

# **BORDERED LIVES: A STUDY OF BORDERLANDERS NEAR THE INDIA-BANGLADESH BORDER IN DHUBRI DISTRICT OF ASSAM**

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## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that **Md. Nurul Hassan** worked under my supervision while preparing the thesis entitled “**Bordered Lives: A Study of Borderlanders near the India-Bangladesh Border in Dhubri District of Assam**”. He has fulfilled all the rules and regulations governing the preparation of doctoral thesis of the University of Gauhati. The Thesis contains the result of his personal investigation. Neither the thesis nor any part thereof was submitted for any degree or diploma of this or any other university. This thesis may be accepted for adjudication.

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## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the present thesis on “**Bordered Lives: A Study of Borderlanders near the India-Bangladesh Border in Dhubri District of Assam**” is the outcome of my own investigation which I have submitted to the Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Guwahati, under the Faculty of Arts for the Degree of the Doctor of Philosophy. The thesis or any part thereof has not been submitted to this or any other university or institution for any degree or diploma. Any inadvertent error or inadequacies that still remain in the thesis is the responsibility of the researcher.

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**Date:**

**Place: Guwahati**

**(MD NURUL HASSAN)**

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

AASU	: All Assam Students Union
ABS	: Association for Borderlands Studies
AGP	: Asom Gana Parishad
AGSP	: Asom Gana Sangram Parishad
AIUDF	: All India United Democratic Party
ANM	: Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASEAN	: Association of South East Asian Nations
AXX	: Asom Xahitya Xabha
BADP	: Border Area Development Programme
BJP	: Bharatiya Janata Party
BOPF	: Bodoland People's Front
BPF	: Bodoland People's Front
BRGF	: Border Region Grant Fund
BRIT	: Border Regions in Transition
BSF	: Border Security Force
CENTO	: Central Treaty Organization
CEO	: Chief Executive Officer
CPI	: Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	: Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CD	: Compact Disk
DoNER	: Development of North Eastern Region
ECG	: Electrocardiography
GNM	: General Nursing Midwife
HDI	: Human Development Index
IAY	: Indira Awaas Yojna
ICS(SCS)	: Indian Congress Socialist (Sarat Chandra Sinha)
INC	: Indian National Congress
IPL	: Indian Premier League

IRRI	: International Rice Research Institute
JNP	: Janata Party
LCS	: Land Custom Station
MGNREGA	: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NCP	: Nationalist Congress Party
ORF	: Observer Research Foundation
PDS	: Public Distribution System
PSP	: Praja Socialist Party
SAARC	: South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation
SEATO	: South East Asia Trade Organization
Sr.	: Senior
SOP	: Samyukta Socialist Party/ Socialist Party
SSA	: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SP	: Socialist Party
SPSS	: Statistical Package for Social Sciences
PSP	: Praja Socialist Party
TMC	: Trinamool Congress
TV	: Television
UK	: United Kingdom
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
USA	: United States of America
VCD	: Video Compact Disk

## GLOSSARY

<i>Baishnavism</i>	: a sect of Hinduism and believe monotheism
<i>Batasha</i>	: a kind of sweets prepared in white round shape.
<i>Bayon</i>	: performer
<i>Bharali</i>	: treasurer
<i>Bhagawati</i>	: one who expounds Bhagavat
<i>Bhaona</i>	: traditional form of entertainment having religious message
<i>Bhawaiya</i>	: folk song
<i>Bhati</i>	: literally, downstream but also southern Assam and Eastern and South Eastern Bengal.
<i>Bhatia</i>	: people from <i>Bhati</i>
<i>Bhatiali geet</i>	: folk song of <i>Bhatia</i> people
<i>Bez</i>	: a physician (traditional)
<i>Burah-Satradhikar</i>	: the head of a monastery, head monk
<i>Char</i>	: hinterland, shallow landscape covering with water, depositional landform in the middle of river or along its convex bank
<i>Charua</i>	: people belonging to Char area
<i>Chena-jana</i>	: familiar to each other
<i>Chira</i>	: flattened rice
<i>Chowk</i>	: a small market place
<i>Churi</i>	: bangles
<i>Dalal</i>	: broker
<i>Deka-Satradhikar</i>	: upcoming priest of religious monasteries
<i>Deshi</i>	: Muslim community from the westernmost part of Assam with aboriginal credentials
<i>Deuri</i>	: an officer of a temple, one who distributes to the people what was offered to an idol
<i>Dhol</i>	: double headed drum



<i>Dhuya</i>	: a kind of folk song
<i>Dingi</i>	: very small size of county boat
<i>Dotara</i>	: musical instrument having two strings
<i>Duwa (Dua)</i>	: special prayer
<i>Duar</i>	: door, gate, passing point
<i>Ektara</i>	: one string musical instrument
<i>Gaan</i>	: song
<i>Gaon Buruah</i>	: village headman
<i>Gayon</i>	: a singer accompanied with instrumental music
<i>Geet</i>	: song
<i>Ghat</i>	: a set of steps leading down to a river or lake
<i>Gowala</i>	: a title related with Milk producing class, milkman
<i>Golla</i>	: a village/ local sports
<i>Guru</i>	: sanskrit word for teacher
<i>Haat</i>	: weekly market
<i>Ha-do-do</i>	: a kind of village sports
<i>Hijra</i>	: intersex people, transgender
<i>Imam</i>	: head cleric
<i>Jaamat</i>	: collective platform
<i>Jatra gaan</i>	: folk theatre of Bengal
<i>Jeen</i>	: a super natural male spirit believed in Islam
<i>Jehaad</i>	: holy fight against the evils, it is a fight for noble cause
<i>Jehaadi</i>	: person keeps faith on <i>jihaad</i>
<i>Jotedar</i>	: cultivable land/ holder of jote directly from the state or zamindar
<i>Kabiraj</i>	: people practising Ayurveda (sometimes also known as Vaidhya)
<i>Kabigaan</i>	: Bengali folk performance wherein poets sing and perform
<i>Kirtan</i>	: recitation of religious
<i>Koch</i>	: a mongoloid origin community
<i>Loka</i>	: people

<i>Kurta</i>	: loose garments wear by both male and female
<i>Kurti</i>	: short upper garment for female
<i>Kutchra</i>	: made of mud
<i>Likhok</i>	: writer, who notes religious scripts
<i>Lungi</i>	: a kind of loose dress for male
<i>Madrassa</i>	: Islamic seminary
<i>Mahalla</i>	: area, locality
<i>Manasha</i>	: Goddess of snake
<i>Mandap</i>	: a temporary platform set up for weddings and religious ceremonies
<i>Matbar</i>	: influential villager having decisive power
<i>Math</i>	: field
<i>Mathauri</i>	: embankment
<i>Mazumdar</i>	: Tax collector
<i>Moktab</i>	: institution provides preliminary knowledge about Arabic literature as well as Islam
<i>Mekhela</i>	: a kind of Assamese attire
<i>Moktadir</i>	: followers of Islamic cleric in prayer
<i>Monshi</i>	: village cleric
<i>Mullah</i>	: cleric
<i>Mukhtiyar</i>	: head of local government
<i>Nazrul geeti</i>	: song of Kazi Nazrul, <i>Bidrohi</i> poet of Bangladesh, undivided India
<i>Naamghar</i>	: place for congregational worship in <i>Eksaran Naam Dharama</i> introduced by Sri Sri Sankardev
<i>Naamkirtan</i>	: reading religious scripts
<i>Nasta</i>	: a kind of sweets combination of rice, milk, sugar and some other ingredients
<i>Paan</i>	: betel leaves ( <i>piper betle</i> ), it is offered in courtesy and mostly consumed in Asia
<i>Pathok</i>	: one who reads, a public reader of religious book
<i>Pitha</i>	: cake

<i>Polli Geet</i>	: traditional song
<i>Pori</i>	: female super natural spirit believed in Islam
<i>Puruhit</i>	: priest
Rajbanshi	: a group with royal background
<i>Sadgah</i>	: a kind of song with different lyrical value
<i>Samiti</i>	: corporation
<i>Satradhikar</i>	: priest of <i>vaishnavite</i> monasteries
<i>Shaivism</i>	: followers of Shiva
<i>Shakha</i>	: a kind of gold ornament for female
<i>Sharee</i>	: female dress/ attire
South-Salmara	: an Assembly constituency of Assam
<i>Sutradhar</i>	: the chief actor or inter locator in the prelude to each scene of an Assamese drama
Zamindar	: Landlord, the intermediate officials between government and peasants in British India

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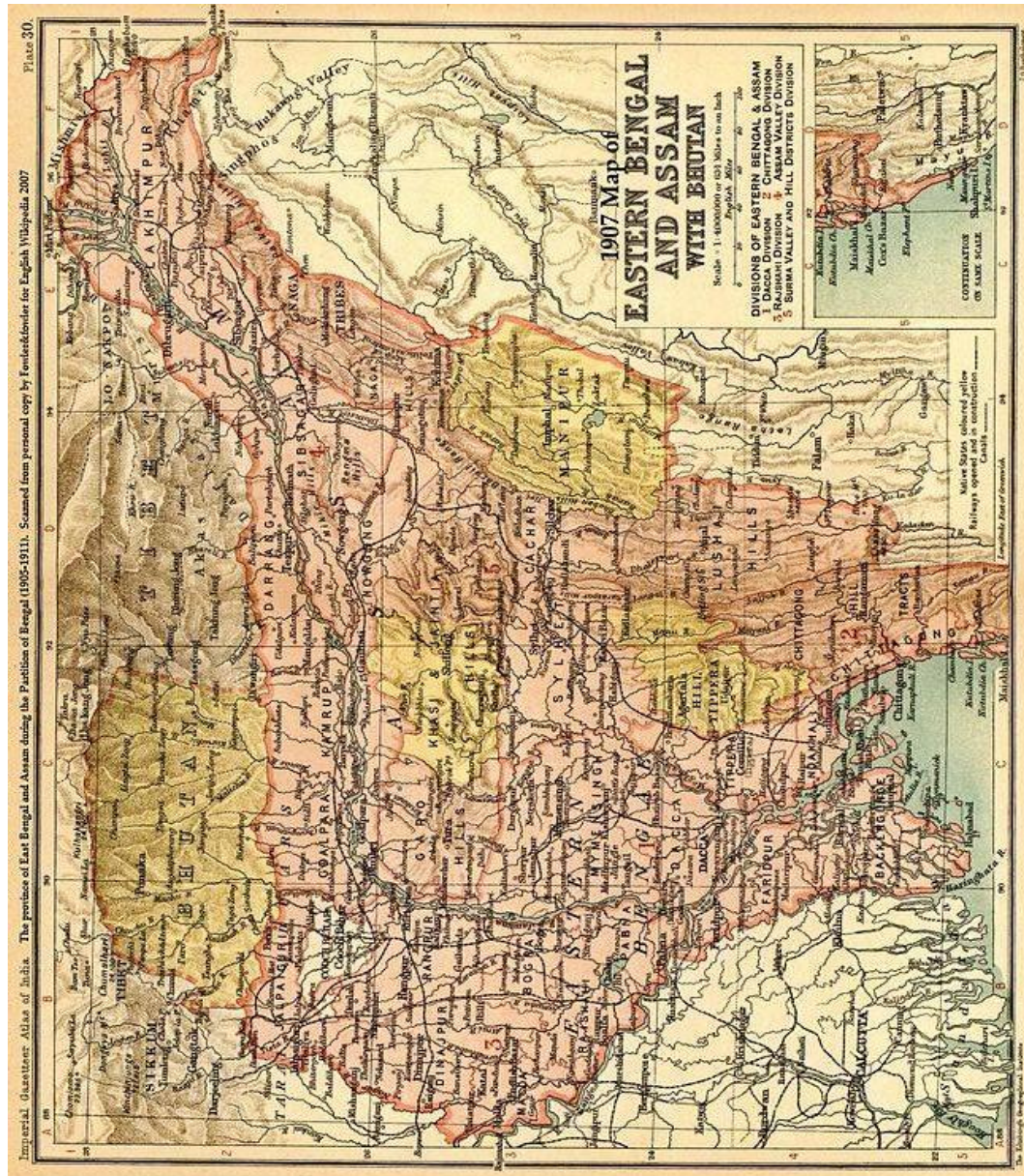
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# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Border is an essential manifestation of nation-state<sup>1</sup>. Basically it is a geopolitical marker dividing one nation from another. It is experiencing existence of different elements along the border i.e. inhabitation of people, security guards, security arrangements, visitors, transborder elements, state and non-state actors and so on. However, all are habituated with the bordered<sup>2</sup> culture. In this crucial junction, functioning of border is not free from doubt and suspicion. Hence, it has been getting attention from different field of studies in recent times. The India-Bangladesh international border is no exception to this. Unlike others, numerous activities have been carried out regularly; consequently it is alleged that rights and privileges of borderlanders are constricted and at times deprived. Here, an attempt has been made to understand the lives of the Dhubri borderlanders of India- Bangladesh international border.

The studies of border, borderland, borderlanders, core and periphery, socio-spatial relation etc. are very emerging aspects of the nation-state system. Structurally, just couple of decades back borders have emerged and most of them are disputed as well as contested one. The development of border is a slow and steady process. Admittedly, the socio-economic-political setting has substantial influence upon the borderland. Everywhere people find some sort of social setting, structural arrangement, constriction, and also bounded with

some limitations and that is also a virtual border. It is very difficult to get historical evidences regarding the earliest creation of physical border. The then border and their activities were different from the border of present format. With the emergence of modern nation-state system, border gets phenomenal importance and also changed from the structural point of view. Apparently, border acts not only as a demarcated line to separate one nation from another but also divides existing society, community and families etc. due to the imposition of border. Another notable point is that the creation of periphery connecting with border having peoples' inhabitation or not; but considered as peripheral borderland. Thus border, borderland and borderlanders are intermingled in the peripheral region creating a crucial subfield in the social science research.

Border is the determinants of political as well as spatial entity of a nation. Even with the modern nation state system, border bears sensitivity in different aspects i.e. security, nationality, identity, diplomacy, governance, development and politics etc. Therefore, border is one of the politically crucial areas that have been studied from different perceptions across the world. Being the borderlanders are one of the vital actors of this very location, the study tries to provide a holistic view of how state negotiates with the border as well as the borderlanders. The term border indicates the geographical arrangement; which is close to frontier; even used interchangeably somewhere; but have differences. Thus various concepts regarding border studies i.e. border, periphery, frontier, borderland, borderlanders are becoming crucial not only as an empirical issue but have to understand in a conceptual framework too.

All borders don't emerge accidentally within a day or two. Thus the trajectory of border is quite complex and uneven. However, the modern political borders have historical base and comparatively more permanent than the earlier ones. It marks the limitation permanently over the movement of people, commodities, authority etc. Thus border management have been functioning in a procedural way since long back. Even the modern nation-states are not lagging behind in this regard. It is pertinent to mention, with the changing circumstances, the nature and activities are changing. So, it needs a comprehensive study to follow up the changing nature of borderland activity in accordance with time and space.

One of the progressive institutions, Asian Border Studies (ABS) celebrates multidisciplinary approaches in border research. At this instance, geographically contested spaces are analyzed by political scientists and geographers. Natural resource management is examined from both a public policy and a scientific dimension. The movement of people across borders and the integration of migrants into new communities concerns sociologists and public administration. The history, languages, literature and art of the borderlands are also important aspects of scholars' prismatic lens (Brenner 2013: 1-2). Most of the time, border becomes a crucial point as a determinant factor in the borderland. Hence, we can apply different perspectives in different capacities to comprehend the borderland. Here, in this research, we are mostly concerned with the socio-political perspective to explore the condition of borderlanders of India-Bangladesh international border located in the Dhubri district of Assam. However, it is inevitable to move forward with

different insights from Anthropology, Geography, History, and Sociology in such a complex geopolitical space.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The fragile nature of India-Bangladesh border continues to challenge the Indian nation-state in a variety of ways. The people living along the border have to experience of different situations. This research work is an attempt to analyse the challenges and needs faced by the state forces as well as people living therein.

When I talked with the India-Bangladesh borderlanders in Ghewmari village of Dhubri district of Assam, they stated their predicament. ‘.....we use to go to our land, but Bangladeshi farmers and also Border Security Force (jawan) disturbs us. Our life is really a precarious one’ stated by a borderlander of Ghewmari village (30<sup>th</sup> October, 2014). It is one of the major concerns for borderlanders’ everyday life. The peripheral existence makes the state apparatuses as well as security system more visible in the border. Accordingly, various policies and programmes are initiated from time to time for the overall development of border as well as borderlanders to enhance national as well as territorial security. Thus the precarious impact of border upon the local inhabitants makes it an important area to study in present day context. Moreover, it also deepens their deprivation, marginalization, alienation from the mainstream of a shared system of a nation-state.

Border is the end and beginning of a state. It acts both as territorial and geographical entity to determine the space of a nation. Centuries back it was something symbolic; there was no permanently demarcated and fixed

boundary what today the modern states have. At present, border is the marker of a state to determine political boundary. Border has paramount influence on as well as control over ethnicity, language, behaviour, culture, custom and mobility within the state but unable to restrict overwhelmingly. Border can be understood in dual sense; firstly, it is a source of ample opportunities and secondly it blocks opportunities for the people living therein. Even the borderlanders have been experiencing a kind of blocked life due to the border. Therefore, it is pertinent to address all the problems and prospects of the borderlanders whether it is Dhubri or beyond that. It may attribute a better and strong border ensuring local and national security. The study focuses on inextricable relationships between border, border lives, borderland, nation state and its response towards local as well as global paradigm.

If we look at the global scenario, there are various contentious borders i.e. United States of America (USA) and Mexico (1846-48, 1910-18), USA and Canada, Nigeria and Benin (several villages near Okpara River), Namibia and South Africa (Orange River borderline), Sudan and South Sudan (for Abyei area), Cameron and Nigeria, France and Madagascar, Malaysia and Singapore, Thailand and Cambodia, Greece and Turkey, Ireland and the United Kingdom, Russia and Ukraine, Croatia and Serbia, Iraq and Iran, North and South Korea, United States of America and Haiti, Israel and Palestine, China and Bhutan, India and Pakistan, India and China, India and Bangladesh etc. Most of the borders are perennially disputed, however protection and preservation of border is really a crucial aspect for every state. Nevertheless, there are bounteous opportunities for the borderlanders to engage in border trade, commerce, tourism and many more. Present Europe, (i.e. France, Spain



etc.) experiencing a new trend of border markets, bungalows, inn and other facilities have been coming up for visitors, tourists, traders along the border with bounteous profit. Unlike this, such opportunities are usually checked by many other states. For the unabated control by the state and other apparatuses, may vandalise the normal life of borderlanders. In such situation, under the strict vigilance, substantial amount of trade (formal as well as informal) have been going on regular basis. A considerable number of people from different walks of life have unremitting relation in these activities. So, it requires a change in the policy mechanism of borders so that people could have rational choice and opportunities. Moreover, it also ensures livelihood security for a section of border inhabitants.

Border is the first and last area of a nation. Therefore borderlanders, i.e. the citizens at the periphery unequivocally suffer from the socio-political exclusion, alienation, deprivation, marginalization from the mainstream of a shared socio-political and economic system. Like many others, the peripheral area of India-Bangladesh border particularly Dhubri district have been facing ample challenges from the state due to their bordered existence. The people are geographically far away from the heartland and it makes the state functioning significantly pitiable for them. Furthermore, the conventional security system viz. the Border Security Force (henceforth BSF), border fencing, border road etc. create hazards and hurdles in their lives. Their lives are restricted, controlled, blocked for the security endeavour. Therefore, human security is pejoratively hampered in their day-to-day life. In such a situation, these people as well as problems get vitality in socio political research.

Here, the main focus is to comprehend how the border itself stands as a problem for the borderlanders. It also deals with the nature, trend, intensity and its impacts upon them. Are the borderlanders comparatively disadvantageous than others? Do the borderlanders have facilities of school, medical, market, workplace etc.? Due to the peripheral existence, is the area really alienated from the heartland? The policy makers as well as policy administration towards the borderlanders is also noteworthy here. So these are some sort of issues we proposed to understand in a comprehensive way.

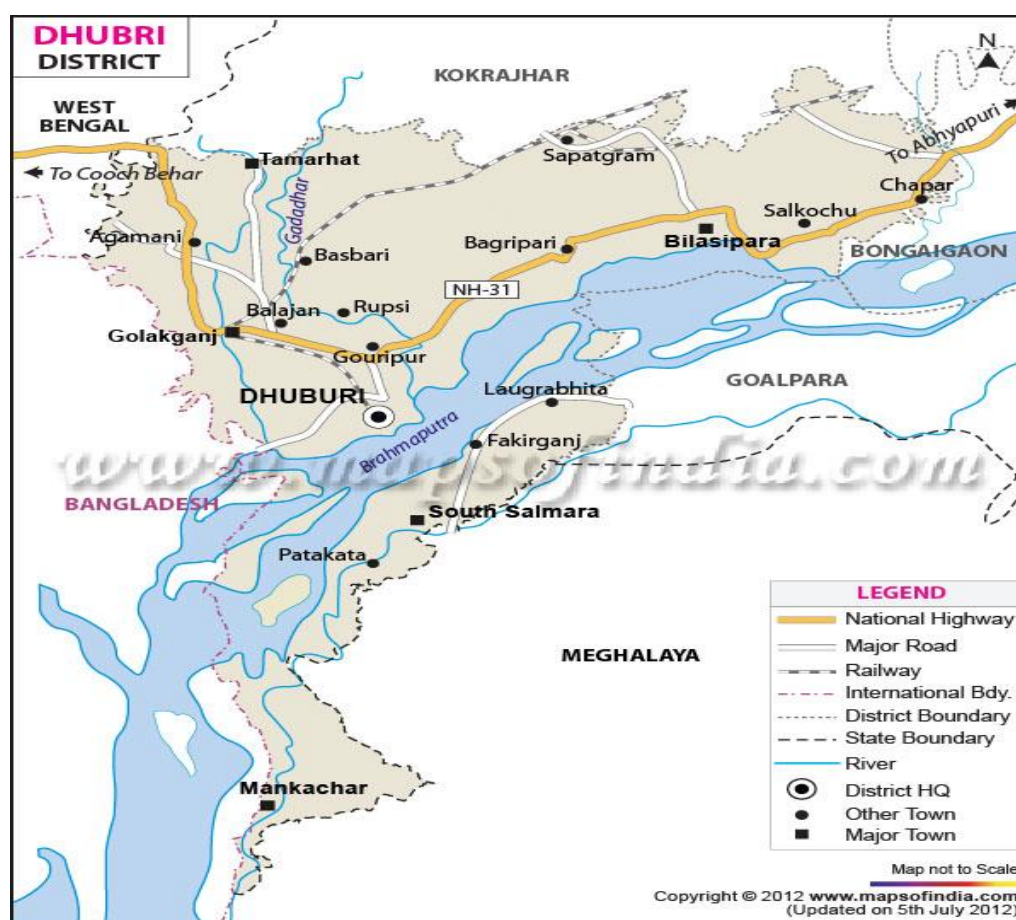
Border is the political manifestation of states. It defines geographic boundaries of political entities or legal jurisdiction, such as governments, sovereign states, federated states and other sub national identities (Hassan 2017). It is a symbol of authority, possession, destination etc. In general the state actors are at vigil in border area. Hence, the borderland society is different from other parts of the state. Being a most sensitive and contentious area, in border a large number of security personnel are deployed. But for local people, such type of security induction sometimes propels human insecurity. People cannot move freely, their social, economic and political rights are constricted. The sense of alienation, deprivation and exclusion makes them perpetually a vulnerable community within the nation-state.

### **1.3 Geographical Area**

With the emergence of two separate nations, India and Bangladesh have been maintaining multifaceted relations between the two. History, geography, ecology, ethnicity, culture, language, trade and commerce, family and kinship etc. are inseparably related to one another. The partition of India in 1947 had created two nations, India and Pakistan (East and West) and again in 1971,

East Pakistan emerged as Bangladesh. Pertinent to mention here, the fates of the borderlanders were decided by Cyril Redcliff without any extensive study and filed survey. In his own word as *‘I was so rushed that I had not time to go in to the details ..... What could I do in one and a half month?’* Cyril Redcliff confessed it in an interview with Kuldip Nayar in 1960’s (Schendel 2005: 39; Bikas 1972: 35). India and Bangladesh sharing 4096.7 km long border, the highest with any other country (fourth longest international border of the world). In the works of Willem Van Schendel, he analyses the India Bangladesh border in detailed manner. Indian states viz. Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura, West Bengal, and Assam are connected to Bangladesh (here, West Bengal is sharing 2217 km, Tripura 856 km, Meghalaya 443 km, Mizoram is 318 km, and Assam is 262 km with Bangladesh) (see appendix I). Assam is sharing 262 km long border with Bangladesh and within that Dhubri district is sharing 134 km with a long terrain and remaining portion is with Silchar and Karimganj districts of Barak Valley. At present around 50 km border is under the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. Here, the installation of barbed fencing was started two decades back and yet to get completed due to dreadful situation. Since 1979, the border has been becoming harder due to intensive protest by the All Assam Students Union (henceforth AASU), Asom Gana Sangram Parishad (AGSP), Asom Sahitya Sabha etc. including different civil societies to drive out the illegal migrants from Assam and consequently barbed fence has been erecting, border out posts have installed, border roads have constructed and more and more security personnel’s have been deployed therein. Similarly, for river area floodlight is proposed to be used to control

the cross border activities. At this instance, various steps have been initiated for the border management for last couple of decades.



Source: [www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com)

The India-Bangladesh border in Dhubri district is one of the most hazardous locations in present day context. It comprises pillar no. 1001, Ramraikuti near Shatrashal under Agomoni circle of the Dhubri district to the last pillar 1071, Shadartila under Mankachar circle. There are five circles viz. Agomoni, Golakganj, Dhubri, South-Salmara, and Mankachar and seven Developmental Blocks i.e. Agomoni, Golakganj, Gauripur, Birching, South-Salmara, Fekamari and Mankachar are located adjoining Bangladesh border. Under these seven blocks, eight *gaon* panchayats touch the border line. Due to erosion number of villages are gradually decreasing but at present almost 126

recognised villages are there (Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Dhubri 2011).

For guarding the cross border illegal activities and external threat, the security forces are deployed there. The no. 68 BSF battalion camp is responsible for river site and other two, No. 88 battalion and No. 121 battalion are related with the plain area. Moreover, 27 border outposts of the BSF are situated along the International border. Accordingly, the India- Bangladesh border is also having a sizable number of security forces, administrative officials, custom officials etc. throughout the border. In the presence of this structural security arrangement of the state, the major focus is how the borderlanders might avail collective security there. Thus, it needs to understand the ground reality of the bordered lives of this particular area. The state response for up-liftment of the local inhabitants is also tried to incorporate here. Due to their geographical distance from the centre (core area); how the economy, politics, public distribution system, health and sanitation, agriculture, employment opportunities etc. are going on, all these are the major issues to be considered here.

#### **1.4 Various Perspectives**

Border can be studied from different perspectives. From the historical point of view, it tries to look at the emergence of border in speculation of time and space. It also emphasises on the history and its transformation with the changing circumstances. In the course of time, how the different borderlanders have been functioning, their behaviour in state activities really significant issue for the recent historians (Donnan and Wilson 2001: 50). There is a historical linkage among all round borderland actors and particularly with the

local people. They have some shared memories as well as stories have been transmitting one generation to another.

The anthropological study looks at the culture and the identities of borderlanders. How the lives of border inhabitants have been changing in accordance with the transformation of society? The border and its relations with the local people is the concern of anthropological study. How the border has an impact upon the life style, their habits, relation etc. are taken into account here. The Anthropologists are concerned with how the power, politics and the policy in everyday life get consolidated is focused by this discipline. The heartland- peripheral relation in the process of power and execution of power is also under the paradigm of Anthropologist (ibid 157).

The sociological perspective is concerned with how the border has influenced upon the family and kinship, marriage, religious institutions, social setting, state relations and so forth. Society has a great influence on the behaviour of human and reversely individual might have influence in the societal process. So, sociology correlates the functioning of human being as major actors with various institutions.

From the political perspective, it is concerned with the state of citizenship, voting rights, voting behaviour, identity, state responses in the process of development, administration, and distribution, local politics etc. are very acutely related with this. At present, the concept of collective development, welfarism, and democratic values etc. try to accommodate one and all within a political sphere. Accordingly the global perspective conceptualises that the border is changing with the beginning of trade and commerce, globalised economy, global market, ideologies, international

norms etc. Therefore, until now concept of border has not been fully decomposed but somewhat softening slowly. Even for the global cooperation the border is becoming a vital factor. There has been an un-resistible change in the functioning of border and its regulations.

From the perspective of International Studies, borders have been serving as focus and symbol of state sovereignty, territorial integrity and power, and have been so since states have existed, they have now become places and symbols which marks the important transformations which states are undergoing (ibid 156). Border disputes, diplomacy, cross border trade, cross border migration, environmental problem, river and terrain, subversive activities, and export-import all these are globally acclaimed phenomena of International Studies.

Now a days, border and borderlanders are becoming one of the central issues to be studied by different disciplines. Thus the borderlanders have remained little bit beyond from the imagination of common people. Hence, the borderland or the borderlanders are getting mammoth importance across the disciplines i.e. in politics, diplomatic relation, policy administrators, and different academics etc.

### **1.5 Conceptual Categorization: Border, Frontier, Borderland**

In the study of borderlanders, various terms are categorically used in different juncture. Border, frontiers, boundaries, borderland, periphery etc. are commonly used terminology of borderland studies. A sizable number of scholars are working on different aspects of border as well as borderland issues etc. Before we move forward to understand the gravity of the problem, it is important to know different confusing terminologies very commonly and

interchangeably use in borderland study. The term frontier is widely used in United States of America; however, boundaries can be traced back to the Roman Empire. Accordingly, A. E. Moodie in 1947 wrote that ‘frontiers are areal, boundaries are linear ..... The former may be correctly described as natural. .... The latter are artificial.’ He also argued that ‘border is a boundary line and frontiers are boundary regions’ (Banerjee: 2010, Moodie: 1947). Border indicates divide of a geographical landscape on the basis of power and authority. Thus the nature and functions of border varies from one space to another. Similarly, it concedes the concept of core and periphery and in the light of spatiality that how the borderlanders are spending their life.

Borderland is the ending space of a nation. It defines the edge of a recognised territory. Hence, in a modern nation-state, border is the structural symbol of sovereignty. As it has to confront other nations, state actors are more or less visible therein i.e. custom officer, security forces, border pillar, fencing, stone, flags, security outpost, check gate etc. The nature of the state and its relations with neighbour and others, position of border, internal as well as external politics of both countries determines the border arrangement. Moreover, border is a hotspot from the economic, political and cultural point of view. The political border tries to look at the political relation in between bordering space with the state. The border itself a determinant factor to control border politics. The basic responsibility of a state is to protect its citizens from the external threat or aggression. It is very pertinent to mention here that a large number of borders have no structural fence, no security forces, no restriction from the state; people may have free or easy passes, connections with their counterparts; such borders are politically flexible. Similarly, we may



find reverse form of borders as strong fences, politically constricted and spreading sensitivity everywhere. Country like USA is more concerned about border with Mexico as well as Canada, there may be equal response from the shared countries or create tussle among the neighbours. Countries like, Benin and Nigeria, Palestine and Israel, Germany and France and at present South Asian countries and mostly India is abysmally facing border disputes with neighbours.

Border indicates limitation but it doesn't mean complete cut-off relationship due to structural change. In the age of globalization, it is very difficult to stop movement or disconnect relation with others; the nature of connectivity has been changing day by day. If we look at the border in the wake of liberal global society, its role has been minimizing, shrinking down. But at the same time, various nations, particularly South Asian regions are experiencing a reverse situation and thus they are tightening their border in accordance with requirement<sup>3</sup>. However, state has a dominant role in the governance of border area. In such situation, it is the responsibility of state to provide adequate attention not only for border but simultaneously the borderlanders too. Unlike various borderlanders of the world, the India-Bangladesh borderlanders and particularly the Dhubri borderlanders are in an unusual condition. Therefore, it makes us to revisit the governance system of borderland in a categorical manner. Even for development of border region, there are some policies and programmes have been introduced from time to time but how much these borderlanders are benefitted from them, it is a fundamental question for every concerned person who have relation with border. However, from the practical point of view, the borderland along the

Indian state of Assam and particularly in Dhubri district is a source of upheaval across the nation.

The mapping of modern borders, a process first perfected in Europe but soon applied all over the world thus symbolized a collective attempt by the state elites to establish a worldwide system of clear cut territorial jurisdictions and to have their legal and political sovereignty confirmed cartographically. The mapping of borders, according to Jones's well known classification, tended to proceed in three stages: establishment, demarcation and control of the border (Jones' 1945). He is very prudent enough to define border as a space with geographical fixation in terms of power and authority. A French lawyer Lapradelle identified a series of stages in the evolution of a boundary. He earmarked the stages as preparation, decision and execution. Willem V. Schendel in a joint venture with Michiel Baud, the article *Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands*, they have mentioned different stages of border. Even they roughly categorise the region into three geographical zones i.e. 'border heartland', 'intermediate borderland' and 'outer borderland' (1997: 221-222).

The border studies get momentum since couple of decades back. The German are more advanced in the advancement of border studies. *Geopolitik*<sup>4</sup>, an internationally acclaimed institution related with border studies has done very extensive study about the importance of geography for the sake of controlling the political system of a nation. Even for a long time they have relentless contribution and were quite successful in this regard. The students of *Geopolitik* popularises the view that a border is an area within which the growth and decline of the state is organised. Accordingly, in the assertion of

Baud and Schendel, borders create political, social and cultural distinctions, but simultaneously imply the existence of (new) networks and systems of interaction across them (Baud and Schendel 1997: 216).

Sven Tagil and colleagues in their statement “boundaries separate people (or groups of people) and the separating qualities of boundaries influence interaction between them (Tagil 1977: 14; Baud and Schendel 1997: 216). Similarly, Ancel very synonymously apply the term boundary to indicate border he said that boundaries are temporary lines where opposed power of neighbouring states are neutralised. The French political geographer referred to international boundaries as isobars (Banerjee 2010: xxix; Ancel 1938).

In the nineteenth and twentieth century’s, borders have served more prominently as political and economic divides. Colonial borders delineated the territorial claims of European super powers in far flung parts of their empires. During the Cold war, borders all over the world became markers of competing political projects (Baud and Schendel 1997: 219). In the words of Newman ‘all borders share a common function to the extent that they include some and exclude many others’ (Newman 2003: 15). He also emphatically mentioned about the essence of a border is to separate the ‘self’ from the ‘other’. As such, one of the major functions of a border is to act as a barrier, ‘protecting’ the ‘us insiders’ from the ‘them outsiders’ (Oomen 1995; Sibley 1995; Newman 2003).

Function of border is never identical across time and space (Banerjee 2010: xiv). With the changing circumstances, the border activities also have been changing. But being the structural entity, border has substantial influences locally, nationally and internationally. From the local point of view,

the borderlanders, security personnel's are inseparable from border; accordingly the state activities are intermediate and national in position and finally global market or beyond the border is labelled as international aspect. Borders are basically constructed to embolden strong nation-state system, national identity, state security and so forth but at the same time it is viral, infectious for certain group of people of border.

Stanley Ross stresses that the Mexican-US border is "a region where two different civilizations face each other and overlap (Ross: 1978, Baud and Schendel 1997: 216). He indicates the narrow sense of civilization in border studies. But it is pertinent to argue here all the civilizations of transitional world history have certain influences but unable to sustained consistently. The civilizations like Indus Valley, Chinese, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Olmec and Mayan in Central America etc. had substantial cultural or very lucidly we can say as civilizational influence in the construction of psychosomatic territoriality and borders. Since all the civilisations were river centric and their expansion had also limitation without any fixed boundary as the checkpoints of river the Nile, regulated the movement of people as well as goods<sup>5</sup>. Accordingly, the nature, geography, environment determines the border and hence it propounds numbers of groups, structure, communities in the societal paradigm. But border is acutely related with formation of family and at the same time emergence of private property. Slowly the group transformed into clan, community, city state and finally nation-state. Such in a slow and steady process border has been coming into existence and has expounding influence upon the whole society. Whenever political interest become vital, the concept of nation-state is also crucial everywhere, the sovereign power of state gets a

political shape, and then everything turns politically. Border simply implies bounding, bordering and ordering process.

If we go back couple of years, the functions of border were more natural than political. With the formation of nationality, the concept of border becomes sharper and it has importance in creating identity (Gelman and Keinan 2007:289). Thus, it not only fixes the identity but also helps to recognise each other. At present, in every nation-state, politics have gain new height after long transformation of geo-politics.

‘Borders are basically human constructs to determine geographical area’ (Banerjee 2010:41). “Border became markers in two ways. First, they revealed the territorial consolidation of states and secondly, the actual power that states wielded over their own societies” (Baud and Schendel 1997: 214-16). Furthermore, ‘border even creates political, social, and cultural distinctions; but simultaneously implies the existence of new networks and systems of interaction across them’ (ibid 216). Accordingly, geography is very crucial in determining boundary. The states are fixed in accordance with the river, hilly range, edge of deserts and so on. As for example, Nigeria and Benin are sharing same river. Accordingly, ocean, sea and river are very common determinant of border across the world. Even, it is suitable to demarcate or fixation of border. If these natural borders have no permanency, have been changing in the course of time and then there may be a scope for contestation. Hence, geography is inevitable in borderland but there may be some loopholes in the manifestation of border. As Baud and Schendel have mentioned “theorist of borderlands have tried to make a distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural borders’ based on geographical parameters. River,

watersheds, and mountains are often considered perfect natural borders. Other theorists have tried to do the same with culture, ethnicity or language. For them, a border is natural if it separates groups that differ clearly with respect to phenotype (race), language or culture,” (ibid 232). As we come to know that there are enormous differences among the border of nation-states. However, very outwardly border indicates demarcated or un-demarcated borders. Whenever fencing is there it makes it distance from the ‘others’ (Jones 2008: 31; Ackelson 2005; Amoore 2006; Andreas and Biersteker 2003; Hakli 2007; Lyon 2003; Sparke 2006).

### **1.5.1 Frontier**

The term frontier is symmetrically or interchangeably used as border region or borderland. However there are some technical differences between the two. Frontier indicates the last region of a territory, there may be already fixed border or may not be but after that very region the authority would be reduced up to nought. Thus frontier has two different meanings; on one hand it is the territorial end of a dominion and other hand it confronts with neighbours. Bolton lucidly mentioned that frontier paradigm is much older than border paradigm. Scholars invoked it explicitly to study Latin America, Africa, China, Australia and Europe especially in the medieval period of expanding states (Bolton 1917). Later period it is substantially applied in different geographical paradigm. A lecture by Robert Reynolds on “*the Mediterranean Frontiers 1000-1400*” conceptualized the Mediterranean as Europe’s medieval frontiers, which drew young adventurous to find ‘fame and fortune out at the edge of their world’ (Wyman and Kroeber 1965:21).

Accordingly, since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the term frontier is extensively used in geopolitics. Lord Curzon as early as in 1907 spoke of “*Frontier of Separation*” and “*frontiers of contract*”, which the geographer Marvin Mikesell referred to as “Frontier of exclusion and frontier of inclusion” (Darling 2012: 58, Hutteroth 1985: 145-55). For a long period frontier was treated as a separate aspect in geopolitical research. Owen Littimore, in his 1955 paper, “*the Frontier in History*,” made several points later incorporated in to the borderland paradigm (ibid 2012:58). The notion of the political frontier has traditionally been associated with the area around the border separating states from each other (House 1980; Prescott 1987; Martinez 1994; Newman 2003). Again sometimes it is used beyond the paradigm of geopolitics. Even to frame different sphere of time, Archibald Lewis in 1958 discussed the “Closing of the Medieval Frontier” which he defines as occurring between 1250 and 1350. It is acutely related with time and space, history in the determination of frontier. Embree went one step further; he gives the concept of natural frontier. He states ‘natural frontiers like mountains, rivers, marshes, deserts etc. those great obstacles of nature and that could serves as frontiers of separation and defence a primary objective (Embree 1977, Ibrahim & Kothiyal 2017: 33). Thus, we may find different types of frontiers with the changing regime.

Despite of sharp differences, border, borderland and frontier maintain close connection in the field of borderland study. In the modern era, border is somehow fixed however borderland has no definite structure at all. According to Linda T Darling, “the frontier is a line (not necessarily straight or narrow) whose purpose is to delineate one population and set of conditions from

another. The focus is on the differences between the two, their opposition or enmity”, (Darling 2012: 55). Furthermore, he also asserted the concept of Borderland stands in direct contrast to that of the frontier, traditionally understood as the outer edge of a society. In the case of United States, the frontier is also the edge of civilization, the place where the civilized society confronted the wilderness, the savage, the unknown (ibid 2012:54-55).

Thompson and Lamar have defined frontier as “a zone of inter penetration between two previously distinct peoples” (Thompson and Lamar 1981: 7). Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron stated that “by frontier, we understand a meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural borders were not clearly defined” (1999: 815) Accordingly, in the words of Turner, he stated, frontier acts as a ‘consolidating agent’ on the society behind it, reducing its diversity and creating/ introducing “nationalizing tendency” (Darling 2012:55, Turner pp. 2, 7, 14). The people of frontier region have multiple options to get involved however the social setting of local people determines the existence reducing all dilemmas. The sentiment among the people builds up in favour of emotionally attached nation with territorial integration. Hence emotion as well as nationalism tendency of frontier people helps in consolidating the essence of a nation. Parker asserts that ‘..... frontiers are extremely dynamic and often unstable zones that exhibit a marked degree of variability through space and time’ (Parker 2006: 77). In such geopolitical space of dynamism, the relation between core and periphery should be solid to sustain as a nation-state. Moreover, Parker very categorically finds out the differences between ‘border’ and ‘frontier’. According to him, borders are just linear but static, hard, dividing line whereas



a frontier is a dynamic, soft fluid zone (ibid: 80-81). He also asserted that borders and frontiers are made up of various types of boundaries i.e. geographic, political, demographic, cultural and economic (ibid: 81).

Magdalena Naum, in his article *Re-emerging Frontiers: Postcolonial Theory and Historical Archaeology of the Borderlands* speaks about frontier that ‘the existence of limits confining the territorial scope of one’s dominion, settlement and known world’. Accordingly, a frontier could be a barrier for contracts, a hot war zone, a buffer region with no clear political authority or a place of peaceful interactions and a cradle of original social and cultural solutions (Sarmah and Konwer 2015:2). In the words of Elton, he defines a frontier as a zone where various types of boundaries intersect and overlap (Elton 1996b: 3-9). Thus, we can find frontier as a space of fragility from multiple aspects i.e. culture, identity, economy, politics, community etc. but try to install the notion of edge, divide or bifurcation.

### **1.5.2 Borderland**

Border indicates structural divide of a system. The term ‘border’ is interchangeably used with boundary indicating limitation of geopolitical space. However, boundary is used very comprehensively i.e. social boundary, ethnic boundary, political boundary, cultural boundary etc. The natures, shape, scope, activism of border or boundary are being changed in the socio-political process. If somewhere a border is installed in a particular geography ensuring different political spaces is called borderland. Generally border creates two different borderlands i.e. one is inside the territory and other is outside of the territory.

The drawing of borderlines and the creation of borderlands are prevalent since long back but the formal shape or structure is given with the emergence of sovereign modern nation-states. The wish for well defined, fixed boundaries was a direct consequence of the idea of exclusive and uncontested territorial state power that emerged in the nineteenth century. Oscar Martinez in the introduction to his 1994 book *Border People*; describes borderland as “a unique human environment shaped by physical distance from central areas and constant exposure to transnational processes” (Darling 2012: 55, Martinez, pp. xvii-xviii). Moreover, these people have to maintain relation with border, state actors existing in border, sometimes outsiders and very pertinently with the state in everyday basis. Accordingly, residents of contiguous borderlands become interconnected as “active participants in transnational economic and social systems” (Darling 2012:55). Their open environment “exposes borderlanders to foreign values, ideas, customs, traditions, institutions, tastes, and behaviour”. Consequently “people of border regions are more likely to live in heterogeneous environments because of greater ethnic mixing and more extensive migration (ibid 2012:55-56).

Baud and Schendel define borderland is usually understood as the region in one nation that is significantly affected by an international border (Baud and Schendel 1997: 216). In a similar tune, Jones said the borderlands are a space where authority is imposed by force as the territory of the state and the sovereign’s power is stitched together (Jones 2008: 20). Thus borderland experiences with conglomeration of internal as well as external pressure over the years. Oscar Martinez divided borderland into four categories; i.e. *alienated borderland*, there is no cross border relation due to animosity of

states; *coexistent borderland*, here the minimum cross border contact exists despite unfriendly relation between two states; thirdly, *interdependent borderland*, here societies of both side linked symbiotically, leading to a considerable flows of economic and human resources across the border. Finally *integrated borderland*, there is no barrier on trade and human movement (Baud and Schendel 1997: 220).

The borderland paradigm, developed in the context of US-Mexico border policy, became the foundation in the field of border studies (Darling 2012: 55). There is a perennial infighting over different issues related to border and consequently borderland has got rousing alarm in every sphere of society. “The drawing of borderlines and the creation of borderlands are the outcome of the establishment of modern states all over the world”, (Baud and Schendel 1997: 216). But seeing the different borderlands, they (Baud and Schendel) try to categorise on the basis of transformation of border. They are very categorical to mention the ‘life cycle of borderland’<sup>6</sup> from the very beginning to the defunct stage i.e. embryonic, infant, adolescent, adult and finally declining.

Stanley Ross posits out that “the borderlands are the meeting places of two societies, not the edge of one. In the borderlands, two societies don’t simply abut, they overlap” (Inal 2011: 249, Ross 1978: xii). Even there may be similarities of societal norms as people are closely connected with each other. The physical as well as political setting of borderland is crucial determinants to shape the society.

Borderlands in which the border doesn’t coincide with natural and cultural divides are potentially more complex than borderland in

which these distinctions are clearer. State policies with regard to language, culture, and settlement in borderlands often evince a preoccupation with establishing new cultural divides that coincide with the border symbols of national unity (the national language, the flag, the national army, portraits of the head of the state, statues of national heroes, the liberal use of maps showing the national territory and the border, annual celebrations of Independence Day) take on a special, more emphatic meaning in borderlands (Baud and Schendel 1997: 233).

The Oxford English Dictionary defines borderlands as ‘the land or district on or near the border between two countries.’ The calculation is varied from one nation to another but influence of border is vital everywhere to level them as borderland. Cultural Anthropologists are focusing on borderlands as regions where new communities have developed/ are developing across or around, and most importantly, because of modern international borders (Parker 2006: 80, Alvarez 1999, 1995; Donnan and Wilson 1994; Flynn 1997; Hansen 1981; Martinez 1994; Pavlakovichkochi 2004; Rosler and Wendt 1999; Wilson and Donnan 1998). “Borderland is a region around or between political and cultural entities where geographic, political, demographic, cultural and economic circumstances or processes may interact to create borders or frontiers” (Parker 2006: 80). Thus it is the last point of informal interaction, which doesn’t require permission. Accordingly, we can highlight James Cusick statement as “a borderland can be defined as an area that is politically and judicially attach to one nation, province, or empire, but which is under strong economic, cultural and demographic influences from an

adjacent polity” (Cusick 2000: 47). There are massive chances of creolization of culture being the borderlanders negotiate with each others in everyday basis. However with the fragile or loose nature of the border is getting changed day by day. Today, the ethos of nationalism is substantially helping in shaping the structure and imposing formalities in transborder relationship. However, various other causes may also boost in the process like terrorism, ethnicity, influx and so forth.

