

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

“Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity, in the comparison and conciliation of differences.”

Mikhail Gorbachev – Nobel Lecture, 1991¹.

1.1 Introduction

The politicisation of ethnocultural diversity is one of the most crucial issues faced by multicultural liberal democracies today. Throughout the world, communities and groups are demanding greater cultural and territorial recognition of their distinctive cultural practices on distinct cultural and ethnic lines. Whether it is western countries or the oriental counterparts, diversity, on the one hand, enriches the cultural environment, on the other, it creates a sense of consistent anxiety. Ethnic and racial cleavages now have become a part of the global political landscape (Jalali and Lipset, 1992-93: 586). Liberal democracies all over the world have overestimated that the protection of basic individual rights would be sufficient for accommodating ethnocultural minorities. The importance of individual socio-economic and political rights in protecting minorities cannot be underestimated in that sense. Kymlicka and Almagor states, “State arrangements of Freedom of association, religion, speech, mobility, and political organization enable individuals to form and maintain groups and associations, to adapt these groups to changing circumstances, and to promote their views and interests to the wider population” (Kymlicka and Almagor, 2000: 89). However, all these common rights appeared insufficient to accommodate the diverse identities within a heterogeneous societal structure.

Societal structure again faced challenges with the recent changes in the mode of production. In the words of Rosado, “It is not too early that as a nation we have moved from an agrarian society concerned with conformity, through an industrial society concerned with nationalism and uniformity, to our present information society concerned with diversity within a global context, on our way to the global society of the 21st century with a planetary world view”

¹ Gorbachev, M. (1991). Nobel Lecture. June 5. The Nobel Foundation.
<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1990/gorbachev/26100-mikhail-gorbachev-nobel-lecture-1990-2/> [Accessed on 24.6. 2018].

(Rosado, 2006: 1). Such cultural, economic and political upheavals have given rise to knowledgeable players in the game of social change.

It is important to identify different cultures and cultural values, and markers of ethnic-national identities. Existing multiple groups in the society are not a source of conflict, but denial of socio-economic rights, cultural disrespect, marginalization and exclusion of political voice has and will lead to political mobilization around religious, ethnic, regional and national identities. Increasingly, the tendency is to focus on grievances along with identity politics.

Today more than ever, identity politics has emerged as the dominant aspect of our political process. The struggle for recognition and redistribution has turned into the paradigmatic form of conflict in our time. The minority as a political category of powerless covers religious, linguistic, social (caste) minorities, sexual minorities, ethnic groups and nationalities, and indigenous people. Generally speaking, indigenous people are conceptually distinct from the category of an ethnic, religious, linguistic or national minority, but in practice, the categories overlap because of the common experience of being disempowered, discriminated and marginalized.

In the Indian scenario that diversity is vibrant and prominent. India has witnessed rigorous identity formation on the basis of religion, language, caste, culture and ethnicity. According to the 2011 census data, on Population of Religious Communities, Hindu 96.63 crores (79.8%); Muslim 17.22 crores (14.2%); Christian 2.78 crores (2.3%); Sikh 2.08 crores (1.7%); Buddhist 0.84 crores (0.7%); Jain 0.45 crores (0.4%) all over the nation. The 2001 census showed that 115 languages were spoken by 10,000 or more people in the country; of these, 22 were spoken by more than one million people. This census also lists the total number of non-scheduled languages as being 93. The state lists 630 communities as Scheduled Tribes, and some of the identified communities, which are themselves internally heterogeneous, comprising several different tribes.

In the context of the ethnic study of the social science domain, primitive tribes and tribal groups come much closer to a definition of ethnic groups forming a close-knit community with several commonalities. The attributes of tribal communities expressly denote geographical proximity, face-to-face interaction and cultural and occupational sameness. Xaxa argued, "With the lack of accessibility to power and denial of rights a new form of

identity of *Adivasis* or indigenous people is crystalizing among tribes in different parts of India” (Xaxa, 2008:38)

The term '*Adivasi*', meaning 'original inhabitants', was first used in the Chota Nagpur region of Bihar in the 1930s and was extended to other regions in the 1940s by A.V.Thakkar, who worked among these communities. 'In the last few decades, the term '*Adivasi*' has got popularised to identify the tribe in India. This term is more commonly brought to use by the NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) circles and activists of the 'mainstream' or 'mainland' India. The term has also gained currency amongst the tribes mainly belonging to central India. The central Indian tribes living in Kerala also prefer to be identified as '*Adivasi*'. '*Adivasi*' term means original settlers in Hindi. *Adivasi* ideologies too primarily use this term in the sense of original settlement, as this was the sense in which outsiders described tribal people' (Roy, 2017: 18). According to Xaxa, "Adivasis are hence defined as groups that shared a common face in the nineteenth century, and which, as a result of this experience, have evolved a collective identity, that is, an identity of being adivasis" (Xaxa, 2008: 39). However, Hardiman does not consider *adivasi* people as the original inhabitants. (Hardiman, 1987: 15-16).

In the rapid and radical changes that are moving through India, the *adivasis* are clearly a very vulnerable group. Their identity as *adivasi* people is in effect neglected, and their dignity as human persons is all too often violated. Obviously, there is a connection between these two aspects of *adivasi* life today: their marginalization from the benefits of development, and their relegation to the bottom of the social hierarchy. For it is the same process of change that first isolates *adivasis*, negating their identity and inaccessibility of their rights, and then integrates and assimilates them into a forced market system (Heredia and Srivastava, 1994: 11).

Adivasi communities from a subordinate ethnic position have always suffered the process of integration. The issue to be considered in their regard is one of overcoming their minority status and of affirming their *adivasi* identity, on one hand, and mobilizing them on the other. In other words, assimilating them into an ethnically uniformed state and not integrating *adivasi* people into a multicultural society is another crucial issue. That finally results in a clash of identity and cultures. Today the clash of *adivasi* and non-*adivasi* cultures in our country is harsher and deeper because the changes people are undergoing are more rapid than ever before.

Efforts to mitigate and manage identity conflicts have certainly been made. India is one of the very few countries in the world with an elaborate constitutional system to accommodate different groups and communities, especially for the scheduled castes and tribes. But after more than seventy years of independence, they still have a long way to go to catch up with the mainstream, especially the smaller, weaker *adivasi* communities.

1.2 Background of the Study

Linguistic, religious, ethnic, and cultural diversities in India are proverbial. So are the political mobilizations, social unrest and the violent conflicts which have arisen from time to time among distinctive cultural and ethnic groups. However, it is important to understand that political mobilizations or cultural and ethnic antagonisms do not flow naturally out of diversities. Marginalization, exclusion and ignorance from part of society and government work as major determinants.

An elaborate arrangement has been made in the Indian democratic structure to accommodate and integrate the marginalized sections of society through various schemes. Such schemes include democratic decentralisation, capacity building programmes, land reforms, Forest Rights Act, Tribal sub-plan, the policy of positive discrimination, regional autonomy, and welfare programmes for the marginalised and needy people including the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and so on. But such schemes and acts are criticised to be lied on the papers only and serious mechanisms have not been initiated by the government to make them effective.

Under such a situation, different ethnic communities have mobilized themselves to achieve territorial autonomy and the number is increasing day by day. On contrary, Different variations as strategies of mobilisation considered by various groups are even more puzzling. Some have used peaceful methods to get mobilized, while the violent route of conflict has been adopted by others. India has witnessed a series of tribal uprisings before and after independence concerning identity and rights. Although several tribal communities have mobilized them in different periods of time, only a few have been able to give it the shape of the movement. In North Bengal, *adivasi* tea garden workers historically followed several ways to mobilize themselves but only under the supervision of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi

Vikas Parishad (ABAVP)² the *adivasi* people have been able to hold an organised movement on ethnic line with demands of basic rights to protect their identity.

North Bengal, the northern region of West Bengal consists of eight districts, namely Malda, South Dinajpur, North Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Alipurduar. The region connects India with the North-East. North Bengal has a wide shared border with Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. The region mostly operates through the agricultural mode of production and agro-based industries like tea, timber, commerce and tourism which constitute the economic backbone of the region. The region has experienced a large scale of migration in different historical periods with large size of the tribal population from Central India, particularly Chotanagpur, Nepal and North-East India, which has changed the demographic pattern of the region.

The complex social pattern of North Bengal has witnessed several protest movements and armed struggles since Independence which include, the Socialist or Communist movement in the name of the Naxalite movement, the ethno-racial and linguistic movement of Gorkhaland, the ethno-racial and statehood movement of Kamtapur, ethno-racial and identity movement in the form of greater Coochbehar movement claiming separate statehood of Coochbehar, Tebhaga Movement in Dinajpur and Jalpaiguri districts etc. the region has faced several identity conflicts as well like Bhatiya conflict, Rabha conflict and Bodo conflict etc. the tribal composition of the region also gave birth to a tribal movement in the past in the name of Tana Bhagat movement among Oraon Workers in the Dooars region of Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar.

