we feel very strongly that along with the making of Mizo Hills a Union Territory, there should be a separate District Council consisting the areas inhabited by 31,000 Chakmas on the western side of Mizo Hills. To protect their interests, language, culture, and tradition, it is in the interest of the nation and security of the country that the Chakma District Council should be constituted."

The Chakma representatives demanded to include all the Chakma inhabited villages and states "the preponderantly Chakma-inhabited western Mizo Hills from Tuipuibari also known as Amsury and Rajivnagar in the north to Parva in the south and including Silsury, Marpara, Punkhai, Demagiri, Tuichang Ghat, Lungsen, Barapansuri, Chawngte, Jarulsari, Vasitlong, New Jaganasuri, etc should form the territorial jurisdiction of the autonomous district council for the Chakmas. This area should also be carved out as a separate administrative district in Mizoram." However, while granting the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC), only 11,153 Chakma populations were included and the rest living from Tripura border to Demagiri (Tlabung) areas were excluded.

[191] Chakma K.M (1966), "Woes of the Chakmas of the Mizo Hills: A Memorandum to the Union Home Minister,'' submitted on 21st May 1967, at Guawahati, para 3 of page 1 and para 1 of page 2. The original Memorandum assessed on 20th August 2014 from Kamalanagar, Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC).

The Chakma leaders were not happy and protested the exclusion of the Chakma villages while granting autonomous council. The then Chief Commissioner of Mizoram, S J Das tried to appease the Chakma Leaders by stating that it was just an ad hoc arrangement and assured that their demand for inclusion of all the Chakma populated areas would be considered later. Therefore, the local Chakma leader believes that the conservation projects in Mizoram, especially the DTR is not for the tigers as there are no tigers but for the political purpose of the Mizos and the Mizo state to dismantle the political demands of the Chakma and Bru tribes (Shyamal. B. C, 2011).

Presently, the DTR has become a place of conflict because the minority tribes such as the Chakma and Bru always consider it as a project to disempower them and take away their lands. On 21st October 1997, Mr. Lalzawmliana, a Forest Game Watcher in Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) was murdered and two of his friends were also abducted by the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF). The Bru Revolutionary Union (BRU) in a leaflet writes that "As you were aware that the Bru people have been living in Mizoram from time immemorial and we can say that the Bru community is also the son of the soil of Mizoram in addition to India. However, both governments treated them like their bastard sons till today. So, we the Bru Revolutionary Union (BRU) request the government of Mizoram and India to kindly treat us as your son. We are feeling deeply sorry for this kind of incident, and we cannot challenge the government, but it is necessary to agitate inside Mizoram viewing the precarious position of the Bru displaced people. The BRU only wants to protect their rights as other communities and the BRU do not want to be repatriated in Mizoram without having a meaningful solution to the Bru problems. We never want communal tension to happen inside Mizoram for this incident; we are just begging our needs to the governments".[192]

After the incidents, communal tensions between the two communities started and the Mass Exodus of the Brus took place.[193] This event triggered communal violence

[192] By Aachhek Range Commander

[193] Lalhriaipuia, Deputy Secretary to the Government of Mizoram, Home Department (2012), of the NHRC case No. 10/16/0/09-10/0C (2012), "Plight of Reang (Bru) migrants in Tripura", responses by

between the Mizo and the Reang/bru communities which led to the burning of 500 Bru's houses and displacement of more than 33,000 Bru or Reang tribes in the neighbouring states, Tripura, and Assam. The demand for the creation of Bru Autonomous District Council (BADC) under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India which is vehemently opposed by all the political parties in Mizoram and by Mizo civil society organizations such as the Young Mizo Association (YMA) and the Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP). The MZP even asked to withdraw the demand for the creation of BADC which was rejected by the BNU, and a "Quit Mizoram" notice was served by the MZP[194]. The then MZP President said that "Brus have always been outsiders and can never be a part of the larger Mizo culture,"[195].

After 12 rounds of talks between the BNLF and the Government of Mizoram, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 26th April 2005 which resulted in the coming of over – ground of 999 BNLF cadres and laying down of Arms to the Government of Mizoram in 2006. The government also promised to repatriate Bru refugees. According to the Mizoram government, the communal clashes that occurred in 1997 and 2009 were sparks due to the murder of Lalzawmliana, Forest Game Watcher at DTR[196]. However, the issue has not been resolved until now. In an interview [197] with two leaders namely Bruno and Swibunga representing their community (Reangs/Bru) in the case of the Supreme Court for their repatriation of the displaced 33,000 people back to Mizoram, they said that the Mizoram government want to repatriate them in separate places and districts of Mizoram. This is not acceptable to them as it will further weaken them in every aspect - politically, socially,

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the Home Department, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl, No. C-18018/50/2012-HM (HR), 4th December 2012, by speed post.

[194] Cited in the reports page 28 of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2010), *"A profile of the internal displacement situation"*, on 2nd September 2010, Indian Express, 9 April 1998; AITPN, 20 December 2007, p.3

[195] Siddiqui, F. A., (23 February 2014). Pushed to the boundaries: The Brus of Mizoram [Report] https://www.hindustantimes.com/ . Retrieved from https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/pushed-to-the-boundaries-the-brus-of-mizoram/story-I1QjQWlTM39l7O7GuHOEqM.html

[196] Cited in the reports page 28 of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (2010), "A profile of the internal displacement situation", on 2nd September 2010, Indian Express, 9 April 1998; AITPN, 20 December 2007, para 3 & 4 of page 5.

[197] The interview took place on 29th November 2017 in the office of Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), New Delhi.

and culturally. And they want to go back to their villages from where they got displaced and mostly in the Mamit district.

However, for the state government it is not possible and according to Mizoram home secretary, Mr. Lalbiakzama, "The Bru leaders made impossible demands. They wanted cluster settlement in large Bru villages with at least 500 households and the settlement of all families in Mamit district, which the state government could not agree to,". The Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) who have been working towards repatriations of the displaced Brus and representing at various levels from the state government to central government and the Supreme Court, want the DTR forest to be de-deserved so that the displaced Brus can resettle[198].

The Chakmas and Reangs in this area (western part of Mizoram) are even denied basic developmental rights. For example, the Multi-sector Development Program (MsDP) is a central government project to provide schools, health care, drinking water, roads, etc. It focuses on the minority concentrated areas in which Mizoram is also a selected state. As per the guidelines of the scheme, it directs that in the minority concentrated districts of Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, and Mizoram, where a minority community is in majority, the schemes and programmes should be focused on the other minorities[199]. However, the state government manufactured its own data and information so that such schemes are not implemented in the minority's areas.

For instance, in an Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) project's report, the state government manufactured its data and shows non-existence Muslim populations in the Mizo villages. In the report, the population of Muslims is shown as 15% in Kananthar, 11% each in Bajirungpa, Mualthuam and Thumpanglui, 10.21% in West Phaileng, 10% in Rulpuihlim villages[200]. There are also cases of diversion to two high

[198] 15th January 2020, Four-way treaty likely to resolve tribals'' issue in Mizoram [News] https://www.outlookindia.com/ Retrieved from https://www.outlookindia.com/newsscroll/fourway-treaty-likely-to-resolve-tribals-issue-in-mizoram/1708927

[199] The guidelines of the Multi Sectoral Development Plan (MsDP) at para 1.7 (viii)

[200] Page No. 2 of Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR)'s comments to the response submitted by the Ministry of Minority Affairs and the state government of Mizoram in NHRC case No. 3/16/0/2011 (diversion of funds to Christian dominated areas in violation of Multi-sector Development Program (MsDP) in Mizoram).

schools and two primary school buildings from Kanhmun (a Chakma village) and Tuipuibari (a Reang village), and Rajiv Nagar (a Chakma village) to West Phaileng (Christian Mizo village) and Mamit (Christian Mizo town/district)[201].

In a place like the state of Mizoram where socio-political space is dominated based on identity and ethnonationalism dominates everyday life. Therefore, this chapter argues that the conservation projects and displacement is inalienable from such reality. In fact, in the state of Mizoram, there are certain narratives or intellectual claims which feed such politics. Such as taxation, migrations due to the construction of the Kaptai Dam in Bangladesh, and population growth.

According to the "theory of taxation," it is believed that Chakmas are from Bangladesh because they have been levied house taxes of rupees five Rs 5 as for all foreigners, whereas the Mizos and their kin tribes were levied only rupees two. In 1950, S. Barkatai, the Last Superindent of Lushai Hills with his letter[202] to R.V Subrahmanaian, Secretary to the Government of Assam for Tribal Affairs, stated that the Chakmas are influx from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It was only when his successor, KGR Iyer submitted a report to the Assam government that Barkatai was wrong[203].

The Superindentent of Lushai Hills, A. Macdonald, who levied house tax of rupees five for the Chakmas himself clarified that the Chakmas are natives of Lushai Hills just like the "Lushais" or Mizos[204]. However, Barkatai's concern~~ed~~ was revenue generation and he stated that "If the Chakmas are treated as non-Lushais they will be liable to pay house tax at the rate of Rs 5/- and other taxes such as Court and Stamp duties which will bring in additional revenue of over ten thousand annually. I am in favor of adopting this course."

Similarly, there is another narrative of Kaptai Dam Displacement in Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. Joy L. K. Pachuau and Willem van Schendel (2015) write that

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[201] Ibd: page no. 5, "construction of High School and primary school buildings", of the ACHR reports
[202] Letter No. Vide D.O No. II-7/50/56-8 dated Aijal (Aizawl)11th October 1950
[203] Vide No. GP.21/55/56 dated Aijal the 27th of October 1955
[204] Order No. 734-47G of 29 April 1946

the claim of Chakmas being immigrants "was hard to substantiate" but they do suspect that there were refugees due to the Kaptai Dam Displacement of Chakmas from CHT (Chittagong Hill Tracts). They state, "Still, Chakma migration into Mizoram did occur. It exploded in 1964 when tens of thousands of people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (then East Pakistan) were displaced by a huge lake that filled up when the Kaptai hydroelectric project was completed, and a dam blocked the Karnaphuli River. Many refugees from East Pakistan entered Mizoram where they were housed in refugee camps"[205]. It is a fact that to reach the then North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), now Arunachal Pradesh[206]. The refugees had to cross the northeastern territories of India such as Mizoram, Tripura, and Assam. Only 14,888 people consisting of 2902 Chakmas and Hajongs families migrated to the then North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), now Arunachal Pradesh.

Indeed, during the migration of the Chakma refugees the then-Governor of Assam Mr. Vishnu Sahay, Assam expressed fears of trouble between the Mizos and the Chakmas if they settled the refugees in the then Mizo District and suggested the then Chief Minister of Assam Mr. B.P Chaliha to settle them in the Tirap Division or NEFA[207]. There are also no official records to show that the Chakma refugees settled in Mizoram and the state government of Tripura and Assam also denied settling them in their territories. Most of the displaced Chakmas were resettled in the upper reaches of Kasalong and Chengi in CHT where the water level was low and in other low–lying areas of Langdu, Barkal and Bhaghaichari in CHT as per the advice of the project officials of Bangladesh[208].

The final narrative which the Mizo Non-Government Bodies such as the YMA, MZP, and others use is the theory of abnormal Chakma population growth. However, factually it is not correct. In the 1951 Census report, the Chakma populations were 5.82% and 7.28% in the 1961 census which had a 1.46% increase. However, it has

[205] Joy L.K Pachuau and William vad Schendel (2015), The Camera as Witness: A Social History of Mizoram, Northeast India, Cambridge University Press, Pp 367 Para – 2.
[206] See Counter-Affidavit by the Union of India to the Writ Petition Civil No. 720 of 1995 in the Supreme Court of India, in National Human Rights Commission versus State of Arunachal Pradesh and Another.
[207] In the letter No. GA-71/64, dated 10 April 1964
[208] Parveen & Faisal, Parveen S, Faisal I.M, 2002, "People versus Power: The Geopolitics of Kaptai Dam in Bangladesh" Resources Development, Vol. 18, No. 1, 197–208.

decreased in the 1971 census to 6.99% which was supposed to increase since it was the decade when the displaced people from Kaptai Dam migrated to India.

Table No. 2: Population from 1951 to 1981 census

Censu Reports	1951	1961	1971	1981
Total Population	196,202	266,063	332,390	494,757
Chakma Population	11,435	19,377	23,236	39, 905
% of the Chakma Populations	5.82	7.28	6.99	8.06

5.9 Conclusion

Ramachandra Guha (2003:140) opines that the conservation projects became a much-wanted project for some as it provides employment, money-making, aesthetic, etc. for some and unwanted for the others. The reasons against the state-led conservation projects for the tribes/indigenous peoples are due to displacement, loss of land, marginalization etc. This might be true in the context of Mizoram too, but it is not immune from the web of ethnic conflicts and politics. Therefore, the DTR project is considered unwanted and opposed by the Chakmas and the Brus and supported by the dominant Mizos.

The opposition and suspicion to conservation projects can also be seen in other parts of Northeast India. In January 2013, it is reported that the Council of Naga Rengmas Hills (CNRH) formed an armed group against a tiger reserve in Karbi Anglong district bordering Nagaland. The CNRH alleged that the democratic protests and representations did not yield any positive results and so justified the outfit's formation. It states that "the decision to set up the tiger reserve in the entire length and breadth of the Rengma – inhabited areas were premeditated to drive out locals on the pretext of possible human – animals' conflicts." Even the Kuki tribes of Assam submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Assam requesting to cancel the tiger reserve by the Kuki National Assembly (KNA) on 14th September 2012 (Shyamal, C., 2011).

The chapter demonstrates the deep relationships of people with nature based on their interactions and their encounters with environmental events. At the same time, the

colonial statecraft and the nation-state formations have affected such relationships both with the environment and among different social groups. Therefore, conservation projects cannot be considered separate from such realities. For example, more than 80% of reserve forests, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserves are in the Chakma and other non-Mizo forests[209]. The DTR with 988 Sq. Km and Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary with 180 Sq. Km cover the geographical areas of Chakmas from Tripura border to Demagiri (Tlabung) whereby most of the Chakma inhabits and was demanded for the inclusion in the autonomous council of the Chakmas but was excluded with a promise to include in the future. The following chapter will examine the impacts of displacement on the people and the environment from the conservation project. It explores and explains how despite the absence of tigers, it is the biggest wildlife conservation project in Mizoram. It argues that the conservation project of the DTR forest serves the interest of the state and the market.

[209] This shall be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Displacement and its' impact on people and the environment

6.1 Introduction

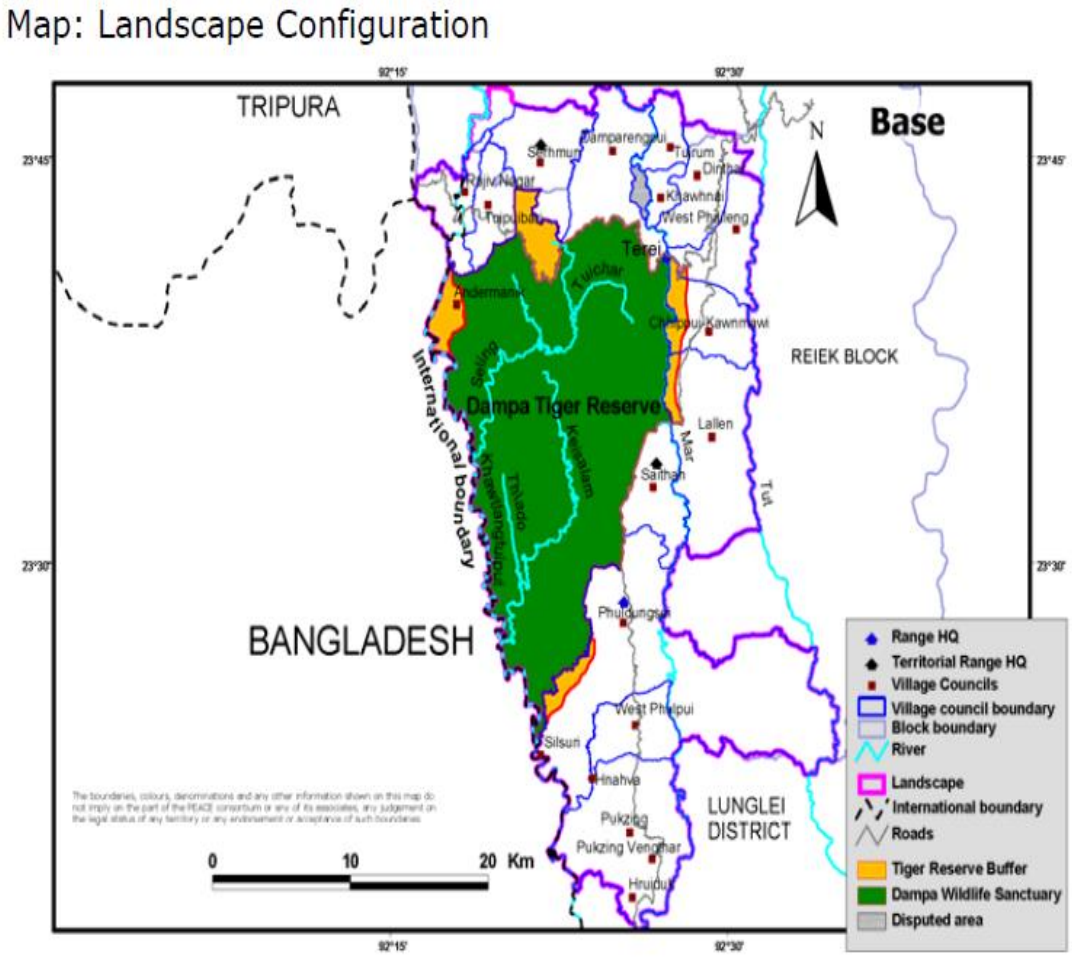
This chapter is about understanding displacement and its impact on the local people and the environment in contemporary times. It discusses how displacement of people breaks down the ecological relationship between the local people and the environment which consequently results in twin victimization. It explores how wildlife gets displaced due to the displacement of people from the conservation project area. It argues that both the people and wildlife represent an ecological system that is inseparable and displacement in the name of conservation results in disturbances to that system. Therefore, displacing people results in the removal of wildlife and de-conserving nature in the name of conservation.