The term “borderland” doesn’t indicate a fixed geographical site between two solid entities, such as nations, societies, religions, and cultures, but refers to a domain where a variety of locales meet, intersect, overlap, and often constitute a unique “borderland milieu” (Inal 2011: 247). Besides, ‘borderlands are sites and symbols of power. Grand towers and barbed wire may be extreme examples of the markers of sovereignty which inscribe the territorial limits of states, but they are neither uncommon nor in danger of disappearing from the world scene’ (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 1). According to Alvarez and Collier, borderland refers not just to the physical spaces at the conjunction of national frontiers, but to the sites that can potentially be found anywhere where distinct cultures come together in interaction without losing their differences (ibid 34). Moreover, military powers as well as accommodative activities are visible in border (ibid). The LPG system (Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization), the emergence of various policies like free trade agreements, political and monetary zones like European Union, the unification of Pacific states like ASEAN, SAARC, SEATO, CENTO and many more gives a different platform and more or less vanishing

the concept of state or demarcation of state or a border. Thus, border and its functions are vehemently reducing with the changing circumstances.

### **1.5.3 Borderlanders**

Borderlanders are the inhabitants living near the border. It is very difficult to categorise whom to incorporate in the borderlanders as there is no any fixed parameters for their recognition. However, people living nearby the border are making a borderland community and their identity is basically determined by the border. Thus, borderlanders are acutely related with the border. Based on the level of transboundary contact, the border population may be divided into two general types: one is national borderlanders and other is transnational borderlanders<sup>7</sup> (Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 281, Martinez 2005).

Martinez discusses the USA-Mexican borderlanders and he very categorically divided them into three groups i.e. Mexican, Mexican American and Anglo American (ibid 2007: 281; Martinez 2005). He also asserts that with the changing geopolitical space, the notion of identity also get changes (Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 281, Martinez 2005). Border has abysmal influence in the process of identity formation. The national identity is imposed over the citizens and the physical border makes the work easy providing structure accordingly. It is acutely related with sense of belongingness or propounds the concept of 'self' and 'others' and one thing is crucial here that up to the recent years, considerably large number of people have fragile identity as the complexity of border or political dilemma. Minghi also excerpt that:

.....boundaries are perhaps the most palpable political geographic phenomenon because they mutate and evolve based on their

history and natural and political resources. He argues that it is important to understand the context of boundaries, disputed or not, for explaining the present day situations (Banarjee and Chen: 427; Minghi 1963: 407).

#### **1.5.4 Core and Periphery in Borderland**

It is important to provide special attention to the concept ‘core/ centre and periphery’ relation. There are different angles generally considered in labelling centre or periphery of a system. Lefebvre was very clear about the concept of centrality to describe the tendency of the state to concentrate power (Lefebvre 1991 (1974): 378). When the capitalist state centralizes modes of production in particular places, it is at the same time depriving power of all other places, thereby rendering them periphery. Thus, centrality and periphery never exist in a same space, but it creates each other. Centrality is not necessarily a geographical centre; however, it is articulated in space. For example, the city as an object in Marxist theory is a centrality that holds the means of production. In space any point can be become a centrality when it assumes power, and its form is determined by the dominant power in any particular moment. Furthermore, centrality can never be fixed. Power is moving from one place to another, making one place a centrality and all other places peripheries (Lefebvre: 399, Oded Hass: [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)).

If we go through the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics* (2009), the centre- periphery relation is illustrated quite categorically. The core manufacturing states dominate and exploit the raw material producing peripheral nations. In simple peripheral countries exist, and have always existed to serve the economies of core countries. So, in the global competitive

market, there is sharp structural division among the nations. The off-shoot of such division is colonialism. Accordingly, it is also mentioned that the political centre seeks to control or manage or avoid dealing with rest of the national territory. Thus, it paves uncertainty over the periphery in every aspect of life.

The production of centre/periphery produces both spatial relations of developed and underdeveloped areas that are essential for capitalist economic growth (Smith 2008: 182, 192) and the social exclusion that strengthen state powers and the dominance of certain groups over others. Periphery, than like centrality, is not a geographical concept, although it is articulated in space. It is the space of the marginalized, from which resistance to dominant powers may arise. This means that the production of space produces both centrality and its defiance. Since centrality is not fixed, it implies a political possibility for peripheries to struggle for it (Hass: [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)). Accordingly, Lefebvre (1901-1991) argued that “industrial capitalist state uses space for colonizing our everyday life, and therefore in order to change capitalist relation of production what needs to be changed in the production of space” (ibid: 1). He was very critical about the marginalisation or exclusion process of capitalist way of production. Activists use it as a slogan when advocating basic rights such as shelter, health and education and as a critique against the withdrawal of the welfare state. In some cities new collective movements responds to segregation and inequality by conceiving new forms of urban life on a local scale (Schmid 2012: 58). As a struggle taken by social movements, the right to the city necessitates alliances. When inhabitant’s join together in partnerships across different identities, if then indeed happens, the right to the



city has the possibility to fulfill its political potential (Hass: [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)).

Hence, there is a structural division between centre and periphery; periphery depends upon centre and centre dominates it. Though it is acutely related with economic relation, but we can apply in other areas too. Some dominant language or cultures are responsible for the marginalisation of others. Hence, there is contested space in sustaining centre-periphery relation.

## **1.6 Review of Literature**

Border has become a major issue in the global paradigm of recent time. Usually border promotes territorial understanding but sometimes it becomes a source of hate mongering between/among states. Apparently, border symbolizes the power and territorial existence of nation-states. However, for the comprehensive understanding of borderland many things have been incorporated i.e. border creation, bordered lives, procedural activism, border as a portal of security, marginal space and so forth. In recent time, Association of Borderlands Studies (ABS), the Border Regions in Transition (BRIT), EUBORDERSCAPES Project, Refugee Studies Centre, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG Group), Observer Research Foundation etc. are the leading organizations have been working on various border related academic works. Accordingly, scholars of different disciplines have been contributing significantly towards borderland studies. Once the works were confined with some specific problems of certain borderland region, but at present, the scope has been widening day by day.

Malcom Anderson one of the most prominent contemporary scholars has argued that boundary disputes are no longer significant and on the contrary

emphasises the study of marginalization of many frontier regions regarding economic as well as social system. He is critical about the unchanging nature of borderland is the biggest problem for the people. Even the provincial as well as the regional borderlanders have to suffer a lot for this. The unchanging international border remains as permanent peripheral region in the eyes of policy makers as well as academicians alike (Donnan and Wilson 1999: 56).

Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson in their book *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* gives anthropological notion in understanding the nation-states. They are categorical about the nature of borderland that sometimes border has to compete and accommodate with other forms of power across the borderland. Besides, they tried to give a clear picture of supranationalism, ethnonationalism and regionalism in the light of borderland studies. Besides, with some notable examples of border disputes like Irish border, Mexico and US border, Benin and Nigeria and many others, try to accentuate geopolitical implications in the entire system. Here, the authors examine the role of the state, ethnicity, transnationalism, border symbols, rituals etc. in the larger context of nation-states. Even, the entire system is empirically verified as how border really works in different configurations. In this regard, they also extensively deal with the concept of body politics to understand the situation at the margin in terms of national security. Another, scholarly contribution from Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen through the Oxford University Press published book *Borders: a Very Short Introduction* (2012) underscores how the nature of border has been transmitting from ancient to modern nation-state system. They also highlighted the day-to-day activism i.e. tourist, tourism, identity, environment

etc. through the borders. In the age of security, are the borders conducive enough to the state sovereignty or not, these fundamental points were tried to highlight in their work. Hence, it tries to cover each and everything related with the border and the nation-state system. However, the situation of borderlanders or implications of border on them are unintentionally missed from the entire work. Undoubtedly, it is not only a major contribution but also a crucial hand book for the borderland study.

The India-Bangladesh border is becoming one of the crucial research areas from different perspectives. At this point, we can go through the work of Willem van Schendel (2005), a leading scholar of India-Bangladesh borderland studies. He has extensively discussed various issues i.e. the historical linkages, community bifurcations, transboundary markets, the sharing of enclaves, formal-informal trade, the subversive activities like illegal migration, informal transborder activities, prostitution, human trafficking, problems of the security forces and their implications on the entire system and so on. In his book *The Bengal Borderland beyond State and Nation in South Asia* examines the relationships among people, place, identity and culture throughout the system. He is critical about the bifurcation process by the Bengal Boundary Commission on the basis of religion and subsequently some people remained in adverse position challenging the nation-state. Moreover, the work is also concerned with the imposed border at this locality. Nevertheless, the notion of transnationality is prevailing in the entire study of Schendel and which is a dilution from bordered lives. He is more concerned about border spatiality in comparison to spatial implications at this contentious

space. Besides this work, he contributed various articles eventually deal with the people belonging to South Asia and particularly India and Bangladesh.

Furthermore, Ranabir Samaddar's book *The Marginal Nation: Transborder Migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal* (1999) deals with the cross border relationship between India and Bangladesh. He emphasises on the movement of people at the time of hardship and argues that history, economy, geography all these are crucial factors in human migration. Even he questioned categorically about the nation-state and national security discourse in post-colonial South Asia.

The work of Paula Banerjee, *Borders, Histories, Existences Gender and Beyond* (2010) is an historical work on borders and bordered existences. The book highlights the immense influence of border on the borderlanders. It paints us a profound portrait of migrant women, human trafficking, and women peace campaigners in different bordered states like North-East and Jammu and Kashmir of India. The suffering of bordered people due to disputes, conflict like situation and impacts of draconian laws are highlighted in this book.

Sanghamitra Misra's *Becoming a Borderland the Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial North Eastern India* (2011) gives a clear picture that border is very newly creation and nowhere it's possible to detach a society from another wholly. She argues how the colonial economy and administration has immense influence in the societal system of not only in the North East and different parts of India. She is also emphatic about the language politics across the region. The phenomenal idea of land, law and migration policy during British administration received attention in her work.

The core focus of the book is the Goalpara district, she eloquently highlighted the transformation into frontier during Mughal and later on, in the backdrop of colonial rule. She is very comprehensive about linkages of Goalpara with its vicinity.

Sanjoy Hazarika's book *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh*, (2000) is critical about the migration from East Bengal to Assam and its abysmal impact in every sphere of life. He prudently discusses the factors behind the migration and its consequences. Moreover, he tries to focus on the plight of marginal people of borderland. The deplorable infrastructure of Dhubri riverine area is comprehensively focused in his write-up. The book also impregnate with substantial inputs of different reports, judgements, procedures that how the migration issue has been addressing in the context of Assam and India in the larger political discourse.

*The Politics of the Governed* (2004) by Partha Chatterjee elucidates how the state acts in the real sense of the term. The book provides a clear picture about the transition of society in accordance with time and space. Different factors of the world, visible or non visible; but have substantial influence in governance. In accordance with the rise of mass politics, the governing techniques are also changing. He has also mentioned that sometimes politics is structurally imposed upon the society. According to him, the political society is generally understood from the global paradigm whereas, leadership's influence or mobilisation occur in local situation.

Paula Banerjee and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury in their joint venture *Women in Indian Borderlands* (2011) extensively analysed the situation of

bordered women of three different regions i.e. West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir and North East India. The sensitivity of borderland is a source of insecurity for all and particularly for women. Besides, they are very categorical about the situation of women in the aftermath of partition and communal eruption in Bengal. Moreover, they were able to concretize the pitiable condition of women with some notable case studies. The significant point is that women and children are more vulnerable in comparison to male in every situation.

Delwar Hussain contributes as *Boundaries Undermined the Ruins of Progress on the Bangladesh India Border* (2013) addressed the urgent question concerning ‘development’ and ‘failures’ in the backdrop of neo-liberalism. The book gives a comprehensive understanding of coal mine of Meghalaya and subsidiary activities related with the factories. He notably mentioned the situation of labourers, sexual life of borderlanders and presence of *hijra* and so forth. This work concludes with a notable point as every transnational society bears the scope of informal activities whether it is Sunamganj/Boropani or Dhubri borderland.

In an article by Jan Buursink *The Binational Reality of Border Crossing Cities* very frankly speaks about the role of border cities in the development process of peripheral area. He stated that “the peripheral area is relatively far away from the core region of the country and its main cities. For such exceptional location, border region is less prosperous and less developed compared to the core regions. As a consequence, border regions have remained pitiful” (Buursink 2001: 8). Even tries to give a picture of border cities across the world that cities are substantially influenced by the border.

Nora Faires in the article “*Introduction: Modern Borderlands*” gives a candid explanation about the Michigan, a state of United States of America surrounded by four lakes. Earlier, it occupied a distinct space for cultural, economic, environmental, political and social interaction for couple of centuries prior to the creation of fencing. Actually, the space has physiological connection with Canada and United States and subsequently it got momentum in the field of commerce and industry. But the creation of border has adverse affect on the entire process. The scope of employability for the natives, Canadians, Metis, Indian Diasporas, French Canadian etc. has blocked overwhelmingly. Notable point is that, Michigan is also over burdened with migrants/immigrants and which is crucial to consider from the security perspective of nation-states.

Shubhrajeev Konwer, in his unpublished thesis submitted to Gauhati University entitled *International Border in North East India: a Case Study of Indo-China Border* very categorical about Indo-China war and border dispute. He argues that governments show a surprising unwillingness to negotiate over their borders either to avoid war or to avoid additional fighting (Konwer 2009: 15). He also highlights the importance of international borders not only provides physical security and resources, they also order the national and transnational economic and social life (ibid: 20). In a nutshell, he argued, to enhance national security, development of international borders as well as peripheral regions is inevitable.

Nur Rahman Bhuyan in his doctoral research on river island Takimari, a village of Dhubri district in Assam; is very near to the Bangladesh border. In his thesis *Living at the Periphery: a study of the Muslims of Takimari River*

*Island near India Bangladesh Border* talks about the socio economic setting, kinship, the life in a periphery are focused extensively. He gives details about the culture of the village people, their dress code, food habit, their economic requirements, education, male-female ratio, employment and so forth. It is a micro level study of a peripheral village and has an inseparable relation with the present study. People studied by Bhuyan were really significant from two different perspectives, firstly they are belongs to a border village and they are also from an isolated *char* area. Hence, their lives are doubly jeopardised that is significantly hampering their smooth functioning of life as well as balanced development. So living in such villages really hitches the modern temper of global market.

In another thesis of Reece M Jones (2008); *Bounding Categories, Fencing Borders: Exclusionary Narratives and Practices in the Borderlands of India and Bangladesh* submitted to University of Wisconsin-Madison, very close to the problem of India-Bangladesh borderlanders. He talked about the trapping of people outside the border for a fixed period; no humanitarian ground is excused here. He also deals with the security system and the life of local inhabitants; even he is more concerned with the Muslims' plight in both sides. Furthermore, he also discussed about the people living in enclaves and their life as ambiguous citizenship. So, their identity and subversive life is widely discussed in his study. He focuses on how the states have been functioning with peripheral citizen in such contentious border.

Ketoukhrie-U in her unpublished thesis *Society and Politics in the Borderlands: a Case Study of a Konyak Naga Village Located at the Indo-Myanmar Border* has given widespread information about the Naga tribal



village located in remote area of Indian state of Nagaland connected with Myanmar. They have very close relation with their counterpart as the culture, community, clan, kinship etc. are very closely connected among the people in spite of transnational identity. Here, the role of the nation-state and different actors along the border is very minimal and it is impossible to suspend the age old relation. Her thesis also deals with the tradition, culture, socio-economic and political life of Konyak Naga community of the eastern part of India.

As the borderland study has become one of the vibrant topics in social science research in recent time, extensive works have been going on across the world. Even, enormous interdisciplinary works on border have been going on over the years. Accordingly, with the changing political discourse, the orientation of society including the borderland also gets changes. Hence, it is inevitable to go across the discipline to understand the borderland society whether it is Dhubri or beyond.

### **1.7 Objectives of the Study**

The study will examine the day-to-day problems of border inhabitants. The socio- economic condition, health, education are facing challenges on day-to-day basis. Their social exclusion, existence at the periphery may aptly responsible for their deprivation from opportunities as well as possibilities in life. In the border area, state security along with power is visible on regular basis viz. border outpost, fencing, security guards etc. However, the borderlanders are neither anxious nor bothered for barbed fencing, but it has an inevitable impact in their life. It has something oblivious catastrophe that is hiding out from the public surveillance. Therefore, the bulk of my focus is border and its obvious impact upon the inhabitants. It is also related with the

present bordered existence, security endeavour and state responses etc. How the government deals with the problems of local people is the major concern of this study. It also deals with how the state as well as policy makers are responding towards the lives of periphery? It is also immensely concerned with the daily life of the borderlanders in terms of health security, economy, employment opportunity, communication etc. If we conceptualize all these, the study bears the following objectives:

#### **1.7.1 Major Objectives**

1. The study examines the socio-economic condition of the people living near the India- Bangladesh border in Dhubri district.
2. To understand the relationship between the state and its citizens living near the border.
3. The study also looks at how the geographical location of a society determines the societal avenues.

#### **1.7.2 Auxiliary Objectives**

- a. To study how the border is a source of security as well as hindrance for the inhabitants living along the India- Bangladesh international border in Dhubri district.
- b. It also deals with the socio-political exclusion, alienation and marginalization of the borderlanders.

#### **1.8 Research Questions**

- a. How is the border itself a problem for the people living at the periphery?
- b. How people would accept the border in their quotidian life?

- c. Do the peripheral existences of people become obstacles in maintaining relation with core area of state?

## **1.9 Theoretical Premises**

The borderlanders study is a very recent development and theoretical implication is somewhat fragile and fuzzy. Since the study is concerned with bordering space, nation state relation, socio political preference etc. and thus various theoretical propositions i.e. socio spatiality, structural functionalism are applicable here. The theory of alienation also bears significance in this regard. As we know that for strengthening the gravity of arguments, theoretical application is very crucial in every sphere of research. Here, in this study, though it is mostly field based work, however an attempt has been made to bring forward the theoretical implication in the course of the study.

Recently, borderland has become a crucial matter for different area of studies. However, in earlier days most of the works on border were explanatory in nature and scholars are concerned with their individual work. Undoubtedly, it is a multidimensional phenomenon. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to shape in a particular theoretical framework. History, context, process of development, security, functioning of borderlanders etc. are notable areas to be studied here. However, the system of borderland study has varied in accordance with time and space. In such situation, establishing a theoretical base is somewhat problematic in nature. Tony Payan, in his article argues two-fold problems to construct theories in border studies. 'First, the multidisciplinary nature and geographical dispersion create structural problem of border theorising. Second, and importantly, the methodological problem also hampers in border theorizing' (Payan 2003: 3-4). Therefore, scholars have

to go through different theories of various disciplines to understand facts of the border in a detailed manner. In this regard, theories whether it has direct connection with the border or not, but we can apply in the broader borderland paradigm i.e. ‘socio spatial theory’, ‘theory of alienation’, ‘relative deprivation’ and the ‘hard and soft border’ etc. Indeed, here, in this study of Dhubri borderlanders, we are prioritizing socio-spatial theory to look forward the issue with allied theoretical premises.

The present study is a field based work, and subsequently it is better to develop an inductive process of theoretical application. Like others, problem of Dhubri borderlanders’ is also fragile and we must look into it from different theoretical orientation. Hence, it comprises the study of borderlanders in general and the state as well as security system in particular. It may also provide space for testing against the facts of reality. It endorses to build up a scientific temper to study the complex bordered lives.

### **1.9.1 Socio Spatial Theory**

Socio-spatial theory deals with space as a major factor to determine the entire system. Space determines the understanding of social practices, institutional forces and material complexity of how human and spaces interact. Space is related with geography and social system intermingly. Michel Foucault defines space as, “the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space..... we live inside a set of relations” (Foucault 1986:23; Khan 2000: 7). Nigel Thrift defines space as, “the outcome of a series of highly problematic temporary settlements that divide and connect things up in

to different kinds of collectives which are slowly provided with the meaning which render them durable and sustainable (Thrift 2003: 95).

Socio-spatial theory is consolidated with space, time, network, and production system. On one hand it makes centre and core areas and reversely other becomes periphery. Both centre and periphery are inextricably related with each other; even periphery is dependable upon the core in production system. Subsequently, it would become the source of exploitation, deprivation, and alienation etc. in the greater domain of society. In the subsequent part of the chapters, an attempt has been made to have a more elaboration understanding on theories concerning with borders.

### **1.9.2 Theory of Alienation**

Theory of alienation is derived from economic aspect of social system. Unlike others, power and area of existence are also crucial determinant factors for society. Only the important places, area, persons are given leading position, attention since all these bear some probability for extending their support in future. “Alienation is often associated with loneliness, but again, all lonely people are not alienated” (Khan: 1994, Josephson and Josephson: 1962). The theory of alienation is itself a negative phenomenon. It sidelines a sub system from entire mechanism as the people of periphery remain geo-politically excluded from its core system. The study of India-Bangladesh borderlanders can be studied under the purview of this theory. It enhances their social exclusion, marginalization in proper sense of the term. Considerably, a large numbers of people living near the border are deprived by the nation-state system. These people have been suffering chronic vulnerability, social exclusion, and alienation etc. in the political and economic discourse and

something beyond. Indeed, periphery makes them not only alienated but also marginalised too. It requires a substantial change in policy regime for their profound development in near future.

### **1.9.3 Hard and soft border**

The present day's borders are structurally divided in to hard and soft. Hard borders are fenced and walled; however, the soft borders are open and regulated in accordance with necessity. Hard border requires or possesses passport, visa, fencing, border gate, border pillar, security forces etc. Indeed, hard border is totally controlled. Accordingly, soft border is open for all; it doesn't require formalities to use the border what a hard border requires. Hard borders are institutionalized, have a legal position and also have proper demarcation of territory. It is also well written and well-structured in nature. However, soft borders are shaped on the basis of identity, memories, stories, custom, culture etc. Thus, soft borders are just narrative in constructs.

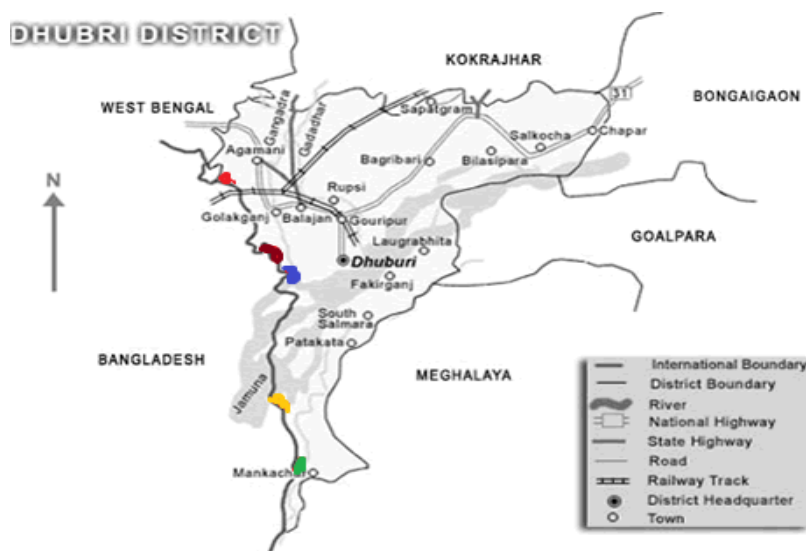
In the era of globalization, borders are working in diverse manner viz. few borders are soft with normal functioning, a few are hard but formal one, other portions are neither hard nor soft but conditional functioning there. The functioning of borders of different countries is really mysterious. At present, the global market, ideologies, various developmental projects, international relations etc. are determinant factors for border and for its functioning.

### **1.10 Methodology**

The study examines the day-to-day lives of the Dhubri borderlanders of India-Bangladesh border. To comprehend the ground reality, it is vital to incorporate people from all walks of life. Considerably, a large number of people are living in different villages along the border. In Dhubri, out of fourteen

developmental blocks, seven are connected with the international border. Accordingly, out of nine circles, five are coupled with the border. The villages are uneven and it makes critical to apply the stratified random sampling therein. Therefore, five villages viz. Ramraikuti, Binnyachara, Ghewmari, Kalairalga and College Nagar are taken from not only five bordered circles but five bordered Assembly segments too. These villages are purposively selected from each development block. From every village 50 households are targeted for interview in accordance with respective electoral rolls. However, during our filed visit on different occasions, finally 178 samples were possible to collect from five villages. But, interview with some local influential persons including village headman, officials of panchayats, local school teachers, government professionals etc. have provided a clear picture about the real scenery of respective village. So, here, focused group interview and observation are applied source from the methodological point of view.

## 1.2 Location of Selected Villages



Ramraikuti	Binnyachara	Ghewmari	Kalairalga	College Nagar

Source: Field Study

This research is primarily based on field work. However, both primary and secondary sources of data collection are followed in the entire study. The participatory observation and formal as well as informal interviews with the local people gives us in-depth knowledge about the problems and prospects of borderlanders. The security personnel, government employees are also dependable sources of information in this regard. Moreover, to articulate the study, a structured interview scheduled with close and open ended questions is used in data collection. It helps us in qualitative as well as quantitative information in understanding the problem. Here the major parameters like economy, health, education, gender, transport and communication are categorically scrutinised.

**Table: 1.1 Research sample**

<b>Name of the Circles</b>	<b>Agomoni,</b>	<b>Golakganj,</b>	<b>Dhubri,</b>	<b>South Salmara,</b>	<b>Mankachar</b>	<b>Total 5 Circles</b>
Name of Villages	Ramraikuti	Binnyachara	Ghewmari (char)	Kalairalga /Assamer alga	College Nagar/ Barmanpara	5 villages
Targeted sample	50	50	50	50	50	250
Interviewed	39	37	38	24	40	178

Source: Field Investigation

Another important aspect is that border villages are different in size, shape and structure. There are few villages very close to the border, some others are along the border and some are at the end of the border. In this study, the select villages fall considerably under all these categories. Among these, in some border villages, people are allowed to use border roads and in some are not allowed to use the roads. Hence, there are differences in terms of problem



created by border in between families who are living along the border and those who are little bit away from the border. So, here the people living in ~1km (one) from the fence have been taken into account.

**Table 1.2: Selection of Border Villages**

One Village from each Border connected Circles

Circle	Block	Select Villages	Gram Panchayat	Distance from border
Agomani	Agomani	Ramraikuti i & ii	Satrasal	1km
Goalganj	Dhubri	Binyachara i & iii	Binyachara	1km
Dhubri	Gauripur	Ghewmari	Gaspara	1km
South Salmara	Fekamari	Kalairalga i & ii	Borairalga	.29km
Mankachar	Mankachar	College nagar/ Barmanpara i	Mankachar West	.5km

Source: Field investigation

The borderlanders are habituated staying in such peripheral area. In the 134 km long border, the problems are varied from one village to another. For the peripheral location, transport and communication, health, education, sanitation, daily earnings, erosion, displacement, agriculture land, the barbed fencing, border road, border security are given priority in the questionnaire. In fact, close observation of borderlanders' everyday life contributed a lot to understand the ground reality. It is basically an attempt for empirical study with theoretical grounding. Moreover, the primary and secondary sources i.e. books, journals, periodicals, paper, reports, official statistics etc. are incorporated in the research. Even the data are analysed by the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).

### **1.11 Scope of the Study**

Borderland is the geographical buffer between two nation-states. In the modern world, the concept as well as structures of border has been changing day by day. Border and borderlanders constitute multiple possibilities as well as obstacles. In these days, border is one of the most significant areas of study. Sometimes, it is examined from international relation, sociological, political, anthropological perspectives in local, national and international paradigm. The physical boundary, demarcation, fencing, development activities in border are matter of concern for all. International relation, state, security, citizenship, women, children, poverty, agriculture, market, distribution system in periphery all are acutely related with borderland study. The communication system, health, education, life expectancy, employment opportunities, electricity, various welfare schemes, human rights are also inseparable from borderland. Likewise, family and kinship, politics and political participation, presence of state at border are also important. Here, it is a micro level study of some particular villages along the India-Bangladesh border in Dhubri district of Indian state Assam. It will provide scope to study the border issues in a broader perspective in coming days.

### **1.12 Scheme of Chapters**

Borderland community is becoming increasingly visible in recent time. Like others, the borderlanders of the India-Bangladesh have different experience since the creation of an international border in place of an inter-district border. It has drastic affect on the society, politics, economy of the commoners and till date they are relentlessly facing hardship internally, externally and even locally too. Their daily life is regularly controlled and which is inevitable from

the nation-state perspective. Thus, through this thesis, a holistic view of Dhubri borderland is tried to underscore.

The first chapter, '*Introduction*' tries to present a comprehensive introduction about the problem as well as procedure of the research. Here, it includes, problem of the study, objectives, research questions, some conceptual understanding, methodology, review of literatures and scheme of chapters and so on.

The second chapter, '*Border, Periphery and the State: a Theoretical Understanding*' attempts at analysing the various border related theories and its application both from horizontal and vertical level. Here, it includes 'hard and soft border', 'socio-spatial theory', 'core and periphery', 'elite theory' and 'body politics' etc. Under the light of these theories, the situation of Dhubri borderland is tried to address comprehensively.

The third chapter '*Lives at the Border: the Social Setting*' is related with the structure of society at this margin of borderland. The structural linkages among the communities i.e. religion, language, gender, family and kinship are significant here. History provides enough evidences to understand the entire society. It also tries to comprehend the inter-community and intra-communities linkages of the borderlanders.

Fourth chapter, '*Bordered Lives: the Presence of the State*' investigates state responses towards its citizens. These are generally determined by economy, education, health, transportation, life of old people, children, women, accessibility of modern facilities, future possibilities and so on. Presence of state through the instrumentalities, police and security system at the border has been scrutinised here.

The fifth chapter, '*Politics of the Borderlanders*' tries to underscore the role of people in borderland activism. The local politicians, *Mullah*--- the cleric, village school teachers etc. have substantial role in all activism of borderland. From family management to link up the interior village to the national politics, everywhere these small but non conventional groups of people have pivot importance. Besides, the formal politics and its transition at this borderland i.e. political behaviour, religious influence, community preference etc. have been incorporated here. The role of border in the nation building process has also given adequate space in this chapter.

The chapter **six**, the '*conclusion*' summarises the major findings and analysis of the study. This chapter ends with some suggestions, limitations and future prospects of the study.

### **1.13 Summing up**

Borderland study has become part and parcel of nation-state system as no countries of the world are internally or externally stable. The borderlanders have become an emerging community facing with similar problem across the world. There is a transition from the natural un-demarcated border to structural demarcated and strong border. Early geographers such as Curzon (1907) and Holdich (1916) envisioned the limits of ancient polities as being determined by constraining geographic features such as rivers and mountain ranges (Pounds 1951; Parker 2006: 83). Accordingly the concept of Whittaker has shown that rivers like the Rhine, the Dunnbe, and the Tigris were primarily lines of communication during the Roman period, even though they were recognized (by most) to be the 'border' of Roman Power (Parker 2006: 83; Isaac 1990; Whittaker 1994). However, today there is noticeable change in the

nature, activity, politics, society, culture of border and it is unstoppable in coming days too. Indeed, despite sensitivity, it is pertinent to pay adequate attention on borderland society for the greater interest of the nation. The Dhubri borderland of Indian state of Assam is facing permanent sensitivity throughout the years.

## End Note

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<sup>1</sup> Each nation-state has its own political apparatus over a specific territory within its own citizens backed up by military force and a nationalistic, sovereign creed (Macdonis & Plummer 2008:509-510). The Treaty of Westphalia marked the beginning of the era of the nation state and nationalism, which historians and geographers studied and explained during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Jailly pp. 2).

<sup>2</sup> See Adelman and Aron, pp. 815

<sup>3</sup> See Banerjee 2010: xxx

<sup>4</sup> *Geopolitik* is a school of political geography established by Major Haushofer in Germany.

<sup>5</sup> See Diener and Hagen 2012: 23

<sup>6</sup> Baud and Schendel very categorically define the life cycle of borderland. The First one is *embryonic borderland*, here clear borderlines are not distinguishable but where two or more frontiers close into, sometimes clash with, each other. The second stage is *infant borderland*, here economic and political linkages are very normal, kinship linkages are maintained, national identity is vague, and people may cherish the hope of the border may disappear one day. Thirdly, *adolescent borderland*, here people have clear memory regarding the open up relation, economic and social relation is separated very recently but not totally restricted yet; fourthly, *adult borderland*, relation continued but problematic, border is accepted, the natural delink of earlier time is socially accepted. Fifthly, *declining borderland*, the border loses its political importance; it is wither away through violent or peaceful process. Finally, *defunct borderland*, here the concept of border is abolished and physical structure is removed away (Baud and Schendel 1997: 224, Schendel 2005:373).

<sup>7</sup> National borderlanders are people who, while subject to foreign economic and cultural influences, have minimal or superficial contact with the other side of the border owing to their indifference to their next door neighbours or their unwillingness or inability to function in any substantive way in another society. Transnational borderlanders, on the other hand, are individuals who maintain significant ties with the neighbouring nation; they seek to overcome obstacles that impede such contact and take advantage of every opportunity to visit, shop, work, study, or even live on the “other side”. Thus, their lifestyles strongly reflect foreign influences (Gelbman and Keinan 2007:281, Martinez 2005).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Border, Periphery and the State: a Theoretical Understanding**

Borderland is a metaphor for processes of many things, psychological, physical and mental (Anzaldúa and Keating, 2000: 176)

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Border essentially determines boundaries or limitations encompassing different geopolitical entities. Everywhere, the basic purpose of border is to differentiate, bisect or restrain one from another either physically or in an imagined way. “Borders are not ‘natural’ phenomena; they exist in the world only to the extent that humans regard them as meaningful” (Diener and Hagen 2012: 1). In geo-politics, border makes territorial differentiation in spheres of the local, regional and global to percolate into power and authority in terms of everyday businesses of states. It endows recognition of different aspects and particularly territorial limitation to escape from overlapping or disputes to maintain relation with others. In this way, the border has substantial impact on the age old linkages of people i.e. family, friendship, clan, kinship, society, culture, ethnicity, identity, tradition, politics etc. in dismantling permanently or reshaping different configurations fixing their subsistence forever. The imposed borders are state configurations whereas some borders are created on the basis of popular demand. Thus, border and borderland society are inseparably related with political aspiration of state. Here, we may find huge differences among the borders of the world on the basis of nature, border activism, borderland society, state response, security arrangement, border construction, functioning etc. Hence, border creates a political space within

the territory or beyond have to negotiate between the states or borderlanders or *vice versa*. As a result, it helps in making spatial differences conceding i.e. core and periphery, heartland and borderland, mainstream and body politics etc. within a given political system. It is pertinent to mention here, periphery conventionally gets less attention. Problems are inadequately addressed and people have limited choice in comparison with the core area and consequently it remains a periphery forever. Unlike others, Dhubri borderland is crucial from spatial point of view as the society has remained captive as a periphery of the Indian state of Assam.

Borderland study encompasses different aspects i.e. border, frontier, periphery, borderlanders, state response and all the state and non state actors of border. The nature and functions of border may have differences in accordance with time and space, from one locality to another; however, very apparently borderlands have some fundamental similarities across the world. Martinez argued:

.....the determining influence of the border makes the lives of border peoples functionally similar irrespective of location, nationality, ethnicity, culture and language. In other words, all borderlanders share the border experience. (Martinez 1994: xviii; Flynn 1997: 312)

Thus, we may go through different perspectives as mentioned in the previous chapter i.e. International relation, Anthropological, Geographical, Sociological, Political, and Global and even beyond. Being the complex nature of border, to find out the ground reality, different theoretical insights are important in borderland study. The multifaceted nature as well as functions

brings confusion in the propagation of theories and hence, theoretical prisms are invariably changing in different circumstances. Accordingly, to understand the borderland precisely depends mostly upon empirical work, however, the ideas are obnoxious to accept or convincing so far. Actually, in border demarcation, fencing, security arrangement, maintaining bilateral or multilateral relations internally or externally etc. are the sole directorate of state. At the same time, borderlanders' security, health, education, electricity, public distribution system, agriculture, overall development etc. are acutely related with the system of governance. But in the age of global coherence, state must look beyond and hence, the external activity may have repercussion on the peripheral citizens. From the statist perspective, nobody can deny the importance of bilateral or multilateral relations and its influences; but here, it is an attempt to look at the borderlanders' problem beyond this traditional standpoint. It is an attempt to address the problems of people inhabiting along the fencing of India and Bangladesh international border in Dhubri district of Assam. Looking at the objectives of the present work, the theories i.e. soft and hard border, socio spatial relation, theory of relative deprivation, theory of alienation, and elitism etc. are prioritised here to understand the issues of borderlanders. As border has substantial impact internally, externally and even locally therefore, intermingling different theories coherently may provide us a solid base to understand the bordered lives of Dhubri in particular and beyond.

## **2.2 Border, Periphery and the State**

Border is basically concerned with geopolitics, that is formal but we may find symbolic or informal border widely too. The political borders are usually controlled, restricted, structured, institutionalized and demarcated in



accordance with political settings of that very state and at the same time regulated within the existing international norms in global paradigm. As we mentioned earlier the presence of security guard, outpost, flags, hoardings, signboards, pillars, fencing, stones etc. are very common to symbolise a border. From the statist point of view, it carries significance in terms of sovereignty, power and authority, nationalism etc. Sometimes, these political borders emerge as a contested space among the nations over the time. Therefore, border is a space for perpetual sensitivity, having widespread implications encompassing internal or external endeavours. So, there are various international laws promulgate for border management e.g. 'zero line' or 'no man's land', structural barbed fencing etc. to ensure the national boundaries are free from overlapping and subsequently to reduce territorial disputes or war mongering among the nations. As a result, construction of fencing, border road, flood light, border guards are installed along the borders in accordance with the international norms. However, it is permitted to live up to the very end of the nation. In fact, different actors including local commoners can access necessitates, work, involve in agriculture production, and maintain trade and commerce and other day-to-day businesses. However, borderland activism is bounded with ongoing existing relation between the states or existence of the border.

The concept of modern political border emerged in accordance with the nation-states. On one hand, state determines the border and at the same time border has tremendous influence upon the state as well as on the borderlanders. Within the territorial spatiality, the state actors i.e. citizens, security guards are present there. As the borderland is an integral part of the

state; is bound to provide all round facilities in accordance with the facilities ensured in core areas.

In recent time, the borderland scholars, very commonly use the term borderlanders in a phenomenological way to indicate the inhabitants near the border. With a sizable number of people, the borderlanders have built up their own community irrespective of caste, class, religion, ethnicity etc. as they are under the domain of same socio-political environment. There are two basic models of borders- one is structural or physical and the other is virtual border. There is a sharp difference as the political border is structural and more or less fixed but bordering on the basis of ethnicity, culture, language are fluid and even creolized and subsequently it becomes very difficult to separate one from another. In fact, the historical linkage has also unavoidable impact upon the borderlanders. Very significantly, globalisation has substantial contribution in bringing the changes into borderland activism. One notable example is the Europe as they have free pass to move within their territorial domain called the Schengen<sup>12</sup> zone and consequently hostile and socially frozen borders have turned into a common platform of cooperation and collective bargaining for enhancing cooperation. For them, border is not a setback and on the contrary used as blessings. Accordingly, China has an economic endeavour as *Shenzhen* for capital investment to enhance market capitalism among its neighbouring states. It is a major financial center of Southern China, resulting in a vibrant economy made possible by rapid foreign investment since the establishment of the policy of 'reform and opening' of the Special Economic Zone in late 1979. The basic but common feature is major river transportation through *Shenzhen*, Maozhou, and Longgang rivers. Very recently, Shenzhen ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the

Global Financial Center's Index published by the Z/Yen Group and Qatar Financial Center Authority. Similarly, Dubai is recognised as one of the economic hubs of Middle East. It becomes a crucial junction for economic cooperation of Arab states. For economic gain, the barrier is vanquished and it enhances connectivity. It boosts to leap the economic activity and revive the abandoned area having initiatives with new visions. So, the borders are used as source of opportunities and it is significant for all round development within the state or beyond. The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries are not lagging behind in this regard as they have common market for regional interest. However, if we look at the South Asian region<sup>3</sup>, the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is not working in a positive way and the borders are becoming harder day by day. Even, the significance of SAARC has been losing its strength. But from 1990's onwards, India is steering to cooperate with a herculean policy as India's Look East and in later period with the changing regime of politics. Since 2014 Indian government formally replaced it with Act East Policy to connect the ASEAN countries with the South Asian nations. Actually, there are some similarities among the ASEAN countries in different dimensions such as religion, culture, history and ethnicity which are boosting a lot in bringing together. Even, among them the age old trade relation or exchange of goods near by the borders is still prevalent among the borderlanders. The India-Myanmar informal ties through the international border *haat* at Moreh, a bordering district of Manipur or different other unrecognised bordering areas experience such type of traditional but informal linkages over the years. Accordingly, many parts of the Indian border along West Bengal, Mizoram, Nagaland and

Tripura have been sharing bilateral trade and commerce despite of barriers imposed by concerned authority. Moreover, India-Nepal and India-Bhutan relations are maintained in a soft manner as there is no restriction in free movement in terms of transport and communication, economic activities, goods, and even human resources and so on. However, it is alleged that such informal transnational market provides unrestrained space to illegal intruders in indulging the nation in a tricky state with abysmal insecurity expounding challenge for the state. Nevertheless, the scenery is almost similar across the world whether it is a case of Mexico-US, US-Canadian or the borders of South Asia, South-East Asian and African nations. Everywhere we may find a transmitting tendency despite of physical borders. Nowhere, it is possible to restrict the people installing border and that is the reality of globalisation of world politics.

Again, if we consider the issues of borderland, we may find that people of borderland have their age old bondage and try to sustain denouncing the restriction imposed by the state and it is a problem not only in South Asian region but other continents too. But, whenever the fencing is constructed, the notion of state becomes sharper in the borderland area vandalizing the relation imposing national identity expounding greater integration. The community identity is sometimes submerged in the wake of political or national identity. Although borderlanders may have multiple identities but the basic identity is determined by the border. Hence, it is important to mention here, being most of the political borders are imposed upon the people and they have refutation over their unexpected lineage and consequently it becomes a bone of contention somewhere (i.e. Kashmir, Hongkong etc.). Furthermore, due to

substantial influence of globalisation the nature, structure, functioning of the borders has been changing day by day. If we look at the border orientation, with the changing circumstances or social transformation, the soft borders are becoming harder and reversely hard ones to softer or diminishing or even the newly constructed borders are common example of recent time. The changing nature of border is determined by the state; however, it has direct impact upon the borderlanders. So, somewhere border is virtually effective for the local people and contrary it may bring unexpected predicament to others lives also. In the words of Baud and Schendel:

National borders are political constructs, imagined projections of territorial power. Although they appear on maps in deceptively precise forms, they reflect, at least initially, merely the mental images of politicians, lawyers and intellectuals. Their practical consequences are often quite different. No matters how clearly borders are drawn on official maps, how many custom officials are appointed, or how many watch towers are built, people will ignore border whenever it suits them. In doing so, they challenge the political status quo of which borders are the ultimate symbol (Baud and Schendel 1997: 211).

Every modern nation-state has been prioritising on border management considering constant global unrest or anti-national transborder activities. Thus, it is the state's responsibility to keep strict vigilance upon every nook and corner including on the borderland. Since, border management is totally state centric, in most of the cases views of local people are kept at bay. The political elite determines the different policy and programmes including land boundary

agreement, construction of pillars and fencing, deployment of security personnel and something beyond. In this way, the borders are grounding with more structural as well as institutional machination. Therefore, sometimes it becomes a bone of contention between the local people and the state or with their counterparts. But, in the global paradigm, there are many borders having source of opportunities i.e. border like France and Germany, once the hostile border turns in to a cooperative ground in the fields of economy, culture, trade and commerce, education, health etc. At present, all these states have substantial contribution in the development process not only within Europe but across the globe through ‘cooperative federalism’<sup>4</sup>. Here, all the people in general and particularly the borderlanders are benefitted by the expansion of market, capital, and resource management. Accordingly, sometimes border tourism provides extensive space in getting involved in different activities and contributing a substantial amount of profit to the state exchequer. In recent time, some other crucial issues i.e. environment protection, climate change, ecology are also try to incorporate in the broader arena of borderland study. Besides, border management is vital to solve the border related issues in an amicable manner to ensure mutual benefits. The borders like India-Bangladesh, USA-Mexico, Israel-Palestine, Benin-Nigeria, North and South Korea and many other borders are perennially facing some managerial problems. Sometimes, such erratic situation creates tension destroying the normal condition at the local as well as at the national level.

In the global context, assertion of political identity is acutely related with territorial premises. “National identity links with territory, culture, language, history, emotion, and memory etc. The process of nation formation

legitimate national identity by tracing it back to fictional common past of specific groups. It is therefore crucial to reflect on how discourses of national identities are created by privileging certain spatial units, such as the borders” (Banerjee 2010: xii). Thus, border is not only physical but mental or psychological too (Kristof 1959; Prescott 1987; Herzog 1990; Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 280). It defines the theoretical limitation first and then the structural as a border is installed, nobody can surpass without formal procedure. Hence, border is not just a border to restrict the people but it shapes the ethos of nationhood.

Borderlanders are indifferently experiencing two things; on one hand it is a source of constriction and on the other hand it is a gargantuan field of opportunities. If we go through the history, there were no demarcated, constructed, and well fenced formal state borders and whenever it has come in to existence, the age old relations have turned into a new paradigm of neighbourhood relation. Indeed, it has substantial impact in the field of society, economy, politics, kinship, culture, custom, day-to-day life of borderlanders. With the construction of border, the shared histories, societal bondage, cultural closeness of people are dismantled forever and consequently have to reshape their identity as fractured, divided denouncing their age old linkages. The political recognition and the essence of nationalism make them more concrete in this regard. Never the less, border creates geopolitical structure, propounding an identity in accordance with nationality and which has tremendous influence in strengthening the sense of nationalism. But, major point is how the people are accepting the border. It is a matter of concern in today’s politics.

### **2.3 Hard and Soft Border**

Border is the external geographical configuration of a state. It delimits the sovereign authority entrusted to a state and also prohibits external aggression or trespassing from other side of the border. However, in the age of globalization it has become prudent enough to sustain international relation and massive transborder activities among the states, enunciating implication of border in geopolitics. The massive interstate activities inculcate cooperation and at the same time the reciprocal relation like hostility, aggression, constant threat on sovereignty makes the border a contested matter forever. Therefore, every sovereign nation-state emphasise upon the demarcated land boundary to define internal and external functionaries entrusted to them. Even, with the emergence of the concept of private property and the competitive atmosphere across the world have constant pressure to introduce boundaries of nation-states. Over flow of elements inwards or outwards may create imbalance or dismantle the whole system. Moreover, the concept of welfarism may also lay responsibility to protect the life and property of individuals. Accordingly, it indicates a comprehensive responsibility towards its own citizens, without harming others to sustain amicable relation or perpetual peace and development. In normal situation, no state has intension to create chaos or rift within the territory or beyond. Moreover, the peaceful situation of neighbours is inevitable for the overall security as well as development of the state or *vice versa*. So, border undoubtedly a formal arrangement, but for what interest it has been working is a matter of concern in the study of borderland society.

The trajectory of a border relegates with long history that starts from image or symbolic border to a structural hard one. It was acutely related with



natural settings, terrain, landscape or geographical locations in the process of territorialisation and even it continues in recent time. The concept of hard border or installation of fencing is very recent edition in border management. If we consider durability of border, in earlier time, borders were very flexible, whereas the modern states have fixed border with territorial claims. In the subsequent era, even after the emergence of modern nation-states, for a long period, there was no provision of such type of demarcated border or territoriality and if somewhere existed, its role was very nominal. The large scale land resources and at the same time less amount of pressure from the population may be the real fact behind this. But, with the increasing pressure on land, competition within the society, scarce situation of other resources at present the traditional concept of state has been withering away or have reshaped into a new structure with fixation of border for territorial security. Thus, the present structure of state is a procedural outcome in accordance with the transitional history of border. Hence, state is a multi tasking agency with some limitation and border is one of the determinants in this regard.