In North Bengal, the tribal population could be classified into three groups based on their location in three distinct socio-economic setups (Roy, 2017: 13): “(a) the Nepali speaking tribes in the Darjeeling Hills, both in tea gardens and outside, (b) the Central Indian tribes in the agricultural setup of Malda, South Dinajpur, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar and Cooch Behar districts, and (c) the Central Indian Tribes which constitute the labour force in the tea gardens in the Terai of Darjeeling district and Dooars of Jalpaiguri district”. These central Indian tribes are mostly considered as *adivasi* by scholars and academicians.

The *adivasi* (tribal) population in North Bengal is largely constituted of the migrants from the Chotanagpur and Jharkhand regions of central India. In the second half of the 19th century because of exploitation by the dikes (aliens), land loss, loss of forest rights, imposition of

² ABAVP is a NGO ‘which was formed for the social and cultural uplift of the adivasis in the country’ (see Bhowmik 2011: 27).

land rent, and colonial oppression, particularly in the post-Santhal rebellion period, they have moved out of their original location. Expansion of tea gardens in the Terai and Dooars regions offered them an alternative livelihood, but they found themselves trapped in another exploitation with an oppressive economic and power structure. The migration flow became stagnant by the 1940s when the expansion of tea gardens stopped. In the 1950s another major transformation was initiated in the land management system with the abolition of the tribal zamindari system. In the Terai and Dooars the excess of the labour force, the closure of tea gardens, termination from the tea gardens, acquisition of the following land, and lack of skill and education made them vulnerable and forced to depend on agricultural production and tea.

In the course of time, many laws and regulations have been passed and initiated for the benefit of tea workers and many good laws have been extended such as minimum wages, the payment of wages, compensation for injury at work, gratuity and pension, etc. The emergence of trade unions in the forties in the tea gardens mainly brought changes. But due to illiteracy, poverty and legal access and lack of proper inspectorates, these laws mostly remained unimplemented.

In the tea belt of North Bengal, the work situation is facing lots of troubles due to issues of tea garden closure, low wages, and basic facilities affecting directly the economic and livelihood condition of the *adivasi* people of the region. The remote location of the tribes with inadequate income generation, less share of the resources, lack of development in terms of education and technical knowledge and skill, and crises in tea gardens and agriculture are some of the crucial factors that reflect the livelihood problem of the tribal people of north Bengal.

The tribes in this region are mainly engaged in agriculture or working in tea garden sectors. Since both agriculture and tea plantation are facing some kind of stagnation, alienation and fragmentation, tribal land continues to be a major problem in the region. Studies on the closed tea gardens in the Dooars reveal that there has been a large-scale exodus of labourers from these gardens to the far states and in the metropolises. The penetration of the outsiders into the tribal belt has resulted in the alienation of the tribes from their land and the economic marginalization of tribes.

The distinct identity of the *adivasi* people on the other hand has never been concerned, further neglected. Their culture, in terms of religious practices and languages, has not been recognised by the government. The immigration of more resourceful non-tribes (Nepalese,

Bengali Refugees and Rajbanshis) into this region has additionally created a sense of insecurity in the collective identity of the central Indian tribes in the form of being reduced to an insignificant minority and insecurity relating to livelihood and identity concern. There have been numerous numbers of social movements, unrest and conflict in the region on the ethnic ground with the demand for separate territory which further horrified the *adivasi* settlers in the region.

The dominant forces in the region on the one hand exploited them in various ways and on the other hand, used them to be integrated as supporters of political parties and trade unions. Being a part of such a depressing reality, the tribes in the region have enough reasons to lose confidence in the administrative mechanism and civil society associations on which they had trusted for so long. Caught in the situation, to preserve their distinct identity, the *adivasi* people are trying to mobilize themselves on the ethnic line.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

The South Asian region and particularly India possesses a strong cultural as well as ethnic hold. Its diverse nature and clash of interests among various communities sometimes naturally results in a conflict situation. Hence, managing ethnic diversities and conflicts is a prime concern of almost every government right now. At a time when western countries facing difficulties in the integration process in a multicultural setup, a study of India's approach relied mostly on maintaining its ideology of unity in diversity and managing societal conflicts on the grounds of identity, culture, poverty, illiteracy, regional disparities, social exclusion, linguistic factors. In the post-independence era, the nation-building press has witnessed a long list of social tensions regarding identity and politics on the ethnic ground. *Adivasi* as an ethnic community always grabbed the attention of the government on the developmental aspects and sometimes in a conflict condition. Though, the concern has been largely restricted within the region of central India. The *adivasi* people in the Terai and Dooars region have always been deprived of the attention of the government. Several studies have highlighted their condition and position of statelessness in terms of their identity as well as livelihood. But the study of the protest movement for their existence which results in a conflict situation and management of such conflict to build a peaceful social order remain untouched. Hence, this study tries to fill the gap by concentrating on the study of the *adivasi* movement which resulted in a conflict situation in the region on one hand and management of the conflict on the other.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

North Bengal consists of a number of ethnic communities with vibrant cultures. The region, beyond doubt, represents cultural diversity with communities belonging to different religions, speaking different languages and having different ethnic origins living together. Looking into the formation and governmental responses towards the various communities of the region there is no doubt that the societal structure is multicultural in nature. On a linguistic basis, various communities like Nepali speaking people, various *adivasi* (tribal) communities and Bengali speaking people are there. On the basis of religion Muslim, Christian and Hindu communities are there. On the ethnic ground Nepalese, tribes, and Bengali played a dominant position in the region.

The tribal population in the region consists mainly of Oraon, Munda, Bhatia, Rabha, Bodo and Kamtapuri peoples. And based on their demand for separate districts there have arisen Bhatia conflict, Rabha conflict, Bodo conflict and some religious conflicts. In the given situation, the *adivasi* community under the supervision of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad, the Nepali community (mostly known as the Gorkha community) and Bengali speaking people have indulged themselves in a conflict situation to establish their right over the land.

The people of the *adivasi* community in the region are basically migrants from the Chotonagpur region of central India. They moved out of their original position in the second half of the 19th century because of exploitation by the dikhus (aliens), landlords, loss of forest rights, imposition of land rent, and colonial oppression, particularly in the post-Santhal rebellion period. The expanding tea gardens in the Dooars and Terai regions (along with parts of Assam) offered them livelihood. This migration flow was stopped by the 1940s when the tea gardens stopped expanding. In the Dooars and Terai the surplus labour force, took hold of the fallow land or cleared forest land and started cultivation. Lack of access to material resources or education made them dependent on agriculture and tea plantations almost exclusively.

Meanwhile, with the issue of hold over land, the peaceful region turned into a matter of concern. To preserve their distinct identity and cultural inheritance three major ethnic groups involved themselves in a power struggle. Hence, trapped in the power struggle between the Nepalese of Darjeeling looking for a separate state of Gorkhaland and the state government which oppose any division of the state, millions of Tribes in the Dooars and Terai of

Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts, who are disappointed by the government decisions, involved in a tribal upliftment movement under the banner of the Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad (ABAVP) to establish their self-identity and political presence over a territory following the provisions of the sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution.

A continuous struggle is going on between the Nepalese, *adivasis* and the plane peoples and its proceeds in a continuous manner. This conflict is adding a new dimension to the prevailing social atmosphere and the mainstream political process. Hence, it is necessary to have a proper picture of and nature of the *adivasi* conflict in the region. In this ongoing situation, it is also important to rectify the possible mechanisms to manage the conflict and locate the actions that have been taken by the state institutions as well as local government and administration to manage the conflict.

In the background of the ongoing continuous conflicts between the Nepalese, Adivasis and the plane people, our study focuses on exploring the ethnocultural dimensions of the conflict on one hand and the role of the state institutions to manage the conflict like situation on the other.