The chapter also discusses the questions of population and the pressures on the environment. It compares population or human settlement in and around the DTR forest in pre-displacement and displacement times. It found that the number of people and human settlements was more pre-displacement times than when people were displaced. There were villages in Bangladesh on the river Sajek, which divides the two countries, i.e., India and Bangladesh. Fish and wildlife were abundant in the pre-displacement times, which is not any more now. Therefore, it argues that there is no relation between population growth and its' pressures on the environment.

This chapter examines how the displacement created a crisis in the people's lives and forced them to change their livelihood activities from subsistence to market oriented. Such change has resulted in immense pressure and dependence on the forest resources of the DTR, which people never experienced in the times of pre-displacement from the project. It argues that the displacement is ultimately benefiting the state and its' political economy. This chapter also reveals the discriminatory practices by the state-led conservation project and how it further marginalises the marginalised. Three communities live in and around the DTR such as the Mizos, Chakmas and the Reangs. The core areas that are inviolate and intact in the areas of the Chakmas and the Reangs and the buffer areas are in Mizos. In the buffer areas, shifting cultivation and other livelihood activities are allowed. Therefore, it argues that the state-led

conservation project is discriminatory and unwanted for the marginalised and advantageous for the state's dominant social groups, such as the Mizos.

Map 3: Landscape of the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR)[210]



6.2 Introducing the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR)

The Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) which is in the Mamit district of Mizoram state is surrounded by the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh to the west, the Indian state of Tripura, Mamit and Kawrthah Forest Division to the north, and Mamit Forest Division to the south and east[211]. It was first started as Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary in

[210] (Sources: Final report (2007) of Biodiversity Conservation and Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project by the PEACE Institute Charitable Trust, ELDF, NR International and Samrakshan Trust).
[211] Ibid., page 3

1976[212] and was declared as a Tiger Reserve in 1994. The total area of DTR is 988 km² of which, 500 km² is as Core or Critical Tiger Habitat and 488 km² as Buffer Area. The Mizo means the people of hills or the highlanders and represents the Mizo language-speaking tribes. The Chakma and the Reang identify themselves as distinct from the Mizo tribes and do not speak the Mizo language. The Mizo tribe practices and follow the Christian religion, the Chakmas follow and practice Theravada Buddhism and the Reang who was known as a Hindu tribe, but many people follow the Christian religion. However, most of the Reang tribes in and around are mostly Hindu by religion. Both Mizo, and Reang use Roman script and the Chakmas have their own script.

The DTR Is located at the tri-junction of Bangladesh and two Indian states viz., Mizoram and Tripura and is the largest Protected Area (PA) in the state of Mizoram by occupying 4.68% of the state's geographical area. The Dampa region (in which the tiger reserve is situated) is a part of the north-eastern hill region landscape and is located at a unique junction of Indian, Indo-Malayan and Indo-Chinese biogeographical realms (Mani, 1974). The landscape is also a part of the Indo-Burma (Myanmar) Global Biodiversity Hotspot, recognized as an Endemic Bird Area and is one of the Terrestrial Ecoregions of the World[213]. In the DTR three major rivers in the western part of the state flows inside the core area such as the river Sazalui[214], Keislam[215] and River Seling and their tributaries like the streams of Tuichar, Charte, Lambachhora, Debasur, Sazuklui, Sialring, etc., in the north and Sairillui, ChiteLui, Thuhruklui, Hmarluanglui, Rawthlalui, etc. in the south. In the eastern boundary of the reserve is the River Mar which flows south and River Tut which flows in the north[216].

[212] Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014), 2013 – 2014 to 2022 to 2023 prepared by the Field Director of Dampa Tiger Reserve, Page 48.
[213] Ibid., Page viii
[214] Sajek in Chakma and Sazalui in Mizo languages
[215] Hugisora in Chakma and Keislam in Mizo

[216] Ibid., page 24

6.2.1 Vegetation covers and wildlife in DTR.

The Biogeographical classification and vegetation of DTR[217] are categorized into the following types: tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, tropical moist deciduous forests, and sub-montane type. According to Pachuau (2011), the vegetation of DTR is as follows: "The low moist valleys have evergreen vegetation, the higher slopes have semi-evergreen forest, and the steep western slopes are somewhat open forests". A significant area within the Core is covered by tropical wet evergreen forests. The wet evergreen forests are characterized by stratification of the stand into three distinct tiers, compromising many tree species. All species of the top canopy are evergreen trees with tall clear boles, frequently with umbrageous crowns and sometimes with plank buttresses. The middle and lower canopies are dense, evergreen and varied[218].

The Government of Mizoram under section 38 V of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 as amended in 2006 notified an area of 488 km² as the buffer area of Dampa TR, as an inclusive agenda[219]. The buffer areas in detail are as follows; Western Boundary: The western boundary starts from the point where Sailui meets Sazalui. It then follows Sazalui till it meets Belkhailui.

Northern Boundary: The northern boundary starts from the point where Belkhailui meets Sazalui. It then follows Belkhailui up to its source and meets Ramrilui, which it follows till it meets Sengmatawklui. It then follows Sengmatawklui downstream till it meets Teireilui. The boundary then follows Teireilui upstream till it meets Tuinghalenglui. It then follows Tuinghalengluiup to its source crossing a saddle till it meets Daplui. It further follows Dapluidownstream till it meets the Tut River. Eastern Boundary: The eastern boundary starts from the point where Daplui meets River Tut. It then follows River Tut up to its source crossing a saddle till it meets Marlui. It then follows Marlui downstream till it meets Lungthretlui. Southern Boundary: The

[217] Is based on the classification and descriptions done by Champion and Seth's (1968)
[218] Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014), 2013 – 2014 to 2022 to 2023 prepared by the Field Director of Dampa Tiger Reserve, page 27.
[219] vide Notification No.B.12011/14/2009-FSTdt. 16.3.2011.

southern boundary starts from the point where Lungthretlui meets Marlui. It then follows Lungthretlui upstream to its source crossing West Phaileng – Marpara BRTF Road, meeting Khawchatlui at its source. It then follows Khawchatlui downstream till it meets Sazalui/Tuilianpui which is also the international boundary between India and Bangladesh.

6.3 DTR forest and Displacement

Chapter 2, part 2.7.1, "Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR): A Tiger Project without tigers" demonstrated how the DTR is a fictitious tiger conservation project and how the displacement by the Kaptai dam in the CHTs (Chittagong Hill Tracts) has a direct impact on the Dampa and the DTR. The 3rd chapter illustrated the historically changing and continued relationships between the local people and the environment. It demonstrated why seeing conservation like the state misses the local populations and the natural environment. In this process, the local people and their ecology gets excluded in the state-led conservation projects. Chapter 4 demonstrates how human-nature interactions are characterized by a symbiotic relationship, and interdependence on each other. It is a system whereby disturbances to one equally impact the other. This part in specific and the chapter in general, shall examine the impacts of displacement on the local people and the environment.

6.3.1 DTR forest and the displaced – people and wildlife

One of the wildlife scientists T. R Shankar Raman[220] conducted an extensive field study in the Dampa Tiger Reserve Forest and argues that to conserve the environment or most specifically the wildlife, there is a need of living together of people and nature instead of without each other. His study also includes the impact of jhum on bird and wildlife species and concludes that Jhum cultivation leads to an increase in bird diversity[221]. It also leads to a mosaic of dense bamboo and diverse secondary forests. Raman (2001), noted that shifting cultivation may be better than establishing monoculture plantations for conservation, especially bamboo and the secondary forests that harbour many forest bird species. Indeed, the works of T.R Shankar

[220] Dr T. R. Shankar Raman is a Senior Scientist with the Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysore. He is a wildlife scientist and writer on the ecology and conservation of tropical forests and wildlife—especially rainforest plants, birds, and mammals—mainly in the Western Ghats of India.

[221] Tiger Conservation Plans: Dampa Tiger Reserve, 2013 – 2014 to 2022-23, prepared by the Field Director of Dampa Tiger Reserve, Mizoram, page 34.

Raman on Jhum cultivation also gets replicated in the chapter 4, at 4.4 and 4.4.2 sections, “people and their environment: Mizos and the Chakmas”, and “nature and culture: beliefs and practices” while describing the symbiotic and reciprocal relationships between the nature and the local people. As nature shapes people’s lifeworld, so do the local people’s practices and livelihood activities shape the local ecology.

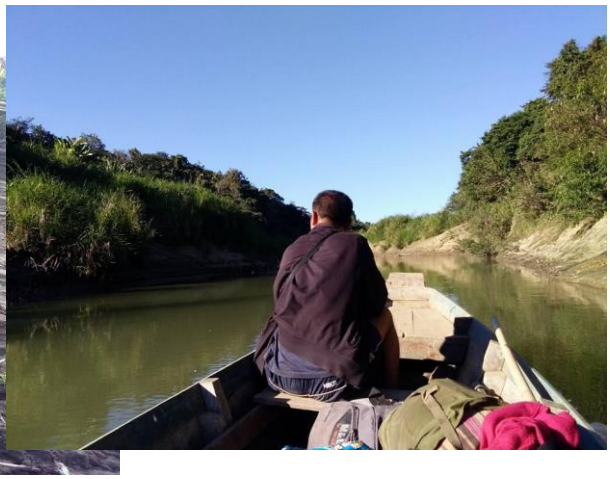
In the pre-displacement times, while travelling on with Bamboo Raft or wooden boat through the river Sajek, every day there were distinct types of monkeys and birds seen on the valleys of the river which is not seen during the times of post displacement from the project. My focus groups expressed that in those days when they used to travel, the monkeys used to play with the people by showing their tongue and were not afraid of people[222]. However, at present, there are no more monkeys seen and indeed I experienced this during my field trip[223] accompanied by three people from the Silsury village and stayed four days and nights inside the DTR forest and after taking permission from the office of the reserve forest in Aizawl. In fact, as a child when I used to travel[224] with my parents, at home before travelling to Jhum fields people only cooked rice for lunch since they can collect enough fish with a thin cloth from the bottom of the wooden boat with which they travel. During my trip in the DTR forest, I saw neither any fish at the bottom of our boat nor any monkeys on the valleys of the river.

The visit to the DTR was to experience and examine its present state and to gain insight into the DTR forest. The following are four photographs. Photograph 1 is a temporary shelter we built to sleep for a night, photograph 2 is the wooden boat that left us to our initial destination. In the photo, on the left is Bangladesh and on the right is India, also the DTR forest. Photograph 3 is curry cooked inside the bamboo and in photograph 4 is the bamboo shaft that we made to travel further and to come back to the village.

[222] Based on the Focus Group Discussion both with the former tiger reserve workers and senior citizens above 60 years of age held in the village silsury of Mamit district, Mizoram in the month of February 2018.
[223] My field visits were from 15th to 20th December 2021.
[224] It was during 1993 to 1997 and before I came to Kolkatta, West Bengal for my school education.

Photograph No. 1

Photograph No. 2



Photograph No. 3

Photograph No. 4

As per peoples' memories and recollections, before 1994 till almost 2000, there were several big animals inside the DTR such as elephant, bear, bison, monkey, deer, otter, buck deer, wild boar, python and so on. In our field trip, we did see the spoor of wild animals like deer, buck deer, and wild boar but did not see any signs of other big animals although they might be present deeper inside the forest. However, the diverse wildlife and bird species that used to be seen on the river valleys and their forest before displacement is no longer visible now.

My focus group while narrating about people and wildlife, states that "in the 1970s and 1980s, people often used to see tigers but now there are no signs of tigers except some big cats." In the time of declaring Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary (DWS) and even after its declaration, people used to cultivate in the valleys of the Sajek river. Initially, when the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary was declared, people had no idea about it, and they led their normal life of doing Jhum cultivation. After 1994, though Jhum cultivation was allowed but with condition of planting fruit trees and certain areas were not allowed to do Jhum cultivation. It was only after the year 2000, people were strictly prohibited from any kind of cultivation or human activities[225].

The fact that people were not allowed to continue with their livelihood activities was indeed a gradual process of separation between people and nature. The restriction of people against Jhum cultivation led to the denial of a symbiotic relationship between people and wildlife. For example, due to the shifting cultivation, the birds and animals get their share from the fields from the crops and insects available in them. People also throw the leftover food in the river or streams which became a source for the animals and fish too. Indeed, it is a Chakma culture to throw the leftover food into the river/stream or ponds or wherever there are water species. It is primarily to share food with them (river species) which people still practice. In fact, when people travel long distances, they always eat food beside a river/stream, so that they can share the remaining food.

[225] Based on the Focus Group Discussion both with the former tiger reserve workers and senior citizens above 60 years of age held in the village silsury of Mamit district, Mizoram in the month of February 2018.

There are popular beliefs and practices among the Chakmas which are shaped by nature. For example, “mot porok pet nou borok,” (Translation lets everyone get a share, even if the stomach is not full). It means the food needs to be shared among everyone if it is not enough for all. Relating it to nature, when the Chakmas eat food (rice and curry) no matter how less they may have to eat, before eating a small portion of it will be thrown into the river and after eating, no matter how less they had to eat, they will keep some (even if it is very little) to throw into the river for its’ species. The practice is not limit to the river or river species but also to wildlife. For instance, in a house away from the river or on the top of hill, some portion of the food will be always thrown outside the house so that the insects or wildlife comes and eat. Similarly, the proverb, “Hei hai ugurile ta re hoi de don; muri murai baji le ta re hoi de jon”, {Translation: The true meaning of wealth is the food which is still available for others to eat after everyone’s stomach is full, and a real person is someone (no reference to gender even though the similar meaning in English is ‘a real man’) who can come back to life after near death incident}. In addition, there is a social norm and practice that one needs to cook food, so that everyone’s stomach is full and even if the food amount is more than required. The culture of extra food among the Chakmas is shaped by their relationship with nature which is practices across different classes or economic backgrounds.

T. R Raman (2001) based on his studies in the DTR forest, advocates and argues for the continuation of Jhum cultivation that serves the purpose of conservation. His advocacy can be further understood or contextualised in the context of Rannyea as discussed in the 4th chapter, section 4.4.2.2, “the Chakmas” while explaining the Jhum culture with folksongs. Rannyea is also a source of livelihood for the wildlife where fruits and vegetables are still available after people moved from the Jhum field. When the DTR or the tiger reserve took place and completely displaced the local people both physical removal and access to forest and its’ resources, Jhum cultivation was not allowed any more. It also denied the wildlife and water species their source of livelihood and consequently, the wildlife too got displaced. This is the prime reason wildlife is not visible like before in the DTR forest.

At the same time, the relationship between the people and the Dampa has drastically changed since the displacement of people. The concept of an ‘inviolate zone’ led to a

crisis of access to meat and fish causing huge demands. For example, the displaced people are not connected with the markets in the towns or cities with good transportation and communication systems. They could be able to manage only for their basic needs such as salt, clothes, and other such basic requirements which they cannot produce. They access their food such as fish and meats from the rivers and forests. It does not come from the markets in towns and cities. Therefore, the conservation project deprived them because of livelihood displacement by the very idea of 'inviolate' and hence a crisis of meat and fish. Consequently, it has drastically brought social change from hunting for sharing to hunting for selling which was not there in the life of the people before displacement. The details of it shall be explored and explained in the later parts of the chapter.

6.3.2 History of DTR and displacement

After India's independence the Assam state passed the Mizoram Forest Act 1955 to regulate timber operation with a permit system[226]. The Dampa area was under the Mizoram Forest Act 1956, recognized in both categories of Unclassed Forests and Riverine Reserve Forests, and the Act is described as follows.

River Sajek in Chakma or Khawthlangtuipui in Mizo language is under riverine reserve forest which is approximately 50 km² falls under river Karnappully reserve forest. The Karnaphully Riverine Reserve Forest is 62 km long and 800 metres wide along the eastern bank of these rivers.

Teirei Riverine Reserve Forest (approximately 20 km²).

Unclassed Forests (approximately 270 km²).

Mizoram became a separate state on 20th February 1987 and for the implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 in the state of Mizoram, a separate Wildlife Division was created in 1987 and other Protected Areas in the state started[227]. Now in Mizoram, there are 10 Protected Areas i.e., 1 (One) Tiger Reserve, 2 (two) National Parks and 7 (Seven) Wildlife Sanctuaries[228]. The Dampa Tiger Reserve Forest is the

[226] Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014) 2013-14 to 2022-23 by Field Director of DTR, Mizoram Forest, Environment and Climate Change Dept., page 48.

[227] Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014) 2013-14 to 2022-23 by Field Director of DTR, Mizoram Forest, Environment and Climate Change Dept., page 51.

