CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

9.1 Synthesis of the Study

The present work, as outlined in the first chapter and then analysed in the subsequent chapters, is basically a detailed geographical study of Khasi population of Meghalaya in which a special attention is given to understand the population characteristics of this tribal group within their urban milieu. The study thus incorporates treatment of a tribal group who have a unique ethno-linguistic origin from rest of the country's tribal population and their habitat which is one of the remote and list developed area of the country. The significance of the study lies in revealing the particular socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of urban tribal population in the state, and the transformation of such characteristics, with a view to suggest further enhancement of tribal development programmes as regards their society and economy. A smooth carrying out of the work has, frequently been affected by non-existence and non-availability of data which in turn has kept the scope of the work limited. Nevertheless, every possible effort has been given to deal with the salient aspects in as much depth as possible. The selected aspects for the present work include population patterns in terms of distribution, density, growth and migration, population composition in terms of age and sex, literacy and educational level, religion, language; and the economic traits in terms of working force, occupational pattern and female participation.
The study begins with a statement of problem and highlighting its objectives and significance (Chapter I) and then passing over to an attempt to review the available concepts dealing directly or indirectly with various aspects of population (Chapter II). These two chapters together provide the base of the work. In the subsequent chapters, the geographical, historical, demographic, socio-cultural and economic characteristics of population have been analysed, both in terms of areal units and social groups. This last chapter attempts to summarise the analyses made so far in the foregoing chapters and to derive conclusions based on these summaries.

The geographical background of the place and people of Meghalaya is outlined in Chapter III, which in turn serves as a prelude to the population patterns and attributes of the specific group of people. As regards the geological formations, the state belongs to the peninsular table land of the country being separated from the latter by the intervening spread of the alluvium of the Ganga and Brahmaputra. The stratigraphic formation of the region ranges from Archaean gneisses to tertiary-quartenery sediments, with sub-regional variations between the western Garo Hills and Eastern Khasi Jaintia Hills. Physiographically, the region represents a more or less plateau formation with horizontal beds of sedimentary rocks. Excepting for a few sheltered valleys in the central part and narrow strip of foothill plain in the western and southwestern part, the entire region has a plateau character with dissected slope on the
north and steep precipices on the south. The central part of the plateau with Jowai, Shillong and Tura uplands from east to west act as a watershed for the rivers flowing north into the Brahmaputra valley and south into the Surma valley. The elevation of the plateau varies between 150 m. to about 2000 m. above sea level. Topographically, the plateau can be divided into two broad divisions:

i) The much dissected hills and valleys in the Western Garo Hills part, and,
ii) The true plateau formation in the central and eastern Khasi Jaintia part.

It is in the second region, which has direct bearing on the study group, further topographic distinction can be made as (a) the northern Undulating hills; (b) the Central upland zone; and (c) the Southern plateau.

The drainage network in the plateau having a rectilinear arrangement, displays two distinct systems of north-flowing and south flowing streams. While the north flowing streams discharge into the Brahmaputra, the south flowing streams drain into the Sylhet plain of Bangladesh. The two drainage systems, however, have wide difference in their valley development in western and central-eastern region. In the Khasi-Jaintia region, the northflowing rivers form flat embayments in the foothill areas and thus make the northern boundary of the plateau fairly irregular. On the other hand, the south-flowing rivers before they enter into the plains, form deep gorges on faulted surface, and thus produce waterfalls at varying elevations. Thus, both the northern and southern slopes of this section of the plateau being
unsuitable for human settlement and cultivation, leads to an over clustering of population within the central upland zone.

Climatically, the state as a whole falls within the purview of tropical monsoon type. However, sub-regional variations are brought within the characteristic seasonal rhythm through the differences in seasonal and annual temperature range, amount of humidity and rainfall received, duration of rainy season etc. compared to the Western Garo Hills, which is hot and sultry with a lower range of temperature between the summer and winter months and considerably high rainfall in summer months. The climate of Khasi-Jaintia section have a bracing nature due to its high altitude. However, the north, northeast and southern parts of this section have much warmer and humid weather due respectively to lower elevation and excessive rainfall from the oncoming south-west rainbearing winds. The orographic position of the plateau brings large variations in annual rainfall from north to south. It is only in the Central upland zone, that the combined effect of high altitude and moderate rainfall results in temperate or nearly temperate weather phenomena.

The topographic as well as climatic factors of the plateau bring forth but a moderate variations in natural vegetation. Meghalaya, at present, has about 39.4 percent of total area under forest, which is much less than the actual requirement (66 Percent) as estimated by National Forest Policy. The vegetation types in the plateau have three broad categories as the mixed tropical forests (upto 900 m above sea level); the grasslands (between 900 - 1300 m.); and the temperate forests with pine,
bireh, oak, willow, cedar and others (above 1300 m.). The forests and natural vegetation in the State has been fairly adversely affected by reckless cutting for jhumming and also by unplanned grazing. According to a recent study (1991-1993) of FSI, jhumming in Meghalaya alone accounted for a loss of 106 sq. Km. of forest cover. Another threat against the afforestation and maintenance of forests in Meghalaya is posed by their very nature of ownership. About 94 percent of total forest being owned by the district council and traditional bodies, making it very difficult to implement the national policies of preservation of forests in the State. Thus, if the unplanned clearing and misuse of the forests continue unchecked, it would create serious ecological problems in the State.

