North East India represents the fusion of two great traditions Indic culture and Mongoloid culture. The Region comprises of seven states known as the Seven Sisters namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram it is also connected to the Himalayan state of Sikkim and to the Darjeeling Hills of the West Bengal. It also connects India to various countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Tibet. Formation of these states began during the British Colonial Period. At this time it was ruled as a part of Bengal Province. The state of Assam came into existence in 1874. After the independence in 1947, the North Eastern region comprised of Assam, and the princely states of Manipur and Tripura. Later Nagaland in 1963 and Meghalaya in 1972, Arunachal Pradesh in 1975 and Mizoram in 1987 were formed. Manipur and Tripura were Union Territories of India between 1956 and 1972 after which they attained fully-fledged statehood.

This region is abode of various tribes enriching these states with various cultural diversities. There are about 220 languages spoken in these states, belonging mainly to three language families, namely Indo- Aryan, Sino- Tibetan and Austric. The Indo Aryan is represented mainly by Assamiya and Bangla, Austro Asiatic is represented mainly by Khasi and the Sino- Tibetan family of languages by the Tibeto- Burman. The area is enriched with bio-diversity. It is also known for its unique culture, handicrafts, martial arts, and scenic beauty. Each state has its own unique features, distinct geographical details and various tribal communities with different rituals and culture. Margaret Ch. Zama (author) says,
The Great variety of people of the North East survived through the centuries because they were one with ecology, and developed their own indigenous knowledge systems to sustain both themselves and the environment that accommodate them.¹

Places of Historical importance include Ita Fort, Temple of Kamakhya, Powa-Mecca, The Ruin Royal Palace etc. People visit North East India because of the beautiful landscape and pleasant weather. Its Geographical features also make it unique as it is divided into the hills and plains. Tribal population living in these region share their unique culture and tradition. T. Raatan(Director of Public Libraries, Itanagar) writes in his book:

The Region has a high concentration of tribal population. Each tribe has its own distinct tradition of art, culture, dance, music and life styles. The numerous fairs and festivals celebrated by these communities and their friendly nature are irresistible attractions for the visitors.²

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Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh has gained its name as Sun first appears here in India. It is also called the Land of Rising Sun. It is situated on the North Eastern tip of India stretching from the foothills of Eastern Himalayas to a height of about 5000 meters. Area wise it is the largest state of North East region. It comprises of numerous rivers and streams on the complexly formed hill system of Shivalik and Himalayan origin. The state shares a total of 1630 kilometers of international boundary with neighbouring countries, 1030 kilometers with China, 160 kilometers with Bhutan and 440 kilometers with Myanmar. The McMahon line defines the international boundary between India and China. Capital of the state is Itanagar, which is named after Ita Fort meaning fort of bricks, built in fourteenth century AD. Before 1971 Arunachal Pradesh was recognized as Union Territory which became full fledged State with effect from 20 February, 1987.

With an area of 83,743 sq km, the largest of any state in the north-east, Arunachal Pradesh has a population of 1,091,117. There are 20 major tribes which are divided into a number of sub tribes. The major tribes are: Adis, Nishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mismi, Khampti, Noite, Wancho, Tangsha, Singpho, Monpa, Sherdukpen, Aka etc. The first group of people were the Monpas and the Sherdukpens of Tawang and west Kameng district. They follow the Lamaistic traditions of Mahayana Buddhism.

Culturally similar to them are Membas and Khambas who live in the high mountains along the northern borders, in West Siang etc, Khamptis and Singphos
in habiting the eastern part of the state are Buddhists of Hinayana Buddhism. The second group of people Adis, Akas, Apatanis, Bangis, Nishings, Mishmis, Mijis, Tangsas, etc. who worship the sun, the moon namely Donyi-Polo (Donyi- sun, Polo- moon) and Abotani, whom they consider the original ancestors. Their religious rituals largely coincide with the agricultural cycles. The third group comprises of Noctes and Wanchos, adjoining Nagaland in the Tirap and Changlang districts. They are hard working people known for their structured village society in which the hereditary village chief still plays a vital role. There are some 22 tribes inhabiting Arunachal Pradesh and all of them speak different languages which are named after their tribes. The state has remarkable linguistic diversity. Bilingualism and sometimes multilingualism is common in both rural and urban areas. The society of most of these tribes is patriarchal and the fundamental laws of inheritance with variations are not uncommon. They follow endogamy and strictly observe the rule of clan exogamy.