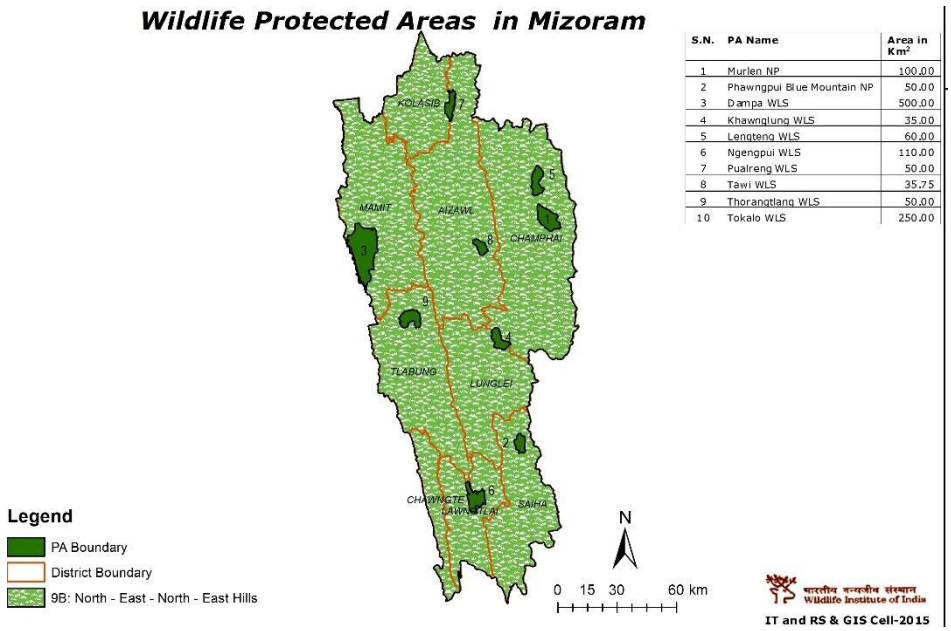
[228] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017 by the Environment, Forests & Climate Change Department, Government of Mizoram, page 128.

biggest wildlife sanctuary in the state of Mizoram by covering 57.15% of the total areas of the wildlife sanctuaries of the state.

Table No. 3: Wildlife Sanctuaries in Mizoram

Sl. No	Name of Protected Area (PA)	Area of PA (in sq. km)	Year	District
1.	Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR)	988	1994	Mamit
2.	Murlen National Park	100	2003	Champai
3.	Phawngpui National Park	50	1997	Lawngtlai
4.	Khawnglung Wildlife Sanctuary	35	2000	Lunglei
5.	Lengteng Wildlife Sanctuary	60	2002	Champai
6.	Ngenpui Wildlife Sanctuary	110	1997	Lawngtlai
7.	Pualreng Wildlife Sanctuary	50	2013	Kolasib
8.	Tawi Wildlife Sanctuary	35.75	2001	Aizawl
9.	Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary	180	2015	Lunglei
10.	Tokalo Wildlife Sanctuary	250	2007	Saiha
	Total	1728.75		

Map 4. Wildlife Protected Areas in Mizoram



The Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary was declared on 20th January 1976 by the government of Mizoram with an area of 180 sq. miles. It was challenged by the affected people led by Mr. Jaladhar Chakma in the Guwahati High Court and the notification was quashed by the court on 11th August 1982[229] in favor of the people. The judgement also states that "the impugned orders are not sustainable in law," and section 18 has not been published in the Official Gazette, an action sought to be taken under the said Act by the impugned notices cannot be sustained.

After going through the records of the cases we find that the respondents have not followed any of the provisions of Chapter IV of the Act"[230]. However, again, on 23rd March 1985, the state issued a notification[231] to declare it as the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary with an area of 681 Km² and to displace fourteen villages. The following table is the initial proposed villages that the state wanted to displace for the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary in 1985.

Table No. 4 Initial Proposed villages to be displaced[232].

Sl. No.	Name of Village	Tribe
1.	Ander Manik	Chakma
2.	Lambachhora	Reang
3.	Persang	Reang
4.	Chikha	Reang
5.	Seling/ Ponsury	Chakma
6.	Saipui	Reang
7.	Mualvawm	Reang
8.	Hnahbawr	Reang
9.	Keisalam – I	Chakma
10.	Keisalam – II	Chakma
11.	Aivapui	Reang
12.	Serhmun	Mizo

[229] Ibid., page 48
[230] Guwahati High Court Judgment (1982), Jaladhar Chakma And Etc. Etc. vs The Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl,..on 11 August, 1982.
[231] vide No. B. 11011/14/84 – FST dated 25th March 1985.
[232] Shyamal. B. C, (2011), MA Dissertation, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

13.	Dampa Rengpui	Reang
14.	Silsury	Chakma

However, in 1988 the then Deputy Commissioner (DC), Aizawl District, H. Hauthuama, was appointed to inquire into the claims, rights, etc., of persons dwelling inside the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary. In the report, the DC reported that "as far as could be ascertained from the record of state government, no right of the above-mentioned people is found to exist in the said area. The people have been doing Jhuming in the area for the last few years. Out of the fourteen Jhumia villages inside the Sanctuary, four villages namely Serhmun, Dampa Rengpui, Silsury and Aviapui are established villages with a large population and situated on the peripheral portion of the Sanctuary." So, the last four villages listed in the table were not enumerated in the Sanctuary to displace.

The D.C (Deputy Commissioner) also suggested to reduce the boundaries of the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary. The report, states that "the total approximate area of the Sanctuary after deleting some portions[233] will be 462 Sq. km. Further, the DC suggested that the Govt. may consider giving financial assistance of about Rs 2000/- (25.56 USD) per household only on humanitarian grounds to move out of the sanctuary area to rehabilitate themselves in the new places"[234]. There were 223 households were left out in the survey for claiming rights and compensation and 30 households were left out by the joint verification team due to their absence from their homes because of Jhum cultivation times they were residing in the Jhum field, and some were away from their homes for marriages etc[235].

[233] Some portions are deleted as stated in the report that it was due to established villages also of large numbers of populations inhabiting in these villages.

[234] Deputy Commissioner, Aizawl district, Dated 30th November 1988, Aizawl, No. D – 12011/43/88 – DC (A)

25, "Enquiry Report as to claims, rights etc. from persons dwelling inside the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary.

[235] Shyamal B Chakma (2013), MA Dissertation, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. In a letter to the Conservator of Forest (Widlife, WL), office of the Chief Wildlife Warden, Environment and Forest Department, Government of Mizoram, Aizawl by Rodney L. Ralte, Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Deputy Commissioner, Mamit, Mizoram on 12th March 2012 with letter No. B.11012/16/2011 – DC (M)/pt.

However, the kind of rights to be claimed by the people are not mentioned. In the rural areas of the state, people practice two kinds of traditional land rights or land ownerships systems. One is based on household, whereby a family owns a limited area of land, and another is community based or communal land. It belongs to the people of a village for agricultural practices, especially Jhum cultivation. Therefore, the meagre amount of compensation does not reflect any rights related to land. Compensation was recognised and allowed only based on the principle of a citizen and hence their personal right. The compensation was not identified based on an indigenous or tribal communities who have different social systems and practices when it comes to land. Therefore, the consequences of the physical displacement from the DTR project are losing both the land I.e., households and communal land.

In fact, the amount of the compensation paid by the state does not reflect the loss of land and properties to the conservation project. The forest department claimed that it paid an amount of Rupees 2000/- (25.56 USD) but according to people they were given Rupees 200/- (2.56 USD) to Rupees 500/ (6.39 USD) per household and forced to vacate their villages, indicating corruption by the state officials. According to the state government, the people did not make any claim of compensation to the D C[236]. Therefore, the following villages and people were displaced in 1989.

Table No. 5: Displaced Villages in 1989

Sl No.	Village	Tribes	No. of House	No. of Households
1.	Chikha	Reang (Bru)	18	127
2.	Saipui	Reang (Bru)	16	95
3.	Persang	Reang (Bru)	12	85
4.	Lampachora	Chakma	21	98
5.	Seling	Chakma	26	211
6.	Mualvawm	Reang (Bru)	20	127
7.	Hnahbawr	Reang (Bru)	12	65
8.	Keislam – I	Chakma	88	543
9.	Keislam – II	Chakma	43	273
10.	Andermanik	Chakma	31	266

[236] Ibid, page 49

11.	Total	287	1890

The above narratives and discussions are based on the records and reports available with the environment and forest department of the Mizoram state. To further explores and analyse the process of displacement, I had focus group discussion with the former forest staffs of the DTR forest in the 1980s and 1990s to understand the context of displacement and relationships between the local people and forest department.

The focused group members of the discussions were Lokhi, Uma, Birla, and Bimal[237] who worked as a Muster Roll (M.R), or the village level workers of the DTR project. They recollect that in those times, especially in the 1990s, they had to face the fierce opposition of the people who did not consider them friends and treated them as enemies. For instance, in 1993, as directed by the then Field Director, Lokhi and his colleagues from the forest department demolished a garden of Mr. Lalit Chakma, who cultivated inside the DTR forest areas. His garden consists of vegetables, bananas, pineapple, jackfruit and so on in the Keislamdor or Hugisorador. His garden falls in the Hugisorador[238] (a small stream inside the core areas of the DTR) and the river Sajek borders between India and Bangladesh. Upon learning the news, Lakhi (one of the interviewee and former M.R) came down to the village with a handmade gun to kill Lokhi. After knowing the information, he and his colleagues left their house and the village and returned only after a week.

Another forest worker known as Bimal did not continue the job because he was not able to bear the harassment of the Mizo Forest Guards who came to the village for forest duty. He said that whenever a Mizo Forest guard comes to a Chakma village, they must serve them as their servant and must find dogs for food, local wine and so on. According to them, since they belonged to the Chakma community, they were treated by the Mizo Forest guards as their inferiors and were mistreated by them as if

[237] Names are not changed for two reasons. First, verbal consent was taken during the discussions but have not taken any written consent to use their names as they do not want to take risk of negative consequences. Secondly, they are former staff of the DTR and according to them, they are not scared to speak the truth and ready to share their real-life experiences when they worked as the ground staff of the DTR.

[238] (Keislam in Mizo and Hugisora in Chakma is the river presently inside the DTR and Dor means the beginning of the stream).

local people were only there to serve them and their officers. Therefore, he quit working with the DTR forest office.

Now they all are residing in different villages and did not continue working with the forest authority fearing troubles for their families and for themselves. They also feel that whatever the DTR authority does is often very inhumane to the Chakmas and witnessing such treatments against their fellow members was exceedingly difficult for them to bear and therefore they all quit their service with the DTR forest office. It was also the time of frequent Mizo-Chakma tensions and conflicts in Mizoram. According to them, the Mizo Forest guards do not come for forest official duty but to intimidate the Chakmas and look for an opportunity to punish them. They believed that the Mizo Forest guards always saw the villagers with the anti-Chakma attitude and as antagonists.

Jhum cultivation was allowed inside the DTR with conditions from 1990 to 1993-94. The conditions were doing plantations of forest fruits trees, teaks, and other such trees and plants which are both edible to wild animals and have commercial values. However, for Jhum cultivation permission is required from the forest department and without permission, anyone cultivating Jhum is liable to be fined, arrested, or at least harassed. From 1990 to 1994, there were six cases where Jhum fields were burnt down and the Jhummias (Jhum cultivator) were taken to the district court for doing Jhum cultivation. And after 1994, Jhum cultivation was banned, and people were restricted from entering the forest without permission. However, at that time there were no legal cases of hunting[239].

Since 1994, until my focus group quit working with the forest department, there have been many cases of local villagers hunting wild animals and cutting trees/woods. In those days, cutting trees was for the construction of houses and other domestic uses. In 1994 when a villager named Gondha Dhan Chakma from Silsury (now migrated to Bangladesh) was arrested while cutting trees inside the buffer areas of the DTR. When he was caught, his knives and other belongings were seized. He was cutting trees and bamboo to repair his house for which he was denied permission. At that time,

[239] This was the outcome of one day focus group discussions with the former forest guards in the Dampa Tiger Reserve on 7th February 2018.

his arrest was sympathized with by the villagers who supported him with any help that they could offer. In the end, he was released with bail but then he fled away from the village to Bangladesh and never came back.

Similarly, there was a case in 1995, when a former village council leader and his colleagues were caught and arrested for cutting wood inside the DTR. The reasons for cutting wood were like the previous case which was to fix their houses. The villagers were terribly angry and prevented their arrest. They appealed to Mr. Liansoma, the then Forest Minister of the state, to get back their wood. Upon their appeal, the Forest Minister came to Pukzin village (a neighbouring Mizo village) and organised a meeting whereby he requested Pala, the then Field Director, to return the wood. However, the Field Director did not accept it and finally, the woods were burnt down to ashes. Though they did not get back their wood, the environment in the villages was against the forest department. It was a very tense situation and difficult for forest department workers to enter the forest for duty. However, there were constant pressures from the authority to perform their duty and there were many cases of joint operations in the DTR by the forest guards, state police and ground-level forest workers (also known as M.R – Muster Rolls) belonging to Chakma, Mizo, and Reang tribes. In such operations, in 1996, a few villagers were caught while clearing forest for Jhum cultivation and a case was filed against them in the District Court. The court settled the case with some amount of money as a fine[240].

Eventually, the villagers could not carry out any activities in the Reserve, from cutting wood or bamboo to fishing and hunting, and to Jhum cultivation. According to the villagers of Silsury, though many of their communal lands were taken away in the 1990s by the reserve forest, they still had enough areas, though not abundant like before. So, they continue doing Jhum cultivation in their available communal land, but the Jhum cycle has reduced from 7-10 years to almost 3-5 years. They believe that this has impacted the fertility of the land and do not have enough production like before.

[240] Ibid.,

Taking away most of their communal land, and putting restrictions and strict rules and regulations in the reserve forest has also gradually impacted their livelihood and foods including meats, fish, etc. In the 1990s, and before, the rice or the ration supplies available were not used by the people except kerosene. People say that the families who must eat the rice supplied by the government indicate their poverty or inability to produce enough rice from their cultivation.

As time passes by and when they can no longer access the lands where they used to cultivate, the dependency on government-supplied food has increased and the demand for government schemes. Schemes like Indira Awaz Yojana (IAY) for housing, New Land Use Policy (NLUP) for planting commercial crops, Multi-Sector Development Schemes (MSDP), Border Areas Development Programme (BADP), and competition to get Below Poverty Line (BPL) ration card, are in huge demand among the people. Under the government schemes such as the IAY, an amount of 20 to 30 thousand rupees was given to construct a house, for NLUP an amount of rupees 30 to 50 thousand to cultivate market-based crops such as acre nuts, fisheries, etc., and the BPL cardholders can access rice for rupees 2 (two). However, not all the eligible people get it and only those who get selected by the village council members who represent the elected political party are available.

In 2005-06, when the line of core areas of Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) was extended to the Aviapui stream next to the village Silsury, problems started once again. With the boundary extension, more than 90% of village communal lands were taken away without any kind of accessibility to it. Villagers can neither access the riverbanks or valleys for any kind of agricultural activities, nor can-do fishing or hunting.

6.4 DTR Project and people

At present, in and around the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest, there are 20 (twenty) villages belonging to the three ‘indigenous peoples’, namely the Mizo, Chakma and the Reang. The Mizo means the people of hills or the highlanders and represents the Mizo language-speaking tribes. The Chakma and the Reang identify themselves as distinct from the Mizo tribes and do not speak the Mizo language. The Mizo tribe practices and follow the Christian religion, the Chakmas follow and practice Theravada Buddhism and the Reang who was known as a Hindu tribe, but many

people follow the Christian religion. However, most of the Reang tribes in and around are mostly Hindu by religion. Both Mizo and Reang use Roman script and the Chakmas have their own script.

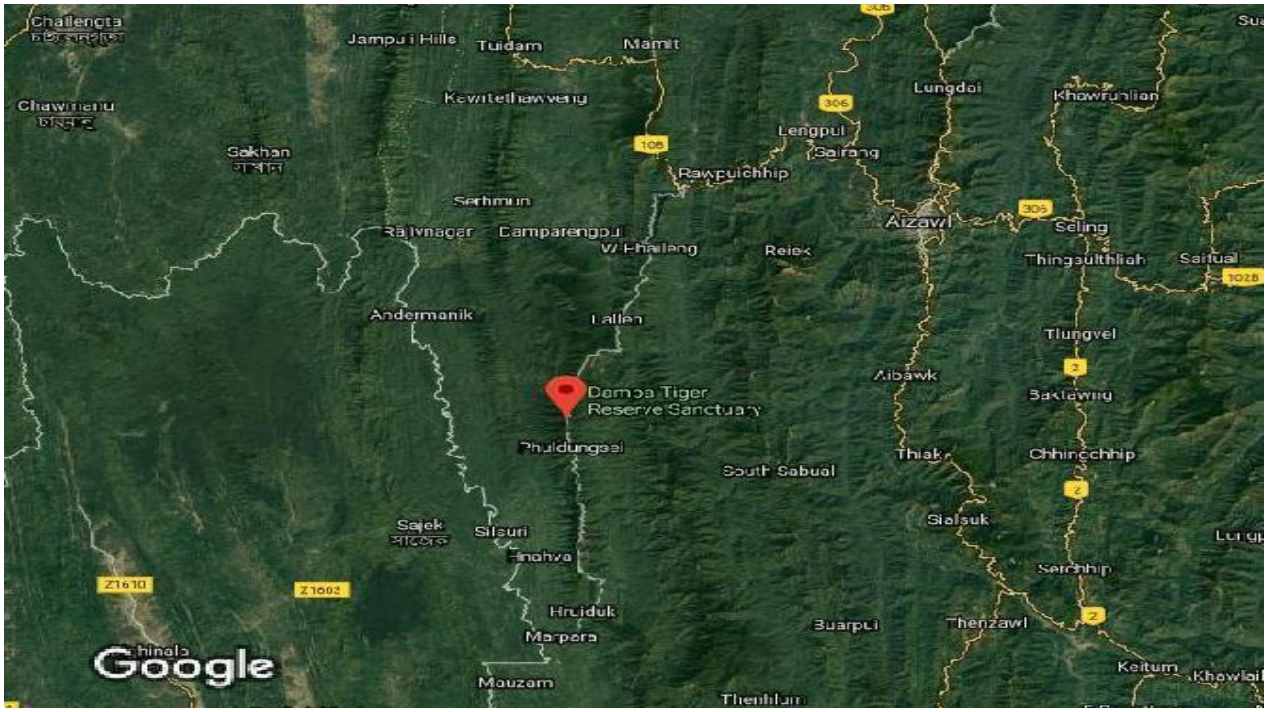
The twenty villages consist of 45,183 (forty-five thousand and one hundred and eighty-three) people with 8,742 (eight thousand seven hundred forty-two) households. All these villages fall under the Mamit district of the state. The following table is the detailed village wise populations.

