INTRODUCTION

North East States occupy a highly strategic north-east corner of Indian Republic and it consists of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Geographically, this region is almost isolated from India and connected with India through a narrow corridor between the Himalayas and Bangladesh. She has common frontiers with four states, China in the North, Bhutan in the North-East, Bangladesh in the West and Burma in the East and the South. No other part of India occupies such a strategic position as the North East Region. It has dense forests, a difficult terrain, lonely green valleys and lofty mountains. The entire region represents a unique set of topography, climate, economy, social and cultural conditions, which differ vastly from the rest of India. This region is situated between 29°-22°N longitude, 89°46'-97°SOE longitude and covers an area of 2,55,587 square kilometre. It has a population of about 20 million.

Before the advent of the British, there were many petty kingdoms and states which were governed by kings, chiefs and village headmen etc. There were diverse political systems.
The East India Company took very little interest in north-east region after it acquired the Dewani of Bengal. Because, there was no strong power who was capable of threatening the East India Company. The economy of this region did not offer the prospect of lucrative trade. But the situation was changed in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The king of Burma consolidated his power in his country and conquered Arakan, Manipur, Cachar and threatened the British district of Sylhet. On March 5, 1824, the Government of Lord Amherst declared war upon Burma. The Burmese were defeated and the king of Burma was compelled to sign the treaty of Yandabo on February 24, 1826. After this war, the British firmly controlled internal as well as external affairs of north-east states.

The possibility of Burmese invasion haunted the British for quite a long time after the war. So, the most important question was defence of British Empire in north-east region. Besides, they began to realise the strategical importance of this region from military point of view. The Himalayas are the natural fort of Indian frontier and this abode of snow formed the natural barrier between India and China. To the Britishers,
North East Frontier was no less important than the North West Frontier at least from strategic point of view. The fear of Russian expansion influenced the British policies towards the North West Frontier. Similarly, the apprehension of further Burmese aggression in north-east was a determinant factor that influenced the early British policy towards north-east. David Scott (Agent to the Governor-General for Assam) therefore created a hedge of native chiefs around the Company's north-east border. Manipur was created a buffer state between Burma and British Empire by the Yandabo Treaty of 1826.

The apprehension of Burmese reprisal proved to be a miscalculation, later the Burmese were found to be reconciled to the loss of Assam, Cachar, Manipur, Arakan etc. As the Company's rule was well established in the valley of the Brahmaputra, it was found that direct administration of the territories of these chiefs would leave a surplus of revenue after defraying the expenses of administration.

So every excuse was invented for annexation of their (chiefs) territories. Thus, all parts of north-east region were annexed one after another into the vast
British Empire. The chief political consequence of the British conquest of north-east region is that the people and the region joined the mainstream of India. Later on, this greatly facilitated its integration with the rest of India emotionally, economically and culturally.

When British India got independence on the 15th August 1947, the north-east states also got free from the British yoke and the north-east frontier territories had to sign agreements to merge into Indian Union. It is unfortunate that the British rulers had to leave this region without finalising future norms of integration and left the protection of ethnic minorities of north-east region in the hands of Indian rulers who had given solemn assurances in the Constituent Assembly.

There were four merger agreements i.e. Khasi-Jaintia States, Manipur, Tripura and Nagaland. There are many special provisions of these merger agreements unlike others of the rest of 'Native Indian States'.

In north-east region, there are many tribes. These tribes are again sub-divided into numerous clans. Each tribe has its own language, traditions and politico-economic setup. Most of these tribes are yet to establish firm loyalty to the new Indian Union as they are not touched
by Indian independence movement. So, we must try to bring emotional integration of the people of this region.

The application and futility of early norms of Indian integration has been exposed by a sudden upsurge of political uprisings revealing the dismal picture of forces of disintegration and even secessionist elements, throwing up challenges to the unity and integrity of the nation.

So, we must adopt a realistic approach in respect of ethnic identity and developmental problems of this region. We have seen, emotional integration cannot be brought by Hindu myths and mythology without relevance to history, geography and local traditions.

North-East region is poor in natural resources. So, the development of this region with its economic restraints needs heavy financial investment, the planning commission of new India must be aware of new ideas of hill areas development to uplift the economic condition of the people. The region must be surveyed to ascertain the extent of forest, hydro-electric and mineral resources and research investigation should be intensified to tackle local problems and proper training should be
imported to local educated youths and farmers in order that economy of the people inhabiting these areas is improved. In north-east region, there is fundamental lack of communication and infrastructure. So, improvement of communication and upliftment of economic condition of the people will certainly bring emotional integration of the people of this inaccessible region.