Polygamy is socially sanctioned and is practiced by most of them. The people are highly democratic, and each tribe has its own organized institutions that maintain law and order, decide disputes and take up all activities for the welfare of the tribes and the villages. It is an agrarian economy most of the population lives in the rural belt as agriculture is the main occupation.

If we talk about religion we'll see that here majority of tribes have their own traditional faith and belief. Each tribe has its own rituals and culture. Some worship Donyi Poloism, some are influenced by Buddhist religion and some are converted into Christians. The most common religious practice is animism, in
which deities of nature and various spirits are worshiped. Hindu beliefs and practices have also penetrated the region, especially near Assam lowlands. The natives of this region mostly worship nature in some form or the other. The festival *Kojum Koje* is celebrated by the Adi tribe as they believe in the ancient tale which tells how Biri Bote (the ruler of water) in order to take revenge of his son’s death destroyed the whole land along with the people of Konjum Koje. Only one survivor emerged, popularly known as Nya-nyi-Myete, who floated down to the family of Donyi- Dongor to tell the tale of destruction and to generate new hope for another civilization on Earth. Today this lady is resurrected in the voice of the *miri* during the festival of Unying Aran held in March. This is the start of the Adi New Year, a new agricultural cycle. Like this only other festivals like Solung, Mopin, mykoh, Dree are connected to some tale and various elements of nature are worshipped.

This state is rich in handicrafts and other art forms like dances. Various dance forms performed here are The Wancho Dance, The Idu Mishmi Ritual Dance, Ka fifai Dance Drama etc. Handicrafts include Wood Carvings, Wooden Mask Pottery, Weaving and Weapon making etc. Margaret Ch. Zama says:

…people have lived off its natural resources throughout their history without threat to the ecosystem; therefore the tenets of their traditional practices are deep-rooted in environmental ethics which
support a close and harmonious relationship with nature.\(^3\)

Meghalaya

It is geographically known as the “Meghalaya Plateau” or the “Shillong Plateau”. The area is made of the oldest rock-formations. The state is situated between the Brahmaputra valley in the north and the Bangladesh in the south. The state has most of its land covered by hills interspersed with gorges and small valleys. Endowed with dense rain forests and rivers cascading down undulating terrain, this region is one of the most scenic of the North East States. The Capital of the state is Shillong, one of the loveliest hill resorts in the east, fondly known as the ‘Scotland of the East’. The three main tribal groups residing in this area are: Khasis, Jaintias, Mikris and Garos, who are said to have inhabited this area before the reign of Christians. These tribes evolved out of the migration into north east by the migrants who belonged to the Indo-Chinese linguistic family, the Mon-khmr and Tibeto-Burman.

The British occupied the Garo hills in 1872. The tribal district council was established. The tribes followed the tradition of Kingship. The earliest Jantia Raja is said to have ruled from 1500 AD. They were influenced by the Hindu culture. Meghalaya became the autonomous state on 2 April 1970 and got the status of a full fledged state on 21 January 1972 marking the beginning of a new era of the geo-political history of North East India. At present the state is governed by

elected representatives. It has a unicameral Legislature (Meghalaya Legislative Assembly) consisting of 60 members 29 from khasi hills, 7 from Jantia hills, and 24 from Garo hills. The members are elected directly by the people from territorial constituencies in the state.

Meghalaya covers an area of 22,429 sq. km. Like other states, agriculture is the main economic activity here as well. Khasi, Garo and English are the major languages. However, English is adopted by government as main medium of official communication. The Khasi, Garo and the Jantia are the original inhabitants of Meghalaya and the state still has a predominantly tribal population. Their cultural traits and ethnic origins remain distinctive, mainly due to their long geographical isolation.

If we talk about culture we will see that women here enjoy freedom and albeit in different degrees. Women play a more important role in the social system than the man. They believe that women are personification of nature and so they believe that where women are honoured, there Gods are pleased, but where they are not honoured no sacred rites yield rewards. This belief of these tribal people is also connected to a myth which describes the biological constructs of marriage on a cosmic scale, and the gender markings of Ramew as female and Ryngkew as male are unmistakable.