Table No. 6: Villages and tribes in and around the DTR

S.No	Name of Village	Tribe	No. of Households	Population (2011 census)	Total	
				Male	Female	Total
1.	West Phaileng	Mizo	4303	11232	10077	21309
2.	Marpara – North	Chakma	447	1142	987	2129
3.	Hruiduk/ Hujurukbui	Chakma	212	514	468	982
4.	Dapchhuah	Reang and Mizo		596	551	1147
5.	Chhippui/Kawnmawi	Mizo	123	307	297	604
6.	Lallen	Mizo		444	416	860
7.	Saithah	Mizo	78	174	163	337
8.	Phuldungsei	Mizo	351	874	754	1628
9.	Phulpui	Reang	198	544	514	1058
10.	Silsuri	Chakma	670	1747	1602	3349
11.	Teirei	Reang	87	202	184	386
12.	Khawhnai	Mizo and Reang	81	230	187	417
13.	Damparengpui	Reang	402	1121	1035	2156
14.	Serhmun	Mizo	157	397	377	774
15.	Belkhai	Chakma	102	269	227	496

16.	Tuipuibari	Reang	408	1,080	912	1,992
17.	Rajivnagar	Chakma	708	1796	1734	3530
18.	Hnahva	Chakma	224	643	521	1,164
19.	Pukzing	Mizo	113	302	235	537
20.	Pukzing Vengthar	Mizo	78	169	159	328
21.	TOTAL		8,742	23,783	21,400	45,183

Map 5 Villages in and around the DTR



Sources: Tiger Conservation Plan: Dampa Tiger Reserve (2014) 2013-14 to 2022-23

6.5 DTR forest and its' discriminatory conservation practices

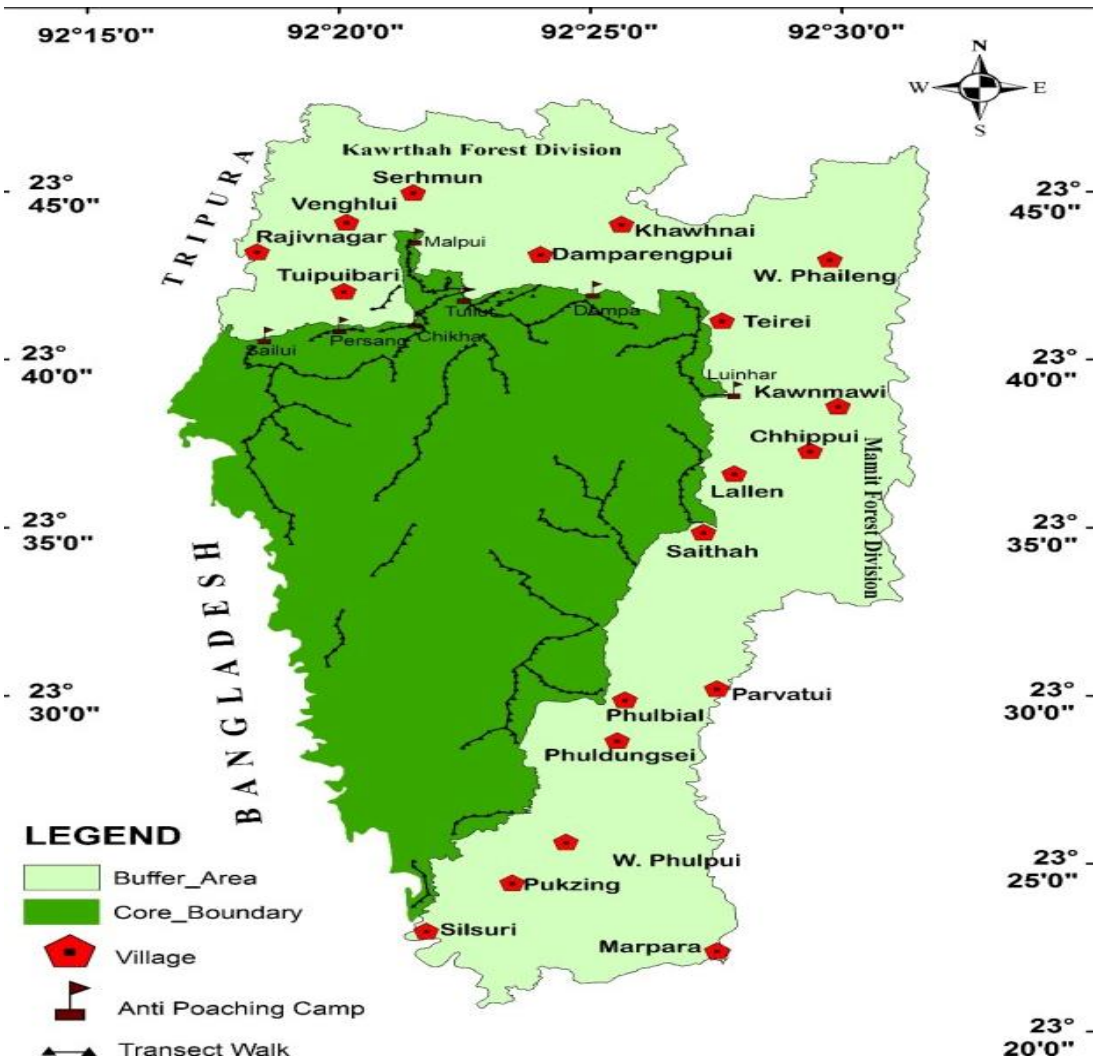
The total area of DTR is 988 km² of which, 500 km² is as Core or Critical Tiger Habitat and 488 km² as Buffer. The Core is an inviolate area where no human activities are allowed, including entering the forest. In the buffer areas, people can enter and engage with their livelihood activities, including Jhum cultivation. The severe impact of displacement and its' discriminatory practices can be well understood from the case of a village named Hnahva, whose inhabitants were displaced in 1989-90 from the Dampa Tiger Reserve from their village known as Keislam. After displacement, they settled in an area between the village Silsury and

Pukzin (a Mizo village). There were no objections from either village against their settlement and they were given or shared lands and started leading a normal life of doing cultivation and other livelihood activities. There were no conflicts concerning land and their agricultural activities. However, over time, they seemed to be a "village without land." They must ask permission from their neighbouring villages and pay money for doing any kind of agricultural activities.

At present, the villagers of Hnahva cannot claim their village area of their own as the neighbouring Mizo villagers (namely Pukzin) often claims the land of Hnahva belongs to them. According to the villagers of Hnahva, that they do not have legal documents either that show the land they settled after displacement from the DTR belongs to them. In 1989-90 in the times of displacement, the forest authority just directed them to settle in that area without any official recognition. It is believed that in those times, the authority just played a mediator role between these two neighbouring villages so that they could settle. According to the people in the village, today, whenever there are communal tensions between the Mizos and Chakmas, the Pukzin villagers threaten to displace them and claim that their village boundaries including the area on which they built houses belong to them (Mizos). The boundary issue has not been resolved despite several attempts to resolve it even after the interpretation of their state legislative representative (also known as Mizoram Legislative Assembly, or the MLA).

The following is the map showing the distinct areas of buffer and core areas of the DTR forest.

Map 6 Core and Buffer Areas of DTR



Sources: https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Status-and-Distribution-of-Malayan-Sun-Bear-in-Gouda-Chauhan/d4776a1cbd7188e419d93d2b8f9bcc39046cc1f0

During my fieldwork, I met Chakma families on the way to Aizawl who are doing Jhum cultivations in the Mizo villages after paying an amount of rupees 1,000/- (12.78 USD) to the Mizo families who own the lands under cultivation. The Chakmas communal lands are under 'core areas' of the DTR. They are not allowed to do Jhum. However, the Mizos communal lands which also comes under the conservation project of the DTR falls under the 'buffer areas' where Jhum cultivations are allowed. Therefore, many Chakma families go to the Mizo villages and ask them to allow Jhum cultivation in their areas. The Mizos agree to their request upon payment of a certain amount in cash but there is no fixed amount for any land. However, after the

season of the Jhum cultivation, they are not allowed to do any other activities and need to leave the place after collecting their agricultural produce.

I interviewed five such Jhum cultivators and asked why they are travelling so far away from their villages and doing Jhum cultivation in the Mizo villages. They responded that they have no more areas for Jhum cultivation, and their traditional areas are under DTR core areas where they are not allowed. Mr. Hiranand Chakma[241] said that "ah puttarow, Jhum sa ra ami he guriboung, gorib manuj, sorkare ama area gani gowdah reserve ba ne de, aamar hissu guribar nei. Hughi bei ow ne oh hobor paan, tarrar oh ama re sitpure senottyea tara amare Jhum guribattyea douun hom tengga loi. Aami Judi bes ja ji le ta ra nou lown." It translates as: "Oh son, what shall we do without Jhum cultivation. We are poor people. Our areas are under the reserve area (which means DTR). We are helpless. Our Mizo brothers understand our pain and suffering of landlessness due to the reserve forest, that is why they allow us to do Jhum cultivation in their areas with very less amount and even if we offer them more, they deny it."

Another interviewee named Hinedhan Chakma[242] stated that "Ami Jhum attyea piri tunduri guri guri ejir. Jhum golle amar gom la ge, Duk aagey hintu monor santi oh la ge jakke bouk maan dhan si je, muris, gossyea, sodoh, singpouk, heshomori, arou maas hanggara he pe boung." This translates as: "we had been doing Jhum cultivation for generations. There is an attachment with Jhum cultivations and of course, there are hardships and not an easy work to do but we feel happy and satisfied when we see the paddy that grows up to our neck, when we see insects[243] and when we get to eat fish, crabs, and river prawns."

According to the state government, in the buffer areas of Dampa, there are several old-growth natural forests and secondary forested areas that harbor significant biological diversity. This includes areas with bamboo and secondary forests regenerating after shifting cultivation, locally known as 'jhum' or 'lo' and is identified as Biologically Significant Areas (BSAs). The BSAs, harbor tigers, leopards, and

[241] Name changed.
[242] Name changed.
[243] Mostly eatables and looks beautiful and the one they mentioned, I do not know in English terms.

other wildlife such as Phayre's leaf monkey and western hoolock gibbon. Other primates reported from the buffer area include capped langur, Assamese macaque, Bengal slow loris and the rhesus macaque.

Two bear species viz., the Malayan sun bear and the Himalayan black bear are also reported along with other mammalian fauna such as hog badger, barking deer, wild boar, small Indian civet, porcupine, serow, sambar, Chinese pangolin, leopard cat, Malayan giant squirrel, red-bellied or Pallas's squirrel, Himalayan hoary-bellied squirrel, and binturong from the buffer areas. Monitor lizard, banded krait and monocellate cobra are a few reptilian species reported from these forests. A considerable number of bird species such as the peacock pheasant, jungle fowl, kalij pheasant, white wagtail, common kingfisher, crested honey buzzard, spot-bellied eagle owl, brown wood owl, jungle crow, blue-throated barbet, and coppersmith barbet etc. are found in these forests[244].

The government also recognized the buffer areas as having important cultural and mythological significance among Mizos and other tribes and thereby promoting their conservation. These buffer areas, also known as Supply Forest, provide the necessary timber and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) such as firewood, fish, crab, wild vegetables, bamboo shoots, medicinal plants, honey, cane, prawns, etc which help in reducing the dependency on the Core areas. In the buffer areas, there are also several rivers and stream beds, which provide suitable microhabitats for elements of biodiversity, particularly wildlife. It is also important from the agro-biological point of view as large numbers of crops that are unique to this agro-ecological zone are found[245].

The state has been against Jhum cultivation since the late 1980s until now, for example their decades old programme of New Land Use Policy (NLUP) with the mission to end Jhum cultivation. The fact is that, although it (state) wants to fully end jhum, it also acknowledges and accepts the fact that Jhum cultivation and human

[244] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017 by the Environment, Forests & Climate Change Department, Government of Mizoram, page 229.
[245] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017 by the Environment, Forests & Climate Change Department, Government of Mizoram, page 229 and 230.

habitation is important for conservation practices. Therefore, it allows Jhum cultivation and other livelihood activities in the buffer areas, but it is not for the Chakmas and the Reangs, who are denied permission. State-led conservation practices are thus discriminatory. Human settlement or their livelihood activities are not against conservation or the environment. The following part of the chapter illustrates the differences in the human settlement between the pre and post displacement.

6.6 Human settlement in and around DTR forest

My interviews with senior citizens from three villages such as Silsury, Hnahva, and Phuldungsei[246] revealed that on the valleys of river Sajek and presently, inside the DTR, there were 33 (thirty-three) Chakma villages on both sides of the river. One side is in India, and another is in Bangladesh. Most of these villages existed in the pre-displacement from the DTR and till the 1999 (especially in Bangladesh). On 2nd December 1999, a treaty known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts Treaty between the Bangladesh Government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS), a political group of the Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh that recognized the rights of the Indigenous peoples and ended violent conflicts between the Indigenous peoples and the Bangladesh state. As and when the CHT (Chittagong Hill Tracts) Treaty was signed between the PCJSS and Bangladesh government, the Chakma people of Bangladesh hoped that they will get back their land lost to the Kaptai Dam and there will be peace in the country. Therefore, the Chakmas who took refuge in different part of Bangladesh started leaving their places. In the process in 1999, the following villages from the Sajek river valley got abandoned. Though the exact figure or numbers of people are not known, the numbers of villages and with estimated households are as follows.

Table No. 7 Approximate villages and households in Sajek river of India and Bangladesh

Sl. No.	Name of villages in Indian side	Approximate household numbers	Name of villages in Bangladesh side	Approximate households' numbers

[246] Senior citizens of the village Silsury, Hnahva, and Phuldungsei.

1.	Hugisora	70	Singhui	45
2.	Ponsuri	60	Udulsury	70
3.	Andarmanek	90	Boalpeyea	90
4.	AjhaSora	40	Gondhasora	150
5.	Chotoloi	20	Pittisora	17
6.	Aamsury (now Rajivnagar)	150	Midingyesuri	30
7.	Borloi	30	Bagemor	90
8.	Kadamtulibaag	35	Rangapanisora	15
9.	Eadsuri	20	Chotohomolag	20
10.	GajhabasoraDor	25	Gaodomor	60
11.	SugonosuriDor	30	Uduipur	80
12.	Indram Sora Dor	40	Baja Adham	40
13.	Silsury Dor	15	Aamtola	15
14.	Silsury Bidor	20	Hingodor	25
15.	Ugodowsuri Dor	15	Boattola	20
16.	BasdobasoraDor	40	Tarabonyea	15
17.	LokhisuriBidor	35		

Table No. 7 suggests that despite populations on both sides of India and Bangladesh being dependent for their livelihood on DTR and the river Sajek playing the role of a lifeline for the citizens of both the nations, nature and people shared a harmonious relationship. However, there are other social changes and impacts due to displacement which shall be explored in this chapter. The process in the making of DTR into a wildlife reserve shows the treatment of the state against certain citizens. For instance, there are twenty villages with nearly 50,000 populations who belong to different tribal communities and the displaced group of people only belong to the Chakma and Reang communities who are ethnic minorities in the state of Mizoram.

The state-led policies towards land use and political economy have also impacted the environment. In the state of Mizoram, the policy towards land use pattern from Jhum cultivation to cash crops and settled agriculture, and to the way the forest is

considered or treated as a source of revenue generations for the state, clearly demonstrates its' negative impact on the environment and people. The forest department in the Mamit district alone generates annual revenue of more than rupees 30 lakhs (three million in pounds). This will be explored and discussed in the following parts of the chapter.

6.7 The state of DTR: Jhum cultivation, Land Use, and conservation

In and around the DTR forest, Jhum cultivation is a way of life and a source of livelihood. Indeed, the state allows people to do Jhum cultivation after recommendations from wildlife scientists, agro-ecologists, and social scientists who have conducted studies on the DTR. Raman (2000) notes that jhum cultivation usually involves the cutting of second-growth bamboo forests. Old-growth, mature, or primary forest is less extensively available in the buffer landscape, besides being more difficult to clear, so these are cultivated infrequently, if at all. The farmers begin clearing the bamboo forests to open their jhum fields normally in January- February. The slashed vegetation is then allowed to dry on the hill slopes for 1-2 months (Raman 2014a).

After the vegetation has dried, the farmers fire the fields in well-contained burns during March-April. Burning helps to open the fields, remove pests, and nourish the soil with ashes. A diversity of crops (15-25 species/varieties) is sown with the first rains in April in plots that are 1-4 ha in area. Usually, inter-cropping of one or more paddy varieties with 15-20 other crops (vegetables, maize, chillies, gourds, cotton, arum, and mustard) is carried out. As no chemical fertilisers or pesticides are used, the entire jhum system is a fully organic farming system.

In the Dampa landscape, Raman et al. 1998 and Raman (2001) studied vegetation recovery after jhum fields are rested. They found that rested fields rapidly regenerate bamboo forests, with over 10,000 bamboo culms per hectare in regenerating jhum forests within 5 years. Melocanna baccifera (Melocanna bambusoides) is the dominant bamboo in regeneration. Further succession includes pioneer trees such as Macaranga peltata, Trema orientalis, Callicarba arborea etc. The forest recovers rapidly in the density of cover and stature, although recovery of trees is slower

(Raman et al. 1998). After dense forests regenerate on the original site of cultivation, the farmers return to cut the bamboo once again for the next round of shifting cultivation, usually within six to ten years of recovery, which forms the 'jhum cycle' (Raman 2014b).