There are various types of borders across the world, however we can categorise it in two broad perspectives i.e. demarcated border and border without demarcation. The demarcated borders are preferably fixed and formal procedures are followed to maintain transborder activities. Such types of border are also labelled as hard border. Here, the life of common people is restricted, the security system is more visible, border fencing is there, and cross border relation without consent is considered as illegal. However, the level of restriction is varied from one locality to another as in some borders people are allowed to maintain transborder relation but in others they are not.

Somewhere they may cross at day time but at night it is totally restricted, somewhere at the time of emergency people are allowed and otherwise not, sometimes peoples' movement depends on the moods of the security personnel. Again, it is difficult for the nation-state to enforce uniform code in the borderland management as the situation varies from one space to another. In some locations inter or intra borderlander's relation is totally denounced by the state as well as other different stakeholders. Sometimes, opportunities and restrictions are mismatched at the borderland and subsequently it boosts the cross border unlawful practices. Accordingly, too much formalism of the border bears high intensity of informal activities. However, in some borders informal activities are unofficially allowed despite of strict prohibition imposed by the state. In these nefarious transborder activities, involvement of security forces, government officials including excise officers and even the borderlanders is undeniable. But, one thing is very clear that border acts as a baseline to justify all these activism.

Again, from the statist perspective it is necessary to construct a border for the sake of security endeavour. It protects the nation-state as a whole and citizens along the border in particular. Internal security of the state is inevitable in maintaining peace and perpetuates development throughout the nation-state. Moreover, it protects both material and non material things i.e. identity, rights, nationalism, culture, development, commodities, resources etc. Accordingly, some borders are installed with bifurcating different identities of people i.e. community, culture, ethnicity, and race etc. These borders are more flexible in comparison to the geo-political border. The geopolitical borders are articulate and fixed, the space can be scaling, there is a need of recognition,

formalism, compulsion, and control etc. and as a result these are labelled as hard border. But, the soft borders are fluid and flexible in nature and can change the line or reshape itself as a new boundary in accordance with requirement.

The concept of hard and soft border is somewhat traditional in borderland study. The political borders are hard, restricted, controlled, if any political turmoil occurs or the bilateral relation is disturbed; there may be direct impact on the border. If we look at the transborder relation from the prism of economics, undoubtedly it requires formal and soft ones for easy transaction of bilateral relation. It requires consumer, customers, market, profit, capital etc. to sustain the import-export system through the border. The border should not be a barrier on customers' choice as well as motif of profit and formal border is inevitable here. Accordingly, no countries are self sufficient and therefore it wants cooperation to fulfil its requirements. There are different levels of transborder cooperation. We may categorise firstly, permissible and formal, second, non permissible and restricted, thirdly, permissible but informal and fourthly, non permissible but informal. Thus, borders can be categorized as extreme permissible, that is soft and extreme non-permissible, that is hard and in between these some intermediary borders are there. Therefore, it is very difficult to locate as soft and hard border.

Sometimes, some borders bear two contradictory phenomena-----availability of opportunities and imposition of restrictions. Most of the hard borders are laid in this category of border. But ultimate consequence is enhancement of informal transborder activities. The geographical interiority, backwardness, alienation, marginalisation are the guiding factors of informal

relation and consequently it speculates sensitivity throughout the nation. Hence, the political discourse has substantial impact to determine the nature of borders.

In the nation-building process border has pertinent role in internal as well as external functionalities. Nation without demarcated territory is difficult to recognise as claim or counter claim makes it more complex. Thus, fixation of boundary is inseparable part of the nation-state system. It makes the border structurally hard but apparently soft in the global paradigm. Today, if we look at the borders, we may find hard, soft or intermediate borders. Moreover, the recent phenomenon as negotiated<sup>5</sup> border is also getting importance across the globe. The entire system depends upon the ground reality of border or bilateral relations between/among the states. It is important that the nature of border has acute relation not only with the existence of border but with time and space too. However, territoriality or the hard border has become part and parcel of modern nation-state system.

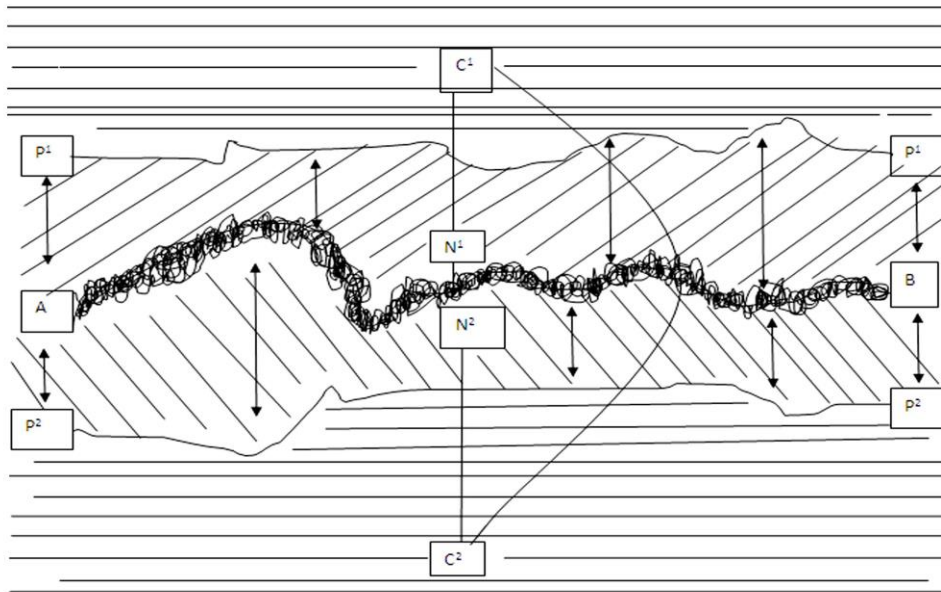
#### **2.4 Socio Spatial Theory**

Border determines the geopolitical spaces as ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, ‘in place’ and ‘out of place’ etc. (Van Houtum and Struver 2002; Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 284). Hence, the borderlanders have somewhat unusual experiences in contrast to the core area. Most of the borderland society, the infrastructure for development and network is really deplorable in condition and reflect huge disparity between the borderland situation and other societies, particularly from the core area in relation with periphery and consequently requires special attention to address their problems in an inclusive manner. However, different elements or factors are contributing a lot

in the check and balance of the borderland society. Here, the geographical location sometimes becomes as a determining factor in the process of borderland management. In geopolitics, we can find two different geographical spaces i.e. the core and the periphery and these are diametrically reverse in terms of connectivity, opportunities, accessibilities etc. If, the bilateral relation or the network between the nation-states expounds, there would be scope for cross border relation and, on the other hand, if the border relation is abysmally controlled, restricted then the scope will be shrinking down. Thus, borderland has remained structural periphery; however, it can be transformed in to a core incorporating different mechanisms.

As we know, society and its transformation is primarily based upon the economy as well as scope of opportunities to connect with the greater paradigm. Here, the core and periphery relation can be considered from different dimensions. In fact, it is somewhat difficult to divide it sharply as core and periphery due to inseparable connection between the two. But, one thing is very clear that core area bears more opportunities in comparison to the periphery but it does not deny the peripheral opportunities. Although borderland is generally defined as geographical periphery but it bears lots of credentials to become core. Figure 2.1 depicts spatiality in terms of core and periphery.

**Figure 2.1: Socio-spatial Theory of Borderland**



Source: Prepared by Researcher

Here,

$AB = \text{Border}$

$AP1 = AP2 = BP1 = BP2 = \text{Periphery}$

$C^1C^2 = \text{political/ bilateral/international relation}$

$C^1N^1 = C^2N^2 = \text{Core periphery network}$

If,

$AB > P^1P^1 = P^2P^2$

And  $N^1N^2 = 0$

Then  $N^1C^1 = N^2C^2$

There will be formal relation, but illicit activities will be decreased.

Again if,

$AB < P^1P^1 \neq P^2P^2$

And  $N^1N^2 = \alpha$

Then,  $C^1N^1 = C^2N^2 < \text{illicit activity}$

Informal relation will be increased, but illicit activities will be increased.

Over the years, to understand socio-spatial theory four distinct lexicons have been developed by social scientists i.e. territory, place, scale and network (Dicken et. al, 2001; Passi 2004, Sheppard: 2002). These are acutely related with large scale transformation of socio-spatial relation viz. globalisation, capital accumulation, state regulation, urbanization, social transformation etc. The changing nature of society is not possible to resist. However, there are various factors that have been deliberately contributed in the societal change eventually.

With the changing time, space and circumstances, the societal avenues may get changes. Accordingly, borderland society may also get ample influences in accordance with the socio-political settings it represents. But, it is frequently alleged and even somewhat it is a fact that, state provides little attention in the region due to their existential periphery, and thus the condition of periphery remain unchanged. If we look at the borderland system of the world, in recent time borderland has become capable in the massive development drive as it experiences establishment of different transit points through the border comprising international market, tourist place over the years. But we may find reverse scenery in different border locations. Indeed, border without prospects may be panic for the borderlanders. Sometimes, people suffer due to the structural constriction of borderland. Moreover, too much interference of state may endorse close border and consequently the opportunities may abysmally decrease there. Hence, transborder activities

impart two opposite notions i.e. constructive and repulsive or development oriented and dreadful etc.

It is considered that borders have somewhat depressing impact although it bears wide-ranging scope to bring prosperity, opportunities but when a system is permanently and consciously sidelined from the system it would be very difficult to flourish whether it is core or periphery. Actually, in most of the borderland areas, people have minimal opportunities without alternatives and which is acutely related to the matter of endurance. Borderland bears comparatively easy connectivity with the foreign market, customers but it is not easier for them to get involved as lots of formalities makes a barrier. Thus, it requires all round attention for constructive transformation in every aspect of society. Furthermore, geographical existentialism is crucial to build up core and periphery in the society. So, the spatiality is one of the vital factors to understand the life of borderlanders. Accordingly, from the spatial determination of borderland, Baud and Schendel (1997) has categorised border into three as:

.....border heartland, intermediate and outer borderland. In the first category, the social networks are shaped by the border. Countries like Germany-Switzerland and France, Singapore and Malaysia, US and Mexico all these are experiencing such type of border. The second category of border always feels the influence of the border but the intensities varying from moderate to weak. The third category, only in specific circumstances feels the effect of the border. In daily life border hardly plays a role; but there is



always a hint of suspense, a slight tinge of uncertainty (Baud and Schendel 1997:222).

The social history of borderlands is determined first and foremost by the spatial dimension (ibid 1997: 221). Being a periphery, borderland society remains relatively marginal and if they fail to overcome from such vulnerability, they become captive in the system. It makes them as a constant sufferer and alienated in different aspects enhancing societal gap and dismantles the core and periphery relation. The Figure 2.1 depicts that whenever the periphery is well connected with core area and also has opportunities, then there are more chances to improve the condition of borderlanders. Again, for the sake of security arrangement, generally state pays enough attention to construct the infrastructural base in borderland society. But it doesn't mean that the local people enjoy all these facilities and are able to improve their condition in accordance with other areas. Here, connectivity, networks are detrimental for the management of borderland spatiality.

## **2.5 Core and Periphery Relation**

There are no specific criteria for the formation of core and periphery; however, the core and periphery relation is applicable to every sphere of society. Here, both the concepts are interconnected but reverse in nature as the core have substantial influence upon the periphery and similarly the periphery is dependent upon the core.

To understand the nation-states, Anthony Gidden had tried to highlight the 'core' and the 'periphery' relations. He mentioned,

World system theorists term three economic zones ‘core’, ‘periphery’ and ‘semi- periphery’. Core countries are more advanced, periphery countries comprise low income and the semi-periphery countries are intermediate group. The major point is natural resources or raw materials from the peripheral countries are generally flow to the core area and the finished goods are again selling out in the market of periphery. In this regard the world system theories argued that core countries have made themselves wealthy, while at the same time limiting the economic development of peripheral countries (Gidden 2006: 554).

So, the market systems with huge disparity have adverse impact upon the infrastructural base of economy in the peripheral region. There is a close connection between geographical periphery and economic backwardness everywhere.

The core area enjoys comparatively more advantageous position than the periphery. People from the periphery enjoy fewer opportunities; they are even decimated from all walks of life. But the basic point is nowhere that core or periphery is permanent; periphery can be transformed into core or *vice-versa*. Again, in accordance with existing elements, the core and periphery varies from one space to another. The terms ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ are extensively used in geopolitics and the social transformation is only possible depending on the negotiation between the processes. Paula Banerjee (2010), in her book *Borders, Histories, Existences Gender and Beyond* argues “the core and periphery relation has substantial impact upon the people and very extensively upon the borderlanders. We may find the core and periphery

relation in everywhere and very lucidly whenever something gets more emphasis than others (there may be different factors), and then the emphasised one will be the core endorsing the other as periphery.” In the context of development, most of the borderland has remained as periphery due to their geopolitical exclusion. The perennial exclusion, negligence, alienation of the state may have contribution for becoming a periphery and subsequently have adverse impact on the process of development. In the borderland study, it is apparent to say here that everywhere the prime focus is given to the border but not borderland or borderlanders. Therefore, borderland remains as a structural periphery in the nation-state system. Indeed, sometimes borderland may turn into a centre or core if opportunities of development are ensured.

Generally, core and periphery relation has a comprehensive orientation and can be understood from different perspectives. If we consider the international perspective, the borders are structurally arranged. It defines territoriality in the formation of the nation-state. The basic concern is security within the state or beyond. It also eases the bilateral flip flop, transnational unscrupulous activities, hardship in maintaining peace, enhancing multifaceted relations and in return provides amicable space for inclusive development. The policy makers are concerned with maintaining peaceful and conducive relationship with other countries and particularly with neighbours for internal security. Most of the nation-states are concerned about borderland actors, but these (actors) are failing repeatedly either due to spatiality or dreadful location and have abysmal impact on society, culture, ethnicity, economy, development, etc. Thus, due to lack of deliberate attention of state towards the border, it remains permanent periphery over the years. Accordingly, we can

consider it from the political context too as borderland people are important for the sake of nationalism but they are treated conditionally as surmounted with doubt and suspicion on their activities. The borderland as a whole is considered as determinant for the bilateral relation as put forward more sensitivity towards security arrangement for the region and for their easy transportation and assistance on everyday basis (it becomes more vital in the time of volatile situation). However, in normal condition, nobody pays attention and no political arrangement is centripetal there. Again, the changing of internal politics may have substantial impact upon the border. The perceptions as well as strategies of governments are not similar and different techniques are installed in handling different issues. Hence, due to fragile strategy in politics the socio-political setting is divided into core and periphery. Furthermore, we can find out how the geographical space determines the cultural transformation. It is very difficult to impose virtual boundary of culture and consequently we can find creolization of culture in transnational junction. If we look at geo-political settings, the core and periphery relation is very fundamental in endorsing self and others in terms of accessibility. Self is consists of core and others in the marginal, that is alienated, deprived, excluded, exploited, poor, destitute etc. Furthermore, core is the base and periphery indicates the outer skirts and directing inseparable relation between them. In this regard, the assertion of Ibrahim and Kothiyal (2017) is very crucial and they mentioned:

the role of borderland populations is crucial in mediating – even directing- the relationship of the so-called ‘Centre’ and its ‘Periphery,’ thus enabling a reconceptualisation of the relationship

of state and borders in terms of a centre-periphery framework and of marginality as the only conceptual lens through which view borders and frontiers. (Ibrahim and Kothiyal 2017: 32)

## **2.6 Elitist theory**

Elite theory seeks to describe the power relationships in contemporary societies. The theory posits that a very small group that is the elite has substantial influence in every aspects of society. There are many prominent exponents of elite theory i.e. Vilfredo Pareto, Mosca, C. Wright Mills, Schattschneider, Floyd Hunter etc. Pareto emphasized on the psychological and intellectual superiority of elites, believing that they are the highest accomplishees in any field. He discussed in his book, “*Rise and Fall of Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology*” (1991) on the existence of two types of elites:

1. Governing Elites
2. Non-governing Elites

He also expounded the idea that whole elite can be replaced by a new one that is called circulation of elites. Accordingly, Gaetano Mosca emphasised on two types of elites---- the ruling elite that is very small portion having intellectual, moral, material superiority over the huge ruled class and that is sub-elite. Moreover, Robert Michel (1911) had developed ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy’ in his book “*Political Parties*” as he said that all the organisations are run by the elite section in their respective field. Elite class has predominance in every society. Accordingly, Schattschneider is very critical about the pressure system of society. Within a pressure group, there are some core influential persons whose interests are generally reflected despite being minority in

position, they are called elite. In a nutshell, all these exponents are concerned about the presence of an influential minority group in every society.

The power elite model is an analysis of politics that views power as concentrated among the rich (Macdonis and Plummer 2008: 515). C. W. Mills in his book “The Power Elite” (1956) mentioned how the society of United States is structured in three different categories under the aegis of political, economic and military elite. Further assertion has come from Floyd Hunter who added structural functional approach to analyse the elite theory. He posits elitism as having relation with micro scale communities of business, politicians, clergyman etc. He made distinction between real power holder and the official power holder. He also argued that the upper class holds the bulk of society’s wealth, prestige and power (ibid: 515). From the Marxist point of view,

The Power Elite constitutes the ‘super rich’ or, in Marxist terms, the capitalists who own and control the lion’s share of the economy (ibid: 515).

Thomas R. Dye in his book “*Top Down Policy Making*” (2001) argues that the public policies are not the result of general demands of public but it acts in accordance with the expectation of elite. However, George A. Gonzalez (2001) in his book “*Corporate Power and the Environment*” mentioned that elites shape the environment policies for their own advantages. Thus, elite section has some influence across the society including in the borderland.

Application of elitism in the borderland study is some sort of unusual idea. It indicates that there is a presence of elite group in every borderland society. In normal situation, nobody can differentiate a borderland from other

social settings. However, it bears some unusual nature in comparison to common societies. The location may have advantages or disadvantages, but one common feature is speculation of permanent sensitivity at this locality. The local people have been enjoying an unusual life with full of mysteries. “The borderland politics have some distinctness within the broader perimeter of national politics; the prominence of elite is substantial here. Borderland elites are very important if they are integrated and allied with the state and then it is easy to control the borderland”, (Baud and Schendel 2006: 217). But the basic question arises here as to that who are the elites at this borderland? As the borderland scenario is somewhat diverse and subsequently the elite section also varies in accordance with circumstances. Most of the villages along the border have no proper connectivity, the basic needs are not mitigated; thus the local people have no idea of all around to compare and consequently a tiny portion comprising village school teacher, the village headman, the educated persons, the professionals, the clerics and even the border guards etc. help in the formation of borderland elite. If we go through the Dhubri borderland area, the Master *saheb*, the *gaon burha*, the *Mullah*, the local politicians etc. have significant role in the transformation or regulation of day-to-day life of villagers. In fact, these people are acquiring different position in the societal avenues, and have enormous influence on the commoners. The concept of structural functionalism is applicable in the study of borderland elite. These people are not only concerned with family or personal matter, but sometimes judicial as well as transnational matters too. As mentioned by Thomas R. Dye about US policy administration, “these elites have also decision making power for the sake of borderland society”.

Moreover, the local disputes and feuds are handled under the aegis of these influential groups.

Like others, borderland experiences different groups of elites have been working without formal structure. “Borderland elites often remained at least partly detached from the state” (Baud and Schendel 2006: 218). So, at a regular interval, the space of elite has been changing. Here we may find circulation of elites. If the state fails to incorporate these elites within the state mechanism, there is a bit possibility to breakdown state power in the border regions and it has to enforce different tactics for the territorial claims or managing other nefarious activities through the border.

The Figure 2.3 depicts that,

AB is a border

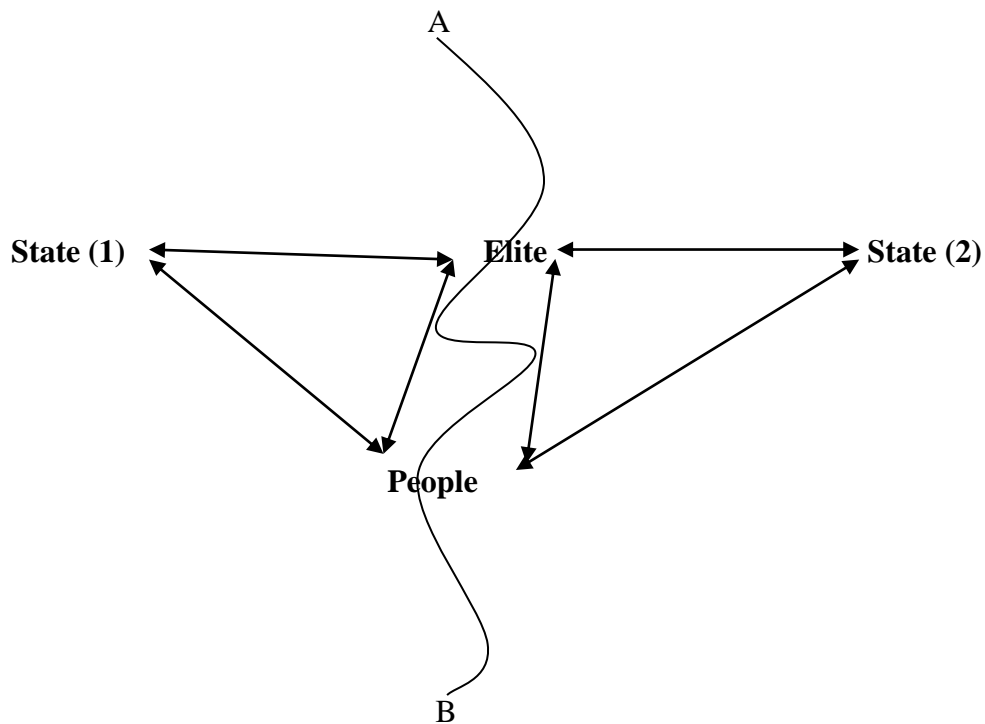
If, AB is strong, then not only the Elite but also people have their only connection/affiliation with their own nation.

In such situation, the Elite of State (1) have influence over the borderland society of state (1) and Elite of state (2) have over the state (2) only.

If AB is porous or easily transnational relation is maintained, then the borderlands Elites have relation with both the states (1) and (2) and all the borderlanders are influenced by them.



## 2.2 Figure: Elitist Theory and Borderland



Source: Baud and Schendel 1997: 219

Thus, we may find different structural functionalisms of borderland elite in maintaining relation with the state and the borderlanders. The scenario differs from one border to another; however, it is more or less common in every borderland society across the world. In porous borderland or soft border, the elite sections have connection with both the states and maintain relation over the borderlanders denouncing border or restriction. Consequently, we may find different types of elites in the study of borderland. In Dhubri borderland society is inescapable from the structural influences of elite politics. Even the deployed security personnels are also connected with this triangular framework as sometimes state, security and elite have to negotiate with the common people for management of borderland.

## 2.7 Body Politics

Borderlanders are connected with the demarcated border of a nation-state system. Whenever, a state formation gets vigour, boundary or border is the ultimate arrangement for them. However, if somewhere it fails to apply properly or remains porous / without demarcation; it is not possible to restrict the people and renders huge amount of transnational activities by different stakeholders of either side. Newman in his article “On Borders and Power: Theoretical Framework” asserts,

.....there are always groups who have an interest in finding ways to move beyond the barrier. They may be seeking jobs, visiting family and friends from whom they have been cut off, smuggling goods, drugs or weapons. But crossing the border does not always bring the expected benefits. The grass is always not greener on the other side, especially when one doesn't have the necessary documents, work permits, language proficiency, or is captured by the authorities in a roundup of illegal migrants (Newman 2003: 14).

The geopolitical connectivity with neighbours makes state to negotiate with each other for co-existence. However, the relation is maintained in accordance with the bilateral relation between the states and border, but border is bounded with notion of state mechanism. So, the nature of border is truly a determinant factor not only for the borderlanders but also for the nation-state too. Actually, borderland is the outermost landscape of nation-state system and it resists external intruders deploying border guards as a formal stakeholder. The core is concerned with every matter across the state and even beyond, but periphery remains supportive as well as dependable to the core. Security personnels are

the representative of core to bridge the gap. Thus, borderland represents a conglomeration of state, state actors and the borderlanders. So, in such type of power construction by the security forces there may be chances of volatility in every moment along the border and it alarms threat to the nation-state internally as well as externally.

Border is the transnational junction and has undeniable pressures from within the state and beyond too. Generally border is arranged with high volt security personnels to regulate transgressor whether pro or anti national but should be tackled properly. There are substantial similarities with the human skin as it has been working as an organ to balance between internal and external systems. Border is very similar to this as it works for linking the internal system nation-state with external world. Hence, it does bestow the power of resistance overwhelmingly. There may be regular presence of disturbances in the borderland, but it must have resistance capacity in accordance with need of the hour. Society with full of sensitivity really makes the border somewhat unusual in politics.

## **2.8 Bordered Lives in the Global Context**

Border has become a phenomenal aspect to understand nation-state system. State as an institution has its own territoriality, limitation, edge and border etc. are just structural orientation shared among the nation-states. Therefore, the borderlands across the world experiencing different transnational actors have tremendous pressure inwardly or outwardly. Hence, borderland faces two diametrically opposite pressure as one from global that is external and other one is from local that is internal. Here, Kaplan and Hakli put forward:

The “end of territorial absolutism” means an end to the absolute control exercised by the state through practices of fixed territoriality. Thus, governments are reluctant to relinquish control of the borders unless there is pressure from outside (globalization) or from below (localization). To study border as dynamic institutions, it is therefore important to study the “bottom up” process of change, emanating from the daily practices of ordinary people living in the borderland region, as much as the traditional “top down” approach which focuses solely the role of institutional actors, notably – but not only – governments (Kaplan & Hakli 2002, Newman 2003:14-15).

If we look at the problem overtly or covertly, borderlanders are habituated with border, but they have to confront with different actors within the state or beyond, the effect may be horizontal or vertical in nature. Thus, in the borderland the individual security is sometimes subjugated for the sake of national security. If we compare the society with core area i.e. the mainstream, it comes to our mind that for how long borderlanders will endure such type of criminalisation of politics of the centre over the periphery. These are basically considered as internal matter of politics with expounding impact on every sphere of society. Accordingly, border is also concerned with the global paradigm as it is inseparable from its neighbours. In fact, the society experiences structural transition in terms of territoriality.

### **2.8.1 Global Perspective**

Border has become a globally contested phenomenon over the years. There are different categories of border that have been working in the global paradigm.

For modern nation-states, the notion of border is inevitable for its formidable structure. Therefore, the geopolitical borders are constructed in accordance with the existing political manoeuvre to enhance the national interest. “By the development of mapping, the state elites try to establish clear cut territorial and hence political jurisdiction. It is also important to mention that the border of third world countries was creation of the colonialists and the state elites” (Banerjee 2010: xxx). Similarly, they try to ban the movement of goods including the basic necessities. Thus, the transborder policy is regulated in accordance with the choice of the ruling class or the state.

The phenomenon of border making has been changing across the world. “When borders were increasingly considered redundant in the west, it was becoming crucial for the third world” (op cit Banerjee: xxx). The major notable point is that no third world countries are self sufficient and there is an inescapable pressure internally as well as globally too. Most of the third world countries are relentlessly struggling and fighting to resist unscrupulous elements in internal setting of society. The societies of third world countries are fragile, insecure in comparison to the developed ones. Due to the structural disparity between the developed and the developing countries, the concept of border has to be redefined. The European countries are sharing in different aspects including the market economy, defence etc. and therefore, it is possible for them to share without restriction. But, USA is in favour of stronger border to reduce the external threat from the neighbours and particularly from the Mexican. “Israel decided to erect the fence mainly in order to prevent terrorists from crossing over from the Palestinian to the Israeli side and carrying out attacks” (Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 282). As the world

is experiencing different threats from time to time and consequently there is a herculean demand of territorial security, border should be there. Hence, in global paradigm security of state is an indispensable factor in determining nature of the borders.

“In today’s global world, two processes pertaining to borders exist in parallel. The one reduces the role and importance of borders in the lives of a society because of the globalization process,” (Struver 2005; Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 288). The other deepens and strengthens ‘the separation between states, nations, and populations by building obstacles intended to prevent the passage of armed groups and terrorists or militancy activity’ (Biger 2004; Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 288).

There is a dynamic change in East-Asian countries. Banerjee and Chen argued:

The peripheral border regions in East-Asia, globalization can reach border cities that were previously guarded by national boundaries but their integration in the global economy depends on how well they are connected to the other locations through some sort of regional centre. The localization of economic ties mitigates the integrating effect of globalization on borderlands, thus contributing to a local territorial confinement of social and economic transactions, (Banerjee and Chen 2012: 19). Moreover, when local and global forces cause borders to push and pull, borderlands developed their own distinctive regional and local characters (ibid 2012: 19).

In the era of globalisation, it is very difficult to sustain isolation and, on the contrary, it ensures cooperation among the nation-states for collective development in every aspect of life. Thus, with the changing circumstances, the role of state is inevitable and subsequently boundary as well as activism of states is globally defined. Border is the crucial transit point to link up global setting with local system. But the notable point is that, does the global system able to boost in the livelihood of borderlanders? The answer may be both, negative as well as positive; ultimately it depends upon the spatiality of border.

### **2.8.2 Bordered Lives in the Indian Context**

India is sharing its geopolitical border with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. Even, it shares maritime boundary in the southern and western coastal area. Again, it is experienced that the nature of border varies from one neighbouring country to another as hard border is constructed with Pakistan, China and Bangladesh, whereas in Bhutan, Myanmar and Nepal it is porous in condition. One pertinent point is that all these countries have historical linkages as migration occurred for the sake of trade and commerce. The historic visit of Xuanzang in the seventh century, invasions of different rulers from time to time, the construction of Silk Road, Stilwell road (Ledo road) and different *duars* etc. are the profound example of transborder connectivity with India's neighbour. But, in later stage, with the sharpening of the concept of nation-state, the Indian sub-continent also has got a herculean change in its geopolitical standing.

**Table 2.1: Length of India's border**

Sl. No.	Name of the Country	Length in km
1	Afghanistan	106
2	Bangladesh	4,096.7
3	Bhutan	699
4	China	3,488
5	Myanmar	1,643
6	Nepal	1,751
7	Pakistan	3,323
	Total	15,106.7

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

At present India has 15,106.7 km of land border and 7516.6 km of coastline including islands. The Table 2.1 depicts that India is sharing longest borderline with Bangladesh followed by China. Here, most of the Indian borders were created with newly emerged nation-states. However, there were geopolitical as well as civilizational linkages among the neighbouring countries of India. But the crucial point is that all the borders or borderland regions are contentious in position to maintaining bilateral relation. There are different problems i.e. claim and counter claim, unabated migration, insurgency and environmental problem etc. relegating over the years. In fact, India and particularly Assam's relation with Bangladesh is more challenging in the last few decades.

The borders like India-China, India-Pakistan and India-Bangladesh are militarised as external threat prevails at every moment, but China and Pakistan are more challenging in comparison to Bangladesh. Accordingly, India's relation with Bhutan and Nepal is more permeable as borders are porous in position. But the notable point is that the borderland areas are given priority



for geopolitical backwardness, but nothing is desirable here apart from sensitivity.

### **2.8.3 Bordered Lives in the Dhubri Borderland**

India has ample contributions in the victory of Bangladesh liberation war against Pakistan in the year 1971, propounding a new era in the Indian subcontinent. However, from the very beginning, the countries have been facing with some upheavals; on one hand it is for the newly created nation-state and other is for political legacy since partition. The massive influx from Bangladesh to India (though Bangladeshis are found across the world) is a major concern for Indian politics in terms of security, identity, citizenship etc. Accordingly, the bilateral land boundary disputes, water sharing, transborder trade, terrorism, transnational activities etc. are also very crucial from the international perspective. Unlike others, the India- Bangladesh border has also remained volatile over the years and consequently people have been constantly facing unusual life along the border. Being the structural divide of politics, here, the presence of state security forces of respective countries, border pillars, fencing, flood light, flags etc. to resist and regulate is crucial from different perspectives. However, it propounds not only a new phenomenon as structural functionalism of border but it creates a huge area as geographical periphery with many pros and cons. Even, it has an ultimate effect in the process of development, availing of the daily essentials, local opportunities, the transport communication, security arrangement, health, education, public distribution system (PDS) etc. which are lagging far behind in this borderland. Unlike others, here, we may find the security system has two different dimensions i.e. the national security and the security of the local people. The

BSF is concerned with the national security and surmounting the interest of local people. It makes the system precarious one and has negative impact on the pace of development. From time to time special packages are provided by the government but unexpectedly these people are unable to avail all round benefits. There is a spatial discrepancy in terms of need of the borderlanders and response of the state.

Construction of the India-Bangladesh border fence is going on in a slow and steady pace (around 67% has been completed)<sup>1</sup>. Even the main architect Sir Cyril Radcliffe confessed his inability and the impossibility of trying to construct contiguous boundary between the eastern part of India and East-Pakistan (Banerjee 2010: xxxiv; Radcliff 1947). Thus, after 70 years of Independence, it has not been possible to fence the border completely. Although, most of the part remain under the strict surveillance of the security guards for preventing illicit activities but that can be performed through the border easily. However, we may find that lots of acts i.e. smuggling of cattle, export of motorised vehicles, drugs, human trafficking, fake currency etc. are very common in the borderland. Even in Dhubri district of Assam the border has been experiencing some illicit activities at regular intervals. Here, a section of people comprising local and non-local are engaged in transborder activities despite of strict surveillance. Undoubtedly, it has become a suitable junction for transborder intruders in making their livelihood at the border. Actually in Assam, the installing of barbed fence has linkage with six year long Assam agitation (1979-85) against the alleged illegal migrants particularly from Bangladesh side and hence, the border remains sensitive

throughout the years. However, the high growth rate of Muslim population became a bone of contention for the dominant indigenous people of Assam. Hence, border is not just a demarcated line here, but it is a barrier to stop Bangladeshi migrants and illicit activities so far. Furthermore, it is also alleged that the Dhubri border is a heavenly passage for the migrants as *char* and riverbank areas are easy destination for illegal migrants prior to their permanent settlement in different localities. Sometimes, the security guards are harshly criticised by the commoner for their role as the mediator in illegal trespass process. There is another point to be comprehended here as the people from either side of border have no differences in their physical appearances as historically, ethnically and culturally they are linked to each other. Indeed, most of the time these people are stigmatised as '*Bangladeshis*'. Nonetheless, migration as a problem is conglomerating everywhere but sometimes Dhubri borderlanders are easily targeted in the politics of Assam. Thus, whenever Dhubri borderlanders go in search of essentials, people have to prove their Indian identity again and again. Hence, migration issue has got a momentum in borderland politics of Dhubri over the years.

The age old relation through the India-Bangladesh border has been shrinking down. Today the porous border has been transformed into a well constructed militarised border. The strict surveillance and formalities are maintained to curb down illicit activities along the border. It is also crucial to mention here that the role of border security personnel are gray, their involvement in the process of mediation is undeniable. Thus, the fencing is necessary and security is inevitable to reduce the sensitivity throughout the border. But, the restriction/ constriction within the fence really bring a

situational upheaval as a portion of people are kept alienated permanently from the mainstream society. So, here we may put a question mark, how these borderlanders will make their livelihood? Then, again the role of state and the politics of borderland need to be addressed here keeping in mind the interest of all the stake-holders.

Socio-spatial theory is very crucial to understand the life of Dhubri borderlanders. In geopolitics it is clear that time and space determines everything. The existence of borders, their functioning, security endeavour, people's expectations are fundamental issues in borderland management whether it is in Dhubri or beyond. For the borderlanders, how the people are deprived, what are the major expectations of people, why they are socio-economically marginalised in position etc. are also vital questions to be addressed here. Development of nation is not possible without the development of commoners and particularly of the disadvantaged groups. The high towers, beautiful mansions, high fashionable dress code of urban area does not mean development. It is high time to address the entire problem irrespective of their existence, social background etc. Borderland as a structural periphery remains contentious forever. Here, the development process is not working adequately and thus it exposes the real picture of the nation-state system. So, in such a situation, border requires a procedural demand for prudent action in near future.

As we know that border is the end and beginning of a nation state (Hassan 2017: 165). It is the point where two states meet one another. Therefore, in such situation, the institutional arrangement has been given priority in comparison to peoples' basic necessities and consequently people

remain alienated over the years. Therefore, a considerable number of people are indulged in illicit works, rejecting the surveillance of the BSF. In fact, transborder activities are neither controllable nor permissible here looking at the situation of common people. So, from the local point of view sometimes the transborder activities can be justified to ensure livelihood security but similarly from the national point of view it is not possible to accept external threat with unabated transgressors. So, there are contradictory perceptions about this borderland but it is inevitable to ensure all round security for them.

As we mentioned earlier that border is the source of opportunities and today it has ample contribution in the national income too. As per government official report, 2016, India-Bangladesh sanctioned trade or transaction has touched approx. 2.4 lacs dollar per annum in recent time. The bilateral relation and particularly trade between India and Bangladesh is going on in a organized manner but sometimes some regions are kept under volatility and consequently it brings disruption of all including the core as well as periphery. In fact, if we look at the history, even after the partition people of both the nations were engaged in trade and commerce, have their common marketplace, even monetary system was very loosely performed for couple of decades. But, in later period with too much of restrictions by the state, there is an adverse impact on the overall relations. Sometimes, it helps to accelerate the informal trade across the border. Thus, the Dhubri borderland region is used for heavenly passes by a section of illegal intruders.

**Table: 2.2 Trade in between India-Bangladesh**

Year	Bangladesh's export to India (million US Dollar)	Bangladesh's export to India as % of Bangladesh's total export	Bangladesh's export to India as % of total India's import	Bangladesh's import from India (Million US Dollar)	Bangladesh's import from India as %of Bangladesh's total import	Bangladesh's import from India as% of total export of India
1991	5.49	0.33	0.03	199.85	6.37	1.12
2001	16.51	0.31	0.03	889.59	11.06	2.03
2011	512.51	1.88	0.11	4560.00	12.06	1.51

Source: UNCTADstat (<http://unctadstat.unctad.org>)

Moreover, no cross border relation is permitted through the Dhubri borderland as fencing has been erected in accordance with the need of territorial security but the deceitful activities have not stopped here. Thus, it is neither alienated nor defunct border according to Martinez (Bassey and others 2010: 3). Once, Martinez defines alienated border as having no cross border relation but it was existed earlier. If we consider the life cycle of border initiated by Baud and Schendel, it is adolescent in position as many people remember their connectivity before the installation of border. Indeed, the region always feels the influence of border with full of suspense, a slight tinge of uncertainty, political crisis etc.

Gelbman and Keinan were clear about the importance of border in the creation of different identities in nation-state system (2007:289). If we consider the Indian context, Radcliffe Line endorses two different political identities with the emergence of two nations i.e. Pakistan and India. It brings sharp divide on the basis of political identity as Indian and Pakistani and in the later period with the formation of Bangladesh, a new national identity of Bangladeshi has emerged. It is undeniable that there were substantial linkages i.e. history, language, culture etc. and it provides collective and common

platform to fight against the British colonialism. Accordingly, border is the emerging cause for the creation of distinct identities and it has expounding impact on other areas too. The age old socio-cultural transborder relation was permanently dismantled with the emergence of border.

With the emergence of structural border, the problem like immigration, illegal transborder trade, transborder terrorism etc. have become very common to different countries. Hence, the concept of border as well as security arrangement in the border has become inevitable. Different borders across the world, to obstruct the massive immigration of Mexican people into USA, had to construct its boundary fence, Israel and Palestinian border has created a hard border. India too has constructed the India-Bangladesh border to resist the illegal migration from across the border. Thus, for the sake of identity formation, border is indispensable one. But, it is very crucial to pay attention to the quotidian life of borderlanders.

Five Indian states are connecting with Bangladesh and West Bengal is sharing the maximum area. Then Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Assam is sharing tiny portion of the border. Again, Assam is connected in two different locations; one is in Barak valley region and another is in the westernmost part, the present Dhubri and South Salmara and Mankachar districts. The study is related to erstwhile Dhubri district as sensitivity and hate-mongering prevails most of the time along the border. We must look at the connectivity of people, their movement, the historical linkages and their acceptability as borderlanders. There were expounding transborder relations including marriages, participation in social rituals, joining in religious activities, market, transportation etc. without restriction upto a couple of decades back. But

installation of border fence has curtailed everything. Undoubtedly, it was a very praiseworthy decision taken at the time of Assam Movement for erecting the fencing; it may restrict not only the illegal migrants but also secure the Assamese as well as Indian culture. It is very crucial for every state of India having borders with Bangladesh to consider the problem seriously.

## **2.9 Summing up**

Border is an essential arrangement in the nation-state system. “Borders are territorially defined limits, as borderlands, but they are also relational entities that reach over and beyond themselves despite mandates to contain, divide and delimit. Borders are, of course, also structural conditions that can be separated from their territorial manifestations” (Piliavsky 2013; Ibrahim and Kothiyal 2017:32). From the global experience on border, we may find two types of tendency i.e. on one hand border is becoming more viable and on the other hand borders are weeding/ eliminating day by day. India is in a paradoxical position that on one hand installation of fencing from one layer to another and at the same time the other part has remained porous without contiguity. Again, India tries to extend cooperation with all the nations to sustain collective development, global peace and security but fails to incorporate all the people from within the territory. In fact, the basic issues of border, borderland and borderlanders have remained neglected in every political discourse.

The Dhubri borderland society is almost similar with the Bangladesh counterpart and consequently the issue of migration remains volatile across the society of Assam speculating relentless suspicion among the people of the mainstream society. However, with the installed fenced border, the society is structurally disconnected for more than two decades and which is unavoidable



for the sake of security endeavour of India and particularly in Assam. It is a situational demand to understand the borderland society through the prismatic lens of socio-spatial theory- that distance, network, connectivity, timeframe etc. have tremendous influence on the people all along the border. Undoubtedly, people are habituated with the border but facing alienation from the mainstream society bestowing the borderlanders in the periphery. Hence, it is pertinent to understand perennial exclusion of borderlanders not only in Dhubri but across the nation too. Again, the elites have tremendous influence in borderland management and sometimes it is necessary for such highly sensitive zone that state actors are always active therein. Hence, every borderland village has some credentials to be considered as a research problem in broader paradigm of the nation-state.

Borderland societies are more or less habituated with the structural linear of border. Military, border outpost, fencing, border gate, check gate, border road etc. are very common and usual for them. In fact, border has substantial role to negotiate the borderlanders with polity, policy, society, identity, culture, nationalism etc. Being a determinant factor, border is crucial in their political and economic life. However, in the course of time, borders are becoming more conditional as porous to fenced, informal to formal, civil to militarized, non regulatory to regulatory etc. are getting precedence there. Undoubtedly, construction as well as management of border is crucial here for the sake of security endeavour but overall infrastructural development of border is also inevitable for a secured nation-state.

## End Note

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The Schengen agreement is a treaty which led to the creation of Europe's Schengen area, in which internal border checks have largely been abolished. It was signed on 14 June 1985, near the town of Schengen, Luxembourg, by five of the ten member states of the then European economic Community. At present most of the European states including some non-European states have joined in this borderless venture.

Myron Weiner states 'bad neighbourhood' (see Dasgupta 2011: 48)

Cooperative federalism is a school of thought in the field of cooperative economics, but extensively used in political system too. It provides adequate space for national, regional and local governments to cooperate in the decision making process.

See Katajala and others pp. 69-71

The Minister of State for Home Affairs, Government of India; Kiren Rijiju informed the august House, a total of 2,731 km of the sanctioned 3,326 km fence along the India-Bangladesh border has been completed in the year 2016 (15 March 2017).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Lives at the Border: the Social Setting**

The British must hugely bear the responsibility for creating this disconnects between the people who shared common strands of history, language, culture and tradition (Observer Research Foundation Report: 56)

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Border is an essential determinant of modern nation-states. If we go through the recent borderland history, most of the borders are political constructions which are imposed on the people. It delinks history, geography, society, culture, ethnicity etc. in different ways across the world. Consequently, the political identity is reshaped in accordance with the existing political endeavour determined by border. The construction of fencing endorses structural coverage for the whole nation-state and it is inevitable for the sake of territorial security. However, the new arrangement due to installing border propels them to shape their own identity in accordance with their geopolitical space denouncing their individual credentials, desires, aspirations, privileges, sense of belongingness, memories, traumas etc. The political construction/reconstruction of identity may have influence that encompasses society, culture, ethnicity of the people. At the same time, it becomes a source of obstruction or infighting among the people or states to attain the adherence of all. Thus, there are some borderlands have been experiencing relentless volatilities as well as repercussions against the existing political system. If we consider border activism, nature, existences etc. will find different categories of borders as hard and controlled border, soft or porous border, fenced border,

demarcated border, disputed border, defunct border, imposed border etc. To sharpen one's own political identity<sup>1</sup> structural border is must whether it is visible or not. Generally, people are bounded or tagged with a spatial reality. There is a conducive demand for nationalism, patriotism etc. particularly from the notion of society and politics. Consequently, it sows the seeds of sensitivity in every sphere to grounding nationalism in the greater interest of the nation-state. Moreover, there is a comprehensive developmental slogan to accommodate all sections of people including the borderlanders. At present, a considerable number of people irrespective of class, caste, community, culture, custom, ethnicity, language, religion etc. are living in border area and their multiple identities are condensed into a homogenous identity as borderlanders. Thus, to understand the borderlanders, it is inevitable to understand their social settings they belong. Here, it is an attempt to comprehend the socio-cultural settings of Dhubri borderlanders of the India-Bangladesh border.

Unlike others, the Dhubri borderland society is more or less complex in nature. The societal dynamism has immense influence in every sphere including the borderland and even has passed different stages of socio-political transformation. Thus, the culture of borderland is more or less fragile due to trans-boundary influences. In fact, modernity has enormous contribution in bringing changes in dress code, food habit, behaviour, feelings, and aspiration etc. of the borderlanders. Similarly, there may be noticeable difference or may not in terms of family, peer group, marriage, livelihood, various rituals, religious practices, nature of works etc. of borderlanders but border has ample

influence everywhere. Here, it is an attempt to find out how the borderland societies are structurally bounded in accordance with time and space.

Borders in normal condition are fixed and permanent to merchandise the sense of limitation. However, the border structure, process of bordering, ordering or controlling varied from one place or system to another. Moreover, the social transformation is really impressive and irresistible everywhere including the borderland. With the emergence of nation-state, the concept of area spatiality, limitation and territoriality have become essential. The sense of territoriality shaped in accordance with the desire of the elite denouncing the role of local populace. Hence, it provides a structurally fixed geopolitical arrangement for the borderlanders in the comprehensive nation building process.

Dhubri district (including newly created district of South-Salmara and Mankachar)<sup>2</sup> of Assam has a sizable number of Muslim population indicates that the peripheral demography of western most part of Assam is very similar with the northern part of Bangladesh and also the easternmost part of Bengal. It is also inevitable to mention here that the tri-junction of Assam, West Bengal and Bangladesh carry similar socio-economic settings in the customary life of local inhabitants with the pan Bengali dominance. Therefore, the people of Dhubri borderland are in a contradictory position as their political identity is Assamese/Indian, however their society is very close to the Bengali culture and consequently their culture is labelled as creolization of Bengali and Assamese with a new entity as Goalparia or sometimes *Deshi*, or Rajbanshi as necessitates. These people prefer to identify themselves as *Deshi* means 'local people' living in their own territorial domain. Here, we may consider the

statement 'social identities in border areas are constantly in flux because borderlands themselves are subject to ever changing condition' (Cusick 2000: 47). Nevertheless, the social setting of Dhubri borderland is linked with history, geography, ethnicity, culture and also has expounding heterogeneity throughout the border.