The matrilineal system of the khasis also carries within it the underpinnings of the relationship between nature and mother built into the complex mechanism of their land tenure system, the social customs and laws.
The youngest daughter of the family acts as a custodian of its land and property. Property is inherited to female line. It is managed by male Mahari. Household responsibilities are shared between the maternal uncle and the father.

If we talk about religion we will see that these Tribal people believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, a powerful creator, and a benign protector. They also believe in a ghost of the spirits, good and bad, whom they propitiate or appease by appropriate offerings. In Garo religion the creator is considered Tatara- Rabuga, they believe that he created this world and people and gives protection against dreaded diseases. His worship demands elaborate rituals and sacrifice of animals like bull, goat, cock etc. The three major tribes prohibit marriage within same clan. They have matrilineal society. Festivals of these people are related to nature and most of them are to worship it to keep it happy.

Desmond L. Kharmawphlaig says,

the khasis of Meghalya believe that nature is impassive and that human responsiveness creates a dialogue between humans and the plants that grow around them.\textsuperscript{4}

A human, accordingly, may develop sensitivity to the voices of plants and this communication is celebrated in myths and rituals.

The major arts practiced in Meghalaya include various dance forms like Shad Sukmysiem, Shad Nongkrem, Laho etc. These are performed during festivals for thanksgiving and other rituals like animal sacrifices etc. The Garos generally sing folk songs relating to birth, marriage, festivals, love and heroic deeds sung to the accompaniments of different types of drums and flutes. In Crafts their main arts are Weaving Costumes and jewelry making etc. Weaving is an ancient art of these tribals. The Khasis are famous for weaving cane mat, called Tlieng, which guarantees a good utility of around 20-30 years.

Tripura

It is the smallest hill state in North East India. It covers 10,491,69 sq. km. and is bordered by Bangladesh on the west, south and north, by Assam on the north-east and by Mizoram on the east. The state has a rich cultural heritage. There are a number of historical Hindu and Buddhist sites. The state has also rich flaura and fauna. The history of this state is shrouded in legends and traditions. Tripura represents a land ruled by the Rajas. It is also said to have played a role in the battle of Kurukshetra. The history of the rulers of Tripura in medieval period is the story of continual fights, particularly with the Sultans of Bengal. In 1947 the agreement of Merger of Tripura with the Indian Union was signed by the Maharani on 15th October 1949. Finally, Tripura became a full fledged state in January 1972.

The total population is approximately 3,191,168. Eighteen tribes with all their traditions and customs make Tripura a cosmopolitan state. Tripras dominate
all other tribes of the state. Laskars and Notias are the other two groups of tribes. This group belongs to the Bodo race. The Mundas, Oraons, Santhals, Bhils, Lepchas, Bhutis migrated to Tripura in recent past. The Kukis form another group of tribes in the state. Hindus are in overwhelming majority. Tribals prefer highlands and relatively remote tracts while others live in the plains.

About 80 percent of the people use Bengali in day-to-day activities. Tripuri the language of community is also written in Bengali script. Almost all Tripuris can speak and understand Bengali. The chief occupation of the population in the state is agriculture. The main activity of more than three-fourths of the workers is agriculture. About 24.3 percent area is available for agriculture use.

A diverse ethnic element among the people of Tripura is that- there are two major racial elements, namely, the Indo Aryans represented by Bengalese and the Indo-Mongoloids represented by a few communities like the Tripuris, the Reangs, the Jamatis, the Noatias, the Kukis, the Halmas, the Chakma, the Mogh and the Lushai.

Besides these major tribes, there are ten more tribes. All the nineteen tribes are classified as ‘scheduled tribes’. If we talk about religion we see that people of Tripura are under the inspiration of Hindu Religion. They had their tribal religion modified by Hinduism. The Cantais and the Deodais are regarded as the custodians of the Tripuri religion and still occupy as exalted a position in society as the Brahmins in Hindu society. Most of the Tribal people have their own tribal
customs and beliefs but in a broader sense of the religion they are believed to be the followers of Hinduism. They worship elements such as the God of water, the God of fire, the God of forests, the God of earth etc.

A trace of their old faith is found in their present practice of striking a bamboo in the ground during religious festivals and worshipping it. Sacrifices form an important part of their religion. The Buffaloes, pigs, goats, and fowls being the animals are ordinarily used for this purpose.