Daman Singh (1996)[247] notes that villagers choose to cultivate at 5 – 10-year cycles (average between 6.5 to 7.3 years) even when longer periods are possible. Jhum cycles may decline because of external pressures such as relocation and grouping of villages, or reduced land availability. Wildlife scientists, agro-ecologists, and social scientists have noted that it is a regenerative system of organic farming that provides a range of resources to local communities, while retaining a considerable area under dense forest cover in the larger landscape (Singh 1996, Raman 2001, Raman 2014b). The science and sustainability of Jhum in Mizoram is reviewed by Singh (1996) and Grogan et al. (2012). According to the latter: "... in contrast to many policymakers, shifting cultivation is now considered a highly ecologically and economically efficient agricultural practice provided that the fallow period is sufficiently long."

According to the 1991 census report, most of the population in the state – 61.37% are cultivators who are engaged in Jhum cultivation. The share of agriculture alone in the Net Domestic Product (NDP) is at 30% at current prices during 1998 – 99[248]. As per the government reports, agriculture is the mainstay of 60% of the population of Mizoram but only 5% of the total geographical area of the state is under cultivation and about 11% of the total cultivated area is under irrigation which is settled agriculture or not under Jhum cultivation[249]. As per the available records, over a certain period, it is observed that the total production of paddy from agriculture led by the Jhum cultivation has reduced over 1.14 lakh Million Tonnes (MT) in 2003-04 to 1.07 lakh MT during 2004-05 and 0.99 lakh MT 2005-06 to 0.42 lakh MT in 2006-07 to 0.15 lakh MT in 2007-08. The fall in production according to the government reports particularly in 2006-07 and 2007-08 is due to the extensive programme of

[247] In her book, The Last Frontier: People and Forests in Mizoram

[248] See, 'Agriculture' of the Government of Mizoram (GoM), "Comprehensive Project Proposals under New Land Use Policy (NLUP) for Sustained Livelihood Development and Uplift for the Poor of Mizoram," submitted by the GoM to the Planning Commission for Funding the Project), page 12, 3.7, chapter 1.

[249] Ibd: Para 2, page no. 13, chapter 1.

rodenticide, a process to kill rats either using chemical or other methods and consequently, about 14,55,568 nos. of rodent (rat) population was killed saving a portion of the produces in 2007-2008. Apart from the rodent population, during the flowering of bamboo other insects like tree bugs (Thangnang) multiply manifolds and cause extensive damage to crop[250].

The campaign by the state against the Jhum cultivation is indeed a trend that could be found in other parts of the world. For instance, Nathalievan et al., (2010) while reviewing and analysing Jhum cultivation worldwide, found that it decreases for two reasons. One is market-based state policies including cash cropping and the other is due to conservation projects. Even though access to markets may lead to an increase in household incomes, it negatively affects the social and human capital of local communities. It also results in permanent deforestation, loss of biodiversity, increased weed pressure, declines in soil fertility, and accelerated soil erosion. Padoch et al., (2007) highlight how Jhum cultivation throughout Southeast Asia is declining due to state policies and conservation policies (Nathalievan et al., 2010) to abandon it, as well as in South and Central America, Madagascar, and East Africa (Nathalievan et al., 2010).

Amy Ickowiz (2006) her studies of shifting cultivation in Tropical Africa concerning deforestation, she put forward that though there are no direct relations between the two yet there are tremendous interests and concerns among the international institutions about the consequences of shifting cultivation and internationally funded 'Alternative to Slash and Burn' programmes have been created since 1992. She further points out that “now there are nine international research centres and sixty-two national research institutes, universities and other government and non-government organizations devoted to the development of agroforestry-based forms of intensified land use as an alternative to slash and burn in the tropical regions of Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Congo Basin.” The dominant narrative not only affects the views of researchers, but it also has a clear and direct effect on policies and internationally funded research.

[250] Ibd: para 1, page no. 14, chapter 1.

In the state of Mizoram, the New Land Use Policy (NLUP) was introduced in 1985-1991 to end Jhum cultivation and to adopt permanent farming and market based non-farm activities. The NLUP has been continuing till now either with the same name or with a different name. For example, in 2002 it was renamed as Mizoram Intodelhna (Mizo's name) Programme (MIP) 2002 whereby 53,288 families from 228 villages were given financial assistance. Raman (2014) states that "The Mizoram State's NLUP deploys over Rs. 2,800 crores over five years "to put an end to wasteful shifting cultivation" and replaces it with "permanent and stable trades."

Under this policy, the State provides Rs.1,00,000 in a year directly to households, aiming to shift beneficiaries into alternative occupations like horticulture, livestock-rearing, or settled cultivation. The policy has created opportunities for families seeking to diversify or enhance their income. Still, NLUP's primary objective — to eradicate "wasteful" shifting cultivation — appears misdirected." He further notes that, "even before NLUP was implemented, despite decades of extensive shifting cultivation, over 90 per cent of Mizoram's land area was under forest cover, much of its bamboo forests resulting from jhum. Recent declines in forest cover have occurred at a period when the area under jhum cultivation is declining, while the area under settled cultivation is increasing, suggesting that the land use policy has been counterproductive to forests."

The following table about the area utilized for Jhum cultivation between 1997 to 2007 shows the decreased area under Jhum cultivation.

Table No. 8 The area utilized for Jhum Cultivation between 1997 to 2007[251].

Year	Area under Jhum in Ha (Hectare Area)
1997 – 1998	68,114
1998 – 1999	68,392
1999 – 2000	36,285
2000 – 2001	35,798
2001 – 2002	40,305

[251] Chapter 1, Government of Mizoram (GoM), New Land Use Policy (NLUP) proposal to Planning Commission of India.

2002 – 2003	41,356
2003 – 2004	43,447
2004 – 2005	40,969
2005 – 2006	40,100
2006 – 2007	41,465

Table No. 9 Village-wise cultivators of the Districts in Mizoram State[252]

Sl. No.	District	No. of Village	Total No. of Household	Total No. of Jhum Cultivator family	No. of Wet Rice Cultivators (WRC) families	Total No. of cultivator families	No. of families operating Jhum & WRC
1	Aizawl	165	60863	18378	453	18831	254
2	Champhai	104	21134	8368	2630	10998	-
3	Kolasib	36	16402	6201	1709	7910	492
4	Lawngtlai	166	20966	14031	546	14577	170
5	Lunglei	136	30097	14897	1139	16036	2376
6	Mamit	90	15370	8051	392	8443	109
7	Saiha	58	9494	4794	422	5216	78
8	Serchip	36	10528	5240	1568	6808	-
	Total	793	1,84,854	79,960	8859	88819	3,479

The above tables of numbers 8 and 9, show that people are taking up settled agriculture that requires clearing the forest permanently and levelling of soil. It also shows the number of Jhum cultivators has been decreasing over the years. However, table number 8, also inform an interesting phenomenon. For instance, there was a drastic change from 68,392-hectare areas in the year 1998-99 to 36,285 in 1999-2000. This is because of the increased amount of money to every household to abandon Jhum cultivation for the New Land Use Policy (NLUP). As per the NLUP Implementing Board (2009)[253], the Mizoram government under the rule of Congress

[252] Cited in the 2011 NLUP proposal, "Comprehensive Project Proposals under New Land Use Policy (NLUP) for Sustained Livelihood Development and Uplift for the Poor of Mizoram", to the Planning Commission of India by Government of India, chapter 6, page no. 35.

[253] New Land Use Policy Manual 2009. Aizawl: NLUP Implementing Board, Government of Mizoram. p.5.

party, have increased to Rupees 30,000 (376 USD) in the year 1998/98 from Rupees 3,000 (37 USD) which was to be in 1984/85. However, it has also increased to 40,305-hectare areas in 2001-2002 with a slight decrease in the previous year. From then, till 2006-2007, the Jhum cultivation areas remained static. This data simply reveals the refusal of the people to abandon Jhum cultivation despite the continued efforts of the states for more than two decades. At the same time, based on the recommendations by the biological ecologists led by S. Raman (1998) to allow Jhum cultivation for conservation, the state too, did not want to eradicate it, which can be clearly seen by the fact of allowing Jhum cultivation in the buffer areas of the DTR.

However, apart from settled agriculture, the state is also encouraging people towards market-oriented agricultural activities such as palm oil and teak plantations which led to deforestation and land degradation. Palm oil and teak plantations permanently convert forest areas (tens to hundreds of hectares) (Aratrakorn et al. 2006, Saikia 2011, Jambari et al. 2012). For example, in the year 2013-14, the Mizoram government has identified 1,01,000 hectares for oil palm cultivation and over 17,500 hectares were already permanently deforested[254]. Raman (2014) made an interesting observation that due to the decline in forest cover and bamboo, people in the village started buying bamboo which was once freely and abundantly available.

6.8 DTR: Conservation and forest use

In the background of the changing land use pattern and a campaign against Jhum cultivation in Mizoram, and to understand what kind of livelihood activities people are practising in and around the Dampa Tiger Reserve, four case studies[255] of four households were done in two different villages namely Silsury, a Chakma village and Phuldungsei, a Mizo village. Both cases 1 and 2 are in the village of Silsury and cases 2, and 3 are in the village of Phuldungsei.

Case – 1

Silsury is one of the villages in the DTR which are left with little village areas for cultivation but do not have any communal lands for shifting cultivation as their land is under the core area of the DTR.

[254] T R Raman, 2014, Mizoram: bamboozled by land use policy, The Hindu, May 14.
[255] Interviews were done on 10th, 28th, and 29th of June 2018.

Ullusury[256] Chakma is a cultivator by profession of 38 years old with a family of six. In the last winter between December 2017 till March 2018, he and his family members are doing vegetable gardening on three acres of land for the first time on the river Sajek valley bordering India and Bangladesh after paying Rupees 2,000/- (two thousand) to the office of the Dampa Tiger Reserve Forest in West Phaileng. Like him, there is also another cultivator who did cultivation in the valleys of the Sajek river. In his garden, he cultivated radish, mustard plant, beans, tomatoes, cabbage, maize, brinjals, cauliflower, peas, gourds, and pumpkins. According to him, the season for such cultivation is from November to March. In his case, he started doing cultivation from December to March.

He earned an income of around 30,000 (383 USD) rupees. If he works as a daily labour worker, he may get INR 300 to 350 per day (3.83 to 4.47$). According to him, the income would have been much more if he could have started in November. However, he is thankful to the forest department for such an opportunity. He stated that the land is very fertile, and it is in the river valley which makes cultivation much easier, which is not the case in other hilly areas or lands. And there are other benefits of cultivation on the river valleys such as catching tadpoles, river prawns, fish, and crabs with "Dhub," a traditional method of trapping made with Bamboos. He also often catches fish with fishing nets. However, he has not sold any of his catch from the river and it was consumed by the family.

According to him, without consuming them, if they sold in the market, they might have earned an amount of Rupees 5,000/- but this year they did not have to buy any fish and so on unlike other people in the village. His family's other source of income is Broom cultivation, also known as broomstick or broom grass, which was never a source before 2000. He believes that once people were not allowed to do any kind of activities in and around the DTR including Jhum cultivation, people were forced to cultivate an area of land repeatedly without maintaining any cycle or gap for cultivation. This has affected the forest or that area where bamboo or trees can no longer grow and instead broomstick plants have started growing.

[256] Name changed.

Presently, he has three acres of land for broom cultivation, where he expects to earn at least 20,000/- rupees. Their other source of income for livelihood is the National Rural Employment Schemes and daily labour (though not daily but occasionally) in the international border fencing works which is a central government initiative to fence the Indian border with Bangladesh.

Case – 2

Ugudomoh Chakma[257] is 45 years old and a Jhum cultivator with a family of 8 (eight). He has four children, his wife and his parents in the family living together in the same household. He has four acres of land for broom cultivation from where his family earns between Rupees 30,000 to 40,000 (383 to 511 USD) per annum. In the month between June to September, he goes inside the DTR to collect roots of sigon saag in Chakma, Anchiri in Mizo, and the scientific name is homalomena aromatic schoot, which is a plant that grows in the forest, especially in the DTR. According to him, it is illegal and if caught by the forest department of DTR, he will have to pay a heavy fine. He says that earlier this plant was in the daily diets of people as a curry, and they never knew that the roots of the plant are so expensive. One kilogram of dry roots of this plant is from a range of 100 to 150 rupees and according to him, if he works for a month then he can sell between 150 to 200 kilograms. He says that although it is considered illegal because of the DTR, it is available in other areas which are not under the reserve forest. He stated that "the DTR has taken away all of their community lands where they used to cultivate, and he cannot go and collect from the Mizo areas where it is available as it is their land, and therefore, we are compelled to do it even if it is illegal."

To the question of NLUP, he said that he only got assistance twice, one in 2004 in the form of 150 baby areca nut plants and another time in 2012 when he got rupees 10,000 in cash, after which he never got again and not everyone gets it because it became a political tool to win elections in the village. In every state legislative election, the political parties contesting elections promise the people to provide the NLUP, if they are elected. The interviewee says that if you are close to the village council members or president, or if one of your close relatives is in the village council

[257] Anonymous name used as requested by the interviewee for his safety and security.

then only one has the chance of getting NLUP. Since he is neither close with any of them nor has any relatives in the council, he never hopes of getting NLUP. When he got areca nut plants in 2004, it was in September and he planted them, but they could not grow. According to him, if the government gave him these saplings in June or July, then the plants would have survived because that is the ideal time for planting when there is rainfall, which is not the case from September and onwards. Like Ullusury Chakma, he also gets money from the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and when there are opportunities, he works as a daily-wage labourer in the international border fencing project.

Case – 3

The village Phuldungsei shares both buffer and core areas of the DTR. On the west side of the village are the core areas but with a revenue pass[258], they can do cultivation; however, only two families have a revenue pass. And on the east side of the village are the buffer areas of the DTR where they can do Jhum cultivation. The revenue pass indicates that the land legally belongs to him/her which no one can claim and against which the owners' pay taxes to the state government. According to the interviewees, before the DTR forest demarcating their communal areas under the core areas, only two families applied and had a revenue pass. The other members of the village did not care about having revenue pass and did not even consider it necessary. Indeed, the notion of land pass was new to them and non-existent in earlier times.

Vanlalruata[259] 45 years old from this village, was doing Jhum cultivation on 3 hectares of land and had a fishery. He has six members in his family with four children. The first two children study in Aizawl city and the other two go to the village school. He has done Jhum cultivation since he started working in his father's Jhum field. At present, he also has a horticulture garden in the village area where he grows oranges, mangoes, jackfruits, and areca nuts on three acres of land. He also does oil palm cultivation on 3 acres of land which also gives him a good income. According to him, he does Jhum cultivation because it is cultivation that they have been doing for generations and he feels good when he is in the Jhum field.

[258] Based on interviews with cultivators namely H. Vanlalruate and Vanlalruaia of the Phuldungsei village on 28th and 29th June 2018.
[259] Name changed.

His average paddy production from the Jhum field is around 250 tin which according to him is enough for their family for a year. The production is negatively affected by birds, insects, parrots, squirrels, rats, wild boars, and other wild animals, who eat in the paddy field. Besides the production of paddy, he also grows fruits and vegetables in the Jhum fields from where he gets in between 30,000 (383 USD) to 40,000 (500 USD) rupees. According to him, he does not need to do broomstick cultivation as available broomstick in their village areas is not enough for supplying to market and is only used for domestic use. Like any other village, he also gets NLUP, NREGS, ration from the public distribution system and therefore, he does not care much about doing other activities like hunting, collection of anchiri, broomstick, and other such livelihood activities. He says that they need to work hard in their orange garden as if it is not taken care of or given required attention, then the oranges get spoiled by insects.

Case – 4

Vanlalhruia[260], is 55 years old with a family of five with his wife, son and daughter in law and a grandson. He said that from the year 30 onwards he stopped doing Jhum cultivation as under the NLUP scheme he now has 3 hectares of settled wet rice cultivation (WRC). He produces rice and vegetables from the field and uses them for domestic consumption. However, he sells vegetables and fruits that he produces due to the large quantity of surplus production in the field. He also has a red oil palm garden on 10 hectares of land from where he gets an income between two to two and a half lakhs (200,000 to 250,000) rupees (2555 to 3194 USD) in three to four years. He says that every three to four years when the palm seeds are ready, companies from outside come and collect them from his field. He also has one rice crushing machine which is a reliable source of income for his family as people must dehusk their paddy into rice. He says that the DTR is good for wildlife but not for the people as they cannot cultivate any land that they consider good for production. He does not oppose the DTR project in principle but there are people in the village who do not like it because on one side is the core zone where once they used to do Jhum cultivation.

[260] Name changed.

These four cases of two different villages reveal the conditions of people from two different communities I.e., the Mizos and the Chakmas who are living in and around the DTR. At the same time, one thing is noticeably clear: all of them produce or engage in market-based livelihood activities. The case studies in the Chakma areas inform that they are being compelled to do so as they have no other alternatives. The cases of the Mizos show that they are going with market-based economic activities because of the state policies that encourage them.

The next part of the chapter shall further explore and analyse how the state policies towards forests and their resources viz-a-viz, the conservation project - DTR and market are changing the livelihood practices of the people. It shall explore the sources of revenue generated from the resources by the Department of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change of the Mizoram government. As per the annual reports published in 2018 by the department of environment, forest, and climate change, the main source of revenue in the state of Mizoram are broomstick, anchiri, cane, sawn timber, and other non-timber forest products (NTFP).

According to the Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Mizoram earns revenue from the broomstick business through Mahal and by a permit system. Based on the records, the department has earned the following revenues from the year 2012 to 2017.