### **3.2 Society of the Dhubri Borderland**

Border is a geopolitical liner to divide the society diminishing the age old linkages of people i.e. communities, kith and kin, families etc. and making them as counterpart without erasing their memories. Nobody can deny the interest of local people to sustain connectivity despite of legal imposition. In the context of the India-Bangladesh border, people do not hesitate to maintain informal relation even after the partition (India-Pakistan) or till the construction of barbed fencing (India-Bangladesh) or sometimes through the hole of fence that remain unexpectedly in recent time. Undoubtedly, the notion of informal relation is there but it is very difficult to continue for them due to the regular presence of security guard along the border. In spite of that, the transborder relation is maintained in accordance with the opportunities in other side but it has a glaring impact in the whole socio-political setting in regional or national level. Everywhere, the nature of the border is important whether it is India-Bangladesh, USA-Mexico, Benin-Nigeria and many others.

The India-Bangladesh border in Dhubri district of Assam is experiencing religious cohesion of Hinduism and Islam throughout the border. However, Muslim villages are outnumbering than the Hindu villages, but everywhere social harmony is maintained cohesively. A chunk of Hindu people, particularly Koch-Rajbanshi and Bengali Hindus are found in the very

northern part of Dhubri borderland as Ramraikuti, Satrasal, Binnyachara part III & IV, Keder part III, Baladuba etc. Accordingly, the southernmost point also has sizable number of population belong to Hindu community comprising Kakripara I, II & III, Chamaibil, Thakuranbari, Jordanga, Kamamoti etc. If we look at the village Ramraikuti, it is the geographical tri-junction of Indian states i.e. West Bengal and Assam and other side is covered by Bangladesh. The name of the village Ramraikuti expounds typical Hindu prominence there. Moreover, the Sri Sri Dham Ramraikuti *satra*<sup>3</sup> gives the religious as well as cultural linkages with the mainstream society of Assam. If we look at the history, the Vaisnavite saint Sankardev received patronage from the Koch *Raja* Naranrayan (Baruah 1999:73) and subsequently he preached the nava-Vaishnavite<sup>4</sup> sect of Hinduism throughout the Koch territory linking from Koch Hajo to Koch Behar. Captain Edward Tuite Dalton (1815-1881) of the East India Company had noted in his paper on the “Mahapurushaya” (JASB, 1851) that “the Mahapurushyas are widely spread throughout lower Assam, extending into Cooch Behar and N. E. Rungpore (North-Western Bangladesh) ..... They also muster strong in Gawalparah and Cooch Behar and are found, I believe even in the Dacca District,” (Dalton 1851; Pathak and Neog 2004).

Similarly, in the southernmost part of the Dhubri borderland, there is again tri-junction of Indian two states Assam and Meghalaya with Bangladesh. The historical importance Mir Jumla’s<sup>5</sup> tomb and similarly the Kamakhya temple<sup>6</sup> are located on the hill top of the West Garo-Hills; however, socio-culturally these are closely connected with the people of Assam. The name of the locality as Mankachar was derived from a person Manik Chandra Gowala,

a milk producer from erstwhile Mymanshing district (present Barisal and Tangail of Bangladesh) of East Bengal used to come for the sake of his occupation. Later period, this area is named after his name as *char* of Manik Gowala, Manik's *char* and finally Mankachar. Thus, it provides two important characters regarding Mankachar; one is presence of the Bengali Hindu and secondly the important hub for business since long back. Actually, the then easiest communication system through river channel of Brahmaputra boosted not only in the economy of Mankachar but also brought substantial change in the socio-cultural settings of this locality. The Mughal and also the British had improved the connectivity with Assam proper and other regions of North-East through the river way of Brahmaputra via Mankachar and Dhubri<sup>7</sup>.

For a long period, Mankachar, Dhubri, Goalpara were not only the important commercial point but also served as the gateway of Assam just couple of decades back. We may find different communities are living here in the villages and maintain cordial relationship with each other. At the time of partition, numerous Muslim families of Indian side exchanged their land property to the Hindus of East-Pakistan and *vice-versa* and consequently some of the border villages are settled only couple of decades back in exchange of nationality. A major chunk of Muslims had left India forever at the time of partition. Similarly, the Hindus prefer Hindustan as their homeland and a large scale of Hindu migration was noticed at that time. But the secular credentials ensured by the then prominent leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Patel, Ambedkar etc.; a large chunk of Muslim remained in their original homeland. It has an immense impact upon the demography as the Muslims are outnumbering the Hindus in the bordering villages. The demographic history



of erstwhile Goalpara district was an integral part of Rangpur up to the year 1874 and then it was incorporated most of the time with Assam province of British India. It is claimed stridently that, the Ahom had ruled Assam for about six hundred year, which is little bit exaggeration as they were destabilised several times from the disturbances caused by the Mughal as well as powerful neighbouring Koch kingdom; however, their (Ahom) maximum territorial expansion<sup>7</sup> was up-to the river Manas (not a permanent border), and it remained as border between the Ahom and the British India up-to the Yandaboo Treaty of 1826. Thus, the socio-cultural intrigues were fragile in this borderland region due to influences of different political settings formed by different communities i.e. Barman, Palas, Mughal, Koch, Ahom, Bhutia, Nepali, and finally the British. The culture of this peripheral region largely remained fragile but somewhat accommodative in nature. However, after the partition of India and then with the emergence of Bangladesh have sharpened the political identity of the borderlanders. Moreover, people continued other linkages in following two-three decades and it has come to an end with the massive resistance movement has started from the end of 1970s in Assam. Thus, fencing was the ultimate resistance for the protection of the Assamese from the Bangladeshi transgressors but have undeniable impact in the field of culture, language, identity, social processes of borderland.

The Dhubri borderlanders identify their language as Goalparia, which is neither Assamese nor Bengali but have substantial elements of both. It ensures the creolization of language which is a very common phenomenon in peripheral region across the world. If we take an example from “the global context, the identity of East Florida is neither Spanish nor American, but their

culture, language is creolized shaping an alternate one. Similarly, US and Cuba, American and Caribbean, British and American have to negotiate in different angles i.e. culture, language etc. and that is why different factors are contributing in the creolization process” (Cusick 2000: 46-55). Accordingly, the historical linkage of Dhubri with East Bengal or the West Bengal provides a good example of creolization therein. Although the India-Pakistan partition was communally coloured but people had maintained very close relation for longer duration even in the post partition period. The porous border helps to sustain their transnational relation in various aspects of life. One thing is very clear that these Dhubri borderlanders are structurally Indian but they are not different from their Bangladeshi counterpart across the border in many aspects.

At present in Dhubri district, the Goalparia dialect of Assamese is extensively used by the common people. However, being Assamese as the official language, it is getting precedent over the colloquial Goalparia language. Assamese is used as official as well as academic language and that is why people are becoming more Assamese than a Goalparia one. But we can't deny the influence of Bengali in the Goalparia language and that is why it is a debatable issue for different institutions or civil society organisations across the nation and Assam in particular. Undoubtedly, it has become significant in the language politics of Assam. However, the accents of local people gives us clear picture that how their language has been varying in accordance with changing time and space. Although, their clarity as a linguistic Assamese is a matter of contestation but nobody can deny their Assamese credentials in the present context. To understand the linguistic

contiguity of Goalpara, Mishra (2011) went through Mullan's assertion, she mentioned:

the Census Commissioner of India 1931, C. S. Mullan who observed that 'as might be expected in a district which is the meeting place of two languages, (it) has developed a dialect of its own.....the true boundary of Assam from a linguistic point of view would be the line drawn from the North to South almost exactly half way through the middle of the Goalpara district'. Mullan also observed that the new category of bilingualism that was introduced in the census of 1931 applied to the people of Goalpara alone. Exceptionalism continued to define the colonial linguistic policy in the region in 1940's as well, although Assamese was by then the medium of instruction in the rest of the valley. (Kar 1975: 33; Mishra 2011: 158)

### **3.2.1 Family and Kinship at the Borderland**

This Dhubri Borderland comprises with hundreds of families from Ramraikuti to Mahendraganj covering a long uneven terrain. It requires accommodation of every family as bottom level institution of society to make it empirically prudent. Today, we may find a transitional space in between tradition and modernity in every aspects of life. The concept of family is very crucial in every civilised society from East to West, North to South; however, the nature of family is changing over the years. If the West is in a modern shape as fragile, temporary in nature but for the developing countries and particularly for South Asian nation-states have command over families since long back. If we go through the views of K. P. Chattopadhyay, he classified families into

three different categories i.e. simple, compound and composite. Accordingly, from the angle of authority or headship, families have been classified as husband dominant, wife dominant, equalitarian, and autonomic families (Ahuja 2010: 98). Thus, on the basis of composition of members, families are categorised as nuclear and joint. I. P. Desai very extensively categorised joint families as functional joint family, traditional joint family, marginal joint family and so forth. Similarly nuclear family is fissioned family as the family is separated from fathers or married brother's family (ibid 99). But it is significant that the structure of family is not fixed and gets change at every interval. Unlike others, the family of borderlanders are also influenced by the border, geopolitical location, sensitivity of the society etc. Even, it determines the family structure, nature of work, safety of women, level of schooling etc. Here, in this India-Bangladesh borderland, we find that structurally nuclear families are outnumbering the joint families; but in some particular condition, they have common/shared structure. The nuclear families comprised of just two or three generations even excluding the horizontal relation with brothers family. The joint families comprises of grandparents, parents, brother's family, children and grand children with the grandfather or instead of him father as head of the family. In their absence, the grandmother or mother gets the charge of the family. Even, she holds the decisive power to administer the internal as well as external matter of the family.

There is also a sharp division of labour on the basis of gender. Even, the sense of patriarchy is prevalent everywhere including the borderland region too. The girls have to leave the parental home after marriage and have to settle in the husband's home permanently. As the border villages are

interior, far away from the core area, most of the marriages are performed in between neighbouring bride and grooms. Generally, arrange marriage is well preferred, but sometimes love marriage or eloping cases are also found in the society. It is pertinent to mention here that under age marriage (around 80 percent) and polygamy are still prevalent in the borderland. The reasons are very common and once Nur Rahman Bhuyan in his thesis “*Living at the Periphery: a study of the Muslim of Takimari River Island near India-Bangladesh Border*” very categorically mentioned about the sense of power as well as prestige are important reasons in this regard. Most of the women are captive within the four walls of home and have to perform motherhood as well as domestic works on regular basis. Thus, women have to face double oppression; on one hand they are facing gender discrimination in terms of tradition, culture, custom, costume etc. and other hand, they are unable to access the outer world for development as they are from interior location or susceptible geopolitical space. So, the condition of women is largely pitiable that they are deprived of education, health, nutrition, security and hence, they are located far below the national average in the context of Human Development Index (HDI). Even, their position is not comparable with the tribal villages across the country.

It is a common phenomenon that the family members are more or less obey the head of the family and most of the time males have decisive role in decision making process both in internal as well as external matters of the family. But sometimes, headship is determined in accordance with his/her capacity and even a female too can be the head of the family. Here, power and authority are the determinant factors to administered cooperation among one

and all. There is also a provision of separation from the core family in accordance with necessities. Sometimes, the separation process becomes somewhat ceremonial. Even, the persons separated from the family are provided with utensils, small amount of money etc. Besides, sweets *nasta* or *batasha* are distributed among the neighbours and particularly among the neighbouring children. Furthermore, the growth of individualism or the concept of 'self' and 'other' has enormous contribution in the nucleation of families. However, these families may share various common belongings except the utensils or cookeries. This phenomenon is widely prevalent in the agriculture based societies across the Dhubri borderland. However, the family size is relatively larger in every household along the border. Separation from family is just a structural manoeuvre; but people are maintaining close connection with each other. As the border has abysmal impact in the day-to-day life of borderlanders, a myriad people are compelled to migrate in different locations across the nation. Actually, the lives of borderlanders are perennially paralysed and consequently people have unremitting migration to the heartland to avail basic needs and opportunities. Hence, in such obnoxious borderland society may have abysmal impact on the family to remain unified for the sake of all round security and particularly for the female as they are easily preyed not only by the neighbouring males, even by the border guards too.

The creation of modern border has altered the kinship as it bisected a large number of families along the border. Before the partition there was no restriction and even it continues for long but with the installation of fencing everything has come to an end. The geopolitical history of bordering region is

acutely related with erstwhile Rangpur district of British India is one of the crucial factors to maintain relation even after the partition. In the words of Sahana Ghosh, she lucidly mentioned that “for the partition generation, Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, Moynaguri, Rangpur, Kaliganj, Phulbari, Nageswari, Bhurungimari, Dhubri, Gaibandha, these names plotted out the contours of a kinship geography that stretched across united Northern Bengal and Lower Assam, though the length and breadth of Koch Behar princely state and greater Rangpur district” (2017: 51). Thus, most of the families have kith and kin on the either side of the border. Border being an accidental set-up and people never thought about the bifurcation or linear after the partition, the social connection virtually remained operational for decades. Even they had no idea about nationality for a long period as the border was porous up to the 1990s. Same is the situation in other parts of the border even today. With the installation of fencing, the family relation sets firmly and after the end of second and mostly third generation, at present these have remained as memory, emotion and history. Here, we may consider the statement “the ambivalences of kinship are also manifest in terms of emotional well-being and the realisation of life-course specific expectations. Transnational separation had the potential to threaten the social reproduction of gender and kinship roles”, (Charsley 2005; Ghosh 2017: 47). In Dhubri borderland, we may find couple of examples that the females are victimised in the process of transborder marriage. The forefathers of most of the families particularly the maternal side remained in Bangladesh and this is the social history of borderlanders but any connection in recent time is vehemently rejected by the local commoners. Even, some of them argued about the generation gap in

maintaining such relationship. Very similarly, a section of Indian girls were married to the Bangladeshi grooms and accidentally entire connections were snapped; thus, everywhere female had to sacrifice more in this regard. Hence, border undoubtedly delinks the human relation; but female are relatively more sufferer than the male due to the bifurcation of borderland.

### **3.3 Structural Linkages**

The concept of structural border has emerged with the materialisation of physical border. It starts with geography and environment; then the geographical landscape determines the movement of people and their family, community, identity, ethnicity, society, culture, religion etc. have emerged with lots of regulations and everywhere border has extensive influence throughout the system. At present, there is a stringent contradiction regarding the functionalism of border in the milieu of modernity. Thus, the ambivalence of borders is to be considered here in a verity of ways to understand the nation-states.

#### **3.3.1 Historical**

The present Dhubri district was an integral part of erstwhile undivided Goalpara district which was created in the year 1822, under the colonial administration. Before that the territory was under the rule of Koch, Mughal, and then British in subsequent period. But for the administrative machination, Goalpara was entrusted under different political settings i.e. Rangpur, Eastern Duar, Bhutan and sometimes Assam and finally after the independence it remains with the Indian state of Assam. So, the history of this area has lots of ups and downs due to transformation of its geopolitical space as a buffer in between different territories. B. C. Allen, E. A. Gait and others mentioned in



the ‘Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India’ put forward about the history of erstwhile Goalpara as:

At the beginning of the sixteenth century the Koch race rose to power under Biswa Singh, whose son Nar Narayan waged war successfully against the Ahoms and the Rajas of Cachar, Jaintia, Sylhet, and Tippera. Before his death, the Kingdom was divided; and Goalpara, with Kamrup and Darrang, was made over to his nephew, Raghu Rai, who is claimed as the ancestor of the present family. Raghu Rai’s son Parikshit, was defeated by the Muhammdans in 1614; and the District was then incorporated in the Mughal empire, though the struggle between the Muhammadans and the Ahoms went on for some years longer. After the British obtained the *Diwani* of Bengal in 1765, Goalpara Town continued to be a frontier outpost, and from Jogighopa on the opposite bank of Brahmaputra, between European Merchant and the Assamese, (Allen & others 1979: 515).

When Assam was made a separate administrative setup in 1874, the district of Goalpara including the Eastern Duar was transferred to Assam. In the year 1905, the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was formed, Goalpara became a part of the new province, but in 1912, when partition was annulled, Goalpara district reverted back to Assam (Assam Land Revenue manual part xii). In subsequent days, this Dhubri area remained as integral part of Goalpara district of Assam in the post independent India. However, in later period, again in 1983, the Dhubri, Bongaigaon and Kokrajhar subdivisions were made new districts bifurcating from Goalpara district.

As we have already mentioned that the India-Bangladesh border was an accidental creation at the time of partition. Redcliff, a British official was the chief architect in demarcating the India-Pakistan border. He demarcated it

on the basis of religion as the Muslims dominated areas were parted away from India with a new national entity as Pakistan and at the same time, the Hindu areas remained with Hindustan/ India. However, Muslim dominated Dhubri subdivision of erstwhile Goalpara district was kept with India as a linked area for the entire North-East. For a long period, Goalpara region was an administrative buffer in between the British colony and the Ahom. Prior to that, Goalpara was under the domain of Koch kingdom for more than three centuries, but that ended with the amalgamation of territory under the British jurisdiction. In fact, it was a linked area of the then Koch Hajo, Koch Behar, Bhutan, and Rangpur. Hence, border had divided the greater homeland of the Koch into different administrative set-up. Here, in Dhubri, different communities had congregated in different stages of history. But, the anguish of local commoners of Dhubri borderland over the segregated kinship as considerably a large number of people remained outside of the fence at the time of partition. Moreover, people had to either sale or exchange their properties at a very low-price. When we talked to Abdur Rashid Khandakar (on 13<sup>th</sup> Oct. 2015), he said, *“due to the partition of 1947, the borderlanders had to lose a substantial amount of permanent property. They had also lost their age old relations”*. As the region shares historical base, the common people had continued their relations, but when it was fenced, the relation was totally snapped. However, Dhubri borderlanders are more or less contented notwithstanding their discontinuity in relations. Hence, the present border is a structural reflection of a divided nation.

The historical relation of Dhubri district was connected with Bengal as four western most districts of present Assam were an integral part of the then

Rangpur district. The bifurcation or the emergence of border seceding India and East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) was more accidental than the natural one. The division in the name of religion has a substantial impact in the following days. If we look at the inhabitants of this borderland of Dhubri district, the community was bisected, kinship was divided; but they have a common history, and consequently, the local people have an aversion towards the imposition as well as installation of border. Even though, these people had maintained relations through the porous border for four decades after the partition. Hence, today's border fencing has social as well as political implications denouncing the historical connections of earlier days.

From the worldly experiences, we may find the tendency of territorial expansion is one of the basic principles of most of the kingdoms. The expansionist tendency was never blunt even for the Mughal and consequently their repeated invasions into the Ahom and the Koch territory signifies the historical linkages between the centre and the periphery. The Mughal had series of confrontation with the Koch in this geopolitical junction of Goalpara and later went beyond to the Ahom territory. The grave of Mirzumla at Mankachar bears some historical propinquity of the Mughal in this locality. Actually, river Brahmaputra via Mankachar, Dhubri and Goalpara worked as a major link route for the people of the North Eastern region. Even, the present North Eastern region in general and particularly Assam had maintained close relations with Dhaka for a long period through the river channel of the Brahmaputra. But at the later stage, with the changing political as well as administrative discourse, Kolkata had become more advantageous destination for the Assamese people. In this regard, the proposal for Tura-Roumari Road<sup>8</sup>

connecting Tura, integral part of the then Assam with Dhaka via Mankachar, Rangpur, Roumari etc. was significant but did not complete due to partition. Hence, with the creation of border, all round linkages have snapped. Partition disrupted the age old pan Indian linkages very deeply.

### **3.3.2 Linguistic Scenario**

Border delinks everything whether it is in Dhubri or somewhere else. For a long period of time, there was confusion and an extensive debate continued to identify the language of Dhubri borderlanders whether it is a Bengali or Assamese language or an admixture of both. It would be clear, if we go through the statement of the Census of India 1921 mentioned, “at the Bengal end, they speak it with a tinge of Bengali; at the Assam end with a tinge of Assamese and in between with a tinge of both” (Misra 2011: 155; Census of India 1921, Assam 1923: 117). Even, there was a demand for bilingual formula<sup>9</sup> in the schools during the later stage of colonial period. But, the debate continues for till date, they are in a dilemma as they are neither Assamese nor Bengali fully, but they have their own linguistic identity as Goalparia. Here, we may go through some significant statements of prominent personalities i.e. Gaurinath Shastri (1928) and Prabhat Chandra Baruah (1926) of this locality; which were eloquently mentioned in the book of Sanghamitra Misra (2011), “*Becoming a Borderland: the Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial North Eastern India*”. Misra highlighted the statements as:

Shastri said, ‘we have never been either Assamese or Bengali.

They are both our neighbours. Who are we? We are neither of the two. We are we. We are the people of this area. We are Goalparia..... we are distinct and so is our culture, customs and

traditions’ (Shastri 1928, Misra 2011: 148). Shastri also argued that several cultural elements, including the cuisine, attire, and social norms, were illustrative of this distinctive borderland identity and could be used to evoke a new people (ibid: 32-38). Accordingly, P. C. Baruah mourned by saying that ‘our district has become the victim of ‘political football’. Moreover, he said we have been forced to accept as our mother tongue the languages of those communities which have scored a goal’ (Baruah 1926: Misra 2011: 148).

Thus, in this locality, the linguistic contestation prevails over the years in accordance with the changing political discourses. In fact, in such a peripheral junction across the world, is difficult to install a sharp linear due to linguistic fluidity.

Bezbaroa defended his analysis on Goalpara’s language by arguing that “Goalpara had been under the rule of the Nawabs..... and Bengalis from professional classes have settled here as well. All of these have contributed to the strong influences of Bengali on Goalpara’s language” (Bezbaroa1910a: 367). Misra highlighted the assertion of Bezbaroa as:

.....the idea of national identity at the borderlands tended to be diluted. Thus, it was acknowledged that ‘Goalpara’s Assamese language is mixed with Bengali to a certain extent, a phenomenon common to languages in frontier and marginal areas..... where certain sections of the population do not even know whether their mother tongue is Assamese or Bengali’ (Misra 2011: 141, Bezbaroa 1910a: 350). Reconstructing the linguistic unity of the

borderland that was Goalpara, these writings almost invariably began with the story of the historical unity of the region. Goalpara was represented as part of a kingdom and ruled by dynasties with a political history that was independent of both the provinces of Assam and Bengal (ibid 2011: 144).

The Koch-Rajbangshi people have their own linguistic credentials and extensively used in the then Koch Kingdom<sup>10</sup> and its neighbouring areas too. “The Rajbangsi dialect- spoken<sup>11</sup> in parts of Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Koch Bihar in West Bengal, erstwhile Goalpara in Assam and Rangpur in Bangladesh” (Baruah 1995: 2783). ‘This area (Goalpara, Kochbehar and nearby areas) has its own geographical and historical distinctiveness and despite being administratively amalgamated into Assam these hundred years it still retains its links with the Rajbangsi language and culture. For generations, the spoken language of both Hindus and Muslims in this region has been Rajbangsi’, (Misra 2011: 144, Baruah 2000: 57). But unfortunately, neither Goalparia nor Rajbangshi language got recognition during the colonial and post colonial period.

We may find couple of *Bhatia*<sup>12</sup> families too along the border as these are peasants of East Bengal origin. The language of these migrant people is again confusing that for certain occasions are demanding Bengali as their mother tongue but officially they are Assamese. Even, there is no single Bengali medium institution in this migrant Muslim locality across the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Once Matiur Rahman Mia<sup>13</sup> told the Assam Assembly on 16 February, 1938:

We are *Bengalees*. Our mother tongue is *Bengalee*..... Under the circumstances if this Assamese language be imposed as a new burden on our shoulders, on our children's shoulders and if we are deprived of our mother tongue, then that will amount to depriving our children from opportunities of education (Guha 2006: 210).

In spite of such vigorous demand, the Muslims of East-Bengal origin were not concerned about their mother tongue. In this regard Guha's (2006: 210) argument is relevant, 'the Muslim immigrants were more concerned with acquiring land rights than preserving their language'. Nevertheless, these people have unique style of dialect, but later period it faces different omission and commission in the linguistic contour. Today, the vocabulary of this *Bhatia* dialect (mostly Mymensinghia)<sup>14</sup> have been emancipating with the inclusion of numerous words from the languages of different communities of this locality. Regarding the language of these *Bhati* people, Lakhminath Bezbaroah put forwarded very significant statement as "the people of *Bhati* are welcome to speak their own dialects at home. It is an expression of their love for their birthplace. But Assamese is the public property of the entire Assamese community and its best to keep differences aside" (Misra 2011: 142, Bezbaroah 1910d: 43). In fact, there is no recognised language as *Bhatia*, but these people have already moved ahead in the Asamiyasation process as they are more capable in Assamese both in public and private life. These people are following bi-lingual formula i.e. one is official and other one is community oriented.

Hence, there is a condensation of language/ dialect and culture in this tri junction of Bengal, western Assam and Rangpur part of Bangladesh. Sanjib

Baruah emphasises the statement of Banikanta Kakati, ‘there is, of course, significant overlap today between the cultures and dialects of western Assam and Northern Bengal. Kakati noted that the spoken language of North Bengal and western Assam- of undivided Kamrup and Goalpara – was *substantially the same as seems to form one dialect group*’ (Baruah 1995: 2783). Thus, in such peripheral space, overlapping is very common whether it is in Dhubri or somewhere else. Before the creation of border, there was a kind of unrestrained people to people connection of either side. Consequently, the linguistic bondage was sustained over the years. Even, some divisive groups are in a race to sharpen their linguistic identity speculating crisis in the larger domain. But at present, these people are leaned to politically construct linguistic settings of Assam.

### **3.3.3 Religious Linkage**

It is mentioned earlier that Muslims were predominant in Dhubri or erstwhile Goalpara as a peripheral region of the Mughal as well as the British administrative jurisdiction. Actually, the Muslim villages are outnumbering the Hindu villages here. Around 20 percent (19.92 as per 2011 census in Dhubri District) of total population are Hindu in border villages and again they belong to different communities i.e. Bengali Hindus, Hajongs, Rajbanshis etc. The existence of *Mandir (temple)*, Mosque, *Satra* (religious monasteries), *Namghar* etc. symbolises the heterogeneous religious composition along the borderland. Although, we may find different religious cults, but border has little impact in their faith and belief as all these communities have been living harmoniously since long back. However, border had curtailed the age old religious linkages among the people. In the undivided India, there was no



question of constraint and later period after partition it had continued for long in spite of different nationality; the local people of either side (India and East Pakistan) of border had not only attended in *Puja*, *Eid* and other religious festivals, but also shared the common puja *mandap*, *Iddgah*<sup>15</sup> field, common cremation ground etc. across the border. An elderly person, Rabindra Barman (67) from Ramraikuti stated that the people from other side too attended the programme of *naam kirtan*, *bhaona* in the historic *Satra* of Satrasal before fencing the border. But, today everything has stopped permanently. The village name as Satrasal was derived from *satra*, a prominent religious-cultural contribution of *Vaishnavite* saint Sri Sri Sankadeva in the sixteenth century. Sankardeva was not only popular in Assam and Koch Hajo but also popular in Koch Behar too and therefore, at the time of his demise he was in Koch Behar i.e. Madhupur *Satra*. In fact, he had developed family relation with the Koch Royal family as marrying out his niece to Chilarai<sup>16</sup>. Hence, the Ramraikuti *satra* of Satrasal had invited thousands of disciples from beyond the border for its religious importance.

If we look at the backdrop of religion in Satrasal village, there is a coexistence of Hinduism and Islam within the greater part of this locality. The followers of *Vaishnavite* sect of Hinduism usually practice *Naam Kirtan*, *bhaona* etc. on different occasions and particularly birth and death anniversaries of their *gurus* are observed in a profound manner. Here, in this *satra*, unlike others, we may get composite structure of officials as *Satradhikar*, *Bhagawati*, *Pathok*, *Deuri*, *Bharali*, *Gayon*, *Bayon*, *Sutradhar*, *Likhok*, *Pashoni*, *Mazumdar*, *Mukhtiyar* etc. These officials are from nearby *satra* and particularly Bhakatpara village very close to Ramraikuti-Satrasal

area. Moreover, a few Bengali Hindu families living there have different religious activities i.e. *Sivaratri*, *Durga puja*, *Lakshmi puja*, *Kali puja*, *Manasha puja*, *Charakh puja* etc. Hence, the area is an example for congregation of *Shaivism* and *Vaishnavism* with Islam at certain level. Around 25 percent of people are Muslim in this borderland village. In the Muslim locality, they have Masjid, *Iddgah*-field, common graveyard etc. Moreover, a considerable number of Rajbanshis are also sharing the village with others observing their own festivals as *Bisohori puja*, *Sanyasi puja*, *Chauni puja*, *Kali puja*, *Dharam Thakur puja*, *Chorokh puja* etc. There are some common religious festivals between the Bengali Hindus and the Rajbanshis too as these are basically from the same religious background. So, the religious plurality strengthens the composite social structure of Ramraikuti-Satrasal village.

In Binnyachara, a predominantly Muslim village consists of four parts; however, a chunk of Hindu families are found in the third and fourth part of it. The Hindus are mostly belonged to marginal classes as farmers, artisans, and fisherman etc., and that is the *Kaibartya*, *Sudra* and *Nama-Sudra* in caste hierarchy<sup>17</sup>. These people also have substantial contribution in the larger social domain over the years. There are very small numbers of Rajbangsi families in this landlocked Binnyachara village. Accordingly, Char Ghewmari is another select village having cent percent Muslim population. These people are *Deshi* Muslims who speak Goalparia dialect. They have different religious institutions i.e. *Masjid*, *Muktab*, *Iddgah* etc. They have *mullah*<sup>18</sup> of their own locality to conduct all the institutional activities as well as other religious rituals. Despite interior location, people are relatively more conscious about religion as Tabligh-e-Jamat<sup>19</sup> is very popular among them. Even, the influence

of *mullah* is substantial here as he is the religious head of the *Mahalla*. A large number of people belong to different age groups are active in practising and participating in religious activities as religion has a strong base in this interior flood and erosion prone locality. However, due to the strong adherence to religion, the process of modernisation is lethargic for these land locked people.

Accordingly, the people of Kalairalga *char* after disconnected from its original location have merged with the Assameralga, ---- a Muslim populated village. They have a temporary Masjid for worship as their village is dislocated due to flood and erosion year after year. There is a *Muktab* for children to learn the preliminaries of Arabic language and Islam simultaneously. Moreover, unlike others, most of the elderly people are more concerned about the religious activities. The influence of economic retardation over religion is clearly visible in this locality. Most of the people are wage earner; they used to go to Meghalaya, the neighbouring state of Assam to work in the coal mine and other factories for accessing basic essentials for their day today consumption. It is very difficult for them to manage religious activities properly. Another village, College nagar and Barmanpara, both the Hindus and the Muslims have equally presence and nobody interfere in belief and practice of religion. One notable point is that people from Mankachar maintained shared religious practices with the people from outside the border up to the couple of decades back (group interview on 27 January, 2014). Even, it is informed that, the then security guards were generous and had allowed them to take part in collective prayer and particularly *janaja* and *kabr ziyarat*<sup>20</sup> in the other part of border as there was a strong family bondage among the borderlanders of either side.

In this study, total five villages are selected and except the Ramraikuti and Barmanpara, everywhere Muslims are demographically stronger. But, one pertinent point is that the social composition of adjacent Bangladesh society is akin in terms of religion, caste, community, language etc. However, the border has intersected their connectivity, *jamat*, the society and collective practices etc. Riaz Uddin (81), an elderly person from College Nagar stated that “*We offered dua for our ancestors at least once a year; at present, the graveyard is outside the boundary and it is very difficult to go there*” (interviewed on 23 November, 2015). Thus, it is crucial that the religious memory is still vivid among the elderly persons. In a very similar fashion, hundreds of pilgrimage used to attend the Kamakhya temple of Mankachar in earlier days from the neighbouring villages of Mankachar and even Bangladesh too. But border makes the temple captive that the numbers of devotees have been declining day by day. Despite of historical importance, the changing geopolitical location doesn’t allow them to access the temple.

### **3.3.4 Community**

If partition divides the community notionally; than the border fencing divides it structurally. The emergence of India-Bangladesh border had direct impact upon the borderland societies as most of them are bisected permanently. If we look at the post partition period, a large number of Muslims had left India but returned with the assurance of peace and protection. Accordingly, thousands of Hindus entered from East Pakistan as refugees to this safe heaven. But, after the Nehru-Liaquat Ali pact of 1950<sup>21</sup>, communal clashes and other atrocities came down and a large number of people belonging to different religious background returned to their respective homeland. In fact, a major

demographical change occurred in exchange of land on the basis of religion. The major or immediate impact was on family, culture, community, ethnicity etc. experienced structural change of social settings. Hence, imposed borders have substantial impact upon the borderland communities.

If we take an example from the global context, the fencing makes the Jewish in Israel secure, helps them to move freely, but on the contrary the Arabs strongly oppose it. Actually, for the Arabs, freedom of movement is acutely restricted after crossing the border to maintain family and economic ties with their counterpart. Here, the role of border is diametrically opposite, for the Jewish, border is a source of safety but the Arab's did not expect the creation of border. Accordingly, the India-Bangladesh borderline is also a matter of safety for most of the commoners on both sides and particularly Indian side, it ensures security from local/non local miscreants, infiltrators, smugglers, traffickers etc. and very similar impact is noticed in the Bangladesh counterpart too. Moreover, a certain section of people from either side have lost their economic opportunities permanently. Accordingly, all round formal communication including trade and commerce have become a matter of concern here. Ultimately, it reduces opportunities but increases sensitivity on the borderland; the movement of people is strongly controlled, at night they are not as secure as the Jewish. Here, in Dhubri borderland, nobody can move at night, even emergency cases are also not considered here. The borders are very same, whether it is Arabs and Jewish or Indian and Bangladeshi; one border provides permanent safety and security but on the contrary, other is partial and sometimes nought. In fact, in India, even after knowing the problem, the authority is unable to provide assistance "for the

sake of national security”. For this, in Israel, the leadership aspire to persuade the decision makers to implement a new policy, ‘breathing fence and not a strangling fence’ meaning working on the possibility of controlled passage of residents to the other side of the fence (Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 287).

If the border passes through a homogenous population, special tie whether legal or illegal, will develop on both the sides and in such cases the differences from one side of the border to the other will be less prominent (Soffer 1994; Newman 2004; Gelman & Keinan 2007: 290). In Dhubri borderland region, people had maintained very close connection over the years and even today in partial manner; even formal and informal connectivity is somewhat maintained denouncing the complexity of border. Here, border not only divides the geographical landscape but the local communities too. Even, the historical bondage of clanship is still vivid among the local people of borderland. Hence, the similarity in community composition on either side of the border villages is helping to maintain cordial relationships.

### **3.3.5 Family**

Bordering is the geopolitical imposition of nation-state. In the context of the India-Bangladesh border, thousands of families were parted away at the time of partition. Consequently, people from either side of the border had maintained family relation even after the partition; however, with the construction of fencing, everything is virtually stopped. In fact, with the changing generations, memories of kinship are fading away among the people.

The border with barbed fence is a new manifestation for the local people as it has emerged only two decades back. Prior to that, transborder marriages were performed among the people in this locality. One elderly

person, Masuruddin Sheikh (68) from Ramraikuti, he told that *‘large number of marriages performed across the border, but today all are stopped permanently’*. He also said that *‘a sizable number of people had wives from Bangladesh side, even a section of people were settled in Bangladesh too. Most of them exchanged their Indian land property with the Hindus.’* He was also very categorical about some families of their own village had settled in the pretext of partition from East Pakistan. The land exchange among the borderlanders had continued for a long even after the partition.

At the time of partition, couple of families were parted away for the possession of property. The present elderly borderlanders are the first or second generation of people and most of them have either matrimonial or patrimonial relatives in the other side of the border. But, sometimes these people try to continue their relation denouncing the existing security structure. However, the tendency of border crossing has abysmally come down due to wide spread sensitivity across the border. Today, for these elderly people, family linkage remains just as a memory but finishing with the end of generation. Their relatives, friend circles, peer groups, and particularly in laws are totally disconnected for the erection of fencing. But, they have regard for their memorable bondage of early stage of life. Again, they have resentment over the unexpected imposition of border in their locality. In the words of former Principal of A. A. Latif Girls Higher Secondary School, Mankachar: *“since long back, the age old linkages are permanently disrupted, actually border (India-Bangladesh) was imposed upon us”* (interviewed on 9 December, 2014).

### **3.3.6 Beyond the Border**

The India-Bangladesh border is a political standing in the aftermath of partition. There is a bounteous demand for fencing as well as detection and deportation of illegal migration in the last four decades. Nevertheless, it was started even before the independence or in accordance with the imposition of 'line system'<sup>22</sup>. Hence, the history of Dhubri and neighbouring region is the history of condensation over the years.

#### **a. Cultural Linkages**

In Dhubri, we can find the culture is somewhat creolized due to the peripheral existence. Both the Assamese and the Bengali cultures are condensed in presence of the Koch Rajbanshi therein. Such type of geopolitical junction, cultural overlapping is undeniable.<sup>23</sup> If we go through the medieval history or the British reign and finally after independence or the partition; the political discourses have been changing under different circumstances and have substantially impacted on the local culture of the commoners. Even, before fencing, people had transborder linkages with significant effect on propagation of culture. On our trip to Bangladesh side, particularly Rangpur district (Dhubri was inseparable part of erstwhile Rangpur division of East Bengal) during 17 to 23 May, 2016, we had an interaction with few people including scholars, artist, students; they equivocally told us about the popularity of songs of Pratima Pandey Baruah, Hemanga Biswas or Bhupen Hazarika and many others in their society. Moreover, the Bangladeshi people used to enjoy Indian TV channels and particularly Hindi movies. In fact, Tamil/ Hindi dubbing action movies are also popular among the younger generation of Bangladesh. Accordingly, from the world of sports, and essentially cricket (Indian Premier



League) has significant contribution in bringing closeness among the people. In recent time, some cricketers i.e. Shakib al Hassan, Tamim Iqbal, Soumya Sarkar, Taskin Ahmed, and Mustafizur Rahman etc. were in the teams of different versions of IPL. Very similarly, Bangladeshi comedy movies particularly played by *Bhadaima*<sup>24</sup> became immensely popular among the villagers of Dhubri and neighbouring areas in the last couple of decades. Accordingly, Bangladeshi movies have also popularity on the Indian side too and particularly borderlanders hired Television, VCD, CD, and battery for two-three nights and enjoyed by all including the female members. The influence of these movies is so extensive that Dhubri, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar and Barpeta of lower Assam had covered for more than two decades. Bangladeshi singers Runa Laila and Mamtaz are immensely popular among the Indian people too. In similar fashion, the *jatra gaan*, *kabi gaan* parties of Bangladesh had regular presence in the nearby villages of the Indian side during winter season as there was no restriction up to few decades back. Undoubtedly, all these have contributed a lot for cultural bondage among the people of Bangladesh and India and the borderlanders in particular.

Musurrudin Sheikh of Ramraikuti also shared his experiences of 60s and 70s that he had a lot of friends on the Bangladesh side. The popular village sports i.e. *Ha-do-do*, Kabaddi, kho-kho, *Golla*, hide and sick, cards, lodo and *Kachuguti*<sup>25</sup> etc. were common platform for all in their everyday engagement. Even, community sports were also arranged and participated by all irrespective of their nationality. Hence, unrecognised international sports were played on in the transborder areas. People had no experience with barrier; nationality was not an issue for them, but with the changing time and

space, it has become a very crucial factor for the Indian state and particularly for Assam.

Local *gaan* (song) are very crucial in transmitting culture from one generation to another and here the role of Tap-Recorder, Radio is very significant including the mobile phone and internet in recent times. Some typical songs i.e. *Bhawaiya geet*, *Bhatiali geet*, *Sadgah*, *Dhuya gaan*, *Goalporia lokageet*, *Kabigaan*, *Magan*, *Palagan*, *Palli Geet*, *Nazrul geeti* are very popular among the people of bordering villages. Apodictically, the erosion prone area like Ghewmari, Binnyachara, Kalairalga and many other remote villages have neither electricity nor allied electronic devices and particularly TV to enjoy different programmes. However, a small number of people have radios usually enjoy programmes i.e. All India Radio, Guwahati and many others from Bangladesh. Actually, people feel relatively more comfortable in understanding all these programmes for their linguistic proximity. The younger generation try to use Hindi, Bengali and Assamese and here the Radio and television have significant contribution in the overall cultural landscape. Elderly and illiterate people and particularly women prefer Bengali (also called *Bangla*); new generation is more attracted towards Hindi language, they are interested in Bollywood movies as well as actors. The Assamese language is used generally in three purposes; for the academic, official and whenever people go beyond the village are compelled to learn Assamese. A section of people prefer Assamese because of their easy destination to Guwahati, the state capital for seeking jobs and other official activities. Even, the wage earners, rickshaw pullers, *Thela* pullers etc. have learnt Assamese to adjust with the mainstream society.

The Goalparia folk songs have massive popularity among the borderland villagers on both sides of the fence. These popular songs based on the folk lives of the peasantry have substantial acceptability among the agrarian people. Indeed, sometimes they sing collectively in a rhythm at the time of harvesting, cleaning, sowing and ploughing etc. The colloquial language used in this folk music makes it easy for the ordinary peasants to understand the messages of songs. Here, the pertinent point is that no musical instruments are used while people work in the field. However, the musical instruments like *ektara*, *dotara*, harmonium, *dhol* etc. are used widely in formal performance on the stage on different occasions. Without any formal education, from one generation to another, illiterate agriculture based rural folks are transmitting the cultural heritage. But, slowly these folk songs are declining day by day as modern equipments are replacing old systems. Hence, the traditional agrarian culture is slowly fragmenting in the wake of globalisation. The impact of global market has become indispensable whether it is in Dhubri borderland or somewhere else. Furthermore, one significant point is that the local (within the village) borderlanders' individual freedom to assemble in the paddy field has been suspended due to the contentious space along the border and which has abysmal impact to carry on the agrarian culture and tradition.

The dress code and food habit bear certain level of socio-cultural reflections. Unlike others, in the wake of modernity, the borderland society is also accumulated changes in every aspects of life. Although, the number of TV, Radio, educational institution are very low in the borderland villages, but the impact of modernity particularly on dress code and food habit is

perceptible here. The new dresses like jeans pant and *salwar, kurti*, frock etc. are replacing the traditional attires like *lungi, mexi* etc. However, *khari* cloth, a cotton *sharee* is popular among the Bengali married women also prevalent in the borderland. But, noticeable point is that, there is an abysmal change in the last two-three decades in the ambivalence of modernity as stated by the privileged class from the borderland. Even, the school children are provided with shirt and long-pant for boys and gown and skirt for girls either by parents or as a school uniform given by the government. In fact, the casual dresses are also changing over the years. In the upper classes, up to the college level, *mekhela*<sup>26</sup> and *churidar* are common dresses for girls. In the Muslim locality of this borderland, the elderly male prefer *lungi* and plain *kurta* as the dress is more comfortable for regular use. Accordingly, the Hindu men do prefer *dhuti* and *kurta* for daily use. Thus, we find significant changes in the dress pattern of local commoners of this borderland too. But, the noticeable point is that, although, the cultural history has linkage with the neighbouring Bangladesh or West Bengal, but today they are inescapable from the global cultural hegemony. Thus, the influence is neither internal nor external only but global too. Rice has been the major food item of these people. Besides, puffed rice, *chira*, stale rice are the emergency foods that are quite popular among them. Sometimes, and particularly in winter season, various dishes including *pithas* are prepared for the reception of kith and kin on different occasions. Undoubtedly, both in dress and food habit, there are various components very similar to Bangladeshi counterpart and therefore, the *lungi* wearing people are easily blamed as Bangladeshi in the larger cultural domain of India and particularly in Assam. Hence, the debate of citizenship on the basis of culture

and particularly dress and food habit has become a contentious matter of recent time.

Jewellery items are also a very crucial indicator to understand the class and culture of a society. It is mostly related with female as rings, *payels*, *shakha*, necklace, chain etc. are the basic requirements. Unlike others, the rural women irrespective of religion do have interest on ornaments. Here, ornament indicates not only the socio-cultural values but religion too. The importance of minimum gold using at nose in Islam is equalled to *shakha* for the Bengali Hindus to symbolise the marital status of women. However, some boys use silver ring, chain and sometimes bracelet just as fashion. But, in recent time, from the family of in-laws, the brides are given ring or chain made of gold or silver etc. besides bicycle and radio. But, it depends upon the financial condition of a family and also the position of the bride. It becomes as a custom of rural society and most of the guardians face problem to maintain such practices. So, formal dowry system is rare in this locality but hidden or unrecognised dowry system prevails widely. In fact, all the select villages have more or less experience about the dowry system. Thus, the entire system of this borderland underscores one thing that there is a condensation of two contradictory notions as Assamese with the Bengali culture, at the same time Islamic with the Hinduism.

#### **b. Marriage and other Rituals**

Marriage is a universal social phenomenon having certain terms and conditions to get sanction for conjugal life (Ahuja 2010: 112-13). In accordance with the changing time and space, there is a significant change in nature as well as performance of marriage. If we go through the present

situation of borderland, the marriages are generally performed in between the people of neighbouring villages as more or less people are from *chena-jana*<sup>27</sup>. In fact, few decades back, trans-border marriages were common among the borderlanders. But, the trend has stopped with the fencing of border and emerging complex borderland situation. However, the Hindus have a different but unusual tendency in marriage as they develop close connection with the mainstream society to get wider space in the larger domain. Sometimes, the Muslims are akin in this regard, but in practical life, most of the cases they are locally engaged. The major problem of marriage in the borderland is to get a suitable alliance. Considerably, a large number of people get married at a very tender age and thus, they have a long experience of motherhood/ fatherhood as well. As the level of education is very low, economic condition is very poor, they have no knowledge about the family planning and finally they have a long reproductive span and have largely contributed towards the rapid growth of population.

The child marriage is widely practised in this locality. In order to comply the minimum age for marriage in India, every child has been losing some additional years at the time of registration of marriage. It is crucial to mention here that all the interior villagers irrespective of caste, class and religion; the female children are generally regarded as burden and at the same time become a matter of concern for physical insecurity. Hence, they try to marry off from the home to reduce their perceived risk. Nur Rahman Bhuyan (2006), in his thesis, very clearly mentioned about this and in his research area, the Takimari village has around 80 percent of marriages were below the legally permissible age. So, he even tried to argue that it is one of the main

reasons for the population explosion in the district of Dhubri. If we look at the village like Ramraikuti, essentially they have better connectivity with Siliguri and other business hubs of North Bengal and consequently, they are economically better off compare to others (See Table 4.5). Moreover, they have got enough opportunities in the process of development. Hence, the condition of this area is relatively better than the condition of Kalairalga, Ghewmari and Binnyachara. The College Nagar/Barmanpara village is again somewhat developed in comparison to other villages. Apparently, the connectivity is important for the sake of development of villages and it brings consciousness about individual status among the local commoners. Again, the class consciousness determinates the population growth whether it is in borderland or somewhere else.

Divorce is inseparably related with marriage, however it is rarely found in the select villages. But, it doesn't mean that there is no case of divorce in the borderland, even for some pity reasons, people approach for separation. Accordingly, it is revealed from our field work in five select villages is that only 4.87 percent women (four persons out of 82 women sample) are widows and .82 percent divorcees (only one). No case of remarriage of divorcee is found in these select border villages. The septuagenarian widows are supported by their son and other close relatives. However, the society is not free from domestic violence but these issues have remained unrecognized over the years. The victims are neither getting legal aids from any governmental/non-governmental sources nor able to lodge complain or approach competent authority due to their poor connectivity.