Assam

Assam one of the eastern most states of the Indian Sub continent is bordered in the North West and North East by the Kingdom of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh respectively. Along the south lies Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. Meghalaya lies to her South- West, Bengal and Bangladesh to her West. The state is connected with the rest of the Indian Union by a narrow corridor in the West Bengal that runs for 56 km below the foothills of Bhutan and Sikkim.

The name Assam is of recent origin. It came into use after the conquest of Assam by Ahoms. It is also known that Assam is derived from the word Asama meaning peerless. The land of Assam is in fact, peerless, judging by her exquisite natural beauty, cultural richness and human wealth. Assam has a rich legacy of culture and civilization. It is home to different races of men- Austric, Mongolian, Dravidian, and Aryan, who came to dwell in this land at different points of time.
The early history of Assam is obscure, although there are numerous references in the Mahabharata, and the Puranas. The early inhabitants of Assam can be safely said to be the Australoids or the pre-Dravidians. It was however the Mongoloids who entered the land through the eastern mountainous pass. Different time periods through light on distinct rulers and their reign on this land. After the advent of Assam there were shift in power from lower to upper Assam. In latter part of the sixteenth century they repulsed the Mughal invasions. In 1817, the Burmese took advantage of the dissensions within the Ahom nobility and overran the Brahmaputra Valley.

However in 1838 all of Northeast India became part of the Bengal presidency of British India. The British dismantled the Ahom ruling structure, and made Bengali the official language. In 1912, the partition was nullified, and Assam was made a separate province once more. Early in the twentieth century, the government of India made vast tracts of land available to predominantly Muslim farmers from the provinces of East Bengal for settlement and cultivation.

The total population of Assam is approximately 26,638,407 as per the provisional results of the census of India. The inhabitants of Assam can be divided into three categories, namely the tribal population, the non tribal population, and the scheduled castes. The tribals consist of different ethnocultural groups such as the Kacharis(Bodos), the Miris, the Deoris, the Rabhas, the Nagas, the Garos, the Khasis, etc. The non tribal groups include the Ahoms, the Kayasthas, the Kalitas, and the Morans etc. The Scheduled caste includes the Basfors, Baniyas, the Dhobis, the Hiras, the Kaibartas nd Namasudras.
What we call the Assamese people of today is in fact the result of assimilation and integration of people of different racial stocks who migrated to Assam down the ages. The non tribals can be divided on the basis of religion amongst whom the Muslims constitute the second largest group followed by the Christians, Sikhs and the Buddhists. Tribes are divided into the hill tribes and the plains tribes according to geography of their location. Tribal religion is very close to animism but with ingredients of Hinduism. A considerable part of tribal population has also adopted Christianity. Each of its 23 tribes exhibit distinct and exquisite ways of life. There are tribes like the Bodo Kacharis, Karbis and Lalungs which are purely patriarchal, and the Khasis, Jaintias and Garos which are strictly Matriarchal.

A number of tribes such as the Hmars, Rengma Nagas and Garos have a social institution called the youth Dormitory in which young males live away from their families and undergo training and education.

Assamese is the principal language of Assam, other languages besides this are Bodo, Karbi, Mishing and Rabha. Assamese is an Indo- Aryan language. It developed out of the Sanskrit language about the Seventh century AD. Over 70 per cent of the state’s population, almost 90 per cent of an estimated 22.4 million in 1991, live in rural areas where the main occupation is agriculture. If we talk about religion then we will find that Hindus constitute a majority of the population. They practice different disciplines of Hinduism. Shakti temples such as the Kamakhya shrine at Guwahati and the Kechaikhati temple at
Sadiya stands testimony to a past in which tantricism was predominant form of Hinduism.

Islam and Christianity are the two other religions which have a considerable number of followers in Assam. There are scattered populations of Buddhists, Sikhs and jains in different parts of the state notable among which are the Buddhists among the khatmi tribes and the Assamese Sikhs of Borkhola in the district of Nagaon. There are various kinds of marriages like Bodo, Ahoms, Rabha, Mikri, Miri, Lalungs etc.