Table No. 10 Revenues from broomsticks[261]

Sl. No.	Year	Revenue Earned (Indian Rupees)
1.	2012 – 2013	20,94,565.00 (26766 $)[262]
2.	2013 – 2014	16,57,171.00 (21177 $)
3.	2014 – 2015	18,93,732.00 (24200 $)
4.	2015 – 2016	73,66,885.00 (94142 $)
5.	2016 – 2017	22,18,243.00 (28347 $)
Total		1,52,30,596.00 (194634 $)

[261] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017, page 149.
[262] The conversion rate is Indian Rupees (INR) 78.25 per US dollar.

The figure is based on the prices and supply outside the state as per the new land Use Policy (NLUP) @ Rs 1/kg and @ Rs 7/kg for non NLUP broomstick.

The next revenue listed is the anchiri which is also a forest product.

Table No. 11 Revenue for Anchiri (Homalomenaaromaticus)[263]

Sl. No.	Year	Permit/Seized	Quantity (In Quintals)	Revenue Earned (Indian Rupees)
1.	2014 – 15	Seized	16,717	9,79,854.00 (12521 $)[264]
2.	2015 – 2016	Permit	1,132	17,40,800.00 (22245 $)
		Seized	1,571	11,11,228.00 (14200 $)
3.	2016 – 2017	Permit	283	4,33,070.00 (5534 $)
		Seized	358	5,49,701.00 (7024 $)
Total				48,14,653.00 (61527 $)

Cane[265]

The Revenue obtained from Cane during 2016 – 17 was rupees 2454 with a quantity of 24729 (unit in Rm).

Sawn Timber[266]

From 2015 – 2016 to 2016 – 2017, the department received revenue from Sawn Timber sales (In INR) 1, 03, 40,812.

Wood Products

Table No. 12 Revenue from the wood products[267]

Sl. No.	Items	Unit	Quantity	Amount (In INR)
1.	Sawn Timber	Cum (Cubic meter)	322	1046215 (13369 $)

[263] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017, page 149.
[264] The conversion rate is Indian Rupees (INR) 78.25 per US dollar.
[265] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017, page 150.
[266] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017, page 157.
[267] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017, page 160.

2.	Firewood	Cum	2164	127648 (1631 $)
3.	Poles	Nos	4191	8382 (107 $)
4.	Hardwood/Roundwood	Nos	28	91750 (1172 $)
5.	Charcoal	Cum	376	7133 (91 $)
6.	Timber Transportation Fee	Length in sizes (LS)	-	-
7.	Administration Fee on Private Teaks	Numbers	8418	375028 (4792 $)
	Others	LS	-	
Total				1656156 (21164 $)

Table No. 13 Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) with Permit[268]

Sl. No.	Items	Unit	Quantity	Amount (In INR)
1.	Bamboo	Nos (Numbers)	962342	1497132 (19132 $)
2.	Boulder	Cum (Cubic meter)	1025	61500 (785 $)
3.	Stone	Cum	52289	817390 (10445 $)
4.	Sand Permit	Cum	22075	980473 (12529 $)
5.	Cane	Rm	24729	2454 (31 $)
6.	Gravel	Cum	2221	41900 (535 $)
7.	Broomstick	Quintals (Qtls)	118852	2218243 (28347 $)
8.	Anchiri (Auction etc.)	Qtls	283	433070 (5534 $)
9.	Others	Length in sizes (LS)	-	612164 (7822 $)
Total				6664326 (85164 $)

Table No 14. Revenue from the seizure of illegal forest Produce[269]

Sl.	Items	Unit	Quantity	Amount (In INR)

[268] Ibid.,
[269] Ibid.,

No.				
1.	Round Timber/Hardwood	Cum (Cubic Meter)	17256	69170 (883 $)
2.	Sawn Timber	Cum	27992	5583411 (71351 $)
3.	Firewood	Cum	1307	178186 (2277 $)
4.	Poles	Nos	1078	15288 (195 $)
5.	Charcoal	Cum	44994	241978 (3092 $)
6.	Bamboo	Nos	128708	693388 (8860 $)
7.	Sand Permit	Cum	2528	106131 (1356 $)
8.	Boulder	Cum	9078	544269 (6955 $)
9.	Broomstick	Qtls	419	288695 (3689 $)
10.	Anchiri	Qtls	358	549701 (7024 $)
11.	Auction Sale of Teak log/ST etc	Length in sizes (LS)	-	6576297 (84039 $)
12.	Others	LS	-	2223635 (28416 $)
Total				17070149 (218141 $)

These are the reports on the state of Mizoram. Specific to the DTR which is in the Mamit district of Mizoram, the revenue receipts in Mamit Division are as follows.

Table No. 15 Wood Products[270]

Sl. No.	Items	Unit	Quantity	Amount (In INR)
1.	Sawn Timber	Cum (cubic meter)	9	105350 (1346 $)
2.	Firewood	Cum	210	12470 (159 $)
3.	Poles etc.	LS (length in sizes)	4191	8382 (107 $)
4.	Admin, Fee on private teak	Nos (Numbers)	85	1750 (22 $)

[270] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017, page 161.

Total	127952 (1635 $)

Table No. 16 Non-Timber Forest Products (N.T.F.P), Permit system[271]

Sl. No.	Items	Unit	Quantity	Amount (In INR)
1.	Bamboo	Nos (Numbers)	307203	475330 (6074 $)
2.	Boulder	Cum (Cubic Meter)	1000	60000 (766 $)
3.	Stone	Cum	204	11480 (146 $)
4.	Sand	Cum	651	29270 (374 $)
5.	Gravel	Cum	243	9700 (123$)
6.	Broomstick	Qtls (Quintals)[272]	4784	551120 (7042 $)
7.	Anchiri (Auction etc.)	Qtls	236	279820 (3575 $)
Total				1416720 (18104 $)

Table No. 17 Illegal seizures of forest produce[273].

Sl. No.	Items	Unit	Quantity	Amount (In INR)
1.	Sawn Timber	Cum (Cubic Meter)	1618	948585 (12122 $)
2.	Firewood	Cum	121	21970 (280 $)
3.	Sand	Cum	18	1040 (13 $)
4.	Auction Sales Teak Logs Sawn Timber	LS (length in sizes)	-	682000 (8715 $)
Total				1653595 (21131 $

[271] Ibid.,
[272] 1 quintal = 100 kg
[273] Ibid.,

Table No. 18 Others (Rents, Fees, Etc)[274]

Sl. No.	Others	Unit	Quantity	Amount
1.	Rents of FRH/License Fee	L.S (length in sizes)	-	23510 (300 $)
2.	Others	LS		157044 (2006 $)
Total				180554 (2307 $)

As per the above figures and records of the Mizoram Government (201-017) the Mamit district alone, the forest department generated annual revenue of rupees 3378821 (thirty lakhs seventy-eight thousand and twenty-one/ three million three hundred and seventy-eight thousand eight hundred and twenty-one). The sources of revenue collection by the forest department of Mizoram itself show the state policy towards the environment. Activities like anchiri, broomstick, sand, and stones will impact the environment. It is interesting to note that the state also earns from the so-called illegal activities of selling forest products. Though the state supports such activities legally, few, especially the poor, can afford such legal processes. Therefore, for the poor it is illegal and for the people who can afford it through the Mahal system which is secured through guarantees of thousands of rupees is legal. The Mahal system is a tendering process where the government invites bids from the state and outside. The winners are given rights to buy forest products from their respective places for which they win the bid.

The people in the village of Silsury are dependent on the DTR forest even for constructing houses as there is no bamboo available in their small village area. Thus, by restricting peoples' activities and declaring their areas into a core area, the DTR has created more human-animal and human-nature conflicts. In the case of Study number 2 above, the respondent clearly stated that they have no choice of selling anchiri or any such forest products without taking risk of legal consequences by extracting from the DTR forest. This created human-animal, and human-nature conflict because of the DTR project and its impact on the environment and wildlife, we shall discuss it in the following part of the chapter.

[274] Annual Administrative Report 2016 – 2017, page 162.

6.9 DTR: Conservation, hunting, and fishing

In the pre-displacement times, the use of resources was regulated by the socio-cultural practices of the people. It maintained a symbiotic and sustained human-nature relationships and checked against exploiting nature. For example, tigers play a significant role in preserving or maintaining traditional customs or rules that define their relationship or interaction with nature. It is a belief among the Chakmas that one cannot use dominating languages against both domestic and wild animals. For example, it is feared that the tiger will come and attack anyone who spells the word "erehtiti" (the word in use while ploughing the fields with bulls) against any other animals. It is also a belief that one cannot even play with dogs (here playing means disrespecting or making the dog uncomfortable), frogs, and other animals or insects. If they do any such things, then it is a belief that either the tigers will follow them and attack; or there will be lightning and thunderstorms even without rain.

The fears of wild animals are not limited to tigers or other ferocious wild animals but also to other wild animals such as monkeys. It is believed that if people hunt or steal the baby monkey then the monkey takes revenge either by attacking the hunter/stealer or stealing the human's baby. It is believed that if people hunt or steal the baby monkey, it takes revenge by attacking the hunter/ stealing the human's baby. Then they will follow or even attack the hunter or stealer till they get their babies back. There were even stories of monkeys stealing human children from their house when the parents went to work in the Jhum field far from the house.

These kinds of beliefs and its' subsequent social norms and practices regulate people's behaviour against any mistreatment of nature. It also demonstrates their ethics and treating wildlife and nature as equal to the human rather than human dominion or superiority over nature. This section of the chapter will discuss the impact of conservation projects and its' displacement on such traditional practices. It shall analyse on two parts such as pre-displacement and post-displacement from the conservation project of the DTR. In the thesis, there had been elaborative discussion and analysis on socio-cultural practices that illustrates the conservation ethics of people and their relationship with nature. Therefore, this section will focus on hunting and fishing that further illustrates how twin victimizations of both human and wildlife are taking place because of the DTR. It also shows the forceful social change and

livelihood practices of the people because of the livelihood crisis created by the conservation project.

6.9.1 Hunting and fishing practices in the times of pre-displacement from the DTR

When the parents go to work on the field by leaving their children at home or even in their absence, the children are always advised against doing any act that goes against nature. In those times, the animals neither feared the people nor were the people scared of them as there were certain principles or rules and mutual respect that regulate their interaction or relationships. There were customs and cultures of sharing for hunting and fishing. For example, if anyone hunts a wild boar, every family or household gets a share of the hunt and if possible, a minimum of one kilogram as household shares even if they are not part of the hunt or aware of the hunting. The shares (in terms of weights) depend on the size and weights of the hunt. The hunter gets one thigh and the head, his assistant (Goldhar) gets one part of the shoulder, and the rest of the part of the hunt is distributed among the neighbors of the whole area where Jhum is cultivated. The hunt cannot be brought home, and it must be cut into pieces and distributed among the people. If the hunt is brought home without distribution among people, then it is believed that the wild animals' dead body also brings bad omen to the family including death. The social norms on hunting deny anyone to hunt more than two deer in a month, but still at that time too, some people did not maintain those rules.

It is believed that people who did not maintain such rules are to face negative consequences such as the deaths of family members or themselves. Hence such rule-breakers were fewer because of the fear as it is believed that even the wild animals have an owner and excessive hunting will make their owner angry. They narrate that there was a hunter in the village who lost all his children, and it is believed that it was due to excessive hunting. Before going to hunt, the hunters conduct "montrou" (a kind of spiritual chanting whereby they pray or take permission from the owners of the wild animals) so that the owners of the wild animals are not angry with them. It is said that without chanting or taking permission, if someone hunts then the wildlife spirit or God will come home along with them who bring bad omen to the family. They also

do “huuj boun,” meaning they do montrou so that in their absence the wild spirit cannot come to their home. However, if they do excessive hunting, no montrou will help them as the spirit of the wildlife will not tolerate it.

These kinds of rules and practices are also applicable to the river species. For example, there is a person in the village who lost his right hand, it is believed, due to his excessive fishing. Another such story is, there was a person, namely Uju Kumar Chakma[275] in the Silsury village who first lost his right hand to incurable disease and then eventually had a painful death at the age of between 55 to 60 years old due to excessive fishing. It is said that he knew every trick of catching fish and if he could not catch fish then no one would. He was an expert, but he took undue pleasure out of it and did fishing unnecessarily and excessively.

There were incidents and stories of people dying or bringing death to the family due to excessive cutting down of trees. It is believed that even the trees, bamboos and other plants too have an owner or spirits who guards them. If someone cuts down excessive trees, then the owner gets angry and punishes them. For example, the father-in-law of Surjo Chakma[276] died because a tree fell on him as he did the excessive cutting of trees in his life. It is believed that the towering trees are also the home of the ghost and if someone cut those towering trees then the ghosts will come to his/her home because he/she has destroyed their home. When the ghosts come and stay in someone’s house then it will not be good for the family. Even if the ghosts do not come to their house to stay, then they will do something against him/her or their family members.

For example, in Gullusury village[277], a person cut down a big banyan tree and he enchanted montrou to protect his house and family. Even though his family members were safe from the ghosts, he did suffer and faced consequences. However, in the evening times when he used to see people on the riverbank who asked his help to

[275] Name changed.

[276] Name not changed because of two reasons. First, it came out of focus group discussions with the elderly people in the village Sislury and who verbally given consent to use the name, and secondly, it is not a topic or incident that may invite troubles for them. According to them the story is based on a true incident.

[277] The village name is fictitious as the exact place of origin of the story is not confirmed.

cross the river. He ended up crossing the river from one side to another with a wooden boat for one full night. According to him, the number of people that he needed to help was too many which is why it required the whole night. However, people do not believe his claim and belief that it was the result or consequence of cutting down the banyan tree. It is said that without reason or greed, no one can harm the forest or cut down plants and trees. There are situations when one can cut down trees or plants but only when they are in dire need and after seeking permission from the spirits of the forests. For example, when someone is ill, and the patient needs certain medicinal plants, then either the family members or the local traditional doctor must visit the forest and inform the patient and the reasons to cut those specific medicinal plants. It is also believed that if one takes the medicinal plant in a proper way as mentioned, then the spirits of the forest blessed the patient too and recovered quickly.

6.9.2 Hunting and fishing after displacement from the DTR

When it comes to fishing and hunting, people do not follow any such traditional norms and values. The displacement has made the displaced suffer miserable in terms of food, meat, fish, money, and so on that they cannot afford to follow those social norms and values while fishing and hunting. For instance, before displacement from the DTR, fish was available at anytime and anywhere. It was not a commodity to be sold in the local market and even if it was sold, the prices were so low that there were no profits. There were people who needed to sell fish or meat when the family was in extreme difficulties or in great trouble. For example, when they have exhausted all their resources due to suffering from diseases or long-term illness among the family members. At the same time, others too, buy from them as they understand the difficulties that the family was undergoing.

The displacement led to an unimaginable demand and cost of fish and meat. Earlier, the price of one whole local chicken was at a maximum of one hundred to one hundred and fifty rupees. The buyers were mostly the Border Security Forces (BSF) who got posted in the border areas of Mizoram. At present one kilogram of poultry chicken costs five hundred rupees and during the covid-19[278], it was nearly 1000 (one

[278] Even though I completed my fieldwork, I remain in touch via social media such as Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, and telephonic conversations with the people in the villages to keep myself informed.

thousand) while the price of local 'country' chicken is above one thousand and indeed they are not available like before. In tea stalls, shops, and among the family members, whoever I interacted with, says that since the poultry chicken started flowing in the village, the local chicken started suffering from disease and dying. Earlier this has never happened, and people believe that the poultry chicken brings diseases that are alien to the local 'country' chicken, and they are incapable of coping with such diseases which is why they die. In the times of pre-displacement, the local chicken, duck, and other domestic animals were healthy and free from diseases and with rich sources of food like insects on the Jhum fields or house areas and fish in the river or streams. Today, there were hardly any families without chickens, ducks, or other domestic animals. At present, there are only a few families who have chicken and can sell it. The displacement has resulted in the crisis of meat in domestic and wild animals.

In the village, during the weekly market, people used to tell me and even discuss among themselves in the tea stall that the taste of poultry chicken and fish from the ponds which comes from the city has no comparison to the taste of local chicken and fish. However, they do not have an option to choose. This only further deepened the crisis and increased demands for fish and meat from the forest. Earlier, there was no concept of selling and earning money but at present, it is becoming a source of livelihood and survival which has resulted in systematic so-called illegal hunting and selling. Selling or exchanging meats or fish were not part of the goods available in the village's weekly market, it was only salt, soap, oil, clothes, and other non-agriculture products which came from towns or outside. However, after displacement, the meat and fish from the forest became the most demanded goods in the villages. The displacement has drastically and dramatically changed peoples' lives.

The following are the sequences or stories about when and how things started changing. The Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary was first declared in 1976 but people did not know about it till they had conflicts with the officials or the forest worker. According to the former forest guards or workers in the forest department, the 1990s were the most critical times for them. In the 1990s, the forest department started imposing laws against hunting which they need to implement on the ground. In those times, people had laws against hunting, and such were unknown to them. When the

forest guards or workers of the forest department had to restrict or catch people who did the hunting, it was a shock for the people. Therefore, it was the most challenging time for the people working in the forest department. According to them, people wanted to continue their socio-economic and cultural lifeworld as before which the forest department did not allow by declaring it as a wildlife sanctuary and by displacing them[279].

The land available for Jhum cultivation was too little to produce food even for 6 months. They believe that Jhumming or Jhum cultivation is part of their culture, and they must do so in whatever available lands they have. They can no longer maintain any Jhum cycle and must use chemical fertilizers available in town for more productivity. They say that within five years, their land became grassland. Bamboo and trees can no longer be found like before. They have run out of livelihood activities and started doing broom cultivation. As the land turned into grassland, the availability of brooms became abundant, and it became the only source of income for the family.