1.5 Theoretical Background

In human society, Cultural diversity is an inescapable fact. Culture refers to a historically inherited system of meaning and significance in terms of which a group of people understand and structure their individual and collective lines. Culture conceptualises the meaning or point of human activities, social relations and human life in general, and the value attached. MacIver and Page (1937: 499) states, “This is the realm of the style of values of emotional attachments, of intellectual adventures. Culture, then, is the antithesis of civilisation. It is the expression of our nature, in our modes of living and thinking, in our everyday intercourse, in art, in literature, in recreation and enjoyment”. Embodied beliefs and practices are core to a culture’s system, which collectively constitute its identity. Almost every modern society is culturally diverse or multicultural in the sense that its members subscribe to and live by different though overlapping systems of meaning and significance. Robert young once remarked, “Heterogeneity, cultural interchange and diversity have become the self-conscious identity of modern society” (Young, 1996: 4)

In modern society, cultural diversity has several sources. Societies include different ethnic, religious, cultural and other communities, with their more or less distinct ways of life. In the name of nation-building or a hegemonic ideology, some of these communities were long

denied collective self-expression and are now keen to exercise their newly won freedoms. Globalization further opens the door for each society to different currents of thought, and its members respond to these in different ways. Since cultural diversity is a fact of modern life and is legitimized in terms of the widely accepted and deeply approved liberal and democratic ideas of individual preference and equal treatment, every modern multicultural society needs to find ways of accommodating diverse demands and interests without losing its uniqueness and unity. Different kinds of diversities raise different problems and require different treatment. The demands of indigenous peoples, religious identities, territorially concentrated national minorities, immigrants, etc. are quite different in nature and cannot be accommodated following the same path.

Democracy is mostly considered and practised as the rule of the numerical majority, which sometimes raises questions regarding the issue of minority representation. This weak minority representation within the majoritarian understanding of democracy often leads to ethnic conflict and social unrest. Horowitz stressed the nexus between democracy and minority representation by stating, “democracy is about inclusion and exclusion, about access to power, about privileges that go with inclusion and the penalties that accompany exclusion” (Horowitz, 1993: 18). Traditionally liberal democracies had consciously ignored the cultural complexities of a given society. In the past race, religion, caste and gender had been the basis of exclusion of individuals from the political and the public arena. Multiculturalism has marked a departure from this old school of thought.

Multiculturalism embodies the politics of difference, as well as the politics of accommodation. Multiculturalism, according to Monim (2009: 15), “is a normative political and social philosophy based on public recognition and acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity and a positive response to cultural difference”. Hence, it is important to understand the necessity of politicisation of group identities and the abandonment or modification of the concept of equal treatment under common laws and general rights. Every law of the land is not applicable and followed by all cultural groups because of their distinctness. The enactment of a strictly uniform and homogeneous set of laws may unfairly impose great burdens on some groups. The multicultural approach delineated so far postulates a rather straightforward link between issues of identity and the domain of particular cultures. It also assumes that the identity of a person corresponds to a particular culture and that such cultures are wholes with easily discernible boundaries. Differences in identity, therefore, correspond to differences in clearly identifiable and mutually distinct cultures (Mahajan, 2011:4). It is of

course true that motivations for the creation of cultural differences have diverse origins. The existence of multi-culture in society tends to create obvious situations that generate radical exclusion of people. Its encouragement of particularity of culture appears to deepen divisions within the society and rejects the common foundation. Multiculturalism further supports aggregative community power and rights over individual freedom. According to the equal right to oppressive cultures, multiculturalism corrodes the values of liberal democracy. Perhaps it is the denial of multiculturalism that results in prolonged, bitter, intergroup conflicts and mutual separation, not the affirmation of multiculturalism. At the heart of multiculturalism are the cultural difference, and negligence and non-accommodation generate political conflict. At the same time, it may be used as an approach to deal with social conflicts. Monim (2009: 15) sees Multiculturalism as a perspective on the management of cultural diversity in multiethnic societies.

A multicultural society is incorporated with various challenges, one of the vital issues is the conflict and the management of the conflict. Generally, three measures are associated with the dealing of conflicts directly: conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Out of this three, conflict management is mostly accepted as it focuses on designing appropriate institutions. Conflict resolution contrary emphasises resolving the conflict from the core, which seems very ambitious as in many cases it does not seem possible to completely solve a conflict when conflict is a constant part of social interaction. Also, conflict resolution focuses more on the process than on the means of coping with conflict. The concept of conflicts transformation is all-encompassing: in addition to those means already included in conflict management and the process of conflict resolution, it concentrates on structures that need to be changed from ground level.

In the process of conflict management, various mechanisms have been followed. Among them, political institutions have gained immense importance. They cover a wide range of policies (including economic policy and poverty reduction) and institutions. The proper design of these political institutions is important for their ability to manage conflict. Diamond Argued that “The policies and institutions that settle ethno-political conflicts and manage diversity peacefully include full political and civil rights for ethnic minorities, programs to alleviate their poverty, protection for them to use their languages and cultures, regional autonomy and devolution of power, and mechanisms or incentives for sharing power, constructing multi-ethnic coalitions, encouraging crosscutting alignments, and allowing broad access to power at the center” (Diamond, 1999: 6). These areas of political

and constitutional design include the nature and structure of political representation, the legislative and executive functions of the state, and the territorial structure and arrangement of the state. This last point looks at the variety of arrangements that can be used to devolve power to the various units of the government, such as federalism and autonomy. These arrangements integrate different groups and communities in the social and political structure while at the same time allowing distinctive identities to govern themselves. As far as conflict management capacities of these institutions are concerned, they can ensure minorities a measure of state power and offer them prospects and opportunities to preserve their culture in the manner of demands for secession and increasing political integration of ethnic groups. However, also through a system of decentralization power can be devolved to local government institutions.

The local level government is the grassroots level agent of democratic decentralization. as it is closest to the people, hence it can play a key role in consolidating democracy through good governance. Through this institution, people are allowed to play an important role at the local level decision-making process. Hence the location of adequate power is crucial to consider. Diamond (1999: 149) in this context argued, “Democratic decentralization requires by definition the transfer of control to lower levels of elected government – in the strongest form the devolution of real authority over some aspects of the policy agenda”. Apart from the implications of decision-making power and recognition for minority groups, Robert Putnam stresses the powerful socializing impact of decentralized participation (Diamond, 1999: 122). In this regard, the local system of governance, which means transparent and efficient procedures, that encourage people’s participation through inclusive and participatory decision-making processes plays an important role in conflict management within heterogeneous societies.

1.6 Research Objectives

1. In a diverse multicultural society conflict is bound to arise due to the existence of cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic groups. However, these conflicts need to be managed for the sake of the all-around development of society. In the Northern part of West Bengal, popularly known as North Bengal, a number of subaltern groups, especially tribal communities are raising their voices for integration into the mainstream social order. In recent times the region has observed a number of ethnic movements demanding separate statehood on ethnic line. For a long time, the Nepalese of Darjeeling organised a movement for a separate state under the name of Gorkhaland including the areas of the

Terai and Dooars region, and on the other hand, the state government opposed any division of the state. In the situation of such a power-struggle millions of Tribes in the Dooars and Terai of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling districts were involved in a tribal upliftment movement mobilized by the Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad (ABAVP) to secure their self-identity and political presence in the region. A continuous struggle is going on between the Nepalese, *adivasis* and the plane peoples resulting in a violent conflict like situation in the region. These conflicts are adding a new dimension to the mainstream political process. In this ongoing situation, it is important to manage these conflicts. So, one of the major objectives of my study is to **analyze the context, causes and motivating factors behind the conflict that is generated as a result of cultural differences and identity issues.**

2. Within the framework of liberal democracy and a federal structure, with the role and functional specifications at all levels of governance, democratic institutions at the national and state-level play a pivotal role in conflict management among groups and communities for promoting national unity and sustaining socio-economic development. Hence, another primary objective of my study is to **identify the institutions engaged in managing conflicts and the ways and means developed for the purpose.**
3. While dealing with the local level conflicts, local institutions and local administration are also used as important tools of government, particularly of the state government. Panchayati Raj is generally considered to be a decentralized rural level local institution for providing services to the local people and acting as the chief vehicle for rural development. Along with these democratically elected bodies, bureaucracy at the local level plays a decisive role in the management of conflicts that crop up among different communities at the local level. Therefore, another major objective of the study is to **explore and assess the roles these local institutions and bodies play in the mitigation of conflicts through their push effects.**
4. Apart from state institutions, several other non-state institutions, organizations and actors also play a crucial role in a multicultural society in reducing tensions among communities arising out of their claims on the structure of state and society. So, the other objective is to **identify these bodies and organizations, and their actual and potential role in the management of *Adivasi* conflict.**

1.7 Research Questions

1. What are the major conflict management mechanisms in multicultural societies?
2. How far and to what extent cultural differences and identity issues have resulted in ethnic conflicts in the divergent social setting in the Terai and Dooars region of West Bengal?
3. What is the overall picture of the *adivasi* conflict under the banner of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad?
4. How far and to what extent the state institutions working within a democratic setup are capable and successful in the management of conflicts and conflict resolution?
5. What role can and does the local government and administration play in enhancing the prospect of managing conflict?
6. How far and to what extent have the non-state institutions and actors got involved in the process of conflict management?