There are no significant differences in terms of ceremony and other rituals particularly for new born child, marriage and disposing dead bodies etc. But noticeable point is that border has tremendous influence upon the ceremonial activities of borderlanders. Large amount of commodities for any party, reception or celebration are not allowed in the borderland region; it requires prior consent of local security forces. The influential classes have to advocate for the sake of common people so that, no intervention comes from the security forces. In such obnoxious situation, people have been suffering from perennial constriction for their unavoidable sensitivity.

### **3.4 Intercommunity Linkages**

The villages along the India-Bangladesh border are heterogeneous in composition. We find demographic heterogeneity on the Dhubri borderlands as some Mongoloid racial origins people comprising of the Bodo, the Koch and the Hajong etc. are living in different pockets. At later stage, people belonging to the Aryan racial group particularly the Bengali Hindus and the Muslims had migrated towards this locality. However, at present, the Muslims are outnumbering the Hindus in this borderland. Again, both the sects of Hinduism as *Shaivism* and *Baishnavism* are sharing with the Muslims, which is again can be subdivided as the *Deshi* and the *Bhatia* Muslims.

The demographic history of Dhubri and neighbouring region remains with the prominence of Hinduism as the Koch/Rajbanshis are widely present starting from Bhutan, India and Bangladesh. Thus, it is a hunting ground for societal intermix of tribal and non-tribal people of the neighbouring areas. Accordingly, the emergence of Muslims started in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and continues till the end of the British rule. However, the crucial matter is that in



the post partition period, there was a chunk of Muslim exodus from Bangladesh in the aftermath of Delhi Pact of 1950. Accordingly, a large number of Hindu Bengali people also entered in Indian side as refugees at the time of partition. At present, a section of these people are facing the political contestation of their status of citizenship in the Indian state of Assam. If we go through the borderland villages, all the communities have been sharing villages without any segregating politics. In fact, all of them irrespective of religion; have been observing different rituals, festivals and ceremonies whenever possible along the border. Even, the cooperation as well as participation of different communities brings religious coherence to this sensitive locality.

Besides, there were professional linkages as most of the *Jotedar* or *Jaminders* were high-caste Bengali Hindus, but the tenants were either Rajbanshi or Muslims. The fishing and some other scavenging occupations were basically related with the Hindu *Koibartyas*; however, at present large number of Muslims are also compelled to engage in such occupations. The *Marwaries* of Mankachar are dealing in different trades in a large scale. The retail market is again controlled by the Muslims as well as the Bengali Hindus. Hence, the composite social setting is working for mutual benefit of commoners across the communities on this borderland. Another notable point is the public institutions are the common platforms to connect whether it is school, college, dispensary, marketplace etc. Sometimes, they are bounded to maintain connection with each other as their basic problems are almost akin and that is the fact of periphery, the borderland or the contentious spatiality.

Moreover, the basic point of linkage is that history of these communities is almost same.

### **3.5 Socio-Political Divide and Unity**

The condensation of different communities, ethnic groups, religions etc. shapes the composite social structure of Dhubri borderland. The village Satrasal is a Hindu dominated area with sizable number of Muslims as well as Rajbanshi population. The notable point is that irrespective of different community identity and religion; people have been maintaining sense of coherence in their day today life. Actually, the daily interaction of common people is somewhat akin and which is determined by the border. However, the situation of Binnyachara, Ghewmari and Kaliaralga is somewhat different as these are Muslim villages. But, in College Nagar-Barmanpara, there is again an inter religious linkages as the Hindus as well as the Muslims are there, but which is almost same with the Ramraikuti as the condition of Hindus is somewhat better than that of the Muslims here and in Mankachar, the condition of Muslims is better than the Hindus. Hence, one thing is common in both the villages as the socio-economic condition of the majoritarian group is somewhat better than the minorities.

It is observed that there is a linguistic fragility on the Dhubri borderland as their colloquial language Goalparia is neither pure Assamese nor pure Bengali, but an admixture of both. Again, all the communities have their respective dialects, but Goalparia is used as the *lingua-franca* of local commoners and Assamese is the official language as their political orientation is with the Indian state of Assam. The *Deshi* Muslim generally identified them as *Asomiya* and also *Goalporia* and *Deshi*. Similarly, the *Bhatia* Muslim, they

identify themselves as Assamese but their colloquial language is more leaned to the Bengali language. The Hindu Bengalis people have their sharp Bengali credential. Apparently, this borderland people are Assamese first and then Goalparia too. The multiple identities are somewhat advantageous for these people as they can access benefits either from West Bengal or Assam. In accordance with the need of the hour, they can identify themselves either as the Bengali or the Assamese and which is a geopolitical advantage for the people from peripheral or borderland region.

The Ramraikuti is a heterogeneous village and its neighbouring villages Bhakatpara, Jhaokuti etc. are almost same. Accordingly, people of Ghewmari and Binnyachara are *deshi* Muslims and have their regular interaction with the neighbouring villages like Dharmasala and Gaspara with a large scale Hindu Bengalis living therein. Accordingly, Baladuba and Bishkhowa etc. villages have the presence of some Hindu families and they have maintained close relations with the people of Binnyachara. The people of Kaliaralga have indispensable connection with the people of West Garo-hills. Similarly, Mankachar again is largely a multicultural society; all the communities are prevailing therein. The relation of the common people is bounded by rural social set up that despite of religious distinction; people are socially as well as economically clubbed with each other. Even, the divisive or regressive politics particularly from the communal angle cannot reach the villagers of borderland. Hence, people are relegating with the sensitivity in every moment and consequently the influence of divisive politics is comparatively low here. But, it is alleged that the Muslims are easily victimised by the border guards compared to the non-Muslims.

### **3.6 Summing up**

Borderland, across the world would remain unusual political space. No borderland societies are permanent as it has been fluctuating in accordance with the time and space. However, nature of the border has an extensive influence upon the borderlanders. As the modern borders are nothing but political imposition or arrangement and consequently numbers of communities have remained transnational in position; therefore, we find shared religion, languages, ethnicity and culture in either sides of the border. Furthermore, the historical linkage among the people is the real spirit that upholds such relations. These factors are contributing transnational connectivity, migration, trade and commerce etc. notwithstanding the installation of barbed fencing or imposition of enormous restrictions on either side. From the global experience, the borders like USA-Mexico, Benin-Nigeria, India-Bangladesh, India-Myanmar, India-Nepal and many other borders have been facing such type of transnational challenges of different degrees and intensities. However, such fragility is detrimental for security but provides extensive space for bilateral collaboration for the sake of development. It is a crucial time for making the borderland a prolific space whether it is Dhubri or elsewhere.

### **End Note**

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of Identity is tied with notions of difference. A border itself does not create differences, but the state which rules this border can and in some cases, like Moldavia and Karelia, does, “differentiate its population from that of its neighbours by means of construction of a national identity” (Schard 2004: 457). In Africa and Middle East identity problem go deeper. In some cases a state border draws on maps without paying any attention to the ethnicity of the population. In such a case, the border is considered more important, and the population finds itself mixed up in terms of belonging. The people belong to one ethnicity, but live on both sides of the border, and they belong to the state, which rule the territory they live in. “The western concept of ‘national community’ has been imposed on new countries created with territorial borders that were not perceived as such by many of the old identities

that continued to persists, often across the borders” (Nadsen and Naerseen 2003; Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 281).

<sup>2</sup> South Salmara-Mankachar is a newly created administrative district of Indian state of Assam. It is the smallest districts in Assam just bearing 568 square kilometer landmass. The name is derived from two assembly constituencies as South Salmara and Mankachar. The Head Quarters is in Hatsingimari. The district is sharing large portion of land boundary with Bangladesh in the west.

<sup>3</sup> *Satra*’s are vaishnavite monasteries. The Ramraikuti satra is situated near the 1001th pillar of India Bangladesh border. It is one of the historical important satras all over the Assam. The spot where the satra is located now, the marriage ceremony of Bir Chilarai and Aai Bhubaneswari was solemnized in presence of Sri Sri Sankardev ([www.cic.nic.in/cicwebpages/assam/agomoni/rrsatra.html](http://www.cic.nic.in/cicwebpages/assam/agomoni/rrsatra.html)).

<sup>4</sup> In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Neo-Vaishnavite movement was started by saint Sankardeva in Assam. It is monotheistic sect that is *ek saran naam dharma*. It is a new trend of Hinduism based on Bhakti, free from image or idol worship. Their religious script is Namghoxa, Kirtanghoxa etc. At present Gohai- Gohani are religious experts and responsible person to continue the legacy. Though it was started under the Ahom kingdom, but later period got patronage by Koch Rajas also.

<sup>5</sup> Mir Jumla (1592-1663) was a *subedar* of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

<sup>6</sup> Kamakhya temple is located in Thakuranbari village along Assam-Meghalaya border and very close to Mankachar town. The India-Bangladesh border is not far away from this temple.

<sup>7</sup> See Kar pp. 1

<sup>8</sup> The present state of Assam as well as the horizon of the Assamese society is much larger than what it was under the Ahom Kings. During the Last hundred years of its existence, or even before, the Ahom kingdom of Assam did not include the district of Goalpara, Cachar and the North Cachar Hills within the territory (Guha 1980: 1699). The maximum territorial expansion in the west is river Sankosh and sustained for two years only.

<sup>9</sup> Tura-Roumari Road was proposed project but due to partition it was not materialised. However, the water ways from Dhubri to Roumari is still functioning (focused group discussion).

<sup>10</sup> See Misra pp. 158

<sup>11</sup> The Koch Kingdom was spreading between river the Sankosh and the Manas (see Misra 2011: 3, 144)

<sup>12</sup> Rajbangshi dialect is generally used by Koch Rajbangshis of western Assam, a large number of people from North Bengal, a portion in Sikkim, Nepal and the adjacent area of Bengal that is within the territory of present Bangladesh. According to Grierson’s survey based on language in the year 1901, Rajbangshi is a well marked dialect ..... spoken in the country to the North east of that in which northern Bengali is spoken’, and extending in to the Goalpara District of Assam , in which it gradually merges into Assamese’ (Misra 2011: 146, Grierson 1903: 166). Even he particularly said Rajbongshi is the dialect of Western Goalpara (Misra 2011: 152).

<sup>13</sup> *Bhatia* is related with land of the *bhati*, i.e. the downstream people. In Assam, the East Bengal origin Muslim is categorized as *Bhatia*. Their official language is Assamese, but in their quotidian life used semi Bengali or semi Assamese language.

<sup>14</sup> Matiur Rahman Mia was a member of Assam Legislative Assembly from West Goalpara see (Guha 2006: 210)

<sup>15</sup> Guha mentioned from the second generation, the Bengali migrants’ major dialect, Mymensinghia, began to borrow words and even idioms from their Asamiya neighbours (1980: 1716)

<sup>16</sup> *Iddgah* is a field used for common prayer by the Muslim. Generally *Idd-ul-Fitr* and *Idd-ul-Azha* prayers are offered in such open landmass.

<sup>17</sup> Shukladhwaj and popularly known as Chilarai, was the younger brother of Nara Narayan, the King of the Kamata Kingdom in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

<sup>18</sup> The division of Hindu society in four varnas- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra are based on division of labour. For details see Society in India, Ram Ahuja 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Mullah is a cleric in Islam. The term *mullah* is primarily understood in the Muslim world as a term of respect for an educated religious man (Taheri 1985).

<sup>20</sup> *Tablighi jamaat* is an organization that virtually preaches an exclusivist Islam. They advocates for five pillars as well as six principles of Islam with full dedication in the name of Almighty as minimum three days in a month, 40 days in a year and four month in lifetime.

<sup>21</sup> Occasional especial prayer for the deceased in Islam

<sup>22</sup> It was signed in 8 April, 1950 between the then Prime Minister of India and Pakistan permitting the refugees to return their respective native land without discrimination. It is also known as Delhi Pact.

<sup>23</sup> See Guha 2006: 166-67

<sup>24</sup> Emmanuel Brunet Jailly in his article (2009: 5) "The State of Borders and Borderlands Studies 2009: a Historical View and a view from the Journal of Borderlands Studies" mentioned about the culture of the borderland communities. 'the literature often describes how these communities may either enhance the effect of dividing territory and communities when their culture, that is, and place of belonging, differs, or bridge an international boundary when they share the same culture'.

<sup>25</sup> *Bhadaima* is a comedian role of Bangladesh cinema world.

<sup>26</sup> A village game played between two person with 16 coin each.

<sup>27</sup> Traditional handmade cloth for female person

<sup>28</sup> Known to each other

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Bordered Lives: the Presence of the State**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Borderland is a bizarre space of geopolitics in the nation-state system. The society, politics, economy, international relation, neighbourhood relation, security of state at different levels i.e. local, regional, national and global and in similar fashion socio-political settings, health care, religious activity, marriages, custom, culture, food habit, day-to-day life, emotion, expectation, experiences etc. are adjusted with the border. Sometimes people do have control over the borders as well as borderland activism. On the contrary, borders also have ample influences on the day-to-day life of the borderlanders. Actually border is a structural manoeuvre but varies in accordance with changing circumstances. In such peripheral space the life of borderlanders is unusual in comparison to the people of core area and hence it is important to find out the correlation of core and periphery of every shared system. Thus, to understand the entire scenario of borderland it is important to look into their social, political, economic and security arrangement in a comprehensive manner whether it is Dhubri or elsewhere.

In most of the modern political settings, citizens are treated equally before the law of the land. Here, borderlanders are integral elements of the existing political system and in no manner they are considered as inferior to others. However, due to their peripheral existence, the disparity of the core and the periphery makes their life alarming one. Hence, the problem should be addressed properly for the sake of development to incorporate them in the

mainstream society. The governance of borderland has two different dimensions, encompassing the local as well as the global in paradigms. Another crucial point that the nation-state should bear is the responsibility to ensure basic necessities for all round development of the borderlanders. In this regard, the Marxist maxim is prominent as it endures the economy as one of the major determinants in every sphere of politics. Accordingly, for the sake of inclusive development, state is responsible for ensuring adequate measure in every nook and corner including the borderland. It helps to reduce the disparity as well as deprivation of all and particularly people from the core and the periphery. So it is important to give emphasis on the governance, distribution, availability and accessibility of one and all. Here, different types of questions intermingle or condenses in a particular point in spite of multiplicity of its nature that how people avail everyday necessities. How their day-to-day life and particularly health, education, market, banking, road and communication, police and security etc. have been performing on the edge of the nation state? In the age of globalisation the state is bounded with as a service provider to ensure security to each and every individual. The pertinent point is that self-satisfaction and state perceived satisfaction both varies in accordance with spatiality. The role of the state as well as local people is inevitable for the upliftment of this specific area, encompassing negotiation among the state, society and the local people. Otherwise, such areas will remain alienated, excluded, and eventually deprived in the larger geopolitical domain.

Border is the ending portion of a nation-state. Therefore, apart from the militarised security arrangement state's response towards the borderlanders is



terribly low and consequently BADP is bounded to introduce therein. Again their geopolitical position makes them deprived in accessing or maintaining relation with the mainstream society. So, in such contentious situation, the nexus between demand and supply is not satisfactory one. It denotes high social disparity among the people and it is also detrimental to the process of development. Accordingly, the virtual pressures as borderlanders speculate sensitivity perennially among them. Hence, these are the various factors contributing to shape/reshape an unusual space within the larger geopolitical domain.

The people of Dhubri borderland are enjoying equal rights and privileges within the territorial jurisdiction of India. But, sometimes in such unexpected circumstances some notions i.e. alienation, deprivation and exclusions etc. have become prudent phenomena which neither one can see nor enumerate but can be realized and sometimes remain beyond the ambit of our imaginations. The borderland villages are in general and in select villages are particularly (i.e. Ramraikuti, Binnyachara, Char-Ghewmari, Kalairalga, and College Nagar) in perilous position due to the detrimental impact of border. Transport and communication is a sturdy factor for their backwardness and it has been relentlessly pushing their society in to a deserted land.

The security personnels are deployed on the border, but most of the people feel insecure therein. From the field, it is revealed that at present 76 percent borderlanders of the select villages are insecure from different dimensions. Here, the pertinent question is which factors are helping to speculate insecurity among the borderlanders despite deployment of forces. Their responses are very simple as poor connectivity and captivity bestow

marginalization in every nook and corner. People are unable to manage their basic necessities i.e. medical facility, education, electricity, market and employability etc. Actually, the borderlanders are consciously or unconsciously excluded from the mainstream politics. Most of the time, the borderlanders' problem does not get proper attention from the state and reversely the local people never bother about the state responses towards them. Only the security arrangement makes them state centric, otherwise, most of the India-Bangladesh border villages have been enjoying total freedom from the nation-state for their geopolitical exclusion. Hence, despite security arrangement, the borderlanders are insecure from different dimensions<sup>1</sup> whether it is in Dhubri or somewhere beyond.

The landscape of Dhubri borderland is varies from one village to another. There is a speculation of sensitivity everywhere and it makes psychological pressure on every local commoner. Such type of difficult terrain, flood, erosion and poor connectivity have devastating impact upon the whole scenario whether it is for common people or border guards or somewhat beyond but it pushes the society into the back foot. There is a preferential contestation between human security and security of the state and if we study in a comprehensive manner it would be clear that all the problems have acute relation with the border, borderland, borderlanders and the nation-state as a whole.

#### **4.2 Education in the Borderland**

The credentials of a society invariably depend upon the status of common people. Human needs and desires are followed in a referral way forming different layers of society. There should be a linkage between self and others

for rationalization of their existence or relativity. Again, to understand or realise their situation, nobody can deny the importance of education or enlightenment of common people. If we consider the National Policy on Education<sup>2</sup> or the state sponsored education policies they are propounded to accomplish entire people including the borderlanders but the real scenery is something else that these people are neither deprived nor denied but have technically failed to pursue education due to their dreadful location. As we already mentioned the border is an uneven and supple landscape, and therefore, stringent effect of the course of river or other environment is undeniable here throughout the border. In such frightful situation, teaching-learning process is really unrealistic dream for them and subsequently it debars them from availing other linked facilities i.e. proper health hygiene, capacity building, space for opportunities, cultural impetus, food habit, professions etc. Hence, education is a distant dream in some borderland villages of Dhubri making the slogan ‘education for all’<sup>3</sup> perish.

Education in the borderland can be considered from two different dimensions i.e. institutional as well as academia. Most of the borderland villages have no institutions due to their geographical exclusion. However, some others have up to a particular level of learning facilities only. In the village Ramraikuti, the landscape is permanent and there are some schools having sufficient infrastructure as well as staff for teaching-learning process. Here, children can avail up to the secondary level of education within two kilometres of radius as Satrasal H. S. Vidyapith School (1948) is there. Moreover, in terms of infrastructure and communication, it is more or less adequate; people can access Agomoni Higher secondary School, Jhowdanga

Jr. College, Golakganj College, Hamidabad College, and even Gauripur College etc. Accordingly, Ratiadoha Sr. Madrassa, Shaluk Kuripar Sr. Madrassa, Barobari Sr. Madrassa and Kharabari R. M. Sr. Madrassa etc. are also accessible for the local students. In a similar fashion, Mankachar and its neighbouring village College Nagar and Barmanpara have all round facilities for elementary to college level of education within two kilometres of radius but the connectivity is deplorable as road and communication is abysmally poor. Most of the families have to communicate through their dilapidated county road in winter season but in summer they submerge under water, the connections become defunct. In Binnyachara, students can pursue education up to the secondary level, but if they aspire more they have to go to Dharmasala College in Gaspara otherwise have to go in Dhubri town, which is 22 km away from the village Binnyachara. In Ghewmari, there is a primary school named 2428 no. Char Ghewmari L. P. School (1978) and a pre-senior Madrassa. The M. E. Madrassa (privately aided, yet to get government affiliation, established in 2003) is the highest educational institutions so far. Accordingly, the village Kaliaralga has a primary school named 1912 no. Kaliar Alga L. P. School (1970) in their original *char*, but erosion washed it away and that is why the villagers have shifted it to different locality in every year intervals. People are settled in Assameralga and which is covered by the river Brahmaputra on one side and on the other by international border; the embankment is their sole communication system to Singimari (sometimes also called as Haatsingimari) that is the proposed district head quarters of South Salmara- Mankachar. One important point is to be mentioned here that in August 2012 (first field visit), Kaliaralga (at present people are settled in

Assameralga); a small number of families were newly settled and even more families were constructing *kutch*a houses as well as makeshifts for settling down there. In the following year, more *charua* families ranging from 24-25 (internally displaced people due to erosion) were settled and the trend continued up to the final field trip in March, 2017. So, the new colony consists of *charua* people (people from *char* area) and they use the *mathauri* (embankment) as the only way for transport and communication from their locality. However, as the location of school was in *char* area students used to go by *dingi boat* or county boat. Some of them fortunately get admission in neighbouring primary school of Singimari. But in the year 2015 a substantial part of the village including embankment was dislocated due to massive bank erosion but later on the embankment was repaired by local people in collaboration with the Border Security Forces, aided by the governments. In our final visit to this Kalairalga/Assameralga village in March 2017; it was by government initiative tried to protect installing porcupine fence but unable to control and it brings ultimate challenge for the common people and particularly the school children and women. Again, in such river prone area, institutions are shifted from one *char* to another and sometimes get settled in permanent area for the sake of future safety. It is very difficult to maintain education for all due to their displacement at regular intervals. One notable point is that except the College Nagar/ Barmanpara area that is in Mankachar, there is no other higher educational institution within short and reasonable distance of border.

**Table 4.1 Literacy Rate**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Border</b>	<b>Dhubri</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>National</b>
<b>2001</b>	Average: NA Male: NA Female: NA	Average: 48.17 Male: 55.84 Female: 40.02	Average: 63.3 Male: 71.28 Female: 54.61	Average: 64.84 Male: 75.2 Female: 53.7
<b>2011</b>	Average: 46.2 Male: 56.4 Female: 36.0	Average: 58.34 Male: 63.10 Female: 53.33	Average: 72.19 Male: 77.85 Female: 66.27	Average: 74.04 Male: 82.14 Female: 65.46

Source: (NSS and field investigation)

Thus lack of institutional accessibility is one of the major factors for poor literacy rate in borderland villages (Table 4.1). Here, women are far behind in the overall educational accessibility rate. The people of Ramraikuti and Mankachar village, manage their communication somehow but others face hardship throughout the year. The student can pursue up to certain level of education within the village. If we take the case of Binnyachara village, someone interested to take college education, is compelled to go to Gaspara; which is five km away from their locality. However, they have to cross the river Gangadhar and many other tributaries which is a risky transportation for all and particularly for the village girls of typical Muslim families. Thus, people have remained deprived in accessing higher education over the years. In a similar fashion, villagers of Ghewmari and Kaliaralga, being a flood prone and erosion oriented area, their situation is also very challenging. There is lack of permanent road for transportation, waterways is used for few months in a year. Indeed, the shifting of village people as well as institutions brings

hindrance to access of education. So, they have to compromise with the system and thus expectation, desires are too limited so that the modern developed world neither can reach nor is accessible to them. The common people have grievances for relative deprivation in every sphere of life. On this, 84.8 percent people have noted during the field visit that they are relatively underdeveloped due to their peripheral existence in comparison to the people of core area.

Another very crucial point is that the students are also not spared from this venture of security arrangement. Undoubtedly, sometimes some security personnels are generous and considered the village people and particularly the students. But some border guards are very rigid and brutal; in the name of security or assigned duty, even the students are not spared. Actually, the whole system is regulated in accordance with the political scenario that is if the internal politics is volatile due to the active mobs against some unscrupulous elements e.g. the foreign intruder, smugglers etc. it spreads high sensitivity throughout the border. But in normal condition and under the daylight people maintain close connection with the security system. This is a common phenomenon for most of the villages of borderland in Dhubri district. Thus, the geographical location really brings adversity to their life and particularly in the field of education.

Moreover, if we go ahead through the lens of academia, here the major question is how much are the borderlanders able to access quality education as a people of periphery and if they have failed then why? What exactly is the politics of education in this peripheral space? Sometimes, the medium of instruction is also a matter of interrogation due to the inseparable relation with

Bengali prominence. So, all these questions are pertinent and if we look at this peripheral space, schools are run with Assamese as the official language of the state. The course curriculum are in Assamese and also their mother tongue is officially recognised as Assamese but have their own linguistic credential as either *Rajbanshi* or *Deshi* and collectively called *Goalparia*, is used in common conversation and also understanding. Although it is recognised as a part of the pan Assamese language, but historically it is more connected with the Bengali culture. In this regard, the debate of Assam Assembly of late 1930s or in contemporary time is prominent Matiur Rahman Mia demanded their language as Bengali. Again Bengali language has advantageous position in the regional sphere and many prominent persons including the *Jamindars* were in favour of merging with the Bengali culture. However, in later period Assamese language gets upper hand and not a single Bengali medium school was there along the border. Hence, the India-Bangladesh border is very crucial to protect the Assamese culture from the pan Bengali hegemony. Generally, it is a long debatable issue, however it is more important that in such inaccessible area, they are practising Assamese and it is a significant indulgence of the greater Assamese community. Their way of understanding is in their own local dialect, but they are not less than any other Assamese. Medium of instruction is a serious concern in such peripheral locality and for that some issues are discussed in previous chapter. Actually, the elite sections of erstwhile Goalpara district demanded for the imposition of their own Rajbanshi dialect or broadly Goalparia language instead of Bengali and Assamese. Even, for a longer period, during the British administration, the present borderlanders were inseparable from the prominence of Bengali



culture and later on bilingual formula were imposed to satisfy one and all. However, the common people and particularly peasants had resentments over the then existing system of *Jamindars*, *Jaigirdars*, *Jotedars etc.*, prevailing in the westernmost part of Assam. Thereafter, people sought alternate options to get rid of the Bengali cultural hegemony, and as a result they accepted the Assamese language as their medium of instruction. Hence, besides their local dialect, these people are officially bound to speak in Assamese.

Furthermore, quality education is beyond their imagination. On one hand, it is very difficult to access education as they are unable to understand in their own language and at the same time they have to learn a new language due to official imposition. Even, the local teachers are also not well versed in Assamese. Again, it is very difficult for teachers to render services as per professional norms. Most of the time, the borderlands and particularly river islands nearby borders remain disconnected from the mainland and consequently a small number of educated unemployed youth are engaged for part-time job in those very schools. They are appointed mostly in the time of rainy season with very low honorarium. These cases are common in Binnyachara, Ghewmari, Patamari, Mahamaya, Nilokhia, Kaliaralga etc. villages and otherwise teachers enjoy unauthorised vacation for indefinite period. So, inaccessibility of education and inability to render services disrupt educational system in this locality. Accordingly, the people of the India-Bangladesh borderland in Dhubri district have been facing hindrance due to their geopolitical location.

## 4.2 Status of Educational Institution

Villages	Ramraikuti pt. 1 & 2	Binnyachara Part 1,2,3&4	Char - Ghewmari	Kalair Alga/ Assamer Alga	College Nagar/ Barmanpara
Nature of the village	Rural	Rural	Rural	Char/ embank settler	Village but connecting with town
Number of population as per 2011 census	3154	7200	2403	1450	1650 (Aprox.)
Number of Primary Schools (I-V)	2	4	2	1	1
Number of secondary school (VI-XII)	1	1	0	0	1
Number of higher educational institution (XII above)	0	0	0	0	1

Source: Census 2011 and Field Survey during 2013-2017

As we know, in due process, marginal circumstances enhance marginalisation acrimoniously. As the borderland is a territorial end, securities are deployed permanently, and therefore nation-states do not bother and also are unable to give proper attention to every aspect of borderlanders' life. Therefore, the borderlanders are constantly alienated from the mainstream society. The field study reveals that the selected villages do not have sufficient institutions in accordance with the number of population (Figure 4.2). If we go ahead with a comparison, Ramraikuti has the highest all-round facilities whereas Ghewmari has least, Mankachar has somewhat a historical base but Kalairalga and Ghewmari are floating on the water. Here, one thing is very important that in spite of their hazardous, inaccessible, remote location, 84.8 percent people acknowledge the importance of education for their individual life and society as a whole. As per the data collected from the field, it depicts that 53.8 percent people are illiterate, 35.4 percent people are educated up to

primary level, 7.6 percent people have secondary level of education and very less, 3.2 percent people have more than that. Similarly for their way of communication and transportation, 65.6 percent people have accessed educational institution on foot, 1.6 percent used cycle, and 10.4 percent people uses others. During summer, 56 percent students can access land road, 18 percent uses county boat, 14 percent students cannot access and 12 percent people very frankly told that schools remain closed for maximum days during the rainy season. Whenever asked about inaccessibility of education, people's response with some valid reasons (answer option were more than one) were 37.6 percent told that it was out of interest, 77.6 percent blamed the existing facilities, 68.8 percent blamed the poor transportation and communication, 45.6 percent spoke about the irresponsible government and 57.6 percent told that guardian have no interest. Even, families with handsome income are also deprived from acquiring education in this locality.

**Table 4.3 Access of Education in Selected Villages: General Observation**

<b>Villages</b>	<b>Ramraikuti</b>	<b>Binnyachara</b>	<b>Ghewmari</b>	<b>Kalairalga</b>	<b>College Nagar</b>
<b>Communication</b>	Road is accessible	Accessible Road	Water ways	Water ways	Road
<b>Flood</b>	No flood	Flood prone	Flood prone	Flood affected	Flood affected
<b>Working days</b>	Normal	Determined by flood/ six month affected	Determined by flood/ six month affected	Determined by flood/ six month affected	Risky border road
<b>Risk factor</b>	Normal	Somewhat risky	Risky	Risky	Somewhat risky
<b>Disturbance from the security personnel</b>	Most of the time normal	Students are considered but conditional	Students are considered but conditional	Considered but conditional	Considered but conditional
<b>Infrastructure</b>	considerable	Deplorable	Very poor	Very poor	poor

Source: Field Study since 2012-17

Then, how do we consider the education system of borderland particularly in Dhubri district of Assam? At the empirical level, we may find an adverse situation on the borderland. At this instance, some points are mentioned which are pertinent to consult to understand the condition of education of this locality.

- a. The poor infrastructure makes the education system deplorable one. Nobody is in a position to pursue education. Even, they do not get the ensured facilities in the BADP scheme too. These villages have inadvertently remained alienated in every aspect and particularly in education.
- b. Here, in borderland, the number of drop out student is comparatively high and particularly in riverine areas as schools are neither accessible nor have permanent infrastructure. So, it is very difficult for school children to manage regular classes and other curriculums. In fact, 80 percent teachers of borderland institutions seek alternative opportunities all the time.
- c. Child marriage is a common social concern among the backward communities including the Muslims in Assam. Unmarried girls are considered as a social burden as preservation of chastity is the first priority for every parent in rural backward area. In the borderland, people have no concrete idea about the importance of education in their life. In this regard, education and marriage are contradictory phenomena as marriage gets priority in comparison to education in rural interior area of Dhubri borderland.

- d. The teacher-student ratio is not sufficient here. Moreover, their irregular presence has stringent affect on academic activities. It is unfortunate that education is neither accessible for students nor affordable for teachers in such dreadful location. In seasonal flood, most of the institutions remain closed. In the winter season, although the communication system of some villages improve but in the *char* area people used to go miles after miles on foot. Thus, the communication system is terribly bad in borderland.
- e. Education is a distant dream for most of the borderlanders. It does not mean that borderland schools are not covering different policy and programmes of the government to facilitate education to all (i.e. SSA, Mid Day Meal, Free Text Book, Uniform, financial aid for infrastructure, teacher training and so forth. Although, in accordance with the changing political regime, some policies are also changed) but collectively they have failed to facilitate education in such a tricky area. Most of the people have alleged that lack of basic infrastructure and economic opportunities in the borderland obstructs in pursuing of education.
- f. Inaccessibility is one of the major reasons of awful education system in the borderland. State is running after the security arrangement and denying the basic necessities of local people. These borderlanders have unexpectedly remained excluded from the larger domain of politics over the years.
- g. The borderlanders have little information about the modern advanced society as they traditionally have remained isolated. There is not a

single reference figure for getting inspiration from him or her by the upcoming generations. Their life starts with the border and also ends with the border.

Hence, it is very crucial to provide proper attention in the preparation of policies and programmes through the Border Area Development Programme (see appendix IX). As the space is a full of sensitivity, remains isolated, people are inaccessible and overall vulnerability prevails everywhere and, therefore, for all, and children and women in particular should get importance in every aspect of life. Nation-states have the responsibility to ensure social justice and education to all.

### **4.3 Health Sector**

Health is inseparably related with human life. It is a matter of individual's basic security and hence it has become an important area to be addressed by the state. For all round development health hygiene is inevitable. The World Health Organization famously defined health in 1946 as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing' (Macionis and Plummer 2014: 724). At present, in Indian context, the health sector is running through public or private or public-private partnership and that is why the state is collectively responsible for maximum protection from health hazards. From the governments' initiatives, there are various institutions like Primary Health Centres, Sub Centres, Government Hospitals, Rural Health Centres, Mobile Health Centres, Medical Colleges, free distribution of pharmaceutical items etc. are facilitating to the common people. Similarly, every health centres of rural area are headed by either General Practitioner or Rural Practitioners, then ANM, GNM nurses, ward boys and other members of staff so that preliminary

and emergency care is ensured in every circumstance. Sometimes, pharmaceutical items are distributed freely so that common people may get relief in purchasing expensive drugs. Moreover, popular schemes like *Mamoni*, *Maram*, *Majoni*, *Operation Smile* etc. are also introduced by the government for child care, starting from the infant stage. However, a section of people are unable to avail all these facilities due to their inhabitation in interior or hazardous geographical location. Even, they do not get the basic minimum facilities of health care security although it is prepared for commoners. Subsequently, it fails to incorporate family planning, nutritious diet, environment hygiene, health hygiene etc. ‘Borders remain an integral force for producing uneven healthcare practices and outcomes around the world’, (Diener & Hagen 2012: 116). The borderlanders of Dhubri, as an interior location, the transport and communication delink the society from the mainstream and the borderlanders have been suffering constantly in their day-to-day life.

#### **4.3.1 Health Security of the Borderlanders**

The geographical exclusion is the root cause of underdevelopment and inaccessibility of borderland. Unlike others, the Dhubri borderlanders of Assam are in a hazardous location due to their poor transport and communication system. Their health, education, and economy all are abysmally traumatised in comparison with the core area. Health hazard is life threatening whether it is in borderland or elsewhere. However, the borderlanders have some unusual experiences in getting health care security. Actually, the borderlanders have been struggling to survive in a normal condition due to their geopolitical sensitivity. Most of the people have

nefarious confrontation with the security personnel and that is also painful and disheartening. Sometimes, a number of patient or family members face some sort of awkward situation, especially after sun set. Their survival rights depend upon the wish of security personnels or the elite section of people of that very region. Their movement is totally restricted or depends upon the wish or aspiration of the commandant of security forces. Actually, in the borderland the local health centres remain, most of the time, defunct. Even, it is not possible to get minimum preliminary treatment in such situation. The irregular presence of doctors and lack of modern equipments pushes their life in to the hell. Figure 4.3 depicts the existing health care facilities of the selected border villages.

**Figure 4.4 Basic Health facilities in selected border villages**

<b>Village</b>	<b>Primary Health Centre</b>	<b>Sub Centre</b>	<b>Physician</b>	<b>Pharmacy</b>	<b>Mobile Health Service</b>
<b>Ramraikuti</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Binnyachara</b>	No	Yes	No	No	No
<b>Ghewmari</b>	No	No	No	No	Yes
<b>Kalairalga</b>	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Mankachar</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Field Investigation in 2013-14-16

### **4.3.2 Common Health Set Up**

Unlike others, the borderlanders of Dhubri have been experiencing different state sponsored health measures. However, the peripheral existence debars them from accessing all round facilities provided to them from different sources. Most of the villages have neither Health Centre<sup>4</sup> nor any other facilities for health measures. But from the field survey it is revealed that people have information regarding various schemes and state sponsored



facilities i.e. Ambulance service 108, Pulse Polio Vaccine, *Janani Surakshya Yojana* and many other state sponsored facilities. But, these illiterate people have more confidence on the traditional health measures. There are different causes of mass acceptability of traditional treatment i.e. cost effective, success story, bio-medical system; modern system is complicated, powerful, has less side effects, is natural etc. In most of the villagers of Dhubri borderland are not able to afford the cost of medication and consequently large number of people are still following the traditional ways i.e. *bez*, *zara-fuka*, *tantra-mantra* etc. Actually, people have little experience of modern treatment and thus their faith upon the scientific temper is negligible. Only at the time of critical situation, if the local treatment fails wholly, then they approach the physician and most of the cases are referred for better treatment just before death. Here, another crucial point is to be noted that the average ratio of doctor and people or other facilities is very meagre in comparison to the national average and in the village/char like Ghewmari and Kalairalga it is significantly poor. If we say that the borderland is not covered by medical facilities, it would not be an exaggeration from the point of health care security. But pertinent point is that why these people are unable to access all such facilities? At present most of the health centres are functionless. Due to lack of permanent doctors, irregular presence of ward-members and nurses, poor healthcare infrastructures; patients are compelled to go away for better treatment. The irregular presence of doctors and nurses create constant panic to the villagers. The critical patients have least chances to revive and very rarely survive. Women are the worst sufferer in this regard as they are neither able to access minimum health care facilities nor health hygiene properly.

Thus, it has failed to generate ideas of modern medication facilities from one to another. Moreover, health consciousness is related to birth control policy. Till today underage marriage is a widespread phenomenon in borderland and they take longer duration to become fertile. Accordingly, the expecting mothers do not have proper idea of health care, don't get proper diet, regular health check up; most of the mothers delivers their babies at home and in post delivery period neither mother nor the baby get proper care, sometimes they suffers from malnutrition; so in this manner number of women as well as their babies have been perennially suffering due to lack of facilities. These are the glaring example in terms of accessibility. The minimum facilities are unable to be got due to their geographical exclusion. Indeed, mortality rate is relatively high whether it is mother or children. Moreover, communicable and non communicable and nutrition related diseases and disorders are also high in this locality. Here, neither the government facilities are available nor people are in a position to afford everything all of a sudden. Hence, they bear maximum risk factor at every moment. This is one of the major unavoidable factors to detract the developmental machination on the borderland.

#### **4.3.3 Emergency Health Set Up**

In the borderland region, people suffer due to lack of preparedness to approach physicians and instead wait for the extreme deteriorating moment. Besides, in the time of emergency, people face different circumstantial hazard as on one hand they remain under the strict vigilance as well as whim of the border security forces and other hand their interior location and poor infrastructural base delinks from the core system. In a restricted and controlled situation without prior consent of the security forces nobody is allowed to manage the

situation. The facilities of 108 Ambulance service is not available in most of the villages due to the terrible condition of road and transportation. In such a situation, sometimes permission of CEO or Commandant is more important than a life of emergency patient. At night, the common people have to depend upon the village headman or the elite section for the sake of permission. Thus, it is difficult for them to access facilities at the time of emergency. But sometimes the generous security forces person extends their support i.e. providing their vehicle, sending doctors etc. as necessitates. As per the report from the ground level, 24 percent are satisfied, 63 percent people are not satisfied and another 13 percent people do not like to respond regarding the health care system of Dhubri borderland.

#### **4.3.4 Traditional Health Care Settings**

A section of people and most of them from villages are strong believer in their age old traditional system. Even, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century modern scientific temper in health care system does not cover their day-today life. These people are not only geopolitically excluded but culturally, economically, and socially grounded and tradition is intrinsically related with every aspect of life. At present 70 percent of Muslim villagers are dependent upon *Mullah* (the cleric) and *Kaviraz* as they possesses enough power or influence to solve all round problems including the health disorders. The illiterate villagers are very easily lured by their *duwa*, *zara-phuka* and *tantra-mantra* and that nobody can deny their spiritual delusion to recover pain, ache and many other internal-external diseases. For this, their main procedure is *zara-phuka* and providing of something to eat or rubbing on that very sore position i.e. water, pieces of ginger, oil, sugar, rice etc. Even, the common people have faith upon that very

*Mullah* and *Kaviraz* in the Muslim locality and *Tantrik* and *Baba* in the Hindu areas. In different capacity, they do not even hesitate to torture the patient physically for instant recovery from suffering or pain. Again, some *kaviraz* possess some sort of supernatural power through their attachment with *Jeen* or *Pori* (male and female devil). Notable point is that there is no any case related with witch hunting in this locality. However, people from interior localities including borderlanders have strong faith upon these super natural activities.

In Dhubri borderland the presence of doctors with other medical staff is abysmally low and thus people are consciously or unconsciously captive in the system of superstition and other traditional set up. Today, the traditional process gets commanding position endorsing confidence among the people. It is a kind of alternate dose for the local people. At present, most of the villages of India-Bangladesh border and particularly the selected villages are piled up with both modern as well as traditional ways wherever possible.

#### **4.3.5 Modern Health Care Facilities**

It is a phenomenal initiative of all the governments that people belonging to different background should be brought under the purview of modern health care facilities. Even, it tries to ensure cost effective for all. Governments not only provide institutional mechanism but other policies like health insurance, elderly pension, schemes for girl child, single mother, schemes for pregnant women, special assistance for critical diseases, scheme for newborn babies etc. Undoubtedly, a large number of people have been benefitted across the nation. However, most of the time borderlanders remain alienated, excluded and even deprived due to their marginal existences. From the global context, some borderlanders undeniably avail better opportunities i.e. India-Nepal, India-

Bhutan, Nepal-China, India-Myanmar etc. their easy access makes them benefitted from neighbouring countries. Even, thousands of foreign nationals from the neighbouring countries come to India for medical check-up in every year. However, a section of Indian citizen from interior area and particularly the India-Bangladesh borderlanders are unable to access all round facilities sponsored by the state. So, the basic rights of people ensured by the constitution of India i.e. right to life is at a critical junction on this borderland. The Dhubri borderlanders have been suffering perennially due to their socio-political exclusion for the last couple of decades.

The health care system of people is abysmally poor in shape along the borderland. The veterinary system is lagging much more behind as quality product of live stocks is really dismal in position. It is impossible to procure maximum benefit from the farming animals even in coming days too. Despite ample opportunities, the agriculture based people are repeatedly failing to get reasonable returns from bovine farming.

If we look at the border villages, there is neither presence of physicians nor other state sponsored basic facilities for the commoners. The condition of health centres is pathetic and it is challenging to maintain minimum infrastructure of a hospital. Even, there are no modern technologies to support the patients. Electricity, infrastructure, staff, nurses, procedure etc. are not available properly and thus, by and large, all the people are suffering. In most of the border villages and particularly in the riverine locality, the modes of the transportation are bullock carts, hand-pull carts, boats etc. Accordingly, doctors including other staff are unable to render their basic services therein. In fact, there is no permanent infrastructural base for them to preserve

different logistic in medication process. Moreover, the different schemes of governments and its implementation is really tough in such area for pitiable condition of communication. There is a mismatch between the government schemes and the expectations of beneficiaries in this locality. Whenever we asked regarding the different facilities of borderland health care system in selected villages and 88 percent of the villagers have information about 108 Emergency Ambulance facilities, nobody is fully satisfied with the present health care system, 24 percent are somewhat satisfied and 69 percent are dissatisfied with the present system. Similarly, 28 percent have taken benefits from the government schemes and another 26 percent people even do not have knowledge about the different schemes sponsored by the central and the state governments. Furthermore, the condition of Primary Health Centre, Sub Centres, ANM, GNM etc. are not accessible to 58 percent borderlanders. Hence, the gap between modern techniques and accessibility is enormously high. At the same time, due to their poor educational background, inadequate economic condition, and religious and supernatural beliefs makes them refrain in availing modern medical facilities.

The deplorable condition of health is detrimental to the overall growth and development in the borderland. People are not aware enough regarding the modern facilities of different fields including health sector. Unlike other rural areas, the borderlanders have tremendous faith upon local '*kabiraj*' for treatment of different kinds of diseases, not only because of the modern health care facilities but also due to their belief on the effectiveness of local medicinal plants. Nevertheless, borderlanders are lagging far behind as far as health security is concerned. However, the state is responsible to ensure all

round facilities to its citizens. But, if the people have to face hardship from the deployed security forces, it would be double jeopardy for these people. Thus, for better health care facilities in the borderland, there should be coordination among people, security personals and the nation-state. Moreover, special attention should be facilitated to all for inclusive balanced development.

#### **4.3.6 Health: Disruption and Continuity**

Basically, health is an individual problem but undeniably it has collective impact on the larger domain of a society. There are neither adequate facilities nor permeability for all in accessing health services on the borderland. The disruption in the name of collective security disowns the individual security of the people. Moreover, the poor infrastructure is a constant challenge for them. The geopolitical exclusion deprives these people from availing state sponsored modern health care facilities. It is revealed from the field investigation that 61.6 percent people deserve new adequate health centres in their locality, 77.6 percent people emphasised on the infrastructural development; another 87.2 percent people demanded the appointment of quality physicians; and 64 percent people frankly question the role of security guards and have sought their help to improve the health services along the borderland (*the Q24. of Questionnaire and here five options are given and answer were more than one*). Actually, for the borderland society, it requires adequate measures in every step of life. The BADP tries to incorporate all these measures at the policy stage, but in practice it is disgusting and has failed overwhelmingly. It ensures availability of basic infrastructure with minimum equipments like X-ray machine, ECG machine, and staffs including physicians etc. but no village are getting all these facilities due to the locations at the margins. So, the area

should be emancipated from the detrimental condition to ensure health security to all.

#### **4.4 Transport and Communication**

In the third chapter, it tried to underscore the socio-historical connectivity between Bengal and Assam through Goalpara. Even, the neighbouring regions like the Garo Hills, Bhutan, Nepal and even Tibet were also connected with Dhubri and Goalpara for trade and commerce. Misra eloquently highlighted the write up of R. B. Pemberton as there were three different routes to connect Assam and Bengal for trade and commerce, she mentioned:

The first (route) is by Murshadabad, Mauldah (Malda), Dinagepore (Dinajpur), Rungpore and Goalpara. This is the line of the Calcutta dak but it is almost impassable during the rains. The second route is via Dacca, Dumari, Pucuoloe, Jumalpore (Jamalpore), Singimarry and Goalpara, also nearly impassable in the rains. The third passage by Sylhet, Chirra, Nunklow, Ranneygodown, Cannymook and Gohatti (Guwahati), but from its crossing over the Khasya hills, it is impracticable for any land carriage and beast of burden (Misra 2011:77, Pemberton 1865: 9)

Misra also referred Jenkins (1868: 7-8) statement:

Dhubri, a vibrant centre of trade from pre colonial times, had the added advantage of a location that made it a natural harbour for colonial trade (ibid 2011: 77).

However, with the changing political discourse, the trade and commerce have been also changing. During the colonial period, the connectivity with Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet had declined due to administrative linkages with Bengal. In



fact, the whole trade and commerce had got different orientation with the changing time and space. Accordingly, the growth of tea plantations in Upper Assam brings a substantial change in trade as traditional articles i.e. ivory, cotton etc. were replaced by it. Hence, through the Dhubri region, trade was very common to neighbouring regions and even continued after the partition or installation of border. Undoubtedly, the space has borne substantial opportunities since long back and consequently it is unstoppable in present day too.

At present there is a clash between opportunities and constrictions due to obnoxious bilateral relations on the borderland. However, here opportunities are vehemently rejected for the sake of national interest. Moreover, the installation of fencing is physical and it brings blocked nature hampering the process of development. There should be proper connectivity internally as well as externally for the development of individuality, community or, nation as a whole. It is pertinent that easy transaction should be facilitated by the nation-state. Therefore, proper infrastructural development is a precondition to access local, regional and global market. It is important to provide attention to the transport and communication system everywhere. In borderland, border-roads are more or less well constructed for the security manoeuvre. Again, the villagers have their own local connectivity, that is from one family to another or one village to another or sometimes not. Accordingly, border roads are allowed in accordance with conditional permission. But, nowhere the transport and communication is adequate and it is one of the major reasons for the underdevelopment or insecurity throughout the border. Again, the number of vehicle is very limited that movement of people is very

less or conditional. But in some villages, either using border roads or the roads constructed under BADP; very recently people are owning private vehicles but problem is to link up all the villages as per necessity is impossible. Again, the landscape is very important for the longevity or better condition of road and transport. Hence, suitable infrastructure may boost in overall development and ensures security to all. Thus, infrastructure might reduce the distance of such interior as well as excluded areas. Table 4.5 depicts the approximate distance of villages from the district headquarters and other locations of importance.