However, the process of forest turning into grassland resulted in water crisis as the water of the river streams are drying up due to the lack of bamboo and trees. Hence, water became an issue which often results in fights among the villagers. The months of May and June are the driest months when the water crisis is at its peak. These two months became the hardest times of the year because of the water crisis and suffering from diseases.

As the situation changes because of the displacement, the prices of rice and other basic consumer goods have increased. The demands for fish and meats have increased, and prices for wild meats can go up from nowhere to rupees 600 to 700 a kilogram (Kg). The meats and fish are solely consumed or sold at the local levels and often supplied to the local village restaurants. In an interview with an illegal hunter, namely Arun Chakma[280], a former Jhum cultivator but no more cultivating because of lack of

[279] In the following content, all the names of persons and places are changed, in the serious cases, dates, month and village or places are withdrawn, and the exact years are not provided for the safety and security of the interviewees.

[280] The interview was taken on the 10th of February 2018 and his name, and his personal information are fictitious except his age which is 38 years, married with five children.

agricultural land as the DTR, has taken their communal land. He recollects that he had been to prison a couple of times including to central prison in Aizawl for cases of illegal hunting. He says that he was caught many times by the forest guards and was also beaten black and blue, but he is forced to do illegal hunting for his family and children. And he does not mind getting caught again as he has no option left for his livelihood and sending his children to school. He does seasonal work like selling forest brooms and has two acres of land where he does broom cultivation. His four children (two boys and two girls) go to government primary and middle schools. The eldest child is a girl, and she works at home helping her mother. She is 21 years old and according to him, she might get married any time as soon as she reaches the marriageable age. She studied until class three in the village government primary school. The younger one after her is a 19-year-old boy studying in class 7 (seven) in the village government Middle School. The third child is a girl aged 15 years and studying in class 6 (six) in Primary school. The youngest one (boy) is 7 years old and studying in class 1 (one) in Primary. He lost a two-girl child to Malaria.

His source of livelihood is income from the National Rural Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), rations (especially rice) from the government; often, he works as a daily wage labourer in the road construction of the international border fencing project and working in another garden as labour. According to him these livelihood sources are not available all the time and are not either stable or sufficient to feed the family members and provide education for the children. Therefore, whenever he is in crisis, especially when his family members fall ill and he needs money for medicines and medical facilities, he goes hunting especially wild boar, buck deer, and deer. He had been hunting for the last six to seven years. He often was caught in the DTR when he was hunting but escaped because he is a member of a local hunting gang and the forest authority, or the forest guards fear their gang.

According to Arun (my interviewee), there are at least ten such gangs involved in so-called ‘illegal hunting’ in the DTR. He narrated a story of conflicts between them and the forest guards. The story is about when they went inside the DTR to hunt, they encountered the forest guards who took away the meat of their hunted buck deer. It was when after hunting a buck deer, they left their shelter to hunt a porcupine. Upon arrival back, they found all their meat missing. They immediately suspected the forest

guards by studying the shape and numbers of the footmarks of the shoes. Soon they started following those footmarks and finally saw seven forest guards who were taking their stag meat. After tracing them for a few kilometers, they found and encircled them and warned them to return the meat or else face death. Their gang consisted of ten members at that time. Initially, the forest guards tried to escape but were not able to do so. In the end, the forest guards agreed to return the meat and dry the meat of the porcupine after which they were released. However, upon returning from the forest, the forest guards reported it to the police. Soon, they came to know about it, they visited their home at midnight clandestinely and warned them to withdraw the police FIR or else they would shoot them and their family members. For a few days, the forest guards could not sleep and stay in their own houses and even their gang members had to remain running without staying in a place with the fear of arrest by the police. However, in a couple of days, the forest guards withdrew the FIR against them and since then, they were hardly caught even if the forest guards knew about them. However, they never hunt openly or frequently, and they have certain rules and regulations in hunting.

To be a member of their gang, one must take an oath against fleeing upon being caught while hunting. If one is caught by the police or state forces including the forest guards, then it is a rule against fleeing by the other members. Their rule is either they kill the forest guards (or whoever the caught them while hunting) or all of them get killed. They must face any state forces with courage as if they are not scared and be ready to fight at any given time and place in the forest. They are very confident to defeat any forces that comes inside the forest to catch them as they know each and every detail of the forest that includes, wild animals, every hill, mountains, valleys, stream and rivers including the depth of their water levels, trees, hiding places, and so on which the forest guards or any other state forces will not know as they are outsider to the this forest. Therefore, they strongly believe that they are unbeatable, and no one can catch them. Another rule of their gang is that no one should gossip about their hunting or disclose to anyone about their hunt including to their family members. They must sell the meat or any other valuable things such as skin very clandestinely and they should not hunt so frequently or openly so that people know.

According to Arun, in his last five years of hunting, he assumes that he earned nearly 200 to 300 hundred thousand rupees. According to him, buck deer, deer, and porcupine are the most profitable hunts. The meat of the buck deer and deer are the costliest as one-kilogram costs from rupees 500 to 600. A good buck deer weighs at least 40 kilograms and above. However, they do not sell the meat of porcupine, but they sell their skin, which gives around 20 to 30 thousand per porcupine. He narrates that hunting is not an easy job and they do not do it for fun. He says that they are forced to do so-called illegal hunting. They are neither educated to get a job nor can-do cultivation like before so to help their family, to send their children to school and provide a decent and dignified life. He remembers the days when they used to do Jhum cultivation in the areas, which are now under the DTR. He states that in those times, they get paddy and vegetables which they consumed and other products such as chilies and cotton are supplied to the market by which they meet the basic needs of the family like clothing and child education. Now there is nothing to fix sources of income if one is jobless. The available works are very dynamic and have no guarantees of income and stability of the works. He further states that he is happy for the DTR because they can go hunting and get some income out of it though it is not an easy job, it is a source of income for those in need. He believes that the DTR will benefit them if it is there because not only those (hunters), but some people are good at fishing.

Even the so-called illegal fishers are benefited out of the DTR. To the question of what they would do, if government come down heavily on them with forces who will outnumber them, which would stop hunting totally, he responded that he is not afraid of any state forces reasons such as they know every detail including where to hide, where to hunt, and where to run which the state forces will not know because they are outsiders. Though they may outnumber them, they have every bit of information about the DTR which they will not have. They are more equipped and efficient in the forest than any state military personnel. Therefore, they will easily beat them inside the DTR.

The DTR is one of the most critical areas where not only the hunters are active. There are many underground political groups in Northeast India and Bangladesh. If they are compelled to stop hunting, they will get help from those underground groups. In such

a case, he narrates a story of a group of hunters back in 2010 who were caught by the state police and before taking to prison and while resting in the house of the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) they all escaped from the house. When they fled his (SDPO) house, they directly went to Bangladesh in the camp of an underground group. Then the captain of the underground group called the SDPO, and he said the people they caught were their members. Further, he said that the wild meats that were seized were hunted in Bangladesh and not in DTR (as they were not caught while hunting but when they were bringing the meat to the village). The gun that they have seized belongs to them and therefore, they must return the meat, guns, and withdraw the case that was filed against them. If they do not comply with their demands, they warn the forest authority that neither the forest guards nor the state police or other forces can go inside the reserve forest, and they will hunt them down inside the forest.

Upon receiving such calls, the SDPO was fearful, and he then informed the higher authorities. According to him, he heard that there was an emergency meeting that took place at the Ministry level about the case and in the final words from the DTR office and police, they responded by saying that the wild meat that they seized is no more as it has been consumed by them. They cannot return the gun (locally made), but they can be assured of not being arresting or registering a case against them (the so-called illegal hunters who were caught) and they can live freely and normally[281]. He is confident that no one can stop them, and they will continue to hunt as they have no other choice. When asked if he or any of them saw any tigers, he answered straight 'no' but there are big cats, which are not tigers. They suspect that there could be some leopards in the DTR, which the state officials might believe to be tigers.

However, according to the state forest department, there are no such militant groups and such conflicts. The Chief Wildlife Warden, DTR has denied that "there are no concrete and reliable reports on the movement of insurgents/illegal immigrants from Bangladesh through this land stretch within Dampa Tiger Reserve"[282]. Even the

[281] The story was confirmed by the said illegal hunters and like him they are still hunting inside the DTR. However, I denied sharing any information and asked the researcher to provide their names in my report. However, the DTR officials deny any such incident, but it has become a wide story in the villages and most of the people know about the incident.

[282] See, Point No. 4 of the Chief Wildlife Warden, Mizoram vide letter No. B.17014/1/2005-CWLW dated 31st August 2012 in the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India (2013),

government of Mizoram refused to the presence of militant groups even though "the congress government had in February 2013 agreed to begin another process of dialogue with the Hmar Peoples' Convention (D) militants who are demanding an autonomous district". The claim of the state government that there is no insurgent outfit in Mizoram was contradicted by the Border Security Forces (BSF) who informed there are 27 (twenty-seven) camps of different insurgent groups active near the Dampa Tiger Reserve along with the Indo-Bangladesh border[283].

Indeed, in the neighboring non-Chakma villages[284], based on the field study carried out with the local hotels[285], the owner's income is more when they get wild meats supplied by the so-called illegal hunters. According to the hotel owners, the hunters are from different communities and villages. The meats which are highly in demand are wild boar, deer, and buck deer. They get wild meat once a week and there are no fixed days or times about its availability[286]. However, illegal hunting and fishing are done by one community and others, such as Mizo and Reang tribes. Earlier people carried out fishing with traditional methods and with fishing nets but now people are even using electricity from solar batteries. According to people, the electrifying method is the only easy and quick way to get fish as getting fish with traditional methods is difficult and often without any success. At the same time, not all the fish die after electrification, and it is believed that they either die after a few days or their reproduction capabilities are damaged permanently. The other popular method is blasting in the river and killing the fish. Shows how indigenous people, facing threats to livelihoods and repression from DTR authorities, are resorting to ecologically harmful practices.

"Agenda Notes for Naitonal Board for Wildlife thirtieth meeting", Agenda Item No. 2, 4th September 2013.

[283] News Bharati English (2013), "27 insurgent camps active near the Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram", on 13th June 2013, http://en.newsbharati.com/Encyc/2013/6/13/27-insurgent-camps-active-near-the-Dampa-Tiger-Reserve-in-Mizoram.aspx accessed on 3rd March 2014.

[284] Here non-Chakma village means Mizo, but the villages are withdrawn to protect the interviewees and the respondents.

[285] Here hotel means local restaurant where the passengers travelling to Aizawl or other towns and cities from the villages by bus or other vehicles stop for lunch and dinner.

[286] All the transactions of meat and money are done secretly without knowledge of the forest officials. People know about it, but no one tells or informs the forest official and on a given opportunity they will also buy.

6.10 Conclusion

This chapter empirically examines the impacts of displacement by the DTR conservation project in the lives of the displaced people and the local ecology. The chapter illustrated how displacement brought forceful social change and practices in the context of their relationship with nature. For example, how people were forced to go against their socio-cultural beliefs and practices on hunting and fishing to survive the livelihood crisis created by the DTR project. In the process, harmful methods accompanied by profits from fishing and hunting got introduced and consequently affect the wildlife and river species. In fact, these activities created an invisible (or secret) local market whereby the customers or the consumers were beyond the local people. Thus, the profits from the practices of so-called illegal fishing and hunting practices are not limited to the displaced people but to other local people living near the DTR forest. Therefore, displacement by the DTR in any form, either physical removal of people or denying their human-nature relationships, affects both the local people and the environment.

The state policies to the new land use policy are bringing a change of livelihood practices of the people from a subsistence economy to market-based practices which is harmful to the local ecology. Furthermore, the DTR project and its' discriminatory conservation practices based on ethnic identity and the extraction of forest resources for market by the state have further deepened the already existing socio-political complexities in the state of Mizoram which is becoming a challenge to the local environment. This is systematically exploiting and harming the local environment. The chapter empirically demonstrates how the DTR is implanted which has little to do either with the tigers or with the local ecology. It is a de-conservation project in the name of tiger conservation.

This chapter also empirically examines theoretical approaches such as.

Neo-Malthusian's population growth and its' pressures on the environment. It demonstrated how before the displacement from the DTR project the presence of populations on both sides of the river Sajek, I.e, India and Bangladesh sides did not witness any environmental problem or threat as is after the displacement. In fact, it is due to the absence of people that led to the absence of wildlife species. This is linked

to the interdependent between the wildlife and the local people for their livelihood and existences. For example, the chapter showed how the Jhum cultivation attracts wildlife as it is also a source of food for the wildlife too. Therefore, the argument in favour of displacement for the environment is not justifiable. This chapter demonstrated how the DTR conservation project and displacement is used to separate the local people from the forest and banning their social or traditional system of communal land ownership. Subsequently, it showed how the state is extracting and generating revenues from the forest resources through the so-called legal and illegal forms. On the other hand, this chapter also illustrates how wildlife is getting commercialised both in the local markets and beyond, which is the direct result of displacement. The DTR project is ultimately serving the political economy of the state as explained and argues by the neo-Marxists approach. Similarly, the chapter showed how the discriminatory conservation practices are based on ethnic identities as construed and argued by the post-structuralist or the post-Marxsists perspectives that explains the non-economic and non-capitalist relations.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

The concluding chapter of the thesis is in four parts. The first section is the summary of the thesis. It presents the summary of the empirical chapters from 3 to 6 in sequential order, which addresses the four research questions of the thesis. The second part is the overview of the thesis from the theoretical framework of analysis in the context of the DTR (Dampa Tiger Reserve) forest of Mizoram, Northeast India. It discusses the problems and challenges of the conservation project and its displacement. The third section of the chapter discusses the research findings and their implications. In the concluding section, it suggests recommendations for conservation practices and for future research.

The overarching research question of the thesis is why and in what ways do the socio-cultural and historical factors affect the human-nature relationship in the DTR, and how the displacement of people equally displaces ecology? It guides the thesis to investigate the research problems of conservation and displacement.

While doing so, the fieldwork is guided by four subsidiary research questions such as.

1. What does seeing conservation like the state miss about the local populations and natural environments, and why does it matter?
2. Why is the relationship between nature and the local people's culture inseparable from understanding the environment and conservation?
3. How are conservation projects entangled in the local and regional politics of nativism and ethnonationalism that dominate everyday life in the state of Mizoram and Northeast India?
4. Why can the state-led conservation project with displacement be an instrument to marginalise both the people and the wildlife, and de-conservation of nature?

Section 1.8 of chapter 1, "outlines of the thesis and sub-research questions of the thesis" while introducing the chapters includes how the chapters from 3 to answer to each subsidiary research question of the thesis. In this chapter, I shall summaries the analysis of the chapters relating to the research questions.

7.1 Summary of the thesis

Chapter 3 of the thesis investigates the research subsidiary question of what does seeing conservation like the state miss about the local populations and natural environments, and why does it matter? In doing so, the chapter explores how the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR) forest in the state of Mizoram, Northeast India is connected to the other geographies such as the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh and Assam in India. The chapter argues that the DTR (Dampa Tiger Reserve) is a space that needs to be understood from the larger regional and spatial histories with which it is related. It is a landscape with its people of different social groups and their histories and the history of the environment. It should not be understood as a space to conserve and preserve from the perspective of the nation-state, which already is the dominant understanding. The place is equally victim of statecraft during the colonial times and formation of the nation-states in the post-colonial state. The conservation project and its practices need to understand its people, the environment, and their histories that go beyond the notion of statecraft, nation-states, and human borders. The chapter also illustrates how any socio-political phenomena in Bangladesh and Assam has a direct impact on its people and the environment and becomes a basis for everyday life in Mizoram.

The chapter illustrates how Mizoram was part of the CHTs and Assam in pre-colonial and colonial times and shows the changing relations between people and the environment from usages to systemic exploitations of the resources over separate phases of history such as in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial times. It explores the state of forest and wildlife and the socio-political history of Assam and the CHTs. It also shows how these two geographical areas were spaces of contention for various rulers or kingdoms and merchants. The chapter explores and explains how during colonial times, these areas were seen as an economic object to be exploited which negatively affected the forest and its resources. This continued in the post-colonial times and was dominated by state developmental discourse which negatively affected the people and the environment. At the same time, the chapter also illustrates the conflict between the state-led conservation efforts and the local community who continued their traditional conservation practices that are based on their symbiotic

relationship and co-existence with nature. The chapter also tells how such dominant imposition of nation-states and failure to understand the people and their socio-cultural and histories are resisted by the people. Therefore, resistance to the state-led conservation projects and practices can be interpreted from such perspectives. Moreover, without considering the local ecology and its people the imposition of state-led conservation projects intrinsically does matter.

Chapter 3 of the thesis explains the significance of local people and environment for the conservation practices, furthermore, chapter 4 investigates the relationship between them (people and environment). It then explores the research question of; why is the relationship between nature and the local people's culture inseparable from understanding the environment and conservation? In doing so, the chapter explores the human nature relationship of two local communities, the Chakmas and the Mizos by examining their myths, mythologies, and socio-environmental histories. It illustrates how nature shapes people's lifeworld, and so do the local people's practices and livelihood activities shape the local ecology. In the process, the local people's social consciousness inherently gets constructed by their relationships with nature. For instance, the environmental factors such as floods, diseases, deaths, availability of water, and productivity play as determinant factors of the Chakmas and Mizos for their migration and settlement, agricultural practices, and their symbiotic and interdependent relationship with nature.