1.8 Literature Review

With the advancement of the study of multiculturalism, concerns regarding the identities and conflicts arising to preserve those identities have come to the forefront. It has become a crucial task to deal with those conflicts in a sustainable manner. A plethora of literature both in the forms of books and articles has appeared on such important problems. There are widespread disagreements among scholars and academicians regarding ways these conflicts can be solved most effectively. In some countries like Uganda, South Africa and Kenya, decentralization is considered to be a fruitful instrument for managing conflict. While in some parts of the world decentralization gives a boost to stabilize conflicts. However, scholars are very much optimistic about the mitigation of these conflicts properly and most acceptably.

Different works of literature have addressed the issues from different dimensions. Here we have organized the existing literature dividing into areas of Multiculturalism, Conflict management and Tribal Politics related to the thrust area of our study.

1.5.1 Multiculturalism

Antony E. Alcock, Brian K. Taylor, and John M. Welton in their edited book “The future of cultural minorities” (1979) reflect the future of cultural minorities caught between the development of national and global societies and the associated convergence of cultures on the one hand, and the growing centralism and uniformity of modern government- on the other. Among the issues examined are the economic, social and linguistic factors making for

the viability or otherwise of the minority culture itself; reverse discrimination; the position of the mass media; and the various constitutional measures used to promote or hinder the development of minority cultures.

“Multicultural States” edited by David Bennett (1998) challenges the national frames of reference of the debates relating to national identity, ethnicity, race and cultural difference by investigating contemporary theories, policies and practices of cultural pluralism across eight countries. His work focuses on the identity concern in a multicultural state, which reflects the multicultural social construction. Again, Paul Kelly in his edited book “Multiculturalism Reconsidered” (2002) examines and answers Brian Barry’s claim that multiculturalism is inherently flawed. With contributions from Chandran Kukathas, James Tully, Bhikhu Parekh, Susan Mendus and Ian Shapiro, amongst others, and a response from Barry, this book ranges widely over the issues raised by multiculturalism and egalitarianism. Although the scholars address their arguments in Barry’s book, the primary focus of all of the responses in his general claim that culture and equality stand in opposition and that multiculturalism as a new approach to the politics of ethnically plural societies is mistaken. This book tries to establish the importance of multiculturalism in a social system.

Raihanah M. M in the article “Multiculturalism and the Politics of Expression: A Appraisal” (2009) discusses how multiculturalism came to be and what it connotes. She also suggests that the concerns and contestation of multiculturalism can be framed within three main power relations which are politics of recognition, politics of positioning and politics of equality.

Rebecca Mason on the other hand in the article “Reorienting Deliberation: Identity Politics in Multicultural Societies” (2010) argues that identity politics only interfere with democratic participation according to an erroneous interpretation of the relationship between identity and reasoning. To him, recognizing the importance of identity to the intelligibility of reasons offered in the context of civic deliberation is the first step towards the kind of dialogue that democratic participation requires.

Rajeev Bhargava, Amiya Kumar Bagchi and R. Sudarshan in their edited book “Multiculturalism, liberalism and Democracy” (1999) focus on major issues of minority identity, community rights, the conditions for a peaceful, symbiotic relationship between diverse cultural groups and justification of affirmative action. They express the importance of multiculturalism with certain limitations. The essays challenge the desirability of a uni-cultural polity but do not accept multiculturalism uncritically.

In “Lineages of Political Society” (2011) Partha Chatterjee focuses on a new theory of post-colonial democracy. He favoured devised concepts and analytical tools to understand the formation of new democratic practices. He further, concentrates on the liberal theory, contemporary capitalism, and theories of nationalism and populism.

“The Multicultural State we’re In: ‘multiculture’ and the civic re-balancing of British Multiculturalism” (2009) by Naser Meer and Tariq Madood focuses on an alternative appraisal of British multiculturalism. They contest the idea that British multiculturalism is subject to a wholesale retreat and suggest instead that it has been, and continues to be subject to a productive critique that is resulting in something best characterised as a civic re-balancing. Apart from seeking comfort in a depoliticized multicultural view, they argued in the favour of dynamic political multiculturalism.

Several scholars have tried to find out the issues of minority rights and identity concerns that are closely related to the notion of multiculturalism in the south Asian perspective. Urmila Phadnis and Rajat Ganguly in their book “Ethnicity and nation-building in South Asia” (1989) mainly deal with the dynamics of ethnic identities and movements in South Asian states in a comparative way. Subsequently, a number of pertinent ethnic movements- e.g., Jharkhand, Assam, Telangana and Gorkhaland in India, and Sindh as well as the Pakhtun movement in Pakistan- have been only touched upon.

“Ethnicity and Constitutional Reform in South Asia” by IFtekharruzaman (1998) probe into the problem of ethnicity in South Asia and examines it and to what extent constitutional reform is a way out. Will Kymlicka and Baogang He in their edited book “multiculturalism in Asia” (2005) explore the different ways in which ethnic and religious diversity is conceptualized and debated in South and East Asia. Using both case studies and thematic essays, they examine the pre-colonial traditions, colonial legacies, and post-colonial ideologies that influence contemporary debates on multiculturalism in the region. It further explores the areas of convergence and divergence between these different perspectives, and the extent to which they provide viable frameworks for managing ethnic and religious diversity in the region.

“Anthropology, Politics and the State: democracy and violence in South Asia” by Jonathan Spencer (2007) offers a new way of analyzing the relationship between culture and politics, with special attention to democracy, nationalism, the state and political violence. Beginning with scenes from an unruly early 1980s, the election campaign in Sri Lanka, it covers issues

from rural policing in north India to slum housing in Delhi, presenting arguments about secularism and pluralism, and the ambiguous energies released by electoral democracy across the sub-continent. He tried to establish a close link between culture and politics.

“Diversity, Ethnicity and Identity in South Asia” edited by A. R. Momin (2009) is comprised of papers by a galaxy of scholars who deal with a wide range of theoretical and empirical themes and issues in the context of South Asia, including Multicultural state, pluralism, shifting identities, ethnic violence, national identity, tribal autonomy, and the interface of religion and identity which are the major concerns of a multicultural society. Rita Manchanda in her book “The No-Nonsense Guide to Minority Rights in South Asia” (2009) highlights the efforts towards improving the situation of the minorities and indigenous peoples in the region, particularly through the strengthening of the provisions for autonomy as well as the importance of institutions of federalism to deal with multiple identities. She again in “States in conflict with their minorities: challenges to minority rights in South Asia” (2010) explores the modern state-making process, recognizing nation and the state as majoritarian concepts. She highlighted the limits of the strategy of political liberalism in delivering equality and justice to minority groups, but it also points to a positive shift in the politics of some of the minority communities- a moving away from the politics of difference towards a politics centred on egalitarian claims, and common issues of democratic governance. After locating examples of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka she encompasses issues such as stereotyping of minorities, state-induced politics of polarization, and development of an economy of collusion and cooperation, and institutions that enable greater inclusion which is a soul concern of the multicultural study.

Considering the nature of state and society and the democratic structure some scholars have focused on the issues of nation-building, ethnic concern, identity issues, minority rights, social security and politics from the Indian multicultural perspective. T. K. Oommen in his book “State and Society in India: studies in nation-building” (1990) presents a bold and refreshing analysis, characterizes the Indian polity as constituting a large number of ‘nations’ and ‘ethnies’. The deep attachment of each ‘nation to its homeland, coupled with the underdeveloped state of the economy, gives rise to a distinction between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, a rupture that is a major source of the tensions and conflict in independent India. Prof. Oommen asserts that most of these conflicts are the result of erroneous conceptualizations arising out of misplaced polarities that juxtapose nation and state, political nationalism and cultural nationalism. Thus, most confrontations do not pose a threat to the

Indian polity as they are essentially assertions of cultural identity. Arguing for language-based nation formation and cultural pluralism, Prof. Oommen asserts that any attempt to shape nations on the basis of religion is the only real threat to the Indian polity and should, therefore, be discouraged. Therefore, the real task of nation-building entails nurturing pluralism in all contexts- values, technology, and culture.

“State and Politics in India: essays in a comparative perspective” by Andre Beteille (1992) focuses upon the relationship between various forms of inequality and distinction (race, caste, tribe, ethnicity and gender) and on concepts of the person; on the relationship between the values of equality and individualism; and on the ambivalent role of the modern Indian state as the guarantor of these values.

Three volumes of “Explaining Indian Democracy” by Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph (2008) explained the working of India’s democratic system through the realm of institutions, public sphere and ideas of political culture, modernization, civil society, and orientalism and apply them to questions of social change.