Child marriage is still prevalent among the Brahmans and Kayasthas, more particularly in the villages. However death rituals of tribes here are quite interesting the burying of the dead is a common custom. Tribes like Akas, the Adis, the Dalfa’a and most of the Nagas bury the dead. The Mikris and deuris burn the dead. Death considered unnatural is not given the usual treatment, the Adis will not offer food at the grave of pregnant woman or a man killed in an accident. The Deuris will not burn a man who died of an epidemic but first bury them and then exhume the skeleton.

Nagaland

Nagaland is bounded by Assam in the west and north, Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh in the north east, and Manipur in the south. On the east it shares India’s international boundary with Myanmar (Burma). After independence, this territory was made a centrally administered area in 1957, administered by the governor of Assam. It was known as the Naga Hills Tuensang area. This failed to quell
popular aspirations and unrest began. Ultimately in 1961, this was renamed as Nagaland and became one of the Indian states in 1963. Today Nagaland has total 11 districts; the terrain is hilly, rugged and mountainous. The average height of the peaks is between 900m and 1200m.

Till the nineteenth century when the first record of region’s lifestyles was made, the Nagas lived a life centered around agriculture and headhunting and the various rites and rituals connected to the two activities. There are various estimated derivations of the name Nagaland. Some scholars opine that the term NAGA is derived from the word NOK or NOKA which means folks or people. Some say that Naga has evolved from the Kachari word NANGRA which means a warrior. Nagas were never under the British Empire, though many writers claim to be, the British established rule over Assam and gradually annexed the Naga hill area to the British Empire. Basically Nagas are the tribal people with each tribe having its own effective system of self-governance.

Nagas belong to the Indo-Mongoloid stock and their ancestors lived off nature’s abundant gifts, blessed with sturdy formidable dispositions. Above all, they have a reputation for a warm-hearted hospitality. Naga tribes have their own language. In actual practice, the language, even within one tribal area, varies from village to village, there are about thirty languages.

The chief occupation of Naga people is Agriculture. The state produces a considerable amount of rice and agriculture in general plays an important role in the economy of the state. The main crops are rice, millet, maize and pulses.
Coffee, Cardamom and tea are grown as plantation crops in Nagaland. The traditional Naga religion is animistic, though conceptions of a supreme character and an afterlife exist. Nature is seen to be alive with invisible forces, minor deities, and spirits. In the nineteenth century, with the advent of British people, Christianity was introduced, and Baptist missionaries became especially active in the region. As a result population now is predominantly Christian.

The traditions and culture which the Naga people share still represent their old beliefs of head hunting. The villages are divided into Khels, or quarters, each with its own headmen and administration. Dimapur, Kohima. Mokokchung and Tuensang are the only urban centers with more than 20,000 people. The organization of the village community differs from tribe to tribe. The Angami, Lotha, Rengma and Ao villages have a democratic structure. Among the Angamis, although the chief is chosen for his wealth, physical prowess and skill in diplomacy, the decisions are taken collectively by the villagers. On the other hand, the Semas have a system of hereditary village chief.

The entire philosophy of Naga life revolved around the practice of head hunting. It was not only the cause and effect of war; it was also the inscription for the Naga works of art. Most of the traditional Naga carvings and patterns on textile have headhunting as their motif. The village drum could not be beaten unless a head had been taken and placed on it. The warrior who hunted a head was entitled to wear special kind of dress and ornaments. In case of marriages, the Naga tribes follow the exogamous principle. Persons of same clan do not
marry. The only exceptions are the Konyak chiefs who are considered so sacrosanct that their principal wife must be a woman of the same clan.

The major festivals are mostly related to the agriculture. The most important festival of the Aos, is Moastsu, which is celebrated after the sowing is over. Other festivals like Sekrenyi, Sankarni puja, Miu, Tsukhenye, Hega festival etc. are also enjoyed. Various arts performed here are Music and dance, Pottery, Crafts, wood-carvings, headhunting, Morung Pillars, Kharu, Wooden log-drum, Blacksmithy etc. Naga people enjoy playing musical instruments like Trumpets and drums.

Manipur

This state spreads over an area of 22,327sq.km., and a population of 23,338,634 lakhs. Manipur is a state with glorious history and rich and varied culture. The state is bounded by Ngaland in the North, Mizoram in the south, upper Myanmar in the east and Cachar district of Assam in the west. Manipur literally means the land of jewels. People have different stories for the origin of name, some people narrate its link with the Mahabharta. They say the name is from Mani, a jewel.