**Table 4.5: Approximate Distance: Transport and Communication**

Location	Ramraikuti	Binnyachara	Ghewmari	Kalairalga	College Nagar
Dhubri	25km	34km	24km	28km	56km
Guwahati	273km	295km	305km	180km	210km
Shilliguri	90km	105km	122km	NA	NA
Hatshingimari	NA	NA	NA	3km	30km
Tura	NA	90km	85km	20km	45km

Figure 4: Source: Field visit in 2012- 2017

#### **4.4.1 Border Road and Functionaries**

Borderland is experiencing with another infrastructural base as border-road. The borders like USA-Mexico, Israel and Palestine, India-China, India-Pakistan, India-Bangladesh all are more or less problematic and contested in the sense of security portal. Therefore, all are in a fray of competition to construct border-roads to ensure territorial security. Accordingly, the India-Bangladesh border-roads are constructed for the sole use of border guards and for first track security which is inevitable for the protection of the nation-state. However, these are not customarily allowed for use by the common people. These are constructed unevenly in accordance with the border fencing i.e.

somewhere it touches the fence but sometimes it is few meters away from the fence. Thus, it is constructed very conveniently. There are numbers of patrolling points for border guards at a regular interval of very short distance. It makes the system easy for observation of the transborder activities. Again, a substantial portion of border roads are well constructed and connected to the core area. However, in some areas, there is neither road nor minimum infrastructure for construction of roads. If we look at the condition of border roads in Ramraikuti and nearby area, the landscape is permanent and density of population is very low. So, most of the roads are better in condition. If we consider the road of College Nagar, it is very close to the fence and just pedestrians are allowed to move there. So, here due to the complicated terrain, up to the first half of 2017 border roads were yet to be constructed. However, people are allowed to use the road for certain duration in daytime. In comparison with Ramraikuti, the roads are worse in condition and it has negative impacts upon the people. Accordingly, in Binnyachara, Ghewmari and Kalairalga, the condition of border roads are deplorable as flood and erosion devastate these areas every year. Here, both border roads and waterways are the modes of communication but during summer, waterways remain as the only mode of communication. But, pertinent point is that flood and erosion really brings hazard not only to the common people but to the border guards too. It is a setback for the security arrangement of the nation-state system. Again, erosion generally changes the course of river, so it is difficult to construct border roads permanently.

#### 4.4.2 Customary Roads

Border roads are constructed for the sake of security arrangement and nobody is allowed to use in their customary life. However, the inland roads of the borderlanders have connection with the border road. From the field study we can come to know that except Ramraikuti village, the conditions of roads of other villages are deplorable. In Ramraikuti village, from the border road to Satrasal, there are three different subways with good infrastructural condition; actually this village has some positive points i.e. high and permanent landscape makes the road and communication protected one for entire year. Apparently, it boosts on the overall growth and development of the region. Accordingly, in Binnyachara, the local ways are *kutch*a and dilapidated in condition. Again, some families are unable to accomplish due to poor condition of roads within the village. At present, erosion of the river Gangadhar has become a challenging factor here and ultimately the villages as well as roads are disappearing part by part. Accordingly, Ghewmari is a totally excluded area connected through single road from Gaspara to Ghewmari. To reach the village, people have to cross a river and then *kutch*a uneven county road again. A large portion of rural road is extended by the families. Actually, the local people use the road during winter and most of the time they are compelled to use water ways only. Here, no vehicle can be used directly due to the tributary of river Brahmaputra at the very entrance of the village. Normally, people keep their vehicle on the other side of the river at Rs. five per night (permanent customer's rate generally different from irregular one). In a similar fashion, if we look at the village Kaliaralga, they are using *mathauri* of the river Brahmaputra; but their customary local road is very

narrow, only the local pedestrian can use it. As the village has settled newly (as originally displaced from *char* area), the families have to extend their customary road in accordance with their requirement. We have very similar experience in the College-Nagar area too that people have their customary road and which is very uneven connecting one family to another. Accordingly, around 12 percent of this village people used the pavements of agriculture land. During flood, again they have to choose alternate communication system and particularly boats; otherwise the system remains disrupted for number of days.

#### **4.4.3 Other Major Transportation**

The select villages are located in geographical periphery and hence it requires linking up the core area for inclusive development. It necessitates suitable condition of major transport as well as customary roads too. It may reduce the distance between core and periphery and boosts in smooth functioning of the peripheral citizens. The dilapidated conditions of roads connecting from the village to the district headquarters are painful to the borderlanders. Very recently, the mode of transportation has improved as the light motor vehicles under private ownership are available there. The major areas are covered by the light vehicles i.e. Auto-Rickshaw, Magic, Tempo etc. are common modes of transportation there. However, their destination is limited in position as it connects Satrasal to Agomoni, Binnychara to Golakganj, Ghewmari to Gaspara, Kalairalga to Singimari and College Nagar- Barmanpara to Mankachar. Before the creation of South Salmara and Mankachar as a separate district in the year 2016; people from College Nagar and Kalairalga had to cross the river Brahmaputra as the district headquarters was at Dhubri and it

required around 3-4 hours for single trip. Again, the number of boats is limited and that is why people had to spend day long journey to connect with the headquarters for official deeds. Again, most of these vehicles come to the district headquarters in the morning and return in the evening and thus the communication depends upon the wish and aspiration of the owner and conductor of vehicles. Again, there is a monopoly of the vehicle owner that there is no alternate choice as these are controlled by some politically influential persons. In such scarce situation, people have been suffering a lot with the emergence of borderland. However, at present, with the improvement of road, the number of vehicle is also increasing day by day. Even there is a proposal to construct the Dhubri-Phulbari Bridge<sup>5</sup> which will end the perennial misery of local people. Furthermore, the creation of the new district South-Salmara and Mankachar and its headquarters in Hatsingimari undoubtedly is a welcome measure for the local people.

#### **4.4.4 Beginning and End of Road**

Border is the end and beginning of a nation-state (op cit). Accordingly, all the internal networks are also blocked with the end of territoriality. Border has substantial impact on the border roads too. On the Dhubri borderland, the Tura-Roumari road connectivity ended forever in the course of history. Similarly, Golakganj was delinked from the entire map of East Bengal railway due to the partition and creation of the border. The connectivity through river channels particularly the Brahmaputra remained disrupted for few decades. At present, the southern bank of the Brahmaputra river particularly West Garo Hills and the Mankachar area are disconnected due to their geopolitical exclusion. But pertinent point is to be mention here that the present

transnational linkages have a historical base of earlier days. At present, the Dhubri borderland experiences permanent disruption in road and connectivity for the blocked orientation due to sensitivity remaining speculated across the border. The roads of earlier days have become defunct and no any major project is initiated apart from the border-roads under BADP.

#### **4.5 Occupation- Market**

The border has an adverse effect on the market system whether it is within the territory or beyond. ‘One of the cruellest consequences of partition was the cutting up of innumerable networks of local marketing’ (Schendel 2005: 130). People prefer not only availability of commodities in market, but accessibility is also important. As we know, due to installation of border, the commercial town of Sonahat is bisected. One half lies in Rangpur (East Pakistan and present Bangladesh) and other in Goalpara (present Dhubri district) in Assam, India (ibid: 133). For such defunct nature of borderland market, we may find some structural changes in maintaining trade over the years. At present, the informal trade is surpassing the formal one as cattle smuggling, export of pharmaceutical items, machine engine, fake currency, human trafficking etc. are noticed at regular intervals. The poor economic conditions of the borderlanders have been one of the reasons for indulgence of this trade. ‘The border areas greatly lag in economic development’, (ORF report 2015: 58). As a transnational space, borderland bears substantial opportunities in bilateral export-import system whether it is in Dhubri borderland or somewhere else.

Dhubri has multidimensional economic linkages since long back. The water ways through Brahmaputra was the then major means of transportation in Assam to connect different parts of India.<sup>6</sup> Besides, Bhutan, Nepal and

Tibet were also connected in this way. As we know, the erstwhile Goalpara district had different historical affiliations from time to time due to a suitable geopolitical connectivity. Hence, Goalpara was the geographical centre for Assam, Bhutan, West Bengal, East Bengal, Garo Hills etc. in terms of connectivity.

The existing markets of borderland are not sufficient to provide basic commodities for day-to-day consumption. Even, the markets of periphery are controlled by the dominant business group of the core area. The cost of commodities is higher due to poor transportation system. If we look at the items for sale, the fixed priced manufactured commodities are not preferred by the retailers; actually in local brand they can impose excess rate or price as there is no alternative option for the local people. As a result, in borderland, we may find monopoly market system therein. The benefit of globalisation as well as liberal market system is yet to reach such area, particularly in such alienated borderland. Whenever we approached people regarding the price they have tremendous grievances (as 80 percent people objected the present format) but are compelled to accept due to very deteriorating condition of road and transport. The chain of market system is very important, deteriorating condition of road and transport makes the market a monopoly one and it is also a source of exploitation to some extent. Thus, people are exploited not only by the others but even by the self too. Considering the issue of security, a virtual restriction is imposed on transporting excessive commodities along the borderland; ultimately it limits the customer's choice terribly.

If we go through the actual situation of different villages of border, College-Nagar is very close to Mankachar town and has direct connection



with Guwahati, Goalpara and Dhubri. Even the Garo Hills is not far from Mankachar in terms of distance. It has remained as an economic hub situated in the south-eastern bank of the river Brahmaputra in Dhubri district of Assam. Here, besides the Assamese customer, a section of people from the Garo Hills used to come to this market. In fact, Mankachar and its nearby areas are producing cashew nut for global market. At present, the local cashew nuts production has become one of the profitable businesses for the local people. Furthermore, people have different options to purchase as the infrastructural base of market system in Mankachar is adequate one in comparison to other bordering villages, but the prosperity of Mankachar is very dawdling due to geopolitical exclusion. If we look back at the history, Mankachar was an integral part of undivided Rangpur district of British India as well as of pre-British India. The then waterways were the sole communication system and ultimately brought comprehensive development to this locality. Besides, the road connectivity was comparatively convenient in undivided situation. After independence, Indian border with East-Pakistan was demarcated; however it has trapped the Mankachar area as a geopolitical periphery within the Indian state of Assam. So, it is pitiable that in spite of multilayer opportunities, the process of prosperity of the commoners is constricted vehemently. At present the development is possible up to a particular level but not more than that.

Furthermore, the landscape of Mankachar, the foothill range of Meghalaya is connected with river basin of the Brahmaputra and Mankachar exists in the intermediary location. Thus, Mankachar is accessible through both land and waterways. As river, the Brahmaputra is used for the entire year,

however, the communication through road is pitiable in condition during the days of summer. Flood and erosion are devastating the entire communication system. In fact, larger portion of College Nagar/ Barmanpara villages are severely affected due to flash flood every year. In such situation, unlike others, the borderlanders of College Nagar have to submit their hope as their lives are jeopardised dreadfully i.e. national security and natural calamity don't allow free movement in seasonal rain.

The market system of Kalairalga is closely connected with Singimari and its neighbouring areas i.e. Tura, Mankachar and Dhubri. Their destination is very limited; either it is Tura or Guwahati. From the field, it appears that, at present 60 percent male are engaged in Tura, that is, in West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya and 20 percent are in Guwahati. The remained 20 percent are involved in different local activities i.e. farming, small scale business, helper in water vessels, domestic labour etc. Not a single person from Kaliaralga is in government service including in teaching profession. The condition of other *chars* along the borderland is akin to Kalairalga. In Ghewmari, the nearest *haat* is Gaspara and then Dharmasala and finally Dhubri. Both Gaspara and Dharmasala are somewhat accessible for commoners and therefore traders have monopoly dominance over the market. Hence, there is a perennial exploitation by a section of vendors over the commoners. The condition of Binnyachara is somewhat precarious as they use to go to Golakganj market or Dhubri which are 9 km and 22 km away respectively from their locality. There is a small *chowk* (centre) consisting of 17-20 vendors in Binnyachara part iii and most of the owners are the Bengali Hindus belonging to marginalised *Kaibarta-Namasudra* community. From the

above discussion, we can reasonably assume a certain portion of local people has taken advantage of monopoly domination to exploit other for their disadvantageous location. Furthermore, most of the people of such locality are migrated labourer from across the state and their visible presence at homes is somewhat of seasonal nature i.e. they stay at their homes for a limited period. As, these people are main bread winners. It is the socially expected responsibility of every person to ensure basic necessities at home. But due to imposed security structure, a certain amount of goods are allowed and consequently most of the families are experiencing hardship in meeting the basic needs all the time. There are two different natures of problem as one is accessibility of commodities and, at the same time, restrictions imposed in the name of security induces permanent panic on the borderlanders. The female and children are more vulnerable group in this regard. Actually, there is a clash between the basic necessities of common people and imposed security tactic for illicit activities throughout the borderland.

#### **4.5.1 Labour Market**

It is pertinent to mention here that borderland areas have been facing enumerable pressure from unemployed people as opportunities are decreasing day by day. Here, couple of factors are working i.e. shrinking of land due to border fencing and construction of border roads, control over the movement of people by the security forces, people have less choices and finally, as a migrant labourer, people have to face stringent challenge in different areas across the nation. At present, a large number of people have easy choice to go to Tura, Guwahati, Siliguri, Bangalore, Delhi, Kolkata and different other parts of India for seeking jobs (see Table 4.6). These people were formerly

agriculture-based but have had to shift as a wage labourer due to surplus labour market in the borderland. Most of them are un-skilled labourer and consequently their demand is limited in industrial market. At present, it appears from the field, a large number of youth are unemployed in this borderland. Therefore, a section of these unemployed youth do not hesitate to engage in unscrupulous transnational activities avoiding the risk factor of the security personnels. Unlike others, people have information about different commodities with towering demand in Bangladesh side and that is why people try to ensure such things in spite of huge security arrangement. In fact, it is alleged that border guards also have been involved in such nefarious activities over the years.

**Table 4.6: People's Choice and Preference**

River side	Villages	1 <sup>st</sup> Preference	2 <sup>nd</sup> Preference	3 <sup>rd</sup> Preference	4 <sup>th</sup> Preference
Northern bank	Ramraikuti	Shiliguri	Dhubri	Guwahati	Others
Do	Binnyachara	Shiliguri	Dhubri	Guwahati	Delhi
Do	Ghewmari	Dhubri	West Bengal	Guwahati	Delhi
South-East bank	Kalairalga	Tura	Meghalaya	Guwahati	Dhubri
Do	Collegenagar/ Barmanpara	Mankachar	Tura	Guwahati	Dhubri

Figure 4: Source: Field visit in 2012- 2017

Moreover, borderland is basically an agrarian society wherein 80 percent of the people have direct or indirect involvement in agriculture. The agrarian system and particularly the paddy cultivation have got immense importance with the introduction of modern techniques of *IRRI* production.<sup>7</sup> At present, the *IRRI* production has become a major paddy culture in the rural

area of Assam. During *IRRI* cultivation, there is a massive demand of labour force. Even, around 65 percent women also have to engage in *IRRI* cultivation. Moreover, one very crucial point is that around 35% people of borderland have cultivated land (not *irri*) outside of the fencing and at the time of sowing and harvesting of crops, it requires large numbers of labour force, as border gates are opened for a limited period, and within the allotted time they have to finish their work. Thus, sometimes it becomes very difficult to maintain or there is inability to get sufficient number of workers at the time of seasonal harvesting. Hence, agriculture is one of the glaring areas for generating employment in borderland but the scope has been diminishing day by day.

The Dhubri borderland is an ever sensitive space. By and large, sensitivity has adverse impact in terms of development, agriculture, border trade, local politics, labour market, environment etc. Apodictically border has innumerable impact in the determination of labour market too. The spatial sensitivity brings consciousness to all about the menace of borderland. It brings chronic vulnerability to each and every person and very particularly to the younger generation as they are facing stringent challenge for their suspicious age group. Since the independence of India, these youth mostly belong to third and fourth generation of borderlanders and most of them are either school dropout student or illiterate, and among them around 56 percent are unemployed. For them, there are some special measures<sup>8</sup> mentioned in the BADP but they are unable to execute in every villages along the India-Bangladesh border. Hence, there is a huge surplus of unemployed labour force and ultimately it generates internal labour migration to different places across the nation.

#### **4.5.2 Investment Pattern**

Any investment is linked with expectation for surplus economy. Accordingly, marketing or businesses are audaciously related with motive of profit. However, every borderland does not have opportunities to make profit. In fact, the investment pattern also varies in accordance with spatiality as all the bordering areas are not suitable for trade and commerce. From the global settings, the borders of European countries are somewhat different and many institutions including the state are ready to invest there. A large number of people from Canada, Mexico, USA etc. are living on bilateral trade through the borderland; their investment is mostly informal and local in nature. Nevertheless, the investment processes are again based on 'centre' and 'periphery' relation and everywhere, the centre gets advantage as it has extensive scope in comparison to the periphery. The Dhubri borderland was a centre for trade and commerce for the last couple of centuries, even continued up to the end of colonial administration. But, at present with the construction of fencing, it has become a geopolitical periphery in recent time. At present, except some unscrupulous as well as unrecognised agencies; nobody is interested to invest in this locality. Government imposed permanent restrictions over the trade and commerce through this border. The blocked area, poor infrastructure, and permanent sensitivity make the situation repulsive one. As the condition of local people is disastrous, nobody is interested to invest there. Furthermore, the surplus labour force is becoming a crucial matter in coming days.

#### **4.5.3 Transnational Trade: *Haat*, Bazar in the Borderland**

In the borderland, transnational trade is an age old phenomenon. It has acute relation with market capitalism<sup>9</sup> of existing geopolitical space. There are various determinants have perennial influence over the market economy i.e. globalization, modernization of technology, transportation and connectivity, inflation, deflation, internal or external politics, social unrest etc. Accordingly, geopolitics or territoriality also has substantial influence upon the transnational market. The national economy depends upon the total amount of export-import and gross national product in a fiscal year. However, border or nature of the border is very crucial in terms of transborder activities as borderland remains under the ambivalence of greater security portal in the modern nation-state system. Most of the countries across the world are facing substantial challenges through the border as smuggling is occurring on daily basis, supply of arms and ammunitions is a challenge for internal-external security, import of drugs, supply of fake currency etc. are more or less occurring in recent years. Various policy and programmes have been introduced to control the menace, but states are failing repeatedly as a certain number of people are relentlessly working for their own benefits. Hence, border bears contradictory phenomenon as challenge as well as opportunities in the field of economy.

In the global context, the natures of borderland activities are varied in accordance with changing time and space. Over control of transnational relation, may be one of the reasons for enhancement of informal activities<sup>10</sup>. Hence, every year state has been losing huge amount of royalty due to unabated informal trade through the border. “Dhubri, a vibrant centre of trade

from pre-colonial times had the added advantage of a location that made it a natural harbour for colonial trade”, (Misra 2011:77; Jenkins 1868: 7-8). Accordingly, Puhit and Taneja have put forward with very relevant argument from the historical linkage as:

prior to 1947, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India were in fact a single country. While traditional, historical and ethnic links are an important factor both for formal and informal trade, it is more so in the case of informal trade since ethnic ties help in ensuring that payments are guaranteed (Pohit and Taneja 2003: 1189).

The river Brahmaputra has substantial contribution in linking up entire Bengal and North Eastern region. Actually, installation of border has constricted the age old opportunities and consequently it boosts informal trade. In a joint venture of Paula Banerjee, Sanjoy Hazarika, Monirul Hussain and Ranabir Samaddar (1999), they stated:

Trade relationship can be augmented further when units in the sub-region have access to each other’s market. In this context it is important to note that most of the trade now is conducted illegally depriving both the government of Bangladesh and its neighbouring states. In such illegal trade, private traders have built a nexus with some of their government officials and corrupt politicians, which has to be countered at all cost. (Banerjee and others 1999: 2551)

‘The chief routes connecting Assam with Bengal passed through Goalpara’ (Misra 2011: 76). The present Jogighopa and Dhubri Town including Mankachar have historical base in trade relations with rest of the country. The



present ‘Dhubri steamer Ghat’ and the ‘Mankachar Land Custom Station’ have been contributing a lot in export-import relation (see Table 4.1). The informal trade through the border undoubtedly has been providing enough opportunities not only for the smugglers but also the borderlanders as it enhances employability of myriad numbers of local people but it fails to accommodate them therein, even though, it will boost the exchequer of both the countries. Indeed, it is better to reconsider the problem of informal trade by introducing different measures in regulating every pro and cons of the borderland.

**Table 4.7 Land Custom Stations in North-East India**

State	Functional	Non Functional	Total
Assam	5	3	8
Meghalaya	8	2	10
Mizoram	0	1	1
Tripura	7	0	7
Total	20	6	26

Source: Ministry of DoNER [www.mdoner.gov.in](http://www.mdoner.gov.in)

Assam has 15 Land Custom Stations (henceforth LCS) for trade with neighbouring countries i.e. Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar etc. and out of them, eight LCSs are assigned with Bangladesh. At present, five stations are working there. So, the non-functional LCSs unleash the declining trend of formal transnational trade relation.

#### **4.5.4 Core and Periphery: Dhubri Borderland Market**

Unlike others, borderland economy of Dhubri is substantially influenced by the status- quo of border. People have some unusual experiences due to their peripheral existence through the years. However, it varies from one borderland

village to another. As we mentioned, Dhubri or erstwhile Goalpara had extensive linkages with Bengal but the situation has changed in terms of trade and commerce. It has abysmal impact on opportunities with local people. Here, we can put forward the argument of Baud and Schendel:

Local communities along most international borders continue their cross-border economic links. In many cases they do not really have a choice because the government fails to integrate the border economy into the larger national economy. Cross-border economic and commercial activities are often based on pre-existing networks of kinship, friendship, and entrepreneurial partnership that now span both sides of the border. (Baud & Schendel 1997: 229)

Baud and Schendel also try to justify informal trade as people have little opportunities in such remote and highly sensitive destinations. They argue “whenever a state applies restrictions on cross border trade, it invites smuggling. Of course, smuggling is not confined to inhabitants of the borderlands, nor does it involve all (or even most) of them” (ibid 1997: 230). This phenomenon is extensively found in all the borderlands across the world. Different categories of security measures have been introduced to address the problems. They also highlight different policies to control the border trade, applying the procedure as ‘markets near the border may be closed, or people may be forbidden to carry more than small quantities of certain commodities within a certain range of the border. Such restriction may lead to adaptation in marketing and transport, as well as in smuggling practices’ (ibid 1997: 231). Hence, the question is why the borderlanders are involved in such nefarious activities. Their response is very simple that there is no alternate option for

them to engage for availing essentials for their quotidian life. They are also very confident enough that the whole system is working in a chain. A huge number of people from different backgrounds are involved in the whole process of borderland trade. Here, again we must go through the statement of Baud and Schendel and they mention:

.....smuggling always involves some members of borderland society and, depending on its profitability, often state officials and non local entrepreneurs as well (ibid 1997: 231).

Accordingly, another fundamental question is also raised by the assertion ‘the change political discourse may affect in the borderland system’ (ibid 1997: 231). As we know, there is a massive demand of cows and particularly beef in the market of Bangladesh and, therefore, cow smuggling is very common in the borderland. The governments have mounted strict vigilance upon such informal activities, but very recently with the momentum of cow-politics the trade is becoming precarious/ sensitive not only in internal politics but also on the borderlands. Even, all the markets have got informal prohibition order from the higher authority not to sell bovine animals. It is important for menacing smuggling, but local agriculture based people have to suffer a lot as movement of cows is not allowed in this locality. Even, the borderland markets i.e. Durahati, Soulmari, Nalia etc. are banned in trading such animals. One farmer from Binnyachara, Khalilur Rahman stated, “*we cannot purchase/sale our own cattle, these are not allowed here. We have to depend upon the mercy of security system*” (22 December, 2016). All forms of cattle trade is prohibited within a limited range of borderland. In fact, such types of measures are applied in other different areas too. Besides, to stop smuggling

limited amount of goods are allowed along the border. The security system has complaints over the logistics of marriage parties and other occasions speculating doubt and suspicions of smuggling. Hence, with the changing regime of politics, some changes are noticed but the basic politics of the borderland has remained unchanged.

#### **4.6 Borderland Economy**

Economy is the backbone of a society. Apparently, borderland is a land of sensitivity. However, it possesses huge amount of economic opportunities as it is the meeting point of the nation-states. Unlike others, the India-Bangladesh borderland also has been accumulating notable changes over the years. Accordingly, economic opportunity through the Dhubri borderland in Assam is disrupted forever with the imposition of restriction. It has an abysmal impact on the overall economy of borderlanders. The number of unemployed is increasing day by day. From the selected borderland villages, the field study reveals that 56 percent youth are unemployed. Here, on one hand people are suffering from obnoxious situation due to sensitive geopolitics, at the same time, these people are suffering from constricted borderland. There are neither chances of capital investment nor local people have the capability to develop entrepreneurs; indeed, labour is the only asset for them. However, we cannot deny the contribution of different stakeholders in the borderland economy.

##### **4.6.1 Agriculture**

Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of borderland economy. At present, considerably a large number of borderlanders are living on agriculture as well as on different allied activities of agriculture. In fact, with the construction of fencing and border road; on one hand, the area of agriculture land is reducing

and at the same time a huge portion of paddy field has remained within ‘zero land’<sup>11</sup>. The Dhubri borderland is a perfect reflection of Indian agrarian society with innumerable problems like pressure of surplus labour, disguised labour, lack of skilled labour, and market for produced items and consequently it does not get proper benefit and more or less all the villagers are relentlessly suffering year after year. Moreover, the amount of farming land has been shrinking day-by-day due to seasonal erosion and constant pressure due to the settlement of new families. At present, around 35 percent families from the selected villages have land property outside of the border in ‘No Man’s Land’ (field investigation). However, people are allowed farming opportunity there as border gates are opened for twice or sometimes thrice in a day. Samir Kumar Das stated, “Indian citizens become entitled to cultivate in their land across the fence only during appointed hours”, (Dasgupta and others 2011: 53). Although, people are habituated with the process but the nexus between the military and commoners is really odious one. At present most of the farmers have left farming in such contentious space.

The landscape of the Dhubri borderland is mixture of both permanent and temporary land. If some villages particularly Satrasal, Jhaskal, Bishkhowa, Baladuba, Keder, Kukurmara, Baraibari, Mankachar, Mahendraganj etc. are permanent at the same time Dighlertari, Patamari, Takimari, Baldiaralga, Fulkakata, Motinerchar etc. are flood prone area and every year the shape and size of land gets changes (see appendix III). So, in such hinterland along the border, it is not suitable for agriculture activities. It is apodictic that people are managing farming in their traditional process which tries to mitigate the basic requirements. At present, it is neither

profitable nor secured occupations and consequently there is a massive shift from farming to daily based worker. In fact, most of the agriculture based people have become migrant workers<sup>12</sup> across the state and particularly in Guwahati. Foiznur Rahman, a resident of Patakata *Char*, reportedly said “Pulling rickshaw in Guwahati is better than farming here, there is no profit in it (farming) [*ati khet korar chai, goheti riksha chalan bhalo, Khetit labh nui*] (interview on 12/2/2015).

#### **4.6.2 Animal Husbandry**

The borderlanders of India-Bangladesh border are basically agrarian based toiling class. Although, paddy culture for them is a major occupation but most of the families have poultry or livestock as all these are linked with agriculture product. However, there is a slow occupational shifting as the farmers are becoming migrant labour. Moreover, cattle smuggling through the borderland makes it more sensitive and nobody is interested to bear risk in this locality. Hence, there is an obvious effect upon the live-stocks as people have no interest in bearing and rearing cows or other bovine animals. But, the notable point is that the atrocities from the smugglers as well as security forces bring existential panic to them. Thus, all the livestock and cows in particular have become sensitive commodity along the borderland.

#### **4.6.3 Fishing**

Fishing has become a new occupational trend on the borderland. The landscape along the India-Bangladesh border in Dhubri district is uneven as from the northern most part Ramraikuti is a permanent high land coming down towards the Brahmaputra and accordingly Mankachar also comes down towards the same river basin. Here, a major area is usually submerged under

water every year. Such flood affected low land has tremendous positive as well as negative impact on farming. However, a section of people have an ephemeral relation with fishing. At present, a considerable number of people are living on fishing irrespective of their social background. Very pertinently, they have tremendous contribution towards rural economy as most of the people are preferably involved in fishing for their daily consumption.

#### **4.6.4 Construction Labour**

Construction labourer has substantial contribution to the infrastructural development of rural as well as urban areas. Massive urbanization across the state increases employable opportunities for the people including the borderlanders. Even, in their own locality, these people are engaged in different capacities i.e. carpentry, masons, construction of road, earth-filling and other linked activities. Undoubtedly, MGNREGA provides minimum 100 days employment guarantee to the rural people to eradicate unending poverty through economic security. However, a large number of people are engaged in different activities within their locality for the sake of livelihood. In the household construction activity, there is a significant contribution of family members as well as neighbouring people too.

The urban area is the ultimate destination for the construction labourer in recent time. There is an acute relation between construction labourer and problem of internal migration. Apparently, people migrate to different locations due to lack of opportunities or limitation in agriculture activity. Hence, these construction labourers are none but the surplus agrarian labourer of rural areas. Again, from the lexicon of gender, both the categories of people are migrating to the urban areas. Moreover, due to the constant sensitivity

along the border, urban area is alternative destination for them. Hence, despite of their poor socio-economic background the people are getting test of modernity therein.

#### **4.6.5 Banking**

Except Mankachar, there is not a single bank along the border in Dhubri district of Assam and as a result, the borderlanders are adverse in position from the financial point of view. The banking system even has failed to incorporate these people due to their peripheral location. In Mankachar, branches of different banks of both public and private sectors are working i.e. State Bank of India, United Bank of India, Axis Bank of India etc. Besides the presence of different professionals in Mankachar, businessmen belonging to different communities i.e. the Marwari, the Bengali Hindu, the Muslims are also contributing significantly towards the banking system. Furthermore, the illiterate but large in number toiling class people living on agriculture or manual labour have no connection with the banks. Even, savings is a vicious idea for them as people are living on hand to mouth. Furthermore, the government facilitated schemes like *Mamoni*, *Majoni*, widow pension, and other financial assistance of government linked with public transaction, have remained at bay as people have no bank account to avail all these. Actually, the geopolitical terrain pushes their life to social and economic exclusion including in the banking system. People related with government services or other salaried professions have been maintaining bank account for disbursement of salary. Moreover, for the borderlanders it is used as a valuable identity document.



#### **4.6.6 Linkage among Agriculture, Labour and Market**

There are ample opportunities throughout the borderland. The local people are availing some sorts of opportunities in comparison to others. However, these agrarian people are facing stringent challenge as the quantum of cultivable land has been shrinking day by day. Apparently, it generates surplus labour and unemployment. It has a negative impact in maintaining minimum wage of labourers and consequently people are forced to migrate for better opportunities. Here, it is pertinent to understand the transition of labour force from agrarian base to construction labour. Again, the overall condition of this locality is unusual as the people have to confront excessive state security measures all the time. As a result, the entire process along the borderland is jeopardised permanently.

However, with the shrinking of employability in agriculture sector as well as concept of surplus labourer, a considerable number of people are forced to go beyond their locality. Most of them have no permanent jobs through the year and at the same time, they are unable to remain permanently that borderland remains volatile most of the time. The population explosion in the last few decades is enhancing surplus labour and generating unemployment.

#### **4.7 Security in the Borderland: State and Borderlanders**

Basically borders are geopolitical arrangement to ensure territorial security to all in different capacities within the domain of nation-state. The nature of security system can be considered in different ways as either local or national, or somewhat beyond. Again it is either individual or collective in nature. The structural presence of security system is inevitable in such sensitive space

whether it is in Dhubri or elsewhere. It controls hundreds of fringe elements through this borderland. Once the Assam Tribune reported “the residence of Biskhowa, Sonarhat and Bhogdanga-Kutigaon areas under Golakganj police station in Dhubri district are living in a state of insecurity due to frequent activities of anti social elements and Bangladeshi extremists” (see the Assam Tribune on 7/1/14). Although sensitivity prevails therein due to peripheral spatiality but the magnitude has been decreasing day by day.

People along the border are very enthusiastic regarding the barbed fencing as the atrocities from the Bangladeshi miscreants have been decreasing significantly in recent time. At present, no fatality is registrar therein. Jabbar Miya of Ramraikuti said, “*Cows were targeted more but even they looted other things also. Once, we were unable to go outside at night. They were more dangerous in earlier days. They are no more today*” (24 January, 2015). He also stated that the atrocities in Bangladesh borderland side have decreased substantially.

The borderland remains sensitive internally as well as externally too. But the degree of sensitivity varies in accordance with time and space. The present situation of the Dhubri borderland is better in position as amount of unscrupulous activities have been decreasing day by day. But, the riverine area and particularly during the flood, the situation really becomes unmanageable. Pushpita Das (2008) put forwarded the situation as:

The riverside border along with multiple river channels, especially in Dhubri sector in Assam, makes surveillance of the entire stretch almost impossible. The entire year, it is extremely difficult to track the courses of river Brahmaputra and its tributaries particularly at

night. They also throw up stretches of char land, which get inundated during floods. Though inhabited, these lands are weather bound, and there is an inadequate presence of security forces (Das: 2008).

Sometimes, there is a debate over the importance of conventional and non-conventional security; undoubtedly both are inevitable in every circumstance. The structural presence of the BSF along the border is not just a challenge to the miscreants from outsiders but insiders too. “Border disputes including the construction of a fence to stop undocumented migration and deployment of paramilitary forces at the borderlands continue to cause human rights violation” (Banerjee and Chen 2012: 21; Noorani 2003).

Border has acute relation with territorial security. But in the age of globalization, the role of border has been also getting changes. The attack on 11 September, 2001 in USA made the world rethink about the security system including the borderland. In this regard Lybecker put forwarded:

Since the September 11 attack in USA, the security system got pivot importance for the internal as well as external policy formulation of USA. The borders were become more impermeable. The National Guards Operation Jumpstart was inducted in addition to National Guards Troops for the protection of US-Mexico border. Even the urban areas are fenced in double and somewhere triple in layer. Furthermore, road and wall construction, patrols by off-road vehicles and low flying helicopters, and lighting projects are also working for secure border (Lybecker 2008: 343).

After this terrible incident, the concept of borderland security got a momentum of change all over the world including in the Dhubri area of the India-Bangladesh border. Even, it is alleged that some Muslims are engaging in *jihaadi* activities through this Dhubri border. Hence, the issues of migration as well as *jihaadi* activities are contributing to sensitising the borderland.

#### **4.8 Women in the Borderland**

The concept of human rights and particularly women are getting wide attention across the globe. Women are vulnerable everywhere even within the family. Their problems are addressed inadequately, their social, political, economic statuses are not recognised and even for their existing social system, they are facing exploitation systematically. Again, the notable point is that people are not concerned about the vulnerability of women including themselves. In the borderland of Dhubri the chronic vulnerability of borderlanders does not get attention in terms of gender sensitisation or social justice to women. As the women are generally engaged in home based jobs as child bearing and rearing activities including management of home, so their role is preferably less in the decision making process in comparison to male. In border villages and particularly the villages like Binnyachara, Ghewmari and Kalairalga the state of women is so pathetic that except voting women do not have connection with the outer world. Even, not a single female has representation in government jobs from these villages. Pertinent point is that after the enactment of Women Reservation Bill in the Indian Parliament, at present, a small number of women are contesting in local self government elections. However, in the real sense the male members have significant control in the decision making process. So, for the namesake, a section of

women have political representation and the Dhubri borderlanders are also following the same in this regard. Even these women are not organised. Their organisational linkage is very rarely found across the borderland. In Ramraikuti and College Nagar/ Barmanpara, though there is not a single self-help group nor other *samitis* run by women but people have little bit organisational information about them. It is important to mention here that all the borderlanders and particularly women are unorganised and have been suffering a lot.

At present, gender neutrality has become a popular campaign across the globe. Even, the UNDP has been championing eight major areas where the position of women needs to be further equalised. These are:

1. Autonomy of the body (for example controls over reproduction and sexuality, and the problem of violence.)
2. Autonomy within family and household (for example, freedom to marry, divorce and have custody of children in case of divorce).
3. Political power (for example, increase role of decision making in unions, governments, parliaments, etc.)
4. Social resources (for example, access to health and education)
5. Material resources (for example, access to land, houses and credit)
6. Employment and income (for example, fair distribution of paid and unpaid labour)
7. Time (for example, relative access to leisure and sleep)
8. Gender identity (for example, problems with rigidity of the sexual division of labour)

The women of the borderland are inescapable from the perennial sensitivity of borderland. Accordingly, their gender identity or problem of self and others is doubling the problem. The inadequate infrastructure and lack of basic facilities along the borderland jeopardise the common people and mostly women. The rights and privileges of human being are beyond their imagination. The condition of women borderlanders from *char* area are the worst in condition. The geopolitical detachment/ exclusion as ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ are the main reasons for the borderlanders’ vulnerability.

#### **4.9 Summing up**

There is a razor-sharp gap between the strategic development process and the empirical situation of borderland. It may be the India-Bangladesh border or elsewhere. The Border Area Development Programme (BADP) is crucial to address the problems at ground level throughout the border. It requires a boost from the governmentality<sup>13</sup> for transmission from policy stage to implementation. Moreover, we must ensure more and more facilities to them so that they can build a better life in spite of their existence at the margin. Desolate borderland will be again a source of insecurity. Good coordination among the state and its actors with the borderlanders is important here to overcome the precarious situation of this borderland. Hence, it requires a concrete negotiation between the state and the borderlanders to overcome these menaces.

#### **End Note**

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<sup>1</sup>The Assam Tribune, a daily newspaper published from Assam, carried the news on security status in the borderland. Though the Border Security Forces (BSF) has been deputed as a neutral force in the sensitive border area, no security has been provided to the people living in Bishkhowa, Sonahat and Bhogdanga-Kutigaon areas, it is alleged. The plight of the people,

however, does not end here. Numerous problems have nullified any developmental work in the area. Lack of medical facilities, unhygienic drinking water, erratic power supply and sub standard communication system are some of the factors which still remain unsolved in the areas under reference. ( The Assam Tribune on 7/1/14)

<sup>2</sup> National policy on education is a policy formulated by the Government of India to promote education across the nation. For the first time it was introduced in the year 1968, then it continued with massive reform in 1986, 1992 and finally in 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Education for All is a global movement led by UNESCO aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix VIII

<sup>5</sup> Dhubri-Phulbari Bridge is a proposed bridge over river Brahmaputra. It is connecting the entire Garo Hills with the rest of India. The land lock territorial existence of west Garo Hills of Meghalaya and also Makachar from Assam will be boost in the transportation system by this very bridge.

<sup>6</sup> See Kar pp. 1

<sup>7</sup> *IRRI* denotes International Rice Research Institute; it is an international research and training organization with Head Quarter in Los Banos. *IRRI* attempts to eradicate extreme poverty by helping farmers grow more rice in an environmentally sustainable way. The quantity of rice procurement has been doubling or sometimes tripling in every year.

<sup>8</sup> See appendix IX

<sup>9</sup> Market capitalism is an economic system which supports private enterprise within a free market, the means of production being privately owned (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>)

<sup>10</sup> See Baud and Schendel 1997 pp. 230

<sup>11</sup> See Samir Kumar Das's article in Dasgupta and others (edit.) 2011: 53-55

<sup>12</sup> Migrant workers are those who migrate within their home country or abroad to pursue for work as seasonal worker.

<sup>13</sup> The term is used from 'The Politics of the Governed', by Partha Chatterjee.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Politics of the Borderlanders**

Politics is always on the move: Things change (Macdonis & Plummer 2008: 525)

#### **5.1 Introduction**

Border, borderland and borderlanders are inexplicably related with each other in the territorial understanding of nation-states. It appears that border is a geopolitical arrangement configuring limitation in different capacities. At present, despite the paradoxical phenomena of bordering and de-bordering of nation-states, a large number of people across the world are living at this spatial junction as the existential setting of borderland is obvious everywhere. Over the years, problems are accrued across the borderland either in horizontal or vertical manner and subsequently, it becomes a glaring area for debate and contestation among the statesman and scholars of recent time. If we consider the emergence of border, it was a slow and steady process starting from the nomadic stage to the modern nation-states. 'The hunters as well as gatherers had their own territoriality. The city-states were based on urban core areas with surrounding farmlands but have limitations. Even the different empires had their own demarcated territory. The notable point is that modern notion of border is concerned with state securitization as an institutional framework.' (Diener and others 2012: 19-36) The concept of modern nation-states started with the Peace treaty of Westphalia, 1648. Thereafter, it was developed in a sensible pace and with the process of decolonisation the entire system got substantial momentum. The notable point is that most of the modern borders



are imposed in accordance with political desirability and have substantial implication in the entire system. Hence, in the purview of borderland study, here an attempt is being made to understand the political discourses of border as well as borderlanders in general and Dhubri borderlanders in particular.

The politics within the state or elsewhere have substantial influence on the external as well as internal activities of a nation-state. Very outwardly, borders are the formal liner to limit power and authority entrusted to them; however, it does not mean a total limitation. With the changing political discourses, the orientation of border is also changing. Here, the International Law, the law of the land, customary laws and more comprehensively the socio-political setting including policy and politics of the state have myriad influence on borderland activism. Thus, borderland politics has become as an unavoidable global phenomenon of the nation-state in the larger domain of global politics.

The India-Bangladesh borderland in general and Dhubri borderland area of Assam in particular is one of the most contentious sites not only for pejorative activities but also for political contestation in different levels. It was started with the partition but has got acceleration with the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation-state. The deceitful activities are unstoppable here due to inadequate measures of the state and as a result, opportunities are heavy-handedly restricted at this junction. Thus, most of the time national politics have maintained parallel configuration in the context of security in larger domain of nation-state. This work is an attempt to delve out how the borderland politics are linked with or have correlation with different political spheres as local, regional and global level. In such bizarre space, all

the issues should be cross-checked for their multifaceted orientations starting from local to global level and very particular to shared sovereign states. Border whether it is peaceful or contentious in position but have importance in the all round political discourses. Hence, border/borderland is a politically contested zone internally, externally and globally too. It requires explicit attention from different political expertises and which is difficult to concede everywhere. Furthermore, the nation-states are venturing claims and counter claims on border and also speculate volatility, mistrust within their geopolitical domain. Sometimes, it doesn't require the issues should be political or not, but, the nation-states endorse them with certain political orientations. Hence, the intensity of border or borderland activism has substantial impact on the formal politics but the core issues of borderlanders' are reaching out from the mainstream politics in most of the time.

## **5.2 Politics of the Borderlanders**

Border is essentially a geopolitical divide in the nation-state system. At the same time it indicates limitation of power and authority entrusted to every nation-state. It decomposes the structure of a nation, society, community and sense of belongingness into different configurations. On the contrary, it boosts some values i.e. democracy, nationalism, patriotism in accordance with their existing socio-political setting. However, the basic point is to ensure security throughout the border and hence, there is an extensive demand for protection of the border and such protectionism sharpens the politics of territoriality. If we go through different borders of the world and even the border of the USA-Mexico is a relevant example of hard border and even try to be harder with the multi-layer fencing in coming days. Similarly Koreans and many others have

imposed permanent restriction erecting border for security endeavour. In recent time, border has become one of the determinants in the context of political mobilisation. Thus, with the changing ambivalence of border, the notion of borderland politics at the local as well as at the global level is gradually changing.

The present borders have political significance to accomplish both inward and outward activities in different capacities. It also acts as a structural intrusion of power and authority within the political settings. From the geopolitical perspective, external relation formally begins from the border, whether the nation-state is connecting geographically with others or not; but have to maintain relation in accordance with the aspiration of existing political manoeuvres. Accordingly, it also expounds a new spatiality as periphery along the borderland is relatively away from the core area or heartland. It makes the locality as existential exclusion and compels to suffer constant alienation, deprivation and negligence from the mainstream politics. As a result, borderland area remains backward permanently and subsequently deserves special attention from different quarters of society. Undoubtedly, most of the borders of the world are facing multilayer transborder problems and in this regard the Indian borders and particularly Bangladesh side are also suffering a lot in a constant manner. At present, transnational phenomenon has become a bone of contention in the national politics. To overcome these panics, different state regulated institutions are engaged therein and which is again a matter of contestation in public domain. Hence, the existing security system has become an issue of debate and contestation within the larger political discourse of borderland.

The permanent peripheral spatiality is disgruntled for the borderlanders in the customary life. They have regular interaction with the state actors both from native and neighbours and subsequently the sense of nationalism gets importance meticulously. Furthermore, the borderlanders perform as a permanent defensive force to resist the intruders. Even, for the sake of national interest, sometimes, individual interests are to be compromised emanating the sense of patriotism, nationalism, belongingness etc. Hence, it is essential to address these issues in a comprehensive manner to understand the nation-states categorically.

### **5.3 Conventional and non-Conventional politics of Borderland**

With the emergence of modern democratic nation-states, the political orientations have also changed. The political values varied from one nation-state to another, but borderland arrangements are remained almost same structurally. As we know, formal politics provides the masses enormous power to handle the nation-states in accordance with their existing administrative mechanisms. The electoral politics indicates the real power is entrusted in the hands of commoners and in regular interval people can exercise their power through periodic election. Unlike others, India is also pursuing democratic values through elections without fail since independence.

In the aftermath of partition, border was inevitable for territoriality and subsequently it has become a bone of contention internally as well as externally too. Later on, the pace of sensitivity<sup>1</sup> based on border has increased and thereafter it has become a permanent contiguous zone in the larger political domain. The politics of India-Bangladesh borderland can be consider from different angles i.e. formal and informal, border as a source of politics

and politics of the borderlanders. Again, the politics of borderlanders can be justified from other angles; sometimes it is based on the structure of the institution, process of functioning, sensitivity of space etc. and subsequently it becomes a vital ground with political significance. Appositely, the formal politics is assured by the constitution and legally bounded; whereas informal politics is somewhat different from the earlier one. With the periodic elections, it formally construes that the power of masses is handed over to elites and particularly to the political elites. These elites or the government as an institution is the supreme decision making body with expounding influence in every nook and corner within the state and also somewhat beyond. Pertinent to mention here that most of the political societies of the world are comprehensively plural in nature and indeed different suburb emerges to avail different necessitates. Hence, the formal politics is kept under tremendous pressure with some nonconventional machinations. Ulrich Beck believes 'people have entered a period of sub-politics where the world of major political institutions built up in modernity is increasingly under question through a politics that takes place everyday life. Formal politics becomes less effective as sub politics develops' (Macionis and Plummer 2008: 525, Beck 1997). Hence, the non conventional politics are getting importance in accordance with the conventional one. Macionis and others (2008) have defined formal politics as:

Formal politics is the social institution that distributes power, set a society's agenda and makes decisions, and governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the

management of a country's affairs at all level (Macionis and Plummer 2008: 503).

The formal politics on the borderland is working in accordance with the larger political domain of a nation-state. All the three formats of election including general at the central level, Legislative Assembly at intermediate level and the local village *panchayats* are conducting on regular basis. However, at the time of election, almost all the borderland villages are regarded as extremely sensitive zone. Unlike others, it is undeniable that the informal politics have substantial impact throughout the borderland system including formal politics. Accordingly, the local politics is complementary to one another but nowhere it is free from the influences of border. So, it is inevitable to look forward the politics of the borderlanders in the larger domain of entire politics of a nation-state.