T. K. Oommen in his “Crisis and Contention in Indian Society” (2005) deals with the various issues confronting India’s society and polity today. He expressed the threat posed by upper-caste homogenous identity which results in secessionist movements demanding autonomy.

by relating the concepts of multiculturalism, citizenship, economic rights and right to a certain quality of life Nalini Rajan in her book “Democracy and the Limits of Minority Rights” (2002) stated that those minority rights are not the only way to counter majoritarianism. She further advocates structural and constitutional changes to render the Indian polity more federal, particularly through devolution and local self-governance. Again, “Identities and Rights: Aspects of Liberal Democracy in India” (1998) by Gurpreet Mahajan locates the close relationship between religious communities and the state, minority rights, secularism and reservations in Indian liberal democratic tradition. Shefali Jha also in her essay on “Rights versus Representation: Defending Minority Interests in the Constituent Assembly” (2003) argues that the granting of a range of individual and collective religious rights to the minorities was used, in the constituent assembly, to justify the refusal of their demand for more adequate mechanisms of representation, for instance, for proportional representation or for reserved seats in the legislature.

“Tradition, Pluralism and Identity” edited by Veena Das, Dipankar Gupta and Patricia Uberoi (1999) favours recognition of a state itself in plurality and change rather than in stasis. They

highlight the relations forged between tradition and modernity leaves a mark on tradition as it is encoded in everyday life.

Imtiaz Ahmad, Partha S. Ghosh and Helmut Reifeld in their edited book "Pluralism and Equality: Values in Indian Society and Politics" (2000) places secularism, pluralism, equality and the state in the comparative perspective of Europe and India, and examines how these core-values have been critical in shaping social and political institutions.

"Ethnicity, Nationalism and Integration" edited by Ajit K Danda (1999) reviewed the various notion of ethnicity, nationalism and integration in the context of identity and integration of the Indian dichotomy, in both the cases of Indian tribes and Indian mainstream, and asserts that the complexity of the problem of ethnicity and associated developments are of such magnitude that despite considerable attention to the subject by specialists over decades, a good deal more is required to be known for drawing up a blueprint toward resolution of the problems associated with ethnicity and to cultivate the spirit of integration.

"Ethnonationalism in India" edited by Sanjib Baruah (2010) deals with the areas of separatism, secessionism, sub-nationalism, and regionalism. Elaborating the issues of virtues and drawbacks of India's federalism, complicated political process and India's ethnic democratic structures, shows the experiences of managing ethnonational diversity.

Apart from different social issues migration has also been a topic of concern to many scholars. Due to this migration and changes in the location social formation face several changes and migrated people as well. M.S.A Rao in his book "Studies in Migration" (1986) brings together twelve essays focusing on the historical, demographic dimension of migration. A wide range of migration situations from the rural to international are explored and many conceptual, theoretical and empirical aspects of the phenomenon are explored. His principal focus of analysis throughout is the human aspects of migration- poverty, deprivation and subsistence. Ranabir Samaddar on the other hand in his book "The marginal nation: transborder migration from Bangladesh to West Bengal" (1999) tried to analyse the issue of migration from an international perspective. He challenges the validity of the concept of the nation-state in the context of post-colonial South Asia. He demystifies the constructs of 'borders' and 'national territory' by bringing to the fore the viewpoints of the migrants themselves. He questions the practical value of these terms by showing how the flow of people across the Indo-Bangladesh border is prompted by historical and social affinities, geographical contiguity, and the economic imperative. Again, Abhijit Dasgupta, Masahiko

Togawa and Abul Barkat in their edited book “Minorities and the State: Changing Social and Political Landscape of Bengal” (2011) examine the formation of minority identity at the time of partition of India in 1947 and in subsequent decades. They emphasize the crisis and coping strategies, migration, and state-local level politics affecting minorities.

With the changes in the perspective of looking at social issues and concerns, S. L. Doshi in his book “Postmodern Perspectives on Indian Society” (2008) applies the perspective of postmodernity to the interpretation of increasingly changing contemporary Indian society. He has applied the perspectives of postmodernism to analyze the major social institutions of Indian society and shows that Indian society is increasingly becoming postmodern, deconstructing the old norms of society.

With the urge to look beyond assimilation different scholars locate the complexities and availability of multicultural setups in the Indian context. Amir Ali in his article “Case for Multiculturalism in India” (2000) talked about the actual position of India as a multicultural state. Beginning with the constitutional acceptance of multicultural values, he further concentrated on the public/private dichotomy and finally emphasises a uniform structure of social and civil rights to build India as a strong Multicultural state. Harihar Bhattacharya also, in his article “Multiculturalism in Contemporary India” (2003) focuses on the institutional measures for the recognition and accommodation of the country’s diversity in the Indian context. He further focuses on the areas of statehood within the Indian federation as well as sub-statehood in the form of regional or Tribal District Councils for political recognition of territorially based ethnic identity. Rochana Bajpai in “Debating Difference: Group Rights and Liberal Democracy in India” (2011) makes an important involvement in the current debate on multiculturalism and shows how much western political theory can benefit from expanding its horizon to include creative non-western experiences. Its major thrust is on group rights dealing with the concepts of secularism, social justice, nation unity and development in a liberal democracy. On the other hand, Gurpreet Mahajan in “Accommodating Diversity” (2011) delineates the policies and institutional arrangements that were specifically designed to accommodate religious, linguistic and cultural diversities prevalent in Indian multicultural society. Gurpreet Mahajan also said about the true essence of multiculturalism in dealing with identity conflict. In her article entitled “responding to identity conflicts: Multiculturalism and the Pursuit of Peaceful Co-Existence” (2010) while dealing with the identity conflict of the ethnic groups’ stresses on the issue that accommodation must attend to the claims of

minorities within the nation-state as well as to the claims of the marginalized groups within the communities of the region where the minority constitutes a majority.

1.5.2 Conflict Management

Academicians have also stressed concern on social conflicts and various ways to deal with the conflict situation all over the world. Karl Cordell and Stefan Wolff in their book “Ethnic Conflict” (2009) investigate a number of ethnic conflicts over time and across continents and tried to develop an analytical model which can be applied to specific conflict situations. Investigating the causes and consequences of ethnic conflict, the authors argue that the most effective responses are those that take into account factors at the local, state, regional and global levels and that avoid seeking simplistic explanations and solutions to what is a truly complex phenomenon. John Hutchinson in his book “Nations as Zones of Conflict” (2004) argues that nations consist of culturally diverse ethnic identities, formed and transformed through conflict shaken by the unpredictable challenges of modernity, and riven thus by cultural wars that threaten national cohesion yet offer communities multiple opportunities in times of change. “Internal Conflicts in South Asia” by Kumar Rupesinghe and Khawar Mumtaz (1996) explores the causes and dynamics of conflicts in South Asia in order to identify the possibilities for transforming and resolving them into peaceful solutions. They focus mainly on India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. They tried to locate the positive and negative roles of governments, of the democratic process, of the army, police and the media as potential defenders of civil society.

Anton Van Harskamp in his edited book “Conflicts in Social Science” (1996) share the basic assumption that conflicts in Social Science must be worked out at the level of the individual social scientific disciplines rather than at the level of philosophy. Through a range of detailed case studies, they talked about different ways in which social scientists deal with the tension implied by being at the same time both party to a conflict and a contributor to the settlement of the conflict. Paul F. Diehl and Joseph Lepgold in “Regional Conflict Management” (2003) represents a multiyear project for understanding and evaluating conflict management efforts. They tried to provide generalizations and lessons for conflict management over the globe, albeit through region-specific mechanisms. The book “Negotiating Peace in Deeply Divided Societies: A Set of Simulations” edited by Radha Kumar (2009) talks about six simulation exercises, which cover the following aspects of negotiating peace in deeply divided societies- one, conflict management; two, initiating Confidence Building Measures that pave the way

for political resolution; three, addressing the root causes of conflict; four, arriving at a comprehensive agreement to end the conflict; and five, post-conflict peacebuilding.

Donald Horowitz identified five ways through which conflicts can be reduced in his book “Ethnic Groups in Conflict” (1985). He stressed Dispersion, emphasis on intra-ethnic conflict, incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation, encouragement for non-ethnic alliances and reduction of disparity between groups to deal with the conflicts. Alexis Heraclides in his article “Conflict Resolution, Ethnonationalism and the Middle East Impasse” (1989) talked about classical modes, in which states strive to resolve revolutionary ethnic conflicts.

John Mc Garry and Brendan O’Leary in their article “The Political regulation of National and Ethnic Conflict” (1994) argued in favour of some methods for eliminating differences and managing differences to address conflicts by some experiences of European and African history.

Marc Weller and Stefen Wolf in their book, “Autonomy, Self-governance and Conflict Resolution” (2005) talks about the recent developments in the design of complex and innovative autonomy regimes and focus on different options of reducing conflicts.