By virtue of its geographical situation, Manipur is a shining peral in the Himalayan system. Manipuris call it as Meithei Leibak. The scenic beauty, large natural fresh water lake, surrounded by hills, refreshing waterfalls and exotic orchids make this state a place of prime tourist attraction. Manipur represents population of two ethnic groups, the people who inhabit the hills called the Nagas
and those who inhabit the valley called the Meiteis. Imphal is the capital of Manipur. The earliest recorded history dates to 900 AD. In the course of its history there have been several invasions from Myanmar which borders with Manipur and numerous other clashes.

In 1826, Manipur was brought into India by the treaty of Yandavo by Raja Jai Singh with the British at the end of the Indo-Burmese war. During World War II, Imphal was occupied by Japanese. After independence, Manipur became a Union Territory and subsequently achieved statehood in January 21, 1972. According to 2001 census, Manipur has a population of 2,388,634. The sex ratio was 978 females per 1,000 males. The valley that is 12 per cent of the total geographical area had 58.84 per cent of the population while the hills were inhabited by 41.16 per cent. The description of Manipur would be incomplete without the mention of the role of its women, in the home, in the up keeping of the family and in society at large. All over the north-east, weaving on the family loom is often practiced in many households, and some of the beautiful textiles which come from the states in the region are the products of women’s labour.

Agriculture is the mainstay of the State’s economy. It engages 76 per cent of workers. Manipur has four aboriginal groups i.e. the Meiteis of the valley and the Nagas, the Kukis and the Mizos of the surrounding hill tribes. The beginning of Manipuri Literature may go back to 1500-2000 years from mow. The Meiteis had a strong sense of historicity and maintained chronicles and numerous records about their genealogy, society, religion, government etc. More than one thousand Meitei scripture had already existed before eighteenth century A.D.
Tayenjam Singh observes that there is extensive written literature in the ancient Meiti script goes back more than 1,000 years.....the oral works contains number of different literary genres, including songs for dance, for prosperity and love lyrics.  

The majority population of the entire state is under the religious fold of Hinduism especially in the valley. There is no trace of Buddhism having been established here in any period of history. Christianity, introduced by the British and America as a policy was not embraced by meiteis in the valley but attracted almost hill tribes.

Festivals are an important part of Manipur. It is festive time throughout the year and Manipuri people enjoy the colourful festivals. Some of them are Rathayatra, Janmashtami, Baruni, Tribal festivals etc. The various arts forms enjoyed by people of Manipur are songs and music, dance forms, Crafts, wood Carving, textile weaving, stone Carving etc.

Mizoram

In shape Mizoram is rather like a narrow and inverted triangle. It is bounded on the north by the district of Cachar( Assam) and the state of Manipur, on the east and south by Myanmar, on the west by the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and different states of India like Assam, Tripura and Manipur. The

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term Mizoram means the land of Mizos. The state has the most variegated hilly terrain in the eastern part of India.

The origin of Mizo is linked by historians to the great wave of the Mongolian race spilling over into the eastern and southern India centuries ago. The total population of Mizoram stood at 891,058 as per the provisional results of the Census of India. There are a number of separate tribes under the general ethnic broad group of Mizo, it includes Ralte, Paite, Dulien, Poi, Sukte, Pankhup, Jahao, Taute, Lakher Leillul and Tangur. The main sub groups are Lushais, Pawis and Lakhers. Although several languages were spoken in the Lushai Hills, the main language was Lushai. Other languages of the Kuki-Chin groups spoken to by the different tribes were Zahao, Lai and Ralte.

The state has good potential for economic growth in the areas of agriculture, horticulture, tourism, handicraft etc. The agriculture scenario in Mizoram is very bright with population per sq.km. Here government has provided farmers with technologically sound techniques and equipment.

In Mizoram people are getting the best possible education and the process of modernization has enveloped all aspects of life in Mizo society. But it still preserves its culture by practicing traditional dances, ad festivals.

Majority population of the state is under the religious fold of Christianity. According to the 1991 Census report, about 85.73 per cent of the total population is Christians. The greatest influence of Christianity has been the spread of education. There is scattered population of Buddhists in different parts of the
state. They form the 7.83 per cent of the total population. The Hinduism in Mizoram seems to have been adopted after the period of animism.