### **5.3.1 Electoral Politics and Borderland Society**

Over the years, numbers of countries are promulgating democratic values conducting elections. In India too, despite the acrimonious situation, the basic values of democracy are extensively perpetuated. It guarantees the rights and privileges to individuals within the constitutional framework based on the principle of equality. The judiciary, media, public opinion, protest, mobilisation of people etc. are working adequately except few deceitful incidents occurring from time to time. In spite of that periodic election, functioning of the parliament, different statutory bodies are the vital determinants for democratic culture and more or less it has been accentuating the essence of politics. Within the larger political setting, these borderlanders have been participating in every political fray as common electorates. The

bottom level institution, the local self government is also functioning without fail.

The ethos of democracy incorporates the entire society; it is penetration of state into the grassroots level. Indian democracy has mounted with different political arrangement, starting from *panchayati raj* or local self-government to parliamentary elections; everywhere citizens are treated equally. Even, people belong to disadvantageous class are endow with special privileges of reservation in different spheres of electoral process. In this instance, the politics is structurally well managed expounding differences in social composition. As we know reservation for women is constitutionally sanctioned, women are in the fray of election, but what is exactly happening that if the panchayat president portfolio is reserved for women, then the wife/relatives of that very leader will contest as candidate, and ultimately it endows two persons to occupy a same position. In the name of wife/relatives, that very person is also handling enormous power and privileges informally. Accordingly, in such situation, the chances of corruption may be increased inappropriately. As most of the people are illiterate; it is easy to mishandle the situation by some influential personalities. Accordingly, due to their peripheral existence and perennial sensitivity, people can indulge in corruption easily. Similarly, the role of intermediate group is significant here. Moreover, due to the geopolitical exclusion, the local people are easily motivated by the politician at the time of election.

### **5.3.2 Political Behaviour**

Aaron Wildavsky is one of the prominent exponents of political preference within the domain of political culture. People's preference has acute relation

with culture, self interest, tradition, status and class etc. and which are considered as preconditions to extend their support or not to support certain belief or ideologies. In this instance, the realm of culture includes religion, ethnicity, tradition, language, historiography etc. to build up their preferences. Nevertheless, common people are inescapable from the influences of their surround and consequently their political behaviour carries a well reflected in their quotidian life. The issue of identity, nationalism, citizenship etc. have constant influences upon the behaviour of local people. In fact, some political parties are comprehensive enough to accentuate these issues in their political orientation.

From the religious point of view, the Dhubri borderland villages are categorised into three i.e. Hindu, Muslim and admixture of both; and it is easy for the political leaders to use the religious cards to procure the popular support at the time of election. Actually, people at the periphery are totally detached from the mainstream society, they have little information about whom to vote and on what basis or whom to not, however, they select these leaders despite of their linkages. A common desire is seen among the borderlanders is that usually they voted for their own community, person with similar belief etc. Even, the major issues like deprivation, citizenship, development, identity, security in their day-to-day life are very crucial to focus but never come to the limelight and by casting vote they try to ascertain their political prominence only. If we go through the functional politics, all the political institutions like *Gaon Panchayat*, *Gram Sabha* are structurally working at the bottom level of the society. These are under the constant influence of a section of people of that very locality. Within the borderland,



these are regulated by certain numbers of elite having different affiliations. So, unlike others, borderlanders are not free from the dominance of elitism. In this regard, the cleric or the locally acclaimed *mullah* has also substantial influence over the people. Thus, it is important to mention here that religions have strong hold in such interior locality. There is a historical prominence too as the divide of India-Pakistan was on the basis of religion and it becomes an unending issue from the political point of view. In the aftermath of partition, the religion has got credential to sharpen the borderlander's identity and which continues for long in terms of nationality and political paradigm too. Later period this situation generates problem of infiltration and consequently there was a massive resistance in late 70's of the previous century by the masses of Assam. Hence, at this borderland, the history and memory have different test of experience, the socio-political setting of the state has something different and their spatiality has also influence in different capacities. In fact, different actors of this locality have substantial impact upon the whole system including their behaviour and preference.

Once the Assam Tribune, a daily newspaper from Guwahati reported that, 'political parties are silent on the infiltration problem for fear of losing their vote bank. Without even an iota of doubt, this invariably provides a fillip to illegal migration'. (Assam Tribune January 7, 2014) Nevertheless, the entire issue has become a common and permanent political agenda for different stakeholders. Even no one has proper configuration and scientific remedial measures to address the entire problem. However, the notable point is that the situation of this border has substantial implication throughout the entire political system of Assam.

### **5.3.3 Religious Influence in Politics**

As we know, religion is a globally nourished phenomenon in the context of politics. Accordingly, the magnitude of its influence is significant but varies from one space to another. It has influence both on individual as well as public life. At present, the Muslims are outnumbering the Hindus throughout the Dhubri borderland. This is a fussy borderland has historical and geopolitical linkages with Bangladesh, formerly East-Pakistan, prior to that was under the undivided Bengal province of the British India, the Koch and also the Mughal had ruled this geopolitical space. “On account of the frequent changes, there has been a certain amount of internal movement of population within the country from West to East Bengal and back again, from East Bengal to North Central Bengal and from both these tracts to North Bengal” (Das 2008: 261). According to B. C. Allen, in the Goalpara District Gazetteers (1901) it is mentioned, the then Goalpara district had 44 percent of Hindu population, 28 percent the Muslims and 27 percent others. Nevertheless, the Muslims have predominance in undivided Rangpur province which comprised the then Goalpara district of British India too. Hence, the numeric strength was substantially rooted under the patronage of the British. While demarcating the boundary, Radcliffe had however confronted a difficult situation. Inspired by the results of the referendum, the League presented a memorandum demanding the inclusion of Goalpara district in to Pakistan since ‘it is contiguous to the Muslim majority areas’ (Chakrabarty 2004: 196). Finally, Goalpara remained within the geopolitical setting of India. Here, the select villages of present Dhubri district are within the territorial domain of Indian state of Assam. One notable point is that memories and traumas at the time of

partition have remained vivid among the elderly people of borderland communities. Accordingly, the socio-political unrest in different occasions in Assam and particularly against the migrant Muslims is helping to renew the sense of loathsome politics on the basis of religion.

However, if we look at the elections after independence, the magnitude of communalism had declined slowly. Although, some prominent leaders of the Muslim League including Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani<sup>2</sup> had influence in the rural Muslim dominated areas even within the India territory too, but the democratic values was formally introduced with the first general election 1951. In Dhubri, people had voted Amjad Ali, a candidate from Socialist Party to the parliament. The trend continues for long and no religion have got indulgence in such constituency for some decades. But, very recently, with the emergence of All India United Democratic Front (henceforth AIUDF), sometimes religion has been getting structural prominence there. However, in certain areas, it is noticed that Bharatiya Janata Party's (henceforth BJP) performance is becoming significant in last few years. The demography of this vicinity reveals the religious influence in the electoral politics in substantial manner. In, Golakganj assembly constituency, BJP is strong in position in the last few elections. Actually, a huge chunk of voters belonging to the Hindu and have concentration in some villages i.e. Ramraikuti-Satrasal, Baladuba etc. have extended their support to the Hindutva based party BJP in last few elections. Accordingly, other Assembly constituencies are represented by the Muslims as the electorates are virtually convinced due to their same faith. At present, it is alleged that most of the politicians are using religious cards to mobilise the voters. Hence, from time to

time, the political leaders try to sensitise the border to consolidate other political groups too. At this S. Srikanth argued with an example:

P. Kumar Mahanta, he publicly alleged that ‘Madrassa’, a Muslim religious schools in the border district of Assam were playing an important role in recruiting Muslim youth for ISI-sponsored organisations (Srikanth 1999: 3414).

Even V. K. Malhotra had quoted the Border Taskforce Report in the parliament that madrasas and mosques along the borderland are taking place not only for the infiltrators but is a process for Islamisation (Shamshad 2017:243, Lok Sabha Debate Text 14 December, 2004). Such types of sarcastic statements on religious line are matter of concern for social integration. Hence, religion is heavily used to mobilize the common people whether it is in Dhubri borderland or somewhere else.

#### **5.3.4 Leadership Influence**

Leadership is a kind of expertise to ‘lead’ or ‘move forward’ a particular system in accordance with desirability. Hence, the role of leadership is significant in different capacities. Again the notion of leadership has been varied from one setting to another. Borderlanders have been experiencing different kinds of leadership with numerous influences. Most of the leaders of Dhubri borderland are performing as arbitrator, mediator and conciliator between the state and the borderlanders. The borderlanders are deliberately dependable on the whim and fancy of their leaders. Besides, perpetual pressure of the leaders from the existing state and sometimes beyond is also desirable throughout the system.

No national figure is ever produced from the Dhubri borderland area as the society is geopolitical periphery in the true sense of the term. The issues along the border are sometimes highlighted by a section of leaders in the national level, but in the long run which is negligible one. In the aftermath of Assam movement, some leaders had focused on illegal-migration issue encompassing this border, even today some leaders are very critical about this; however it fails to accentuate cumulative attention from all walks of life. If we consider the role of national leadership, these occasional visitors have just finished their responsibility in the policy stage only.

As the Indian democracy is comprised with multi-stages political settings, there is an organisational chain connects from top to bottom within the institutional mechanism. The local Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assembly are representing all including the borderlanders, but they have little information regarding the ground reality of border to convince the public domain. At present, there are some village level leaders with different political affiliation, working as intermediates and which is essential for focusing the issues of grass root level. Besides, it also helps to aware the local commoners about their basic entitlements. Hence, local leaders have tremendous contribution in the borderland management.

### **5.3.5 Civil Society**

The civil society groups are becoming significant across the nation. Even in the borderland region too, some organisations are working therein. Due to the geopolitical marginality, the borderlanders are lagging much behind in terms of modern processes. The socio-economic base is really deplorable in condition and subsequently they are lagging behind as most of the villagers

have no idea about such institutions. But some local personalities have involvement as mediator between the state and the local commoners. Hence, the space of civil society remains as vacuum but group influence is significant throughout the border.

Over the years, a small number of people have been leaving borderland either permanently or maintained low connection with their native area due to the precarious situation prevailing therein. As a result, their numeric strength is decreasing day by day, some paradoxical notions are working in this venture----- on one hand sensitivity prevails in this locality for entire life and at the same time there is an alternative space to accommodate in the core area. Despite of such trend of out migration, a large number of families are remained for their parental property. So, the conscious sections of people are floating across the nation and most of the time maintains ceremonial connection with this locality. Undoubtedly they have bitter experience about the borderland system, once Abdur Rashid Khandaker of Binnyachara asserted that he has two residences; one is on the borderland and other is in Panbari, close to district headquarters. The vital point is that most of the people are dependable on him, as at the time of emergency he remains standby as saviour. So, there are numbers of people who are performing such kind of activities since long back. Hence, there are some unorganised civil society groups working for one and all.

Since border is a sensitive political margin, some civil society organisations are working for the sake of borderlanders as their rights and privileges are facing stringent challenge due to their existence at the periphery. In this regard, ‘Bhogdanga-Fauskerkuti *Simanta Gaon Bachao (Suraksha)*

*Samiti* is a formally organised institution rendering help in every aspect of borderlander's life. Essentially, the institution is working as negotiator between the state and the common people. At the same time, despite the help of the government, some NGO, voluntary organisations, student organisations, researchers etc. are working relentlessly to enhance their socio-economic-political situation at this margin. An NGO, North East Craft and Rural Development (NECARD) has contributed for the infrastructural development of Bhogdanga-Fauskerkuti proposed border *haat*. Hence, it would be crucial for borderlanders to have more pro-border civil society organisations in coming days.

#### **5.3.6 Presence of Political Parties**

The Dhubri district has divided into seven Legislative Assembly segments i.e. Mankachar, South Salmara, Dhubri, Gauripur, Golakganj, Bilasipara (West) and Bilasipara (East) and these are under the parliamentary constituency of Dhubri. Despite of geopolitical periphery, there are different political parties have virtual presence since independence. In the first couple of elections, the Praja Socialist Party had prominence in this constituency. Thereafter, the Indian National Congress had domination up to 2004 general election and at present AIUDF is incumbent therein. If we look at the second category parties, in the initial stage it was INC there, after that PSP, Independent, BJP, AGP and at present again INC. Although, the district is levelled as Muslim minority concentrated area, but the shifting of vote is really significant one. Since the beginning, INC has significant presence in terms of vote share, but at present AIUDF and BJP are alternative choices for the electorates. Nevertheless, the demography is not suitable for competitive election therein.

If we consider the Assembly segments, in the early 1980's the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has virtual presence therein. In the Golakganj Assembly constituency, there was a tight contest between the INC and the Communist party of India (Marxist) in several elections. But with the decline of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the vote share has shifted slowly to either the BJP or AIUDF and therefore sometimes a triangular contest is visible here. Again, there is a sharp divide of Muslim votes between AIUDF and INC; automatically the third party gets upper hand in this Assembly segment.

In the aftermath of Assam Movement, the entire political scenery has changed with the emergence of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in the larger political domain of Assam and even in the Dhubri borderland region too. In the year 1996, an AGP candidate has come out successfully from the Mankachar Assembly segment. Accordingly, from Gauripur, B. K. Mushahary has elected as AGP candidate in the year 2004. But one notable point is that the vote share of AGP in other constituencies is relatively minimal. In Dhubri, in the year 1991, BJP won the Assembly constituency and the following two terms was in second position. But, at present, in the last two elections, the major fight is between AIUDF and INC. South-Salmara is almost Muslim dominated constituency, earlier the fight was between INC and Independent candidates, at present AIUDF is an alternative choice to them. Hence, if we come to the politics of Dhubri parliament constituency, due to the numeric strength of Muslim, the chances of Muslim candidate is relatively higher than the others. Therefore, religious polarisation makes it a safer zone for AIUDF supremo Badruddin Ajmal. But, the defeat of Ajmal in the Assembly election



2016 from the South Salmara constituency asserts the other face of electoral maturity in minority concentrated area. Thus, in every election, the voting behaviour has been changing significantly. But the significant point is that Muslim voters are the determinant factor in this westernmost district of Assam.

If we look at the *panchayat* election results, the voting behaviour is very common from one election to another. The Hindu voters are more comfortable with the BJP and otherwise INC. Earlier, most of these voters were close to CPI just before the BJP's emergence. Accordingly, at present moment, the Muslims are comfortable with AIUDF, but second option is INC. Hence, INC is in advantageous position in every format as the ultimate choice for both the Hindus and the Muslims. Sometimes independent candidates are coming out successfully due to the sharp division of votes among the parties. The representation of female is very crucial after the introduction of reservation in *Panchayat* level. But, their educational background is comparatively far behind than the males. One thing is important that to contest an election, family background is important irrespective of communities. Undoubtedly, *Panchayat* election has enhanced women empowerment, but in the real sense their role is too limited in this male dominated locality.

#### **5.4 Non Conventional Politics**

Although different forms of politics is going on at this geopolitical margin, but broadly we can divide them into two i.e. conventional politics and non-conventional politics. The conventional politics are fixed and focused, whereas the non-conventional politics are not but have substantial influence throughout the system. Besides, it has been working as a source of mediation

in the larger domain of politics. In accordance with the social composition, it may be varied from one space to another. Partha Chatterjee (2006) in his book 'The Politics of the Governed' has explained the role of non-conventional political elements in a categorical manner. Anadi Bera, the founder of *Jana Kalyan Samiti* (1986) was impressive to organise the people of a particular railway colony in West Bengal (Chatterjee 55). Like him, there are numbers of such personality as well as organisations are working consciously or unconsciously for the sake of commoners. They are the mediators between the common people and the state. Even they are working to ensure basic entitlements for the disadvantageous classes. Once Chatterjee argued, "..... everyday politics are regulated not by the law but by other authorities" (Chatterjee 2006: 73-77). As a space at the margin, the borderland society is experiencing with some dominant actors i.e. the elites, the *master saheb*, *matbar*, the commandant etc. have substantial influence in their day-to-day life.

#### **5.4.1 Elite Politics**

Modern politics is structurally inclusive and empirically divisive in nature. The political power generally vested with the masses but usually regulated by a certain number of people i.e. political elite. They have substantial influence encompassing from top to bottom level of the society. Although there are numbers of determinants that have been working but elites are the real force throughout the system. Time and space too have significant influence in every format of politics. Politics is the collective reflection of aspiration, need, grievances etc. of the masses. There is a virtual difference in between politics

and the electoral politics whether it may be at regional, national and international level.

Power is the ultimate essence of politics. Michel Foucault sees power as everywhere and to be found in all relationships (Foucault 1977). However, “it (power) does not simply come from the top; it is not simply about the formal institutions of power. He looks at all social life to find the power mechanisms at work in it (Macdonis and Plummer 2008: 504). Hence, it is impressive to understand the power relationship in certain peripheral spaces with political importance.

Unlike others, borderlanders have been confronting with non-conventional politics; the role of elite at this margin is significant. The *gaon burah* (village headman) has an important role in the borderland politics. Due to the societal complexity, the *gaon burahs* have relation on one hand with the local people and the others including the commandant and other security forces. So, at the time of upheavals, he has to extend helping hand towards the local people. Similarly, the *mullah*, school teacher, and economically and politically influential persons have too extensive influences throughout the system of borderland and in every critical situation people can approach them. Similarly, the village *daktars* (doctors), whether they have valid certificate or not, but people have close connection to them. Actually, the whole geopolitical space is not favourable for normal living, on one hand people are dependable on the elite class and at the same time the elites are taking the advantage of the disadvantageous situation of the commoners. One notable point is that this influential group is recognized not only by the security system but have importance in the larger domain.

#### 5.4.2 *Mullah* Politics

The linkages between religion and politics are historically rooted across the line. Once in Europe, Pope was influential figure both in religious as well as political sphere. There was a perennial contestation between the Pope and the Monarch in terms of supremacy in public domain. Although, the role of Pope has become limited from the political point of view, but their influence is still significant as religion and politics are compassionate with each other. Even the present political systems comprising one and all have acute relation with religious dogmatism and consequently the notion of secularism, communalism, multiculturalism etc. has become viable. Moreover, religion has substantial implication in the ground level of society. The religious heads from the bottom level whether it is Christian priests, Buddhist monks, Hindu *puruhit*, or *satradhikar*, Muslim *mullah* etc. have significant role to influence the society.

The term *mullah* is primarily understood in the Muslim world as a term of respect for an educated religious man (Taheri 1985: 53). The basic function is to manage the religious activities as a leading person of that very locality. Besides his daily assigned activity i.e. five times prayer<sup>3</sup>; he essentially accomplished to run *Maktab*<sup>4</sup>, solemnised marriages and conducts the burial procedures of deceased etc. Hence, in every crucial step, the role of *mullah* is significant. Hence, *mullah* has become an influential figure in most of the Muslim villages. His influence is encompassing everything including religion, politics, society, culture etc. Due to his positional tallness, people have confidence on him. Therefore, the commoners accepted his dominance without any question.

The role of *mullah* among the borderlanders is significant as the religious cards have been substantially accentuating in their day-to-day life. It has historical prominence as religious identity was sharpen at the time of partition. However, the then tempo of people has defused substantially over the years. From the general perspective, *mullahs* are the first among others at the time of religious congregation and also called *imam*; that is the leader. So, on one hand *mullahs* are taking advantage of socio-political background of borderlanders and other hand their religious incomparability. These *mullahs* are wielding decisive role in most of the cases of borderlanders. Indeed, they have been working as mediators between the local people and the state.

There is not a single madrasah in the select villages. But, all the villages have *mullah*, or experts of religion. Apparently, it is an indispensable part of social setting influencing one and all. Partha Chatterjee talks about *mullah* in the context of modernization of madrasahs and he argues “no Muslim could claim that modern education was not necessary. On the other hand, everyone has agreed that private madrasahs did not provide modern education. Why then should not the government come forward to start modern madrasahs that were not ‘factories for producing mullahs?’ The Muslim community should not only support this policy but also actively contribute, even financially, to the setting up of madrasahs that offer modern education.” (Chatterjee 2004: 125)

#### **5.4.3 (Master *Saheb*) School Teacher**

The school teacher job has become a lucrative one in rural society. Since long back, *gurus* are given respectable position in different capacities. They are considered as more conscious fellows than others as they have a role of

mediation between government and the local settings. Again they have influence not only over the students but also the parents and the surroundings. More or less, they have substantial contribution in the mobilisation of society. Being the school teachers are primary reference group among the local people and indeed have impact in every aspects of life including politics. Notwithstanding, modern society is little bit different to recognise the school teachers. Although consciousness gets mammoth importance, but from the Marxist point of view, matter or economy is the base of consciousness. Moreover, sometimes individual personality acts as determinant to influence others. The village school teachers are economically sound, they are somewhat capable in understanding politics, norms, system and very crucial matter is that they are very important to fill up the forms whether voter list, ration card, NRC, and so forth in the time of necessities. Again they have a bit information about the different processes of office, health facilities, and other government facilities and therefore, people have confidence upon them. Again the teachers render services in the time of election, enumerating National Sample Survey, community awareness programmes etc. and all these make prudent in confidence building over the common people. We may find such type of situation in the economically backward society. Partha Chatterjee very eloquently discussed about acceptability of school teacher in 1980's in a slum of Bengal. He mentioned:

In the 1980's, a popular perception emerged everywhere that school teachers had the will and the ability to find commonly acceptable solutions to local disputes. Since they were salaried, they did not depend on agricultural incomes and thus did not have

strong vested interests in land. Most came from peasant backgrounds and were thus thought to be sympathetic to the poor. They were the educated among a society of vast illiteracy. They were familiar with the language of peasants as well as that of the party, well versed in legal and administrative procedures, and yet organically part of the village community (Chatterjee 2004: 65).

He also highlighted the voice of the margin as he mentioned:

It was common to hear villagers saying that their school teacher was the one who most commanded their trust (ibid 2004:65).

In borderland, undoubtedly the border has substantial influence over the village administration. However, the dominant group including the school teacher are in a commanding position in the decision making process of the villages. However, the degree or process of influence varies from one region to another. The society with permanent and undisputed landscape makes the commoners economically sound and free from contention; here the relation between the dominant and dominated class is invisible. But in this backward, contentious and marginal borderland society, a section of people are always dependable upon others. Thus the presence of elite is determined by the structure of the society. Most of the people have confidence upon the school teachers as permanent elite of their locality. As their linkages with the common society and the governance system, they prevail cumulative role in the whole process. Actually they are capable to convince the people as well as the state actors. Moreover, in the Dhubri borderland, the problem of migration is very susceptible one; all the common people are suspicious here except the government professionals.

#### 5.4.4 Politics of Despicability

Border is a transnational junction with ample opportunities whether it is in Dhubri or somewhere else. Most of the activism of borderland not only denotes the politics of sensitivity, but also promotes the politics of despicability. Here, it is alleged that people from different settings have nefarious involvement in such activities. We can consider the ‘politics of despicability’ in different capacities i.e. infiltration, smuggling, violence, insurgent activities etc. Since, migration is a sensitive issue disseminating the entire socio-political space of Assam but without considering the ground reality, there is a usual allegation over the borderland of Dhubri as this region is using as a heavenly passage by the infiltrators. The politics of ambiguity retains at this juncture over the years. Hence, there is an insurmountable gap to contextualise the people’s perceptions from the core area towards the periphery or *vice-versa*. Another notable point is that, people from different background have involvement in smuggling at this borderland. Even the field investigation reveals that 76.0 percent people have positive response, 10.4 percent have negative and 13.6 percent have ‘no response’ regarding the illegal trade through this borderland (see Q no. 11). Again the subsidiary question 11a reveals that 14.4 percent of local people are benefitted, but ‘others’ (mediators, go-down owners, labourers etc.) are getting 55.2 percent. Although as a percentage, the involvement of traders (4.0), BSF (1.6) and the government officials (4.0) are very less; but it is alleged that a lion share is appropriating by these people. Undoubtedly, it reveals a nexus among all the stakeholders. Furthermore, whenever asked about the smuggling of cattle, 37.6 percent people have positive response, 48.8 percent said ‘no’ and another 13.6



percent were not ready to response at all. Accordingly, the subsidiary question 12a reveals that 10.6 percent local people, 5.2 percent foreign nationals, 4.6 percent government officials, 6.0 percent security guards, 46.8 percent ‘others’ have engaged and another 36.8 percent have ‘no information’ in this regard. If we consider all these cases, there is a susceptible insight that the borderlanders have nefarious involvement in such activities. Furthermore, it promotes the politics of despicability among the commoners due to their existence at the margin.

### 5.5 Politics of Dhubri Borderlanders

The Dhubri borderland region of Indian state Assam is a junction of different complications since the partition. If we consider the state of security throughout this borderland, the perceptions are varied from one individual to another. If someone finds greater scope through this borderland, others find nothing except anti-national elements. If somewhere flood and erosion create havoc, but others may not. Hence, despite of such fragile spatiality, the entire border has become touchy and susceptible and thus border is a matter of concerned for all. Unlike others, the Dhubri borderlanders have engaged in indifferent political manoeuvres and here it is an attempt to compare among formal politics, customary politics and politics specific to the borderlanders.

#### Politics of the Borderlanders

Formal Politics	Informal (Customary) Politics	Politics of Dhubri Borderlanders
*Formal politics is essentially modern; it endorses certain procedural road-map to the ruler and the ruled. It also denotes the political	*It is traditional and unavoidable so far. Even it has substantial impact on the modern political system. It includes chieftains, village councils, religious	In Dhubri, the borderlanders try to bring together both formal and informal politics. The empirical scenery indicates: a. Illegal migration and <i>Bangladeshi</i>

<p>significance of the governed in the larger domain of the nation.</p> <p>*Here in the borderland, it includes model code of Borderland i.e. no movement is allowed after sun sets, border gates will remain open for limited and fixed period, movement of people would be limited, movement of commodities would be limited, ‘Commandant in Chief’ has absolute power to issue Identity Cards etc.</p> <p>*Participation in electoral politics in regular intervals i.e. covering from local <i>panchayat</i> to the national level elections.</p> <p>*Policy making and its implementation are included in the formal politics. Some government organs (central as well as state) are engaged for all-round management of borderland.</p>	<p>heads, elite class influences, <i>Mullahs</i> and Village Masters etc.</p> <p>*The contestation between formal and informal activities is very sharp and for the greater interest formal activism gets precedence. However, it is inescapable from the circumstantial influences.</p> <p>*Sometimes informal politics of the borderlanders may breach the existing rule of the nation.</p> <p>*Social exclusion, sensitive space, restricted life etc. are contributing a lot in the informal politics of borderland.</p>	<p>stigmatization, both are moving forward in a paralleled manner.</p> <p>b. Politics of sensitivity (internal as well as external) and which is somewhat permanent.</p> <p>c. The role of Political Elites, <i>Gaon Burha</i>, local politicians, Village School Masters, <i>Mollah</i>, <i>Matbar</i> etc. are prominent in the decision making process.</p> <p>d. At present, live stocks are also contributing to sensitise the borderland politics. Cow smuggling and cow politics are getting precedence here.</p> <p>The notable point is that the Dhubri borderlanders are also functioning in accordance with time and space and subsequently nothing is permanent therein. Besides, the most of the people are habituated with the borderland.</p>
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Source: prepared by the researcher

## 5.6 Border and Politics of Assam

Assam is sharing both international as well as inter-state borders. In this instance, borderland experiences are different from one space to another. Apart from the Bangladesh region, nowhere fencing is erected. Undoubtedly, people are habituated with the border. It will reduce the sense of sensitivity and mistrust for one and all. Field investigation reveals that 84.8 percent are in favour of strong barbed fencing, 7.2 percent are not interested at all and 8.0 percent did not respond (Q 31). Due to their existence at the margin, people deserve state sponsored protection therein. They are critical about the illicit activities from either side of the border. Even the Muslims are also in favour of construction of strong border for solving the *Bangladeshi* issue permanently. At present, it has become a cumulative issue in the entire North-East. Thus, it is the responsibility of state to regulate all the borders in adequate manner. Border control- the effort to restrict territorial access – has long been a core state activity (Andreas 2003: 78; Anderson 1996). But nowhere is possible to deny the spatial influence at this borderland. The nature of the local political organization and culture influences a boundary and functioning of the border depends of their activism. (Jailly 2009: 6) Prakash Singh, a former director general, Border Security Forces (BSF) has defined, “border management as a fluid concept in the sense that the level of security arrangements along a particular border would depend upon the political relations, the economic linkages, the ethno religious ties between people across the borders and the configuration of the border itself” (Singh 2001; Singh 2002: 11, 57-70).

### **5.6.1 Illegal Migration**

Migration is a never ending process in the world history. It has acute relation with borderland politics as both inward or outward migrations have tremendous impact in every aspect of society. As Bukowczyk observes in his essay, “Historians of borderlands and regions –national or otherwise- naturally have a central interest in migration – both emigration and immigration – because of the centrality of the movements of people in defining these spatial entities and in creating the relationships and connections that ‘make’ them” (Nora 2008: xiii). Accordingly, Nora Faires highlighted the situation of Michigan of USA as the Canadian has a commanding position therein. Moreover, the unabated illegal migration from Mexico is also a serious matter for the internal politics of USA. Eventually, strong border was inevitable there in spite of massive merchandise relation in between them.

Migration is a lifelong process. The concept of border and particularly fencing has acute relation with migration. Once Mendoza asserts that:

..... state historically fail in stopping people from migrating to places that they consider offer better opportunities. The best example available can be found in the case of Mexico and the United States, who have failed to prevent ‘illegal’ immigration despite increasing militarisation and technological advancements used to patrol the border. These circumstances have scholars re-evaluating the importance of state’s borders in today’s political context. (Mendoza 2008: 11)

Newman in his article stresses that there are always groups who have an interest in finding ways to move beyond the barrier. They may be seeking

jobs, visiting family and friends from whom they have been cut off, smuggling goods, drugs or weapons. But crossing the border does not always bring the expected benefits. The grass is not always greener on the other side, especially when one doesn't have the necessary documents, work permits, language proficiency, or is captured by the authorities in a roundup of illegal immigrants (Newman 2003: 14).

Apodictically migration has conspicuous impact in the nation building process. Most of the countries are reeling due to massive influx and have been taken different preventive measures to overcome from the issue in near future. In fact 'assimilation is one of the problems most commonly associated with transnational migration' (Mendoza 2008: 12).

The India- East Pakistan Border and presently the India-Bangladesh Border (Radcliffe Line) is politically demarcated at the time of independence. People from each side have similarities in culture, language, ethnicity, community etc. and it makes them easy in melting with the larger domain. Pertinent to mention here that the Indian state Assam has been facing massive influx from Bangladesh through the borderland of Dhubri and it continues for couple of decades, and becomes an unending problem. In fact, it speculates fear psychosis among the indigenous people of Assam as they are becoming minority in the larger democratic setting. Undoubtedly it is an uncompromising challenge for the Assamese in present day context. At the same time, it is touchy one for those, who are easily stigmatized as illegal migrants in their day today life. Anindita Dasgupta eloquently mentioned:

When we go to the cities they call us foreigners. They say we have never seen you before ..... you are Bangladeshi. When we say we are from the chars, they do not believe (Dasgupta 2000: 273).

She also mentioned in her unpublished thesis “Emergence of a Community: The Muslims of East Bengal Origin in Assam in Colonial and Post Colonial Period” about the nature of population movement/internal displacement particularly from *char*:

1. *Char* to *char*
2. *Char* to village
3. *Char* to town/cities
4. *Char* to hills

There are myriad workers belonging to different marginal locality including *char* and borderlands of Dhubri, have bounteous presence across the state. Sometimes, these are lucidly stigmatised as *Bangladeshi* (the illegal migrants from Bangladesh). Hence, there is a contestation between suspicion and susceptibility over the illegal migrants in Assam. However, it is irrefutable that no *Bangladeshis* are allowed to settle in Assam. There is a massive demand for the detection and deportation of these people, but the issue has become so clumsy that in spite of changing political regimes, issue remained as same. Undoubtedly, in Assam the problem of ‘illegal migration’ has got pivot importance as a political agenda by all the parties in fray. The political polarisation over the issue has become a *modus operandi* in Assam. Considering the issue of influx from Bangladesh, Ashis Bose, one of the India’s leading demographers suggests that ‘it is possible to make such estimates on the basis of the recent Censuses in India and Bangladesh’

(Dasgupta and others 2011: 50; Bose 1993). Nevertheless, the preparation of NRC will expose the ground reality. Even, it will end the politics of despicability in the name of migration.

### **5.6.2 Fencing**

Fencing is the highest form of physical arrangement of border. Apart from the riverine area, the Dhubri borderland region is almost fenced. Jaswant Singh put forwarded in his article regarding the situation behind the India-Bangladesh border fencing as:

On April 21, 1984, for the first time since Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation, the Bangladesh rifles and India's Border Security Forces exchanged fire for almost a whole day.....

The specific issue sparking off this exchange was India's decision to start on a barbed-wire fence along the Assam Bangladesh Border to prevent uncontrolled immigration. The incident occurred at the tri junction of Bangladesh, Assam and West Bengal at an otherwise insignificant little hamlet called Satrasal.

Barely a kilometre away is an even tinier hamlet by the name of Ramraikuti (Singh 1984: 1056).

Besides, the Assam Accord (1985) clause nine<sup>5</sup> clearly mentioned about the construction of barbed fence at this Dhubri borderland for permanent safety and security. Thereafter, the issue has become a core political agenda for every political party in Assam. Undoubtedly, it was started with a single layer fence but replaced by double layer in the following days. Moreover, the security system has virtually intensified at this borderland since that very incident. Perhaps, the fence has become harder due to permanent sensitivity throughout

the border. One notable point is that despite of barbed fence, a section of people have the allegation that infiltration is still occurring through this Dhubri borderland. Even, the common people are unable to free from the vicious cycle of *Bangladeshi*. Samir Kumar Das has earnestly mentioned about fencing as, “a stricter border control regime in the form of ‘border fencing’ is often touted as the surest means of protecting the country from the contagion of immigrants” (Dasgupta and others 2011: 51). Undoubtedly, infiltration is a matter of concerned for one and all the Indian citizens. Otherwise, it will create socio-political discrepancy in the context of India and Assam in particular. Thus, fencing is one of the important measures to control all forms of formal and informal activities through the borders.

### **5.6.3 Informal Activities**

In a regular interval, BSF’s have been seizing cattle’s from the smugglers bound to Bangladesh. Undoubtedly, the total amount of such type of informal trade is huge and interestingly these are disgusting for the Indian custom department. There is a blistering scope to enrich the exchequer of both sides as India can supply enough cattle to Bangladesh to mitigate their demand. Over restriction makes it more contested that a section of people are indulging in anti national works and supplying more and more cattle in spite of vigilance. Accordingly, the present government is more vigorous enough regarding the cow politics and subsequently people are suffering more. Even the live stocks are at risk that the agriculture based people neither sale it nor purchase in accordance with their needs. Hence the notable implications are:

- a. The numbers of live-stocks are decreasing day by day.



- b. Cattle have become a source of controversy in and outside or even throughout the border.
- c. The geopolitical space is not favourable and involvement or indulging in such activity is one of the easiest options along the border.
- d. It has been debarring from huge amount of royalty collection. It is not a part time business but will continue for long.

In the words of Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, as she argued,

....the disinterest shown by both India and Bangladesh in tackling the problem of rampant cattle smuggling which has made the Indo-bangladesh border a dangerous place for ordinary people (Meghalaya Times 2017).

Why informal trade and smuggling have been occurring relentlessly along the border? Although, the intensity of trade is varied from one region to another, but most of the reasons are common therein.

- 1. Official process is outdated and it fails to address the entire system adequately.
- 2. Bribes and other demand from the traders are common at this locality. It promotes different layers of syndicate *raaj* and makes it difficult to differentiate what is legal and what is not. For the commoners, the informal trade is nowhere less than valid as in every stage people have to spend huge amount of money.
- 3. The inadequate transport enhances informal trade throughout the borderland. It is detrimental for the security forces but desirable to the smugglers for camouflaging.

4. The borderland infrastructure is inadequate and hence, tracing all the problems is challenging. Indirectly it promotes informal activities among different stockholders i.e. syndicates, traders, carriers, officials etc.

“Cattle smuggler would not survive without the support of the local population, border guards and the police.” (Observer Foundation Report, 2015) There is a huge despicable nexus among different stockholders of borderland. Even, it is alleged that in a similar way foreign nationals are used to enter in Indian territorial jurisdiction. Sometimes, these matters are over exaggerated but it is difficult to reject the trespass of illegal people overwhelmingly.

#### **5.6.4 Sensitivity**

Borderland is a sensitive space and its magnitude has been varied from one space to another. Sensitivity propels the border to become harder whether it is US-Mexico or India-Pakistan or somewhere else. In this instance, the politics of sensitivity throughout the Dhubri borderland region is more or less permanent. The sensitivity may be inward or outward, top down or bottom up in their orientation, but it has perennial implication upon the borderlanders.

1. The nature of sensitivity at this junction can be categorised as permanent, multidimensional, spatial, imposed etc. It is true that the quantum of sensitivity in Indian side is equal to their counterparts. Nevertheless, some issues like illegal migration, smuggling, insurgency, informal trade etc. have a legacy to endorse sensitivity throughout the larger political domain of India in general and Assam in particular.

2. Sometimes sensitivity is imposed throughout the borderland. The deployed security forces are the virtual resistance to undermine the sensitivity from outside. However, it is conducive for the internal management of the border. Despite of occasional disturbances, the borderlanders are in favour of more and more security forces therein. The field investigation reveals that 43.2 percent people have accepted that individual security is undermined due to the presence of security forces, whereas 46.6 percent denied it and 10.4 percent people abstained from answering the query (See Question 2). Accordingly, 61.6 percent people have accepted different types of hindrance from the security forces, whereas 32.0 percent denied and 6.4 percent did not reply. Hence, politics of sensitivity should get adequate response in borderland management.
3. Globalisation makes the entire world politically intact. All the sensitive incidents across the globe have instance repercussion and borderlands have been suffering more in this regard. Actually, the border has been facing both internal as well as external implications.
4. Despite of different dimensions of sensitivity, we can broadly divide into two i.e. permanent and temporary. Here, the borderlanders are suffering from permanent sensitivity and which has adverse implication in the development process. Sometimes, their way of life is vandalised as sensitivity imposed from the higher authority. If somewhere the smugglers or the insurgent groups are nabbed, or flood and erosion creates havoc; it has adverse repercussion throughout the borderland. If India-Pakistan border is hotbed of revolt, the India-

Bangladesh border generally tightens. At the time of India-Bangladesh land swap deal by the august initiative of Manmohan Shing led UPA government (2011), sensitivity prevails for few years; however, the problem of adverse possession of land has come to an end. Accordingly, the recent revival of beef banned encompassing most of the regions in India have ample impact on export-import system. The cross border trafficking of cow has been decreased from 2.2 million a year to 5,00,000 in the year 2016-17. The trade dropped to 250 Million US Dollar from 1.5 Billion US Dollar, which means an approximate fall of 1.2 Billion US Dollar, reports by one of the reputed dailies 'the Hindu' (October 22, 2017). Hence, the spatial sensitivity has adverse effect in the development process.

### **5.7 Border in Nation Building**

Border is essentially a part in the structural formation of nation-state system. It limits or controls both internal and external courses of action to pertain the notion of nation-states. Different aspects whether it is hard or soft, visible or non-visible, internal or external etc. have been occurring here but have substantial effect in the entire processes. Most of the borderland societies are complex in its spatial settings and hence, an arrangement of structurally demarcated border is worthwhile in the nation building process. We can put forward Lybecker's statement here as:

Traditionally border defined territorial lines physically dividing nation-states. They served as a primary method for nation-states to establish and demonstrate power differences between themselves and their neighbors. Overtime, and particularly with globalization

the function of borders has shifted. Differences between nation states have become blurred socially, culturally and in cases like European Union politically and economically. Thus, borders are no longer the separators of countries, delineating self enclosed spaces that are nation-states. Instead, borders are centers of contact, locations of origin or destination for the ever increasing passage of people and goods—both those permitted by and those evading the authorities (Lybecker 2008: 337).

Accordingly, with the changing time and space, the nature and activism at the borderland have been changing. Even, globalisation has substantial impact on management of transnational relations. “The ‘end of territorial absolutism’ means an end to the absolute control exercised by the state through practices of fixed territoriality. Thus governments are reluctant to relinquish control of the borders unless there is pressure from outside (globalization) or from below (localization). To study borders as dynamic institutions, it is therefore important to study the ‘bottom up’ process of change, emanating from the daily practices of ordinary people living in the borderland region, as much as the traditional ‘top down’ approach which focuses solely the role of institutional actors, notably—but not only—governments” (Kaplan & Häkli 2002, Newman 2003:14-15). Hence, despite of the multidimensional influences, border or the demarcated space is the existential reality in the nation building process.

Borders are created to control/regulate the transnational activism and particularly the movement of people. At this point, the aspects i.e. migrations, borders and nation-states are categorically linked with one another. Michael

Kearney has argued that ‘international migrants effectively undermine the whole idea of statehood and national boundaries.’ He also suggests that “the ‘transnational communities’ that have been the result of this migration challenge the defining power of the nation states that they transcend” (Baud and Schendel 1997: 221).

The notion of identity has acute relation with the notion of difference. In geopolitics, borders are not only spatial linear, but determines the national identity too. A border itself does not create differences, but the state which rules this border can and in some cases, like Moldavia and Karelia, does, “differentiate its population from that of its neighbours by means of construction of a national identity” (Schard 2004: 457). Accordingly, “in Africa and the Middle East identity problems go deeper. In some cases a state border draws on maps without paying any attention to the ethnicity of the population. In such a case, the border is considered more important, and the population finds itself mixed up in terms of belonging. The people belong to one ethnicity, but live on both sides of the border, and they belong to the state, which rule the territory they live in” (Gelbman and Keinan 2007: 281). “The western concept of ‘national community’ has been imposed on new countries created with territorial borders that were not perceived as such by many of the old identities that continued to persists, often across the borders” (ibid: 281).

At this point, David Newman went ahead on borderlander’s identity, he asserts:

The location of the boundary may change through time, as some groups or territories expand and others decline, but they will always

demarcate the parameters within which identities are conceived, perceived, perpetuated and reshaped (Newman 2003: 15).

Deducing the territorial complexity, colonialism has immense influence in the determination of border or formation of modern nation-states. “Colonial rule may have been incomplete and short lived, but the imposition of the territorial state model would have far-reaching implications. Indeed, the origins of most contemporary international borders outside of Europe have some colonial connection” (Diener & Hagen 2012: 52). Furthermore, if we consider the Flynn’s perspective,

Most international boundaries in Africa arbitrarily divided denouncing the ethnic groups and kinship linkages. Such arbitrary borders are a colonial legacy, testaments to Africa’s colonized history and European government’s struggle for control over people, land, and resources. The fact that colonist paid little attention to indigenous cultural groups and ethnic boundaries dividing friends and families into different colonial territories while incorporating ancient enemies into the same colonial territory, is often cited as a leading factor in the contemporary political instability of many African states (Flynn 1997: 313).

Highlighting the role of border in the nation-state system, Samir Kumar Das stated, “the state was not only territorializing the nation but also nationalizing the territory by fixing its population within the territorial bounds and refusing to accept others within it” (Dasgupta 2011: 48). It has a linkage with citizenship and nationality in the larger political domain. In the context of India, the partition and making fences, have not only divided the people but

sharpened their national identity. Nevertheless, some people remained in the wrong side of the fence as the border was imposed upon them. In this regard, Diener and Hagen put forward significant statement as:

it was impossible to draw lines perfectly dividing Muslim and Hindu communities into their respective states, so millions of people found themselves on the “wrong” side of the new border (Diener & Hagen 2012: 53).

Considering all these, W. V. Schendel has eloquently mentioned about the role of borderland in the nation building process as:

.....both states (India-Pakistan) shared an interest in dominating the border population, controlling the cross border movement of goods and people, and making borderlanders committed to the nation (Schendel 2005: 103).

At this point, Dhubri borderland societies have been facing ample complexities over the years and it fails to address in a comprehensive manner. The issue of identity is more or less fragile and subsequently it needs political audacity for strengthening the sense of nationhood.

## **5.8 Summing up**

In accordance with the formal politics, the informal politics do have substantial presence at this borderland. This borderland region of Assam is a source of politics in different capacities. Apodictically, the state sponsored sensitivity constantly prevails therein and which has substantial implication on the borderlanders. Despite of obnoxious situation, people are virtually habituated with the entire process. The politics of the borderlanders can be considered from the socio-spatial perspective as time, space and network etc.



have substantial implication therein. In fact, some visible and non-visible actors are also working as arbitration, reconciliation and mediation between the state and the borderlanders. Furthermore, it needs to address all the issues in a concrete manner to overcome permanently. One notable point is that the presence of *mullah*, school teacher, village headman or others are not beyond the ambit of borderland politics. Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish the politics of borderlanders from the borderland management, but the entire process is essential for larger domain of nation-state.

### End Note

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 267, 269-70

<sup>2</sup> See Guha 2006 (173-74)

<sup>3</sup> A Muslim offers prayers for five times in a day- Fajr, Zohar, Asr, Magrib and Isha

<sup>4</sup> Maktab is an Arabic word meaning 'elementary Schools'.

<sup>5</sup> The international border shall be made secure against future infiltration by erection of physical barriers like walls, barbed wire fencing and other obstacles at appropriate places. Patrolling by security forces on land and riverine routes all along international border shall be adequately intensified. In order to further strengthen the security arrangements, to prevent effectively future infiltration, an adequate number of check posts shall be set.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusion**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Over the years, the nation-states are undeniably getting significant attention in the study of geopolitical space. This academic enterprise is an attempt at going through the larger geopolitical domain which includes a particular borderland located in India's North-East which is still largely unexplored and unexplained. It indicates existence, the spatiality construing as core and periphery relation within the realm of politics. We may find different kinds of borderland activism across the world. It has to maintain some formalities under the territorial setting or sometimes beyond the ambit and also varies in accordance with time and space. Since the very transformation of border as informal to formal one or shaping as structural is somewhat slow and steady in process. Again the recent trend is significant as the notion of bordering as well as de-bordering has become pertinent for the management of specific territory. Hence, border indicates restriction, divide, complication, control etc. but in a reverse form the global approach makes everything open and eases the connectivity for perpetual peace and cooperative development. Globalization is about "de-bordering the world of states" (Blatter 2001: 175-209). Today, borders bear sensitivity in every sphere of society i.e. locally, regionally and even globally too. As we know that prior to the creation of border, most of the present borderlanders had shared social setting with their counterpart, had similar history, cultural linkages, religious connectivity, memories, traumas

etc. But in the course of modern politics the people of the borderlands are accommodated in accordance with their political settings within the framework of state. And this apparently becomes a globally accepted phenomenon. In this instance, bilateral discourses are getting importance and have influence on the government policy and programmes. However, in certain cases its grim impact becomes visible upon the local commoners and particularly the borderlanders. Hence, border, borderland and borderlanders are eventually connected through some procedural machinations.

As a peripheral district of the Indian state of Assam, Dhubri is sharing the international border with Bangladesh. Both the countries are sharing different activism either in formal or informal way. Consequently, some crucial issues like illegal migration, transnational-trade, militancy, water sharing, land disputes have emerged which are detrimental to peaceful coexistence. The linkage of both the countries is historically rooted and eventually multiple relations have been maintained in different ways. However, it seems, the state is not as much concerned about the people than the border. The creation of border or imposition of all round restrictions make them excluded and eventually alienated from the mainstream society and perhaps it pushes them into an adverse situation within the larger domain of nation-state. As a result, the Dhubri borderlanders have remained perennially deprived. Here, this study has delved out the day-to-day life of Dhubri borderlanders in the context of socio-political exclusion, marginalization, alienation, deprivation and its impact in the process of distribution and inclusive development of a nation.