Thomas Benedikter in his edited work “Solving Ethnic Conflict through Self-Government: A Short Guide to Autonomy in South Asia and Europe” (2009) talked about the autonomy movement in South Asia and tried to show, how such conflicts were solved through self-government measures by analysing various case studies.

Although academic works with specific reference to Terai and Doon region’s social Conflicts and conflict management measures are rarely available, there is no paucity of literature on the theoretical aspects of conflict and resolution in India.

Sanjib Baruah (2010) in his edited volume “Ethnonationalism” raised the question: “How is India doing vis-a-vis the challenge of managing its exceptional diversity?” the essays collectively tried to answer the question. Kanti Bajpai highlighted a mixed process of state violence and political compromise to address the situation. Gurharpal Singh focused on ‘conventional wisdom to deal with ethnic conflict in India’s democracy. Katharine Adeney advocated the federal nature of government and Maya Chadda said about integration through internal reorganization to deal with ethnic conflicts. On the other side, Sumit Ganguly warned about the dangers of using an army against ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic society like India.

“Ethno-Social Conflict and National Integration” (1993) by P.N. Rastogi attempts to understand and explain ethnic conflict as a generic problem-phenomenon besting most plural

societies. The analysis further proceeds toward identifying the requirements of monitoring, predictive inference, and problem-solving in this context. Situations of ethnic opprobrium in India, as well as, other plural societies are seen to be the empirical, isomorphic variations of the problem's basic dynamic structure. Short term and long-term policy measures for the resolution of the problems are identified from analysis. The latter also enables one to uncover the what, why, how, when and what needs to be done, aspects of the-social conflict and national integration.

Jugdep Chima in his book "The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India: Patterns of Internalization" (2010) argued that internal clashes and competition between state elites often contribute to the emergence of ethnic conflicts and their internal unity and cooperative action can release the situation.

"Social Conflict" by N. Jayaram and Satish Saberwal (2011) deals with family conflicts, cultural conflicts, political conflicts and conflicts in the workplace. They further tried to put a light on the conflict resolution procedure in the Indian context.

Bhupinder Singh in his book "Autonomy movements and Federal India" (2002) deals with the arguments and aspirations of some ethnic communities to acquire, through socio-political movements, some measure of control over societal resources like political power, economic endowment and social status. Their goals vary from total independence to degrees of autonomy within the constitutional federal framework. In this book, the Indian Constitution is visualised as an architecturally multifaceted modern edifice of accommodative versatility. Given the will and capability of political management, the multiplying demands of a tumultuous polity are not difficult to be lodged therein. It is emphasised that realisation of the potential of the now constitutionally mandated radical panchayat system is essential for a comprehensive harmony of the total architectural design of a federal India.

"Conflict Resolution in Multicultural Societies: The Indian Experience" (2014) by Jhumpa Mukherjee seeks to identify the key to India's success as an integrated democracy amidst a whole lot of trajectories. She primarily deals with the question of accommodation of ethno-regional identities in India and emphasizes the role of multicultural decentralization as the central key to the resolution of manifold ethnonational conflicts. She further advocated multicultural decentralization to deal with social conflicts, though she did not specify any specific case.

1.5.3 Tribal Politics

“State, Society, and Tribes: issues in Post-Colonial India” by Virginius Xaxa (2008) revisits the concepts of ‘tribe’ and ‘tribal society’, situating the existing body of knowledge in the context of state policy and socio-cultural developments witnessed in India after independence. Critiquing the terms of the discourse of indigenous people and *adivasi* consciousness, it explores and evaluates the question of citizenship rights. Delving into long-standing debates on tribal movements, autonomy issues, protective discrimination, and empowerment, it moves on to larger questions of the politics of ethnic identity, language, gender and religion.

Meena Radhakrishna in her edited work “First Citizens: Studies on Adivasis, Tribals, and Indigenous peoples in India” (2016) engages with the political and historical processes which go into the making of differential identities and adoption of specific labels by communities and explores a number of critical issues confronting this extremely vulnerable section of Indian society. Highlighting these communities’ attempts to organize a broad-based social movement to challenge ecologically destructive and non-inclusive economic policies, the book shows their struggle to claim a common identity as Indian citizens.

Nishi K. Dixit in his book “Tribes and Tribals: Struggle for Survival” (2006) seeks to document changes in the socio-economic life of tribals, while critically examining the tribal’s struggle for survival. He tried to relate various areas including globalisation, social exclusion, health problems, human rights, marginalisation, land alienation, tribal self-rule, national policies, forest rights and various conventions concerning the present situation of indigenous and tribal peoples.

Ved Pal Singh Deswal in his article “Role of the State in Protection of the Rights of Tribal Communities” (2016) points out that the Indian government have been rigorously seized by the issue of making public policies sensitive towards the tribal communities. Over the decades, the process of development has frequently led to a progressive erosion of their traditional rights over their land resources including the forest. The author emphasizes the need to join hands with NGOs, social activists, media and government to make the proper implementation of the policies and laws which have been made by the Parliament of India.

However, there are some pieces of literature are also available on the tribal situation in North Bengal Region. Samir Kumar das in his work “Migrations, Identities and Democratic Practices in India” (2018) tried to reconcile the culturally specific forms of self-expression in

the North Bengal region. After discussing various competing identities and movements for separate statehood he observed as long as there will remain excess of such claims and demands that these institutions are unable to contain and absorb, democracy will remain forever inadequate.

“Can the garden be my home: Land, livelihood, and Life-world of Tea Garden in North Bengal” (2015) by Lalit P. Tirkey tries to look into the issue of insecurity of tea plantation workers in the face of the crisis faced by the tea industry in the North Bengal region. He further attempts to unfold the contours and complexities of livelihood threats encountering tea workers who are mostly adivasis and explore the possibilities of livelihood options, particularly the ownership of land that acts as a buffer during any livelihood crisis.

Sanjay K. Roy again in his article “Modes of Alienation of Adivasi Land in North Bengal: A Field View” (2014) tries to look into the aspects of alienation of *adivasi* land in the districts of North Bengal and underlines the gravity of the problem. He focuses on the implications of such alienation on their life. He highlighted how the neo-liberal development paradigm has turned *adivasis* into victims. Sanjay K. Roy again in his work “The Integrationist State, Expanding Market, and the Struggle of the Adivasis in the Dooars and Terai for a self” (2011) tries to focus on the struggle of the Adivasi people of the Dooars and Terai region and the issue of integration in the present liberal democratic order. From a Marxist point of view, the article tries to establish the link between the market system in a liberal economic order and the problem of integration of *adivasi* people.

Sharit K Bhowmik in his article “Wages of Tea Plantation workers: Gap between North and South” (2015) highlighted the issue of wages of the tea plantation workers of West Bengal. He compared the situation of the wage distribution in West Bengal and Assam with tea plantations of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. “Living Conditions of Tea Plantation Workers” (2015) Article by Sharit K Bhowmik deals with the question of underpayment of wages, livelihood and starvation deaths of the tea garden workers with special emphasis on Kerala, West Bengal and Assam. In the article, he blames the state and central government for not paying adequate attention to the major issues of the tea garden workers.

Sanjay K. Roy in his paper “Marginalisation, Alienation and Ethnic Identity Formation: The Case of the Adivasis in Dooars and Terai Regions of North Bengal” (2015) argues that the shared perception of land loss and a common experience of marginalization in the economic, social and political spheres together have prepared the ground for the *adivasi* ethnic

movement in the Terai and Dooars region. He further tries to locate the nature of the movement and its fate in a situation where political parties were only concerned about narrow self-interest.

While making an overview of the books and articles, it seems to me that the works have dealt with various aspects of *adivasi* issues and problem areas of their identity construction. But there is a research gap in the area firstly; there is very limited work on the *adivasi* movement and conflict situation in the Terai and Dooars region of North Bengal. Second, so far as the role of state and non-state institutions and actors in a multicultural democracy in managing and resolving conflict arising out of ethnocultural differences and identity issues of the *adivasi* people of this region in particular. The present study, therefore, is an attempt to fill the gap by analyzing the *adivasi* movement and the conflict situation in the Terai and Dooars region on one hand and the role of governmental institutions in the process of management of the conflict on the other.

1.9 Methodology

Hardly a day goes by without some seeming manifestation of ethnicity in political and social life being reported on. Conflict situations of Bodoland, Jharkhand, and Gorkhaland; new state formation in the Telangana; issues of multi-culturalism and security in Kashmir; and the re-interpretation of historical memories and myths in places as far as north-east and Central India all point to the salience of ethnicity as a critical factor in today's complex social order. In short, we seek to problematize notions of ethnicity and identity, and explore why political and social life is affected by agendas and aspirations defined by 'ethnicity' or the sense of belonging to a particular community, and how this ethnopolitical outlook (whether of actors or observers) affects societies. Hence, my study on the management of *Adivasi* conflict follows the same path of ethnopolitical study.