In doing so, the chapter with the support of the folksongs, folktales, belief systems, and livelihood practices, explains how nature inseparable from the local people's culture and lifeworld is. The interactions or relationships with nature regulate, guide, and develop their belief systems and cultural practices. Furthermore, the chapter shows how the ecology of the DTR (Dampa Tiger Reserve) is part of a larger ecosystem that cuts across national borders. For example, the DTR area is also known as the Sazek Hill Range of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) in Bangladesh. Indeed, it is historically a shared space for different local communities and wildlife and stands for an ecology of people and nature that shares an intimate relationship that is symbiotic and interdependent. Therefore, I argue that understanding and treating the environment as a definite space that needs to be identified and demarcated for conservation is a misleading approach. Separation of people and nature and dividing

the lands for conservation is nothing but creation of another boundary that restricts and stops the natural fluidity and continuity of life for both people and the wildlife. Hence, the state-led conservation projects and practices need to adopt a comprehensive understanding of the local ecology and failure to do so will only victimize both the local people and the environment.

Chapter 4 shows how separating the environment and people for conservation project does not serve its purpose and negatively affects both. This can be further understood in the chapter 5 which historically explores the environmental events of Bamboo flowerings and how it played and shaped the socio-political movement of the people. The chapter investigates it in separate historical accounts such as in the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. At the same time, the chapter explores the relationships among the local communities and with the state and its agencies. The chapter also investigates the changing inter-ethnic relationship leading to a state whereby the politics of belonging or the notion of citizenship has become based on ethnonationalism and nativism. Thus, the chapter addresses the research question of, how are conservation projects entangled in the local and regional politics of nativism and ethnonationalism that dominate everyday life in the state of Mizoram and Northeast India?

The Bamboo flowering events prove the profound relationship of the local people with the environment which was not understood and underestimated by the state. For instance, in the post-colonial time, the Assam and the Indian state ignored and dismissed the negative effects of the Bamboo flowerings by terming it as a tribal belief. It so resulted into a larger socio-political movement against the Assam and Indian government, and formation of a new state in India. In pre-colonial times, the inter-tribal conflicts were dynamic and not rigidly confined to their distinct social identities. Though the conflicts were fluid and without a defined notion of enemy but the Mizo Hills (present-day Mizoram) in the pre-colonial times experienced continued hostilities and chaos between villages, clans, and several tribal/ethnic groups. It was the Bamboo flowerings that helped to end inter-tribal conflicts. The chapter also shows how the Bamboo flowerings were also an opportunity in the advent of British administration and the Christianity into the hills. In the pre-colonial times, despite several expeditions, the British could not be able to bring the Mizo Hills under their

rule until the Bamboo flowerings in 1881. The devastating effects of the Bamboo flowerings into famines, starvation, diseases, and deaths forced the local communities to seek help from the British administration. The historical experiences of Bamboo flowerings made the local communities prepare better and fight its' impact as can be seen in the post-colonial period.

However, the inter-tribal conflicts which ended before the colonial rule have been reinforced and exploited as a tool to rule the hills by the British administrators. For instance, the Chakma queen Kalendi Rani took the help of the Mizo tribes to crush the revolt against her and resulted in the deaths of hundreds of the Chakmas at the hand of the Mizos. The chapter discusses how it was in the colonial period, when the Britishers were having negotiations with the queen for their rule in the CHTs (Chittagong Hill Tracts). In the colonial rule, the Lushai accepted Christianity and the Chakmas refused it strongly which led to animosity between the Chakmas and the Mizos. Similarly, the Roman script's introduction by the British administration also played a significant role in deepening the conflicts. The Chakmas had their own script and resented the usages of Roman script. In fact, it was during the colonial rule that the notion of Mizo nationalism was born. The colonial rule has changed the discourse of inter-tribal relationships and conflicts whereby the social boundaries of enmity and friendship were drawn. This can be understood in the post-colonial times in 1986 when signing the Mizo Peace Accord with the Indian state, the MNF (Mizo National Front) leader strongly demanded for the abrogation of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC). After the statehood of Mizoram, the state saw inter-tribal conflicts whereby the non-Mizos (especially, the Chakmas and Reangs/Brus) became the victims at the hand of the Mizos. From 1985 to 2000, 21 private Members resolutions were sent to the State Assembly for the abolition of the CADC.

The Chakma leaders in their autonomy movement demanded for the inclusion of all the Chakma inhabited villages. However, out of 31,000 Chakma populations, only 11,153 Chakma populations were included with a promise to include the other Chakma areas in the future. Therefore, the Chakmas do not believe the genuineness of the DTR (Dampa Tiger Reserve) project and suspect that its prime purpose is to take away their land in the name of tiger conservation. Furthermore, more than 80% of reserve forests, wildlife sanctuaries, and reserves are in the Chakma and other non-

Mizo forests. The DTR with 988 Sq. Km and Thorangtlang Wildlife Sanctuary with 180 Sq. Km cover the geographical areas of Chakmas from Tripura border to Demagiri (Tlabung) whereby most of the Chakma inhabits and was demanded for the inclusion in the autonomous council of the Chakmas but was excluded. Therefore, the DTR is entangled in a complex socio-political relation and the functioning of the state.

Chapter 5 illustrated the deep relationships of people with nature and how environmental events play determinant factors in their social and political life. It also shows how the colonial statecraft and nation-state formations have affected their relationships with the environment and among themselves. Chapter 6 investigates how the displacement from the DTR project affects the local people and the environment. It also explores the discriminatory practices of DTR project by the state. The chapter addresses the research question of, why can the state-led conservation project with displacement be an instrument to marginalise both the people and the wildlife, and de-conservation of nature?

The chapter empirically examines the twin victimization of people and the environment because of displacement by the DTR project. For example, the displacement of the local people results in the displacement of wildlife. It is because the people's livelihood practices like the Jhum cultivation is also a source of livelihood for wildlife species. Displacing people and denying their livelihood practices also results in the displacement of wildlife. Consequently, it breaks down the ecological system that they (local people and wildlife) sustain, which results in breaking down this ecosystem. Hence, displacing people led to the removal of wildlife and de-conserving nature in the name of conservation. The chapter also explores the question of population and their dependence on the environment and the need to displace them. It does so by comparing the presence of the local people in and around the DTR in pre- and post-displacement times. The empirical evidence suggests that there are no links between human habitation and pressure on the environment. Hence, the question of displacement does not arise.

The chapter also examines the forceful creation of livelihood and food crises for the local people due to displacement by the DTR project. It reveals that this forceful crisis

has resulted in immense pressure and dependence on the forest resources and dramatic change from subsistence to market-oriented livelihood practices. It also investigates the state's policies such as the Mizoram state's New Land Use Policy (NLUP), the rules to use the forest resources, DTR project's policy of core and buffer zones. The empirical data clearly stands out the state's political economy goals whereby neither the people nor the forest matter. It strongly suggests that for the state, what matters is the revenue generations by forcing people to adopt market-based livelihood practices to generate revenues, even if they are based on by extracting the forest resources or their livelihood activities negatively affect wildlife and forest resources.

This chapter also examines the discriminatory practices by the state led DTR conservation project and how it further marginalises the marginalised. For instance, there are three local communities that live in and around the DTR which are the Mizos, Chakmas and the Reangs. The core areas that are inviolate and intact in the areas of the Chakmas and the Reangs and the buffer areas are in Mizos. In the buffer areas, shifting cultivation and other livelihood activities are allowed. The chapter reveals that the DTR project is not opposed by the Mizos and opposed by the Chakma and the Reang community. In fact, there are 10 (ten) conservation projects in Mizoram state and the DTR is the biggest project in the name of tiger without tigers by covering 57.15% of the total areas for wildlife sanctuaries.

7.2 Overview of the thesis

The thesis explores why and in what ways do the socio-cultural and historical factors affect the human-nature relationship in the DTR, and how the displacement of people equally displaces ecology? It examines and explains the problems of state led conservation projects and displacement both at the conceptual and project operational level. It argues understanding the environment without people and as an object that needs to be conserved and preserved, is a colonial approach to nature. In doing so, it disrupts the local ecosystem and continues the colonial legacy of governing nature. Such an approach rejects and does not allow us to appreciate a human-nature relationship that is, or can be, symbiotic, harmonious, and sustainable. Such a paradigm of conservation practice is a top-down, forceful, and instrumental approach which breaks down the local ecology. Consequently, it de-conserved in the name of

conservation and became an instrument for the state and the market to serve their purposes.

The next part of the chapter explains and analyses the thesis from theoretical frameworks. The first part of it is to understand the Dampa and its people, it considers James Scott's model of non-state spaces. The second part of it explains the problems of the DTR from post-Marxists, neo-Marxists, and neo-Malthusian theoretical perspectives. The DTR forest and its people fall into what James C. Scott (2009) describes as a zone of non-state spaces. He describes the people away from the state's rules in the valleys and who are not reachable by the state to govern. The people of the hills or what he refers to as highlanders shaped their culture and system to elude the state. To keep the state away from them, they developed or shaped their cultures and systems such as linguistic variety and Jhum cultivation also known as swidden agriculture to make administration impossible reaching out to them. The oppressive state could be a factor for their migration to the hills from the valleys, but my research reveals that environmental factors such as floods and famines are key reasons for migration from valleys to hills. It also elaborates how the environmental factors or events played determinant roles in shaping the social system and cultures of the people. The thesis also reveals the fluidity and continuity of people and the environment between the hills and valleys and not in isolation or binary as suggested by James Scott.

In the second part, I explain how the thesis and fieldwork is guided by the theoretical framework of thinking, investigations, and interpretations. The phenomenon under study is displacement by the DTR project and its socio-ecological, cultural, political, and livelihood practices of the local people. I draw contradicting theoretical approaches to engage and explain the phenomenon under study. For instance, I consider the neo-Malthusian approaches to investigate and examine the rationale for displacement viz-a-viz the sustainable development of the conservation projects and the local people. Similarly, I take the neo-Marxist approaches to explore the political economy of conservation to link with the socio-political and political economies of the state, which is a limitation for the neo-Malthusian approaches. For example, it cannot answer the existence of the DTR in the name of tiger without any tigers. At the same time, the neo-Marxists cannot explain who these local communities are and why

certain communities with distinct social identities get excluded and victimised. Although, these communities are not homogenous and are distinct from each other with their socio-cultural practices. Thus, I take the support of the post-Marxist theoretical approaches that includes feminist and post-structuralist perspectives which focuses on the non-economic and non-capitalist relations such as gender, ethnicity, and the socialised nature.

The neo-Malthusians approaches argues that the rapid loss of lands to agriculture and other uses with high increasing rates of human populations in the developing countries are resulting in over exploitation and loss of species (Guyer and Richards, 1996). As Paul Robbins (2004) pointed out that the neo-Malthusians strongly believe that controlling populations is fundamental in tackling environmental issues. Thus, conservation projects are seen as the way forward to protect both the habitat and the species backed by legislation and regulation (McNeely, 1995) and hence displacement of the local communities are justified. These ideas are based on some of the famous works such as Ehrlich and Ehrlich (1970 and 1972) on Population, Resources and Environment, the Population Bomb, and the global computer models (Forrester 1971 and Meadows et. al (1972), the Technocratic Notion of Political Globalism by 'global community (Myers and Myers, 1982) and the need of the world to be saved from the destruction of humankind (Polunin, 1994). It also Advocates for sustainable utilisation of resources and the realisation of the basic needs through an authoritarian state (Adams, 2001). However, the empirical evidence of my fieldwork in the DTR conservation project does not support any of the neo-Malthusian arguments and has no relevance to the local ecology of the DTR. Even though the outcome of my fieldwork empirically refutes and disagrees with the approach, it is relevant to my research to investigate the phenomenon of conservation and displacement. For example, I came to know how the displacement of local people led to the displacement of wildlife and river species.

The neo-Marxists approach helped me to critically engage and understand how the DTR is not a so-called apolitical environmental conservation project. Moreover, the neo-Marxist approaches developed in response to the neo-Malthusian's apolitical understanding and approach to the environment and people. The neo-Marxists approach the political and economic factors in understanding material power that

mediates human and nature relations (Biersack 2006: 3, 10; Bryant 1998: 80). It argues and explains the environmental change in the context of underdevelopment and poverty (Bryant 2001). It emphasizes profit and accumulation by the capitalist class at the expense of the environment, natural resources, and other classes (Bryant 2001: 152-153). It deploys the political economy framework and links it with the issues of environmental change and exploitation in terms of class, gender, or subaltern status (Bryan 2001: 152; Biersack 2006: 9). The neo-Marxists approach helps to examine the environmental change in the DTR viz-a-viz the state's policies on the forest and its resources, and the political economy of the DTR project. This approach guides to investigate the Mizoram state's New Land Policy (NLUP), extraction of forest resources, and generating revenues which is neither helping for conservation nor to the local people. In fact, it has become a source of employment for some, flows of incomes from outside sources (both national and international) in the name of tiger conservation. This approach also helps to investigates and understand how the state led conservation practices of the DTR is just not a local phenomenon but part of the larger global and regional dimension and linkages as a method of analysis by the neo-Marxists (Biersack 1999: 10). Most importantly, the DTR project is not an outcome of local action/effort but is part of the larger national and global initiatives to address global environmental crises and climate change.

The DTR operates at an extraordinarily complex socio-cultural and political factors. The local social groups or communities with distinct socio-cultural identities who do not belong to a particular homogeneous class or group. For example, the local communities such as the Chakma, Mizo, and Reang are all indigenous peoples but their relationships with each other are governed by a defined notion of inclusive and exclusive socio-cultural identities. Therefore, to explore and understand this aspect of the research, the thesis supports the post-Marxists theoretical approach that focuses on non-economic and non-capitalist relations (Castree et al. 2001: 2004). It also helps to explore the overarching research question of the thesis which is, why and in what ways the socio-cultural and historical factors affect the human-nature relationship in the DTR and how the displacement of people equally displaces ecology?

In this approach, the post-structuralist perspectives engage in the discourse of "ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs,

attitudes and social identities" (Gee, 1996). Furthermore, it helps to investigate what Davies' (2016) refers to the societies and natural environments that continually 'co-produce' each other. This approach helps to investigate the meaning of the local communities that live in and around the DTR and their shared ecological histories and different social identities. It helps to explore and explain the differences between the concept of Jhummas for the Chakmas and Zomia for the Mizos though their social identities are based on their relationships with nature. This approach also helps understand displacement by the DTR project based on the politics of identity and the history of exclusion.

7.3 Research findings and their implications

State-led conservation practices can be very coercive on the populations in and around the area in which the conservation project is set up. The DTR is a fictitious conservation project to protect tigers where there are no tigers. It is an instrument of socio-political power for the state and the dominant social groups against the other ethnic minorities in Mizoram. A project like the DTR is a conservation discourse fantasy just like the "development discourse fantasy" coined by Ferguson in his famous book of "The Anti-Politics Machine" in 1990 while examining the failure of Thaba-Tseka Development project in Lesotho, a region of South Africa. His critique is based on the fallacy of the project to deliver or relate it its actual goals and the inherent goodness of such developmental projects are "often taken granted by the world powers and theorization." Similarly, conservation projects are often taken for granted to address climate change and environmental crises.

Just like the developmental projects as Fergusson (1990) explained, the conservation projects too have "unintended consequences both good and bad" as is the case with the DTR project. Further, it has only helped the bureaucracy and the state with the inflows of money and other incentives in the name of tiger conservation and failures to conserve wildlife and the local ecology. While explaining and analyzing the economic case of the cattle trade in Lesotho of South Africa, argues that "reduction of complex anthropological problems to technical ones, followed by a prescription of a technical solution, all with the implicit aim of destroying local social and economic legacies and replacing them with hegemonic ones." This is exactly what is happening

in the DTR Forest of Mizoram, whereby the local conservation practices are replaced by the dominant and foreign conservation project-based practices that have little to do with the local ecology. It has replaced the local conservation practices and ecological system and destroyed them, resulting in the victimization of people and the environment. Therefore, the DTR conservation project is resulting in de-conservation in the name of conservation.

Ferguson interprets and concludes with what he calls the "anti-politics machine" or the instrumental effect of development discourse. He argues that it is not enough just to analyze development's success and failures of a developmental project and what matters is the outcomes or what Fergusson refers to as "sociological ends of these projects." Similarly, in the context of the conservation projects, it shall be the "sociological and environmental ends" to understand the outcomes of the conservation projects. The unintended outcomes of the DTR project could be best understood from the outcomes of socio-livelihood crises, negative impact to the local social relations and human-nature interactions. Furthermore, it has created massive changes in peoples' relations to land, forest, and wildlife. Finally, it perpetuates and strengthens (by the DTR) the local and regional (by the conservation discourse) socio-political power dynamics between different ethnic or tribal identities in Mizoram and Northeast India.

7.4 Recommendations to conservation practices

1. The DTR conservations project needs to end its discriminatory conservation practices. For instance, the Mizo social groups are allowed to do Jhum and other agricultural activities as they are under or near to "buffer areas" of the project. On the other hand, the Chakma and the Reangs are not allowed as their community land is under "core areas" or the inviolate areas.

2. Both the state and national social welfare programmes need to be implemented without discrimination based on ethnic lines for the welfare and development of the people.
3. The project needs to be reviewed and allows people to continue their lifeworld which only contributes and ensures the conservation of nature and its' biodiversity. At

the same time, the state needs to regulate and stop the market agents from exploiting the environment.

Recommendations and direction to further research

1. If there is conservation, some of it must be transboundary as nature is not defined by human and nation-states borders. For example, wildlife knows no such boundaries and the purpose of conservation will not be served if conservation practices are regulated to a defined and set geographical location. Moreover, the understanding of conservation should not replace ecology where both people and the environment are part of it.

2. Stopping market agents from reaching the forest in the name of conservation and economic development.

3. Studies of conservation must consider the logic behind setting up a conservation project which may not have to do with wildlife conservation. There could be better monitoring of wildlife populations before setting up any conservation project that massively disrupts the life of people.