The select border villages of Dhubri are considered here for understanding the ground reality to enhance our understanding of inclusive development. It also helps to understand the problem and prospects of border, borderland and borderlanders of this contentious space. Unlike others, there are different visible and invisible factors that have been contributing enormously towards this borderland. Here, despite ample opportunities, sometimes people are forced to compromise with this disadvantageous situation of Dhubri borderland. Nevertheless, it has been an issue for debate and contestation over the years. For this, it is crucial to ensure adequate facilities to the borderlanders for their comprehensive development.

Furthermore, to understand the borderland society, it is important to unearth the relations between the borderlanders and the state or the entire borderland management comprehensively. Despite the presence of security forces along the border, suspicion and volatility prevail most of the time. However, it is undeniable that illegal transborder activism has continued. Hence, the presence of structural vulnerability throughout the border is undeniable.

## **6.2 Findings**

This study is a micro level attempt to look into the Dhubri borderland society in a comprehensive way. Due to their existence at the margin, the borderlanders are worried about their development issues. However, most of the people have adjusted with the border. Undoubtedly, the Dhubri borderlanders are somewhat advantageous in position in comparison to their Bangladeshi counterparts. But, this society is lagging much behind in comparison to different core areas of the Indian state of Assam. The poor

connectivity between the state machination and the people at the periphery is propelling such pitiable condition for these borderlanders. In such a situation, there is enormous scope for unscrupulous activities and as a result, security forces are deployed permanently therein. Hence, it is the responsibility of the state to provide adequate opportunities to one and all so that people may get better livelihood facilities therein. Undoubtedly, special packages as BADP, BRGF are allocated for the borderlanders, but the implementation as well as proper monitoring is important. Being a peripheral space, their condition is beyond notice from the mainstream society. The major findings of this research work can be highlighted as follows.

1. Border and its fencing is a crucial arrangement not only for the state but the local people too. They strongly favour the fencing so that Bangladeshi miscreants cannot trespass to loot or create atrocities in Indian side. Before the fencing, it was very common in that locality. Border fencing and the engagement of security forces are important for the sake of security at the local as well as at the national level.
2. Secondly, the present security setting is little bit tricky as well as sensitive both from the borderlanders' perspective and the national too. Actually, any mishap on the borderland generally sensitizes the entire locality or *vice-versa*. The major duty of the security forces is to tackle every situation considering the interest of the nation and the local borderlanders. Undoubtedly, the national security is their foremost priority, but they cannot deny the interest of the local commoners. So, people have to suffer a lot for the lack of humanitarian consideration from the security forces. Actually, the borderlanders are fed-up with

the imposed sensitivity of that locality, and hence, they are neither able to overcome nor in a position to come out as these people have shared history, memory, emotion, expectations etc. So, there is an irrational nexus between the national security and the security of the local borderlanders.

3. Thirdly, the geographical impasse is also hampering in multiple ways. The first one is road and transport. Though border roads are constructed, but in maximum area, these are used only by the security forces. The road and transport generally ends at the border or just before reaching the border. So, the villages which are parallel with the fencing have been suffering a lot. They have neither own roads nor can use border roads in accordance with their requirement. Therefore, some families are in a geographical trap as their movement is regulated in accordance with the whims and fancies of the security forces.
4. Most of the people have alleged that border is a political imposition in the aftermath of partition. Actually, the people still have very fresh memory about the linkages i.e. common history, kinship, friendship, culture, language, family bondage, societal bondage, etc. But important point is that the numbers of elderly people who have vivid partition memories are decreasing day by day. Slowly, the memory of linkage is losing its importance with the changing generations. However, with the creation of border, the sense of nationality has become prudent among the borderlanders.
5. As far as the problem i.e. migration, smuggling and transborder activism through the Dhubri borderland is concerned, it is very

difficult to recognise the intensity of the problem as either side of border have demographic similarity in terms of language, dress code, food habit, behaviour etc. However, the situation has been changing over the years. Until very recently, there are some areas particularly in the riverine ones with chances of deceitful activities but the BSF are vigil everywhere. The basic problem is the course of the river as it has been changing in the aftermath of seasonal floods. It has adverse affect not only on the borderlanders but on the fencing too. There is little bit scope for the Bangladeshi migration, but which is not in accordance with the virtual image built up by certain section of people in Assam in the last few decades. However, there are thousands of Indian citizens who have been migrating in search of opportunities in the core areas and unfortunately a section of them (internally migrated) are labelled as *Bangladeshi* on different occasions. So, the society has essentially remained excluded from the larger domain of the nation-state.

6. Dhubri was a junction of different cultures, ethnicities, languages etc. as number of communities were condensed into this locality. Although, Assamese is their official language but Goalparia is extensively used by these people in their customary life. Hence, their language is neither Assamese nor Bengali, but an admixture of both. It is undeniable here that geo-politics have substantial influence in the creolization process whether it is in Dhubri borderland or elsewhere.
7. Border Area Development Programme (BADP) is one of the major initiatives under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. A huge amount of fund has been allocated every year since the Sixth Five

Year Plan. It emphasises on infrastructure for the overall development of one and all along the border. It tries to facilitate special attention for the borderland people in terms of medical, transport and communication, education, employment etc. It also makes it easy to secure the border outpost, fencing, flood light, check gate, and so on. From the point of policy research, there is a strong collaboration between Central and State governments and they have been working for the development of borderland. But despite strategic attempt, the ground reality is somewhat different. The local people have no idea about the scheme of BADP and nobody has paid attention to this. Hence, it is important to pay attention to implement the provisions of BADP.

8. If we categorise the people on the basis of occupations, most of the borderlanders are agriculture based. Prior to the independence they were under the then feudal structure i.e. *Jamindar*, *Jotedar* etc. and after independence and particularly from the introduction of Land Reform Act different occasions<sup>1</sup> they have become free from external interference. At present around 70 percent of these people are dependent on agriculture. Besides, a sizable numbers of people, around seven percent, are living on fishing occupation too. Other subsidiary professions like driver, shopkeeper, carpentry, artisan, barbers and other manual labourers are becoming prominent as the traditional opportunities are shrinking day by day. It is undeniable that people, very few in numbers, are engaged in transborder activities. Informal trade is a collective process of people from periphery and core areas.



Hence, more or less informal trade is going on and as per the report of Ministry of Trade and Commerce the amount of informal trade is outnumbering the formal one. At this point, despite opportunities, people's choice is very limited in terms of occupation.

9. Borderland economy is functionally in bad shape as a small number of people are taking the advantage of disadvantageous position. They virtually have monopolised the small scale trade. The entire borderlanders are exploited as their choice is very limited due to their existence at the margin. In this regard, the concept of border *haat* is worthwhile as border *haats* will enhance the buyer's choice. Even, the borderlanders will be benefitted more as the scope of different allied works will be increased therein. Moreover, it will replace the informal trade with the formal one and increase contribution towards the state exchequer. Undoubtedly, at this borderland there are ample opportunities as most of the areas are historically connected and it is time to revive the historical and economic routes again. At present, some bordering states have introduced border *haats* i.e. Dolora Balat Border Haat (Sunamganj, Bangladesh and Meghalaya, India), Baliamari Kalaichar border Haat (Kurigram, Bangladesh and Meghalaya, India), Kamalasagar, Srinagar, Palbasti, Kamalpur are in Tripura and Bholaganj, Nalikata, Shibbari, Ryngku etc. are in again Meghalaya. So, more and more border *haats* are coming up but it is impossible in Dhubri borderland as sensitivity prevails there most of the time. Even, the functioning of two land custom stations i.e. Golakganj and Mankachar are not adequate from the point of bilateral

trade. Hence, for the economic self sufficiency the concept of border trade should be re-introduced here.

10. The India-Bangladesh border fencing is not just a political demarcation but it has been protecting the Assamese culture from the pan-Bengali hegemony. Although, Bengali accent and culture have had myriad influences through the westernmost part of Assam, even people have been in a dilemma over the years and this border is nothing but a political solution in this context. Due to the creolization of culture, language, custom, their identity has become fuzzy and contested one.

11. The borderlanders are unorganised as sensitivity prevails everywhere. The women and children are the worst sufferers here as it is very difficult for them to meet the basic needs i.e. education, health etc. The territorial exclusions have an adverse affect among the borderlanders whether it is in Dhubri or elsewhere.

12. After the construction of fencing, the intensity of informal relations has increased and consequently people have been breaching the security protocol again and again. Actually, the informal trade indicates opportunities at this junction. However, it is undeniable that different stakeholders have nefarious involvement in such informal trade.

13. Despite surrounding of the Dhubri borderland by a chain of constricted situations, the borderlanders are in advantageous position in comparison to their counterparts. Their incorporation within the Indian side renders advantages at the present moment. Even, a section of people has frankly nodded their luck and destiny. The local people have practical knowledge about the population explosion, scarce

situation of workplace and poverty ridden condition of the then Bangladesh side before the erection of fencing. Once, the Dhubri borderlanders had experience with a sizable number of Bangladeshi people who used to enter Indian side for searching job and other allied opportunities. But, with the erection of fencing everything has stopped by and large. Even, the border fencing has stopped all forms of atrocities from the other side. Hence, at present, it seems these people are relatively in advantageous position than their counterparts.

14. Finally, the borderlanders are worried about their locations at the margin of territoriality. Admittedly, they have resentment about their present status and it is very difficult for them to get out of the peripheral existence.

### **6.3 Recommendations**

Since the Dhubri borderland is dreadful in position it is important to take new resolutions for the sake of overall security without compromising on the process of development. Undoubtedly, borderland is a space at the margin; enhancement of opportunities is very low in comparison to the core area. The existing problems of this locality are multi-dimensional and subsequently it requires state intervention for the comprehensive development of the state. Hence, we can consider the following recommendations.

1. The India-Bangladesh relation should be strengthened for all round development of nation-states and particularly the borderlanders. Both the countries are not only contributing in production/capital but have large scale consumers too and thus it requires the improvement of bilateral relationships for mutual benefits. It will also help to control the informal

trade through this border. The informal trade is disadvantageous for the government exchequer and that is why it requires some uncomplicated methods to strengthen the economic tie up i.e. easing tariff on goods, services, excise duties etc. It is also important to enhance multilateral trade and commerce among the South-Asian and South-East-Asian countries.

2. Secondly, the 401 kms long State Highway connect NH 27 at Srirampur to NH 106 at Nongstoin through Dhubri, Phulbari, Tura, Rongram and Ronjeng. Moreover, the proposed Dhubri-Phulbari Bridge over the river Brahmaputra will reduce their day long journey to a couple of hours. It will be a permanent solution for the land locked area of southern part of the river Brahmaputra. Indirectly it will enhance the socio-economic progress of some virtually excluded areas i.e. Mankachar, Mahendraganj, Kukurmara, Singimari, Kalairalga, Tiamari etc.
3. The management of the border should be peopleoriented so that it would possible to build a strong bridge among different state organs i.e. administration, border-guards and the borderlanders etc. In fact, it will help in the protection of border from the illegal intruders from Bangladesh side. Undoubtedly, it is very difficult to differentiate the Assamese people of Dhubri borderland from the Bangladeshi counterparts but it is important to manage the entire system considering the interest of the local people. Here, it requires local cooperation to prohibit the illegal migration without harassing the *bonafide* Indian citizens. Hence, the entire security management of borderland should be reconsidered again and again.
4. The scheme as 'Border Area Development Program' is essential for the infrastructural development of such peripheral space. The expectations

from BADP are high but it requires time bound monitoring so that it could reach the needy people of borderland. Actually, there is a substantial mismatch in the process of implementation. It is very difficult for the people at the margin to pursue the government officials for availing such packages as their geopolitical space is not located favourably. Actually, these people are struggling for the minimum needs and that is why they have no idea about what to do and what to not do. Interestingly, the elite section is always in the forefront in accessing the benefits and consequently the poor remain as poor perpetually. It is a source of relative deprivation for the borderlanders.

5. Borderlanders of Dhubri are not less than any other Indian citizen and they are entitled to get proper access to education, better health services etc. The locality requires more educational institutions with adequate facilities, medical, dispensaries, minimum transport and communication system etc. People are constantly suffering from the problem of inaccessibility. People from the villages i.e. Binnyachara, Kalairalga, Satrasal, Ramraikuti and many others have been suffering painstakingly for their location at that margin. Most of the people have no idea beyond their locality. Indeed they have no idea about the complexities of the world. Modern educational institutions are beyond their imagination, health infrastructure, modern technologies etc. are never reaching them. At this instance, for the holistic development, again some special initiatives are needed. The pro-people and pro-active role from different stakeholders may help to reduce their marginal gaps.

6. It is important to impose proper restriction on the borderland for adequate border management. The opportunities through the border should be tackled carefully, otherwise, people will try to denounce the restrictions or formalities imposed therein. It may go against the greater national interest. At present, the opportunities at this space are shrinking day-by-day and, therefore, for some people, informal trade is an alternate option at this junction. Hence, to control such borderland menaces, the state must ensure better opportunities for these people.
7. The security arrangement of the border should be such that it should be harmonised with the individual rights of the borderlanders. Needless to say, the national security should not go against the individual security. The human rights violation in everyday life is very common and most of the time it is from the border guards. Ultimately, it propels disturbances in their day-to-day life. The whole system exacerbate due to the unnecessary confrontation between the security system and the local people. As most of the borderlanders are Muslim and it is difficult to distinguish from their Bangladeshi counterpart so borderlanders are easily targeted. Hence, sometimes, the border guards try to control in an inhuman manner. This is a matter of condemnation whether it is Dhubri or somewhere else. So, the borderland requires some changes in the security arrangement and in bridging the gap between the local people and the security arrangement.
8. To control migration as well as smuggling, Botswana government has constructed 480kms electric fence with Zimbabwe border. If we consider the situation of Indian state of Assam, although it seems similar to Botswana, it requires concrete and complete fencing at this point to stop

movements permanently. Thus, the creation of complete fencing may be one of the options to control illegal migration through this borderland. Even, it will end the politics of *Bangladeshi* migration from this perspective.

9. The riverine area of the India-Bangladesh border (Assam region) is considered as most sensitive zone and it is terribly difficult to keep vigilance in every moment. Due to excessive flood and erosion the security system has become more or less defunct for certain period. It provides scope for nefarious activities by the anti-national elements. Therefore, fencing is inevitable there. But it is neither possible to block nor it is possible to erect fence there due to excessive current of water or unfavourable terrain. Therefore, constructing a bridge may not only enhance the security system but also give a boost to the borderland trade as well as communication.

10. Transnational corridors are the emerging space for tourism but it should not be a detrimental at phenomenon for the internal situation of a nation. Diener and Hagen (2012) mention as ‘tourism is one of the most prominent forms of border crossing with immense economic impact, but like all socio cultural processes, there are two sides of the coin’ (page 98). Here, Nora Faires (2008) write up is significant as how the Detroit and Windsor region is a transnational agglomeration of labour migration from Canada to USA. According to her, ‘Detroit and Windsor each sought to boost tourism on its side of the river by commodifying the supposedly unique national values each embodied, those marketable qualities that reputedly distinguished an American from the Canadian city’ (Nora 2008:

ix). It is pertinent to mention here that the bounteous contribution of migrant labour from Michigan region in United States of America has become a globally recognised automobile manufacturing area since the late 60's of last century. However, in the context of Indian state of Assam, there is a relentless antagonism in the last couple of decades for the illegal migrants across the state but technically there is a failure to detect and deport overwhelmingly. But other states like West Bengal, Tripura, and Meghalaya have managed it suitably. In Assam, the problem should be addressed beyond the prismatic lens of politics and it is important to reconsider the scope for tourism, trade and commerce, health care marketing etc. along the borderland.

#### **6.4 Retrospection on the Objectives as well as Research Questions**

This study has attempted to look into the relationship between border and borderlanders of a particular political discourse. It has dealt with the existential linkages between the local commoners with the existing socio-political setting. Moreover, it has also explored how the geopolitical spatiality has vital implication on different aspects of borderlanders. In this micro level study, certain areas are prioritised but more and more petty issues are yet to be addressed therein. In this study, five objectives are contextualised and also three pertinent research questions. The aforesaid propositions can be put forward here again.

1. The study has examined the socio-economic condition of the people living near the India- Bangladesh border in Dhubri district.
2. It has provided scope to understand the relationship between the state and its citizens living near the border.



3. Moreover, it has sought how the geographical location of a society determines the societal avenues.

In accordance with these three, the following sub points were also incorporated herewith.

- a. It has tried to address how the border is a source of security as well as hindrance for the inhabitants living along India-Bangladesh international border in Dhubri district.
- b. Finally, the study has also dealt with the socio-political exclusion, alienation and marginalization of the borderlanders due to peripheral existence.

#### **Research questions were**

- a. How is the border itself a problem for the people living at the periphery?
- b. How people would accept the border in their quotidian life?
- c. Do the peripheral existences of people become obstacles for maintaining relation with core area of state?

#### **6.5 Epilogue: Limitations of the Study and Scope for further Research**

Undoubtedly, borderland study has become important research area across the discipline. The study of Dhubri borderland region is not lagging behind in this regard. Despite the comprehensive analysis of bordered lives, it is not sufficient as every research has its own limitations. Accessibility as well as rapport building with the respondents was really difficult due to the perennial sensitivity prevailing there. Even, it is observed that due to the presence of

researcher, the quantum of sensitivity had increased substantially. Some of the respondents were more or less cooperative. But, most of the time people did not feel free as they had fear from the state actors and particularly the BSF. Even, some people including the researcher had faced unnecessary interrogations in different occasions. Moreover, it was really difficult to get first hand information about informal activities along the border. The pertinent point is that neutral but close observation will help to understand the situation of borderlanders. Despite such limitations, the region has carried relevance for further study.

1. Borderland study deals with the nation-state at the realm of periphery. Nevertheless, the borderland region is unusual but unavoidable in the context of nation-state. Apparently, the spatial complexity of borderland demands multidisciplinary approach to understand the ground reality. Besides, it requires a comprehensive analysis across the discipline.
2. Border is a geopolitical imposition but we can't negate the opportunities through it. The India-Bangladesh borderland in Dhubri district has been tightening day by day, denouncing opportunities overwhelmingly. So, it is crucial to explore the opportunities for mutual benefit in coming days.
3. Most of the time, the illegal migration issue was blown out of proportion and tried to be linked with Dhubri borderland without consideration of the ground reality. Migration is a lifelong process and it occurs across the world but the proximity varies from one space to another. Once Assam with the entire North-East India had experienced about innumerable migration for a long span of time from its vicinity but the quantum has decreased substantially over the years. Moreover, the river Brahmaputra

was used as a medium of communication in earlier days and even today it has relevance not only for economic cooperation but to control the despicable activities including illegal migrations. Usually, migration through this Dhubri borderland is a well imposed political phenomenon to keep this area under suspicion and sensitised and which have adverse affect on constructing an accommodative societal avenue in coming days. A considerable number of *bona-fide* Indian citizens, belonging to the Muslim community have been suffering at regular intervals due to stigmatisation in the name of '*Bangladeshi*' and which is reprehensible so far. In fact, for their peripheral existence, these Dhubri borderlanders are being targeted repeatedly. Hence, it is important to find out more and more ambiguous issues from this borderland to understand the entire system and for its amicable solution in near future.

4. The problematic space of borderland generates fear among the borderlanders. Despite presence of more and more security arrangement along the border the borderlanders never feel secure. Their sense of insecurity can be understood from multiple dimensions. First of all their social exclusion from the mainstream society and it has an abysmal impact throughout their life. They have to prove their identity at regular interval. The second one is related to the structure of security system as it is more or less contradictory for people and the existing system. It is a confrontation between the duty bound security forces and the customary life of borderlanders. Indeed, it is also a confrontation between national securities vs. individual security. Hence, most of the borderlanders have been suffering from such type of political dilemma. Thirdly, their fear is

from the miscreants of the Bangladesh side too. Before the fencing, the Bangladeshi dacoits, thieves, various miscreants had contribution in making the border area volatile. So, it makes the Dhubri borderlanders substantial loser in terms of property. Finally, their life is engulfed with fear. It is a creation of small number of borderlanders through their involvement in nefarious activities from time to time. Thus, it requires in-depth study to understand the security system of this borderland.

5. Fourthly, the people living on the borderlands are yet to normalize the concept of the border in their life. In this regard, Samaddar's argument is quite crucial as, 'they (the borderlanders) look at it as another barrier to overcome. Poverty and disenfranchisement of residents in these borderlands drive them to attach a normal informality to the border such that borders no longer remain exceptional to the lives of these people (Samaddar 1998; Banerjee & Chen 2012: 21). However, the Dhubri borderland is somewhat different and consequently, from time to time, the question of border and borderland hit the public domain.

## **6.6 Summing up**

There is constant suspicion over the borderlanders and usually they are treated as 'others'. Here, it requires an alteration of attitude by one and all and very factually the cultural gap needs to be bridged as soon as possible. It would be better to incorporate these peripheral citizens into the rights bearing individual and collectivity to get rid of this decade long spatial, social, economic and political exclusion.

## End Note

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<sup>1</sup> There are various land reform acts are passed in colonial and post colonial period in India and Assam in particular. The Assam State Acquisition of Zamindaries Act, 1951; The Assam Fixation of Ceiling on land Holdings Act, 1956; The Assam (Temporary settled Areas) Tenancy Act, 1971 are very prominent acts passed in Assam from time to time. Prior to that, Goalpara Tenancy Act 1929 for the first time granted the occupancy rights to the tenants who held lands for a period of more than twelve years.

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**Appendix I**  
**India –Bangladesh Border Area**

Sl. No.	International Border	Post or Pillar Number	Areas (km)
1	West Bengal (India)- Bangladesh	0001 to 1001	2217.70
2	Assam (India)-Bangladesh	1001 to 1067	262.00
3	Meghalaya (India)- Bangladesh	1067-1338	443.00
4	Tripura (India) Bangladesh	1338to 1397 (North) and 1397 to 2250 (South)	856.00
5	Mizoram (India)- Bangladesh	2301 to 2358	318.0
Total			4096.70

Source: Borders a very short introduction:

**Appendix II**  
**Village Distance from the International Border**

**Dhubri (Assam)**

Block	0-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	20+
Agomani	66	64	10	01	00
Birsing Jarua	77	39	24	48	20
Fekamari	57	36	08	00	00
Gauripur	54	22	09	16	10
Golakganj	20	25	19	10	18
Mankachar	46	37	11	00	00
Rupsi	85	09	15	32	07
South Salmara	06	31	38	00	00

Source: [mha1.nic.in/badp\\_app/BADP\\_Reports\\_Main\\_Page.aspx](http://mha1.nic.in/badp_app/BADP_Reports_Main_Page.aspx)

### Appendix III

#### List of Villages connected with India-Bangladesh border in Dhubri District (Assam):

Jhaukuti part I & II	<b>Ramraikuti</b> part I & II	Jhaskal I, II, & III
Bishkhowa I, II, & III	Lakhimari I, II & III	Nayachara
Pachim Gaikhowa I & II	Keder i, ii, & iii	Berbhangi i, II, & III
<b>Binnyachara</b> I, II, III & IV	Baladuba I, II, & III	<b>Ghewmari</b>
Sastarghat I, II & III	Dighaltari I & II	Patamari
Takimari	Baldialalga NC	Tharigrambhita
Montirchar	Fulkakata I, II & III	Mahamaya char
Muthakhowa	Katheralaga IV	Salapara I, II, & III
Dewaner-alga	Dorogar-alga	Nilokhia I, II, III & IV
Mahiralga	Kokradanga I, II, & III	<b>Kalairalaga</b> I, II
Assamer alga	Fekamari	Kaniamara I & II
Changerchur	Chanbari I & II	Diara
Uzan Jhagrar char	Bowalia	Charbari II
Kukurmara II	Domatola	Patharia
Darna Kawahagi	Jhowdanga I, II & III	Jordhanga I & II
<b>Mankachar</b>	Thakuranbari	Kakripara
Boraibari	Jhagrar Char	

## **Appendix IV**

### **Border trade:**

Indo-Pakistani trade agreement 1 September 1963

Trade Agreement between the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan New Delhi, 1 September 1963

[...]

#### **Article VI**

The two Governments further agree to enter into such Special Arrangements including arrangements relating to Border Trade as may be considered by them to be necessary from time to time, during the period of the validity of this Agreement to facilitate the movement of goods from one country to the other.

[...]

(Ministry of External Affairs, 1994-7, v4, 406-29)

### **Trade Agreement:**

#### **Indo-Bangladeshi trade agreement 28 March 1972**

Trade Agreement between the Government of India and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, New Delhi, 28 March 1972:

The Government of India and The Government of Bangladesh, Conscious of the urge of their two peoples to enlarge areas of mutual cooperation; Desirous of strengthening economic relations between the two countries on the basis of equality and mutual benefit; Recognising that the common people of both countries should be the beneficiaries of close cooperation between the two Governments in the fields of trade and development; Aware that this objective can best be secured by organising trade between the two countries on a State-to-State basis as far as possible; Have agreed as follows:

### **[Articles I -III]**

Article IV In order to meet the day-to-day requirements of the people living within a sixteen kilometre belt of border between West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram on the one hand and Bangladesh on the other, and with a view to providing facilities to these people to dispose of their goods, border trade shall be allowed in specified commodities in accordance with Schedule 'B' attached to this Agreement.

### **[Articles V-X ]**

#### **Article XI**

This Agreement shall come into force from 28th March 1972 and shall remain in force, in the first instance, for a period of one year.

Sd./- L.N.Mishra

Minister of Foreign Trade

Government of India 28.3.1972.

Sd./- M.R.Siddiqui

Minister of Trade and Commerce

Government of Bangladesh

## Appendix V

### INDIA-BANGLADESH BILATERAL TRADE STATISTICS (2009-16)

VALUE IN BANGLADESHI TAKA

(VALUE IN MILLION US DOLLAR)

YEAR	IMPORT	EXPORT	TRADE RATIO
2009-10	21680 (304.62)	221573 (3202.1)	1:11
2010-11	36475 (512.5)	324832 (4560)	1:9
2011-12	38792 (490.42)	376428.5 (4758.89)	1:10
2012-13	45071.68 (563.96)	381598 (4776.9)	1:8.47
2013-14	35448.42 (456.633)	469080 (6035.5)	1:13.22
2014-15	40944.83 (527.16)	452668.2 (5828.10)	1:11.05
2015-16	53969.82 (689.922)	426847.35 (5452.9)	1:7.9

Prepared by: Dhaka Chambers of Commerce and Industries (DCCI)

Source: (Import: Export Promotion Bureau and Export: Bangladesh Bank



## Appendix VI

### State Level Elections:

#### 1. Mankachar

Year	Winner	Party	Vote secured	Runner-up	Party	Vote
1951	Kobbad Hussain Ahmed	INC	6798	Hussain Kobad	IND	3127
1957	Kobbad Hussain Ahmed	INC	7545	Zahirul Islam	IND	7236
1962	Zahirul Islam	IND	10744	Kobbad Hussain Ahmed	INC	10492
1967	Z. Islam	IND	22975	N. Islam	INC	12747
1978	Zahirul Islam	JNP	27913	Nurul Islam	INC	13818
1983	Zahirul Islam	INC	23066	Aminul Islam	IND	14845
1985	Aminul Islam	IND	24098	Zahirul Islam	INC	24093
1991	Zahirul Islam	INC	36801	Borhan Uddin Mollah	ICS(SCS)	16941
1996	Aminul Islam	AGP	42312	Zahirul Islam	INC	40248
2001	Hosnara Islam	NCP	35699	Motiur R. Mandal	INC	32010
2006	M. Rahman Mandal	IND	38554	Zabed Islam	INC	36651
2011	Zabed Islam	IND	64639	Motiur R. Mandal	INC	53852
2016	Motiur Rahman Mandal	INC	54181	Aminul Islam	AIUDF	49868

#### 2. South Salmara

Year	Winner	Party	Vote Gained	Runners up	Party	Vote Gained
1978	Dewan Joynal Abedin	IND	20189	Nasiruddin	JNP	9262
1983	Md. Bazlul Basit	INC	29763	Dewan Joynal Abedin	IND	16561
1985	Dewan Joynal Abedin	IND	42192	Bazlul Basit	INC	7603
1991	Dewan Joynal Abedin	IND	23314	Wazed Ali Choudhury	INC	18172
1996	Wazed Ali Choudhury	INC	43355	Dewan J. Abedin	IND	16858
2001	Wazeda. Choudhury	INC	47329	Dewan J. Abedin	IND	27183

2006	Badruddin Ajmal	AUDF	55767	Wazed A. Choudhury	INC	39387
2011	A. Rahman Ajmal	AIUDF	62254	Wazed A. Choudhury	INC	58498
2016	Wazed Ali Choudhury	INC	80066	Badruddin Ajmal	AIUDF	63343

### 3. Dhubri

Year	Winner	Party	Vote	Runners up	Party	Vote
1951	Tamizuddin Prodhan	IND	11433	Ahmed Ali Sayed	INC	6460
1957	Tamizuddin Pradhan	INC	8738	Abul Fazal	PSP	4718
1962	Mr. Umaruddin	INC	10643	Tamizuddin Pradhan	IND	4515
1967	S. A. Ali	INC	100008	A. B. Sarkar	IND	9765
1972	Mohammad Umaruddin	INC	24595	Nazrul Islam	IND	4037
1978	Mohammad Umaruddin	INC	14064	Rajendra Mohan Dutta	IND	13208
1983	Mohammad Umaruddin	INC	27478	Upendra Bhattacharya	IND	10892
1985	Mosir Uddin Sheikh	INC	19368	Saber Ali Sheikh	CPI(M)	10785
1991	Dhruba kr. Sen	BJP	19966	Saber Ali Sheikh	CPI(M)	16215
1996	Nazibul Umar	INC	30806	Dhruba Kumar Sarkar	BJP	23902
2001	Nazibul Umar	INC	45113	Dhruba Kumar Sen	BJP	27782
2006	Rasul Hoque	AUDF	56305	Nazibul Umar	INC	25575
2011	Jahan Uddin	AIUDF	53937	Nazibul Umar	INC	46455
2016	Najrul Hoque	AIUDF	60933	Nazibul Umar	IND	36847

### 4. Gauripur

Year	Winner	Party	Vote	Runners up	Party	Vote
1957	Prakritish Ch. Baruah	IND	9464	Md. Azad Ali Sheikh	PSP	7973
1962	Sayed Ahammad Ali	INC	10150	Azad Ali	PSP	8132
1967	M. A. Ali	PSP	12609	K. P. C. Baruah	IND	10340
1972	Sayed Ahmed Ali	INC	26341	Mohammad Azad Ali	SOP	11320
1978	Md. Azad Ali	JNP	16989	Ramesh Chandra Roy	INC	12887
1983	Joynal Abedin	INC	28152	Ramesh Chandra Roy	IND	4259
1985	Aniruddha Shingha Choudhury	IND	17773	Kazi Abul Hosen	INC	14405

1991	Mohibul Hoque	INC	18049	Birendra Nath Ray	BJP	16176
1996	B K. Mushahary	IND	27480	Mohibul Hoque	INC	24489
2001	B K.Mushahary	AGP	50624	Mohibul Hoque	INC	47332
2006	Mohibul Hoque	IND	47157	B. K. Mushahary	AGP	42685
2011	B K Mushahary	BOPF	53849	Nizanur Rahman	AIUDF	37190
2016	Nizanur Rahman	AIUDF	73423	BK Mushahary	BOPF	53512

### 5. Golakganj

Year	Winner	Party	Vote	Runners up	Party	Vote
1951	Santush Kumar Baruah	INC	12280	Bhuban Chandra Pradhani	SP	5312
1957	Bhuban Chandra Pradhani	INC	11004	Syed Ali	IND	7924
1962	Sarat Chandra Singha	INC	12591	Kabir Chandra Ray	IND	10374
1967	K. C. R. Pradhani	IND	22048	J. Adhikary	INC	10615
1972	K. C. Ray Pradhani	IND	23058	Sabita Rani Pradhani	INC	16707
1978	Alauddin Sarkar	CPI	18721	Sabita Rani Pradhani	JNP	14491
1983	Dalim Ray	IND	30495	Allauddin Sarkar	CPI	27977
1991	Allauddin Sarkar	CPI	36926	Jadabananda Adhikary	BJP	33636
1996	Alauddin Sarkar	CPI	37264	Dinesh Ch Sarkar	BJP	36748
2001	Dinesh Ch. Sarkar	BJP	48808	Alauddin Sarkar	CPI	25039
2006	Abu Taher Bepari	INC	36680	Dinesh Ch Sarkar	BJP	36409
2011	Abu Taher Bepari	INC	59320	Ashwini Ray Sarkar	BJP	55312
2016	Ashwini Ray Sarkar	BJP	74644	A.S. Ali Sarkar	INC	68253

## Appendix VII

### General Election in Dhubri

**List of Winning MP and Runner up from 1957 to till date from the Dhubri Lok Sabha Constituency**

Year	Winner	Sex	Party	Total Vote	Runner Up	Sex	Party	Total Vote
1951	Ali Amjad	M	SP	*	Sitanath Brahma Choudhury	M	INC	*
1957	Ali Amjad	M	PSP	101303	Nazmul Haque	M	INC	73410
1962	Ghysuddin Ahammad	M	INC	89407	Williamson Sangma	M	IND	61891
1967	J. Ahmed	M	PSP	144141	A. Ali	M	INC	77833
1971	Moinul Haque Chowdhury	M	INC	180226	Jahan Uddin Ahmed	M	PSP	30478
1977	Ahmmad Hossen	M	INC	151328	Zahirul Islam	M	BLD	150738
1985	Abdul Hamid	M	IND	159945	Nurul Islam	M	INC	148127
1991	Nurul Islam	M	INC	189843	Dinesh Chandra Sarkar	M	BJP	140391
1996	Nurul Islam	M	INC	314594	Onkarmal Agarwal	M	AGP	182373
1998	Abdul Hamid	M	INC	374625	Dr. Pannalal Oswal	M	BJP	180987
1999	Abdul Hamid	M	INC	279812	Dr. Pannalal Oswal	M	BJP	258472
2004	Anwar Hussain	M	INC	376588	Afzalur Rahman	M	AGP	259966
2009	Ajmal,Maulana Badruddin	M	UDF	540820	Anwar Hussain	M	INC	356401
2014	Maulana Badruddin Ajmal	M	AIUDF	592569	Wazed Ali Choudhury	M	INC	362839

NB. In the first General Election, it was part of the larger West Garo Hills Constituency

- Data is not available

## Appendix: VIII

### Health Care: Ratio of Institution and Population

Sl. No.	Category	Population
1	Village Health Care Unit	1000
2	Health Services at the Sub Centre	5000
3	Primary Health Centre	30,000
4	Community Health Centre	1,00,000
5	District Health Centre	5,00,000

Source: Health for All: An Alternative Strategy, 1981: 103

**Appendix IX**  
**Various schemes/projects under**  
**Border Area Development Programme:**

**Education**

- i. Primary/Middle/Secondary/Higher secondary school buildings (including additional rooms)
- ii. Development of play fields
- iii. Construction of hostels/dormitories
- iv. Public libraries and reading rooms

**Health**

- i. Building infrastructure (PHC/CHC/SHC)
- ii. Provision of medical equipments of basic/elementary Type. X-Ray, ECG machines, equipment for dental clinic, pathological labs. etc. can also be purchased.
- iii. Setting up of mobile dispensaries/ambulances in rural areas by Govt./ Panchayati Raj Institutions including Tele medicine.

**Agriculture and allied sectors**

- i. Animal Husbandry & Dairying
- ii. Pisciculture
- iii. Sericulture
- iv. Poultry farming/Fishery/Goat/Sheep farming.
- v. Farm forestry, horticulture/floriculture.
- vi. Public drainage facilities.
- vii. Construction of irrigation embankments, or lift irrigation or water table recharging facilities (including minor irrigation works).
- viii. Water conservation programmes
- ix. Soil conservation- protection of erosion-flood protection.
- x. Social Forestry, JFM, parks, gardens in government and community lands or other surrendered lands including pasturing yards.
- xi. Use of improved seeds, fertilizers and improved technology

- xii. Veterinary aid Centres, artificial insemination Centres and breeding Centres.
- xiii. Area specific approach keeping in view the economy of Scale – Backward-Forward integration.

### **Infrastructure**

- i. Construction and strengthening of approach roads, link roads (including culverts & bridges)
- ii. Industries – Small Scale with local inputs viz. handloom, handicraft, furniture making, tiny units, black smith works etc. and food processing industry
- iii. Provisions of civic amenities like electricity, water, pathways, ropeways, foot bridges, hanging bridges, public toilets in slum areas and in SC/ST habitations and at tourist centers, bus stands etc.
- iv. Development of infrastructure for weekly haats/bazaars and also for cultural activities etc. in border areas.
- v. Construction of buildings for recognized District or State Sports Associations and for
- vi. Cultural and Sport Activities or for hospitals (provision of multi-gym facilities in gymnastic centers, sports association, physical education training institutions, etc.)
- vii. Construction of houses for officials engaged in education sector and health sector in remote border areas.
- viii. Tourism/Sports/Adventure Sports Scheme – creation of world class infrastructure for tourism and sports in border block where ever feasible- like rock climbing, mountaineering, river rafting, forest trekking, skiing and safaris (car/bike race, camel safaris, yak riding, boating in Rann of Kutchh.
- ix. Creation of new tourist centers.
- x. Construction of mini open stadium/ indoor stadium./auditoriums.
- xi. New & Renewable electricity- Bio gas/Biomass gasification, Solar & Wind energy and Mini Hydel Projects - systems/devices for community use and related activities.

**Social Sector**

- i. Construction of community centers
- ii. Construction of Anganwadis.
- iii. Rural Sanitation blocks.
- iv. Cultural Centres /Community Halls
- v. Construction of common shelters for the old or Handicapped
- vi. Capacity building programme by way of vocational studies & training for youth for self-employment and skill up gradation of artisans and weavers.

**Miscellaneous**

- i. Development of Model villages in border areas.
- ii. E-chaupals/ agrishops/ mobile media vans/ market yards.
- iii. Cluster approach wherever feasible.

## **Bordered Lives: A Study of Dhubri Borderlanders of India-Bangladesh Border in Dhubri District of Assam**

F1. Respondents' Name: .....

F2. Address of the Respondent: .....

F3. Nearest Border Outpost: .....

F4. Name of the Development Block: .....

F5. District: Dhubri

F6. State: Assam

F7. Date .....

My name is **Md. Nurul Hassan**, a Ph D Research Scholar under the supervision of **Prof. Monirul Hussain** in the Department of Political Science, Gauhati University. The title of my research work is, "Bordered Lives: A Study of Dhubri borderlanders of India-Bangladesh Border In Dhubri District of Assam. Here, in this research, the socio-economic condition of the borderlanders are tried to incorporate. For a quality research, your participation is very crucial. It will endow not only to understand the problems but also provides inputs for the development of borderland society.

### Personal Information

Gender	Age	Religion	Community	Language
Male		1. Hindu	1. Assamese	1. Assamese
Female		2. Islam	2. Bengali	2. Bengali
		3. Others	3. Koch- rajbansi	3. Hindi
			4. Others	4. English
				5. Arabic
				6. Others

### **Interview Begins**

Q1. Living at this borderland, are you satisfied or not?

1. Fully satisfied 2. Somewhat satisfied 3. Somewhat dissatisfied 4. Fully Dissatisfied

Q2. We have come to know that you the borderlanders have to face with security personnel's in their day-to-day life. Undoubtedly for the sake of security, it is important. But do you feel that by these security endeavours your individual security is abysmally disturbed or not?

1. Yes 2. No 8. Doesn't know

Q3. Have you ever faced any hindrance from the security forces?

1. Yes 2. No 8. Can't say



Q3a. (If yes) then what types of problems you generally face from them?

1. Illegal arrest                      2. Sexual harassment                      3. Physical torture
4. Mental harassment    5. Others:.....8. Can't say

Q4. Are there any special facilities for you (borderlanders) provided by the Central or the State Government?

1. Yes                      2. No                      8. Can't say

Q4a. (If yes) what type of facilities are you availing?

1. ....
2. ....

Q5. Living in such fenced / borderland area, do you feel any problem?

1. Very difficult to live                      2. Somewhat difficult                      3. Little bit
4. Not at all                      8. DK/CS

Q5a. (If reply is 1/2/3), what are the major problem you the borderlanders are facing or how you consider the followings? Are you satisfied or not?

		Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	CS/NA
1	Communication	1	2	3	4	8
2	Road and Transport	1	2	3	4	8
3	Security Forces	1	2	3	4	8
4	Education	1	2	3	4	8
5	Health	1	2	3	4	8

### **Economy**

Q6. What is your primary occupation?

1. Farming                      2. Business                      3. Job (govt./private)                      4. Housewife

Q5. Wage Earner                      6. Others:.....8. Can't say/ DK

Q7. What is the main occupation of your family members?.....

Q8. You know, for a limited time being, people are allowed to enter the Zero Line? How you consider this?

1. Yes                      2. No                      8. Can't say/DK

Q8a. (If yes) do the security forces create problem or not?

1. Yes                      2. No                      8. Can't say/DK

Q8b. (If yes) Can you tell me the nature of problems created by them?

1.....

2.....

3.....

Q9. Borderlanders have huge amount of agricultural land in the 'zero line'. Do you have land in the outside and if yes, then how much?

1. No land      2. 1-5 *Bighas*      3. 6-10 *Bighas*      4. More than 10

5. I had but not now      8. Can't say/ NR

Q9a. Have you ever gone to that very land?

1. Yes      2. No      3. Never      8. Can't say/No Response

Q10. Which market do you prefer for customary (for purchase/sale) life?

.....

Q10a. How much distance from your home?

1. 1-2 km      2. 3-5km      3. 6-10km      4. Above 10 km

Q11. We know that illegal trade is very common phenomenon. What is your perception regarding the illegal trade of India-Bangladesh border?

1. Yes      2. No      8. Can't say

Q11a. (If yes) Then who are the people benefitted most in such trade?

1. Local people      2. Traders      3. Government service man

4. Border Security Force      5. Others:.....

Q12. The news of seizing cattle is regularly published in different news papers in recent time. Then, what about your borderland area?

1. Yes      2. No      8. Can't say

Q12a. (If Q12 yes) who are involved in such cattle smuggling?

1. Local people      2. Foreign nationals      3. Government officials

4. Security forces      5. Others:..... 8. No response

Q12b. (If Q12 yes) After seizing the cows, how they manage all these? Are they exported to Bangladesh again?

1. Yes, exported to Bangladesh      2. Kept in Security stations

3. Others:.....      8. Can't say

Q13. Do you know about the Border Area development Programme (BADP) initiated by the Indian Government?

1. Yes                      2. No                      8. Can't say

Q13a. (If Q13 yes) Have you ever got the following facilities?

	Yes	No	can't say
1. Agriculture based materials	1	2	8
2. Housing, School /College establishment	1	2	8
3. Health center and other allied facilities	1	2	8
4. Border Road and develop communication	1	2	8

Q13b. (If Q13 No) what are the reasons behind not getting such benefits?

1. Government doesn't provide
2. Lack of knowledge
3. Corruption in intermediate level
4. Others: .....

### **Education**

Q14. Can you tell me about your educational background?

1. Illiterate                      2. Literate                      3. Elementary                      4. Secondary
5. College level                      6. Above college

Q15. What is the basic communication system of students? (Answer may be more than one)

1. On foot                      2. Bicycle                      3. Motorcycle                      4. Light vehicle
5. Others:..... 8. Can't say

Q16. During summer/ flood season, how the students generally communicate?

1. Boat    2. Road    3. School remains close    4. Can't go    5. Others...

Q17. In your village most of the people are illiterate. What is the main reason for denial education here? (Answer may be more than one)

1. People are not interested
2. Lack of proper facilities
3. Lack of proper communication
4. Government have no attention
5. Guardian have no interest/ not conscious
6. Others: .....

Q18. How do you consider the education system?

1. Very important      2. Important      3. Somewhat      4. Not at all

8. Can't say/ no response

**Health**

Q19. Do you know about 108 health facilities?

1. Yes      2. No      8. Can't say

Q20. Is there any health centre in your area?

1. Yes      2. No      8. DK/ can't say

Q21. Where do you prefer for your health check up?

1. Primary Health Centre      2. Hospital      3. Hospital(with special facilities)

4. Others: .....

Q22. People say that Border security Forces do not allow the commoners at night. Have you ever faced any hardship by them?

1. Yes      2. Never faced      8. DK/ No Response

Q23. (If Q22 yes) what type of problem you faced?

1. Do not allow to move us      2. Abused/ slang words are used

3. Sometimes some personnel's consider us      8. No response

Q23a. Can you elaborate the problem: .....

Q24. What would be your suggestions regarding health security of the borderlanders? (Answer may be more than one and preference should be noticed)

1. Installing health centers in this locality

2. Improving the communication system

3. Appointing efficient/ modern physician as well as facilities

4. It requires co-operation from the security forces

5. Others:

**General**

Q25. Before fencing, most of the borderlanders had connection with their counterparts. Is there any problem after the bifurcation with them?

1. Yes      2. No      8. CS/DK

Q26. (If Q25 yes) what are the problems?

1. Communication                      2. Meeting with the relatives                      3. Property  
5. Others:.....                      8. NR

Q27. Are you satisfied with the followings or not? (Fully or somewhat to be noticed)

	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	C/S
a. Education	1	2	3	4	8
b. Health	1	2	3	4	8
c. Supply	1	2	3	4	8
d. Road and Transport	1	2	3	4	8
e. Postal	1	2	3	4	8
f. Telecom	1	2	3	4	8
g. Electricity	1	2	3	4	8
h. Water supply	1	2	3	4	8
i. Lavatory	1	2	3	4	8

Q28. Is there any member of your family enjoyed the following government facilities?

	Yes	No	CS
a. <i>Rozgar</i> (MGNREGA)	1	2	8
b. Pension (Old, Widow etc.)	1	2	8
c. Free Treatment (NRHM)	1	2	8
d. Housing (IAY, RAY etc.)	1	2	8

Q29. What is the major problem of your area?.....

Q30. "Comparatively the border/ periphery area is poorer than the core area," is it true or not?

1. Yes                      2. No                      8. Can't say/No response

Q31. "The barbed fencing in India-Bangladesh border is utmost necessary," is it true or not?

1. Yes                      2. No                      8. Can't say/ DK

### Household Information

1. Total numbers of family members living in the household:  
Adult:..... Children .....

2. Do you and your members of the House have the following s?

	Yes	No
a. Car/ Jeep/ Van.....	1	2
b. Scooter/Motor Cycle.....	1	2
c. Computer/Laptop.....	1	2
d. TV.....	1	2
e. Mobile.....	1	2
f. LPG.....	1	2
g. Pumping set.....	1	2
h. Tractor.....	1	2
i. Shallo/Machine boat.....	1	2
j. Dingi boat/ County boat/ Mar boat.....	1	2

- ### 3. Types of house where respondents lives:

- i. Pucca (both wall and roof made of pucca materials)
- ii. Pucca-Cutch (either wall and roof is made of pucca material and other of cutcha materials)
- iii. Cutcha (both wall and roof made of Kutcha materials other than the materials mentioned in category 4)
- iv. Hut (both wall and roof made of grass, leaves, mud, un burn brick and bamboo)

- | 4. Live Stock: | Total Number |
|----------------|--------------|
|----------------|--------------|

- a. Goat/ Sheep .....
- b. Cow/ Oxen/ Buffalo.....
- c. Any other.....

5. Total Household Income:.....

6. Mobile Number:.....

7. Any comment: .....