1.9.1 Research Design

Research Methodology plays an important role in identifying the research problem and determining the research design. Focusing on the *adivasi* people as a tribal community, multicultural societal nature and conflict management, as three major aspects of my work constituted the very first step to working out a methodological stand for the thesis work. At very first the culturally enriched ethnic nature of my study group led me towards an ethnographic approach. But, in a diverse and complex social structure, a rigid method of study may not result in a fruitful outcome, hence I was relying on grounded theory to get a

loose format to work in a complex situation. On the other hand, a diverse multicultural society cannot remain always peaceful or conflict-ridden. Conflict and peace are relative social conditions and stability in both cases is not possible. Hence, conflict management tries to manage the situation and establish a peaceful social order which may not be permanent in nature. Thus, the study of mechanisms and measures turns important here to deliver and protect the interests of the conflict parties, as only through this peace could be gained and conflict would be managed in a meaningful sense. In such a situation both the application of ethnographic and ground theory approaches in the political domain turns relevant to me.

Primarily the study was moulded by an ethnographic approach, which focuses on the description and interpretation of a culture or social group based on observation of either participant or non-participants. Such an approach aims to understand another way of life from the native point of view by focusing on ordinary, everyday behaviour (Bloor and Wood, 2001, p.69). The approach of ethnography has developed in recent times and extends its accessibility in the social science domain. Recent development in the approach to ethnography advocates the need to learn how everyday life is associated with, and changes in relation to, the political process that may exceed the boundaries of groups, communities, regions and states. The value of the ethnographic method extends to highlight casual links, brings to the fore alternative causal paths and in cases where media outlets are controlled by political interests, and poverty, lack of infrastructure, illiteracy, or political violence impede survey research, ethnographic approaches are often the most reliable and practical means of collecting data (Volo and Scatz, 2004: 268-269). Here, the researcher's intention was merely not to follow the methods of ethnographic details. The focus of the study was rather lied on the use of various sources of data in narrative form and aimed at rectifying the facts with interpretations.

Our work later on intended to structure by grounded theory, which is described as an approach to analysis, which may use a bundle of specific techniques in flexible and different ways, with the aim of gathering theoretical insights from qualitative data (Bloor and Wood, 2001: 95-96). Grounded theory tends to be more reflective of practical situations and advocates adaptation of the new method in any given situation depending on the requirement. As our research work is associated with multiculturalism and a complex ethnic base, I find it worth applicable in work.

Integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods in one study is usually termed as 'mixed methods'. The reason for using more than one method is commonly discussed in the

literature as a means to add new perspectives and offer a richer and more comprehensive picture of the issue. One frequently stated rationale is that society and social phenomena are complex and that one method is not sufficient to represent this complexity (Greene et al., 2001:26). Or as Teddlie and Tashakkori contend: “Mixed methods research can answer research questions that the other methodologies cannot” (2003:14, quoted in Bryman, 2006: 118). Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005: 384) argue that “mono-method research is the biggest threat to the advancement of the social sciences”, and particularly point to the benefits of mixing quantitative and qualitative methods. In this thesis, mostly qualitative methods are employed and they are combined rather than integrated. Therefore, I am using the term multiple methods in order to distinguish my methodological approach from ‘mixed methods’. In my research, the purpose of applying multiple methods is to provide a broader insight into the cases that would otherwise be not possible.

1.9.2 Method

The methodologies which have been followed for the study are both descriptive and empirical. The data and information have been collected both from primary and secondary sources.

1.9.2.1 Empirical Method - Primary data have been gathered from the field study through interviews of the respondents with schedules. Semi-structural interviews, Focus Group Discussions are also adopted for this purpose. For the descriptive study, materials have been collected from different sources like official minutes, proceedings, published and unpublished documents and other official records. Leaflets, pamphlets of the *adivasi* movement of the region and various memorandums submitted to the government of West Bengal as well as to the central government were the main source of primary data.

1.9.2.1.i Semi-structured interviews: Face-to-face interviews are conducted to generate qualitative data and information. The interview method with the semi-structured schedule has been followed for such data collection. The interviews have been conducted with the state-level leaders of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad, as well as of the regional units of the Terai and Dooars region.

1.9.2.1.ii Focus Group Discussion: Focus group discussion and schedule methods are followed to receive responses from the participants and beneficiaries of the movement. This method has been used to quantify and observe collective reactions on the generic issues that affected the *adivasi* people as a group who directly or indirectly participated in the

movement. Such information is required to identify reasons for such conflict situations, the policy spheres, development schemes, and the role of local government.

1.9.2.1.iii Schedule: The scheduled method has been employed for collecting quantitative primary data. Since the research focused on some sensitive questions, besides formal interviews, preliminary discussions have been done with some of the respondents.

1.9.2.2 Theoretical Method - The data from secondary sources have been collected through content analysis and compiled from books and journals, historical records and gazetteers, other unpublished reports, press reports, website information and government and NGO documents and data publications, including census sources.

1.9.3 Respondent Category

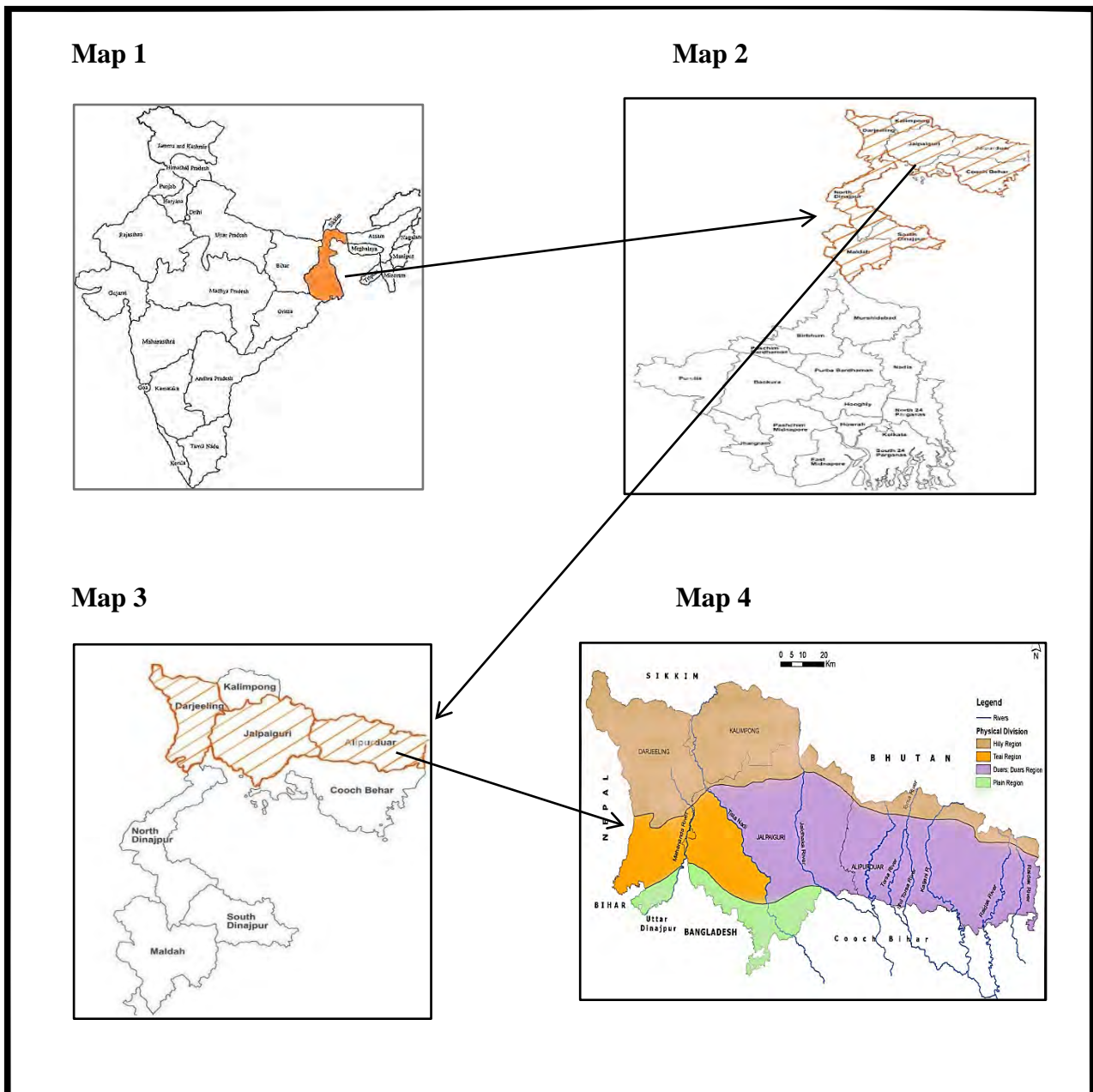
Overall, there are two groups of respondents. The first group of respondents is the *adivasi* and *non-adivasi* people and the second is the leaders of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad. Consequently, two sets of questions have been framed to reach out to the target.