The various art forms practiced by the people are Dance, Music, etc. Mizo women who are known as born weavers who make their garments known as puan have moved ahead men in education, Government jobs and business. Bamboo products are also a special craft work carried out by Mizo people.

Society and Literature are never separable, in fact literature and society are identical to each other. Whatever facts, conflicts and issues touch us in our life, Literature traces those activities and present it to the social mass with a need to bring change and awareness.

Social Realism means the depiction in Literature of social reality as it is, there should be a point one to one correspondence between the society depicted in Literature and the actual society. Writers and poets from this region too are bringing out the facts and issues prevailing in this land through their works. Social Realism is a prominent feature of their writings.

Although North East India is unique in its culture and traditions, different tribes have their own oral literature consisting of songs, and fables. But there is also a dark feature of this land where people since ages are witnessing conflicts and various issues related to their homeland. The troubled political climate, the beautiful landscape and the confluence of various ethnic groups perhaps have given rise to a body of writing that is completely different. The bent towards education and growth is making these people aware and helping them in bringing
out their troubles through Literature. Ishaan Tharoor (co-editor of Time World) writes:

the seven states of the Indian North East, a vast rugged appendage off the Indian mainland suspended between China, Bhutan, Burma and Bangladesh are among the country’s most impoverished and least developed and are still beset by myriad ethnic insurgencies.\(^6\)

Many of today’s conflicts have their origins in the way the subcontinent was partitioned, international borders were reorganized and the region consequently became landlocked. Since its formation, the region has been standing witness to almost all varieties of conflict - including interethnic conflicts, conflict over natural resources, the native-migrant conflicts and border conflicts between the states of the region so and so forth - substantially overlapping into each other.

Although a hotbed of conflict, it is ironic that studies in conflicts specifically focused on the region really took off only since the late 1980s. It was during this period that we could see the growing convergence between Northeast Studies and Conflict Studies. Literature on peace and conflict resolution consists predominantly of (a) memoirs, biographies and autobiographies of the ex-army

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generals, police officers, activists, ex-insurgents etc; (b) journalistic writings with detailed chronicling of the events, incidents and organizations involved in insurgencies and movements; (c) scholarly and policy-oriented writings by researchers, advisors and consultants; (d) reports, vision documents etc of the government, the voluntary organizations and other multilateral agencies and last but not the least (e) the literary works mostly in the regional languages. Early writings on ethnicity and identity-based conflicts were written by such scholars as Apurba Baruah, Manorama Sharma, Gail Omvedt, Udayon Mishra, Tilottama Mishra etc.

The problem of Insurgency in North East India is a major problem faced by people of this region. The Assam Agitation (1979-1985) was a popular movement against immigrants. The movement, led by All Assam Students Union (AASU) and the 'All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad' (AAGSP), developed a program of protests and demonstration to compel the government to identify and expel illegal immigrants. This issue too became a major issue for the writers to bring forth the truth and justice. The violence and hatred spread by these militant groups is recorded by various writers in their books.

Talking about the current political situations we can say that in Assam there is rule of Congress Party and in the rest all other states, there are regional parties on authoritative seats. There have been various disputes and protests over formation of new states and demand for a separate land have been put forward. We can easily trace a poor record of violence and protest due to these issues. Recently, there is a demand for the formation of a new state by the
people of Bodos tribe naming it as Bodoland. Already several states have been carved out of Assam disturbing the peace of these states and increasing corruption day by day. Due to these issues and disputes other problems like poverty, illiteracy and unemployment are also growing up. This greed to have power and land is spoiling the culture and society of this region.

Women and their sufferings due to orthodox beliefs and practices are also clearly shown by the writers like Mitra Phukan, Siddhartha Deb and Indira Goswami. Practices like polygamy; and issues like exploitation of women are also parts of the literature from this region.

Religious dogmas and rituals emerging out of it like animal sacrifices, head hunting also became a cause for these writers to raise their voice against it. Writers like Indira Goswami are famous for their active participation in introducing this isolated region to the rest of the India and drawing attention of Government towards these states who are suffering since ages.

Thus Literature emerging from this region talks about various issues prevalent in these states which until recent years had remained under-represented.