1.9.4 Location of the Research

The *adivasi* movement has been generated and restricted within the Terai and Dooars region of West Bengal under the umbrella of the Adivasi Vikas Parishad. The Parishad has become active and open for around 200 units in the Terai and Dooars region. So, keeping in mind the area of movement the study area has been selected. This section presents a brief profile of the Terai and Dooars region of West Bengal.

This northern part of West Bengal is further divided into Terai and Dooars regions. The Teesta has divided the area into two parts- the western part is known as the Terai whereas the eastern part is known as the Dooars. The 'Terai' ("moist land") is a belt of marshy grasslands, savannas, and forests at the base of the Himalayan range stretching southwards to about 38 km. The altitude of the Dooars area ranges from 90 to 1,750 m. The Terai and Dooars region constitute the plains of Darjeeling district, the whole of Jalpaiguri District, Alipurduar District and the upper region of CoochBehar District in West Bengal. Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri, Malbazar, Mainaguri and Birpara are the major urban conglomerations in the Dooars in West Bengal.

Figure No. 1.1 Location of the Research



[Map 1: Map of India, orange colour showing the location of West Bengal. Map 2: Map of West Bengal, orange colour border showing the area of North Bengal. Map 3: Orange colour borders showing Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar District comprised of Terai and Doars regions of North Bengal. Map 4: Map showing Terai and Doars region.]

Source map 1: <https://maps-india-in.com/india-map-sketch> (modified)

Source map 2 and 3: <https://www.alamy.com/west-bengal-districts-map-with-name-labels-white-background-image424626564.html> (modified)

Source map 4: Department of Science and Technology, West Bengal (modified)

The Dooars region is mainly located under the Jalpaiguri and Alipurduar district administration. The Jalpaiguri district comprises of two subdivisions: Jalpaiguri Sadar and Malbazar. Jalpaiguri Sadar consists of Jalpaiguri and Rajganj municipalities and Jalpaiguri Sadar, Dhupguri, Maynaguri and Rajganj community development blocks. Malbazar subdivision, also known as Mal subdivision, consists of Malbazar municipality and three community development blocks: Mal, Matiali and Nagrakata. Alipurduar district consists of Alipurduar municipality and six community development blocks: Madarihat–Birpara, Alipurduar–I, Alipurduar–II, Falakata, Kalchini and Kumargram. According to the 2011 census, 5.08% of people of the state of West Bengal belong to ST, while in Jalpaiguri district it is 13.08%. It is found that in the Matiali and Nagrakata blocks about half of the people are ST. In Kalchini, Madarihat- Birpara, Mal and Kumargram nearly 1/3rd of people are tribal.

On the other hand, the Terai region is located under the Darjeeling district. The district comprises four subdivisions: Darjeeling Sadar, Mirik, Kurseong and Siliguri. Darjeeling is the district's headquarter. There are 17 police stations, 12 community development blocks, 4 municipalities, 1 Municipal Corporation and 134gram panchayats in this district. The Terai region is mainly under the Siliguri subdivision, which consists of four blocks: Matigara, Naxalbari, kharibari and Phansidewa. Among these blocks, Naxalbari and Phansidewa are highly populated by tribal people.

Selection of the Block - For this research purpose, six blocks from Terai and Dooars region have been selected mostly on the basis of *adivasi* representation and area of conflict. Malbazar and Nagrakata block from Jalpaiguri District, Kalchini and Birpara block of Alipurduar District and Phansidewa block and Naxalbari block of Siliguri subdivision under Darjeeling District have been selected purposively.

1.9.5 Data Collection

Data is collected from both primary and secondary sources. Qualitative and quantitative analysis has been done for data collected as the primary source through a field study of the respondents using the personal interview method. In the research systematic random sampling method is used to collect the data. Samples are selected from the universe of the voter list. Altogether 300 respondents are selected for conducting interviews. The researcher has used governmental statistics, governmental notices, official website information, official documents of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad both from state and regional units,

press reports, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district Gazetteers, unpublished reports, books and journals which are used for constructing the basic structure of the research.

1.9.6 Field study – the researcher has used the field study method to study the nature and pattern of the movement, participation of the *adivasi* people in the movement, the role of government institutions and outcome, and the satisfaction level of *adivasi* people.

1.9.7 Interview Schedule –

To conduct the interview the researcher had prepared two types of questions- unstructured questions to get the qualitative responses from the respondents and a structured questionnaire was prepared to receive the quantitative responses from the respondents.

1.9.8 Variables of the interview Schedule-

Here the variables that have been selected are the sex, tribe, age, educational status, economic condition (income of the respondents), and occupational status of the respondents. On the other hand, areas of development, social identity, and identity concern are other aspects that have been considered. Their viewpoint on the movement, participation status and reasons have been also incorporated. Further responses of different governmental units on the demands and the satisfaction status of the respondents have also been considered. Finally, the result of the movement, status of the movement in the present situation and future possibilities has been rectified. All these variables would help the research to explore the socio-economic condition, their social position, developmental perspective, the level of mass participation in the movement, the initiative of the governmental units and the outcome of the movement.

1.9.9 Data Processing

The researcher has used some statistical methods like tables and charts to represent the data and to show the relationships between variables. Two sets of schedules are prepared for interviewing the two groups of respondents including both open and close-ended questions. The data gathered from the close-ended questions were converted into statistical analysis. On the other hand, the content analysis process has been adopted to analyse data gathered from open-ended questions.

1.9.10 Time taken

The blocks, selected from the Terai region, under the Siliguri subdivision of Darjeeling District, i.e. Phansidewa and Naxalbari are not so far from the living area of the researcher,

thus it took 21 days to cover all the interviews of 100 respondents in the month of August 2014. But it was a problem for the researcher when the interview is conducted in the blocks of Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri districts due to distance. The researcher first covered the Malbazar and Nagrakata blocks of the Jalpaiguri district in 17 days and the Birpara and Kalchini blocks of the Alipurduar district in 18 days and the research stayed in the place and conducted the research.

1.9.11 Time frame

The entire period of research has been divided into four phases. The first phase, covering a time of one year has been devoted to locating and identifying the foundations of the conceptual framework, relevant for the present study. In the second phase, the researcher examined in detail the theoretical framework (mainly secondary data from books and journals and primary data from official documents of ABAVP). In the third phase, the researcher has concentrated on data collection and analysis of the respondents. The final phase has been devoted to preparing the research aims in the completion of work.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

The research work has two major areas to look into. One part concentrates on the *adivasi* conflict under the supervision of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad, while the other part focuses on the various conflict management mechanisms concentrating on the actions of state and non-state actors. However, for the feasibility of the research, keeping both spatial and temporal limits of the study, some delimitation of the study turns essential. As the *adivasi* movement was initiated and carried out under the leadership of Adivasi Vikash Parishad, and all the actions and movement programmes were decided by them, data have been collected concentrating on their activity. Though the conflict and movement part of the study is very essential, the major focus of the research lies in the management of the conflict and state response. The movement is mostly handled and managed by the state government of West Bengal, and central and local governments have a very limited role to play to resolve the conflict.

1.11 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into six chapters. **Chapter I** have provided the background, the rationale of the study, statement of the problem, literature review, methodology and theoretical framework adopted for the purpose of research. **Chapter II** attempts to build a theoretical frame of multiculturalism and the existence of a multicultural structure in Indian

society covering various aspects of democracy, diversity, pluralism, nationalism, minority rights, and globalization from a liberal, post-colonial and post-modern perspective. **Chapter III** dwells upon the Theoretical framework of conflict management highlighting various theories and attributes of social conflict in general and India in particular. This chapter further discusses the various sides of conflict management mechanisms from a theoretical standpoint. **Chapter IV** takes an analysis of the nature and dimension of the *adivasi* conflict in the Terai and Dooars region focusing on the very core existence of *adivasi* people in the Indian subcontinent and their living conditions in the region. This chapter further elaborates on the emergence and shape of the conflict. **Chapter V** tries to identify the various mechanisms and agents of conflict management resting on the Indian Constitution, Central government, state government and various local-level administrative institutions. **Chapter VI** tries to analyse the data collected from the *adivasi* and non-*adivasi* respondents and ABAVP leaders from the fields of the Terai and Dooars regions. **Chapter VII** deals with the overall findings of the thesis and explains the observations.

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