Shillong urban agglomeration, being the largest urban area in the State, presents a noticeable sub-regional character regarding physiographic climate and vegetation. Being located on an undulating hill (Shillong Hill), the town slopes from east-south-east to west-north-west, allowing the streams to meander, before they merge with the Umkhher valley in the north and Umiam in the south. Physiographically, five sub-units are identified within the Shillong urban area which together present a combination of ridge and valley topography from the north to south. Climatically, Shillong town represents a transitional variety between the humid subtropical and temperate type with typical rhythm of four seasons but with much less severeness of summer temperature, and night frosting being a common phenomenon during winter season. Natural vegetation in Shillong by virtue of
the elevation characteristics bear of that of the temperate coniferous and grassland type, with true pines (Pinus Khasya) occurring as the most representative variety.

A look at the economic background of the Khasi people of Meghalaya as well as that of the population in general reveals a predominance of primary economy, operated in many an instance, through primitive tribal mode, and thus indicates a low level of economic development for the tribal population of the state as a whole. Agriculture either in the form of settled or shifting cultivation, dominates the economy of majority of population. The two systems of cultivation conform roughly, in the Khasi-Jaintia region, with the two principal land holding category. Thus, while jhumming is mainly associated with the Ri-Raid (Community land) ownership, Ri-Kynti (private land) lands are utilised for settled cultivation. Though, prevailing physiographic situation compel the farmers to practice shifting cultivation at large, a slow but steady change is being noticed in the nature of land holding and cultivation practice, regarding which the Khasis have a pioneering position. However, the cropping pattern in both the method remains more or less same which is typified with a wide diversification and thus lack specialisation in the production of any particular crop. The rural areas surrounding the Shillong urban agglomeration, however, have gained a name regarding orchard farming and market gardening.

In spite of having a rich mineral and forest resource base, the industrial sector of economy of Khasis has failed to gain a strong base due primarily to a low level of technology and a
lower level of expectation of the people as well. A poor development of transport network is also held responsible for a backward economy. Though the road transports are quite well developed, maintenance is poor and the density of other transport and communication systems is very low in Meghalaya. However, the service sector economy is quite popular even among the local tribals, and this should be considered as a positive aspect of economy.

The peopling and present population structure of Meghalaya is a combination of processes which involved movement of both tribal and non-tribal population unto the state and subsequent processes of intermingling and assimilation among themselves. It is interesting to note that, the two most significant indigenous tribes of the State, namely, the Khasi-Pnars and the Garos, are also immigrants, who with their 'Mon-Khmer' (Indo-Chinese) and 'Tibeto-Burman' ethnic origin respectively, moved into this part of the country in distant past. Among these two tribes, the Khasis, who are of prime consideration in the present work, are the only representatives of the Austric linguistic group, and maintain a quite interesting history of settlement, social evolution and formation of state. As has been analysed in chapter-iv, the Khasi settlement in state was initiated by a few clans and certain socio-political organisations. Both these traditional clans and organisations still enjoy a privileged position in Khasi society and play a significant role in the decision making processes. Thus, though being a tribal community and canvassing for an egalitarian social system, the class
systems also remain inherent within the Khasi society.

The significant phases of politico-historical evolution of Khasi region are traced as the formation of 'Syiemship' being originated in the 13th century A.D.; formation of twenty four native states in the 14th century; introduction of the Autonomous District Council leading to the emergence of United Khasi and Jaintia Hill district. This Autonomous district along with the Garo hills district of the same status formed a fullfledged state in 1972. A gradual change is distinctly noticed in the functional pattern of the region through these phases in which the purely agricultural economy of the native states gradually made accommodation for politico-administrative and other associated functions. A slow but constant process of urbanisation also accompanied three changes, leading ultimately to the growth of Shillong town, which at present has the maximum urban development in the State and accommodate the largest share of urban Khasis.

The historical emergence of the State and the largest urban centre therein as mentioned above, as well as the process of peopling through time which the State has experienced, attribute a distinct pattern of population density and distribution for the Khasi population in Meghalaya. The general distribution of population appears to be uneven being controlled by both environmental, socio-cultural and economic factors. Being controlled by the physico-climatic background, this population in Meghalaya shows a general tendency of concentrating on the plateau tops or higher slopes between the elevations of 900m. and 1200m. above sea level. The lower elevations in both north and
south, on account of their rugged topography and unfriendly climate, exhibit a sparse distribution. A more concrete picture in this respect emerges from the distribution at microlevel of C.D. Blocks in the region (Map 5.3). The distribution pattern is further influenced by the factors like availability of agricultural land, practice and extension of jhuming, relative levels of urbanisation, transport infrastructure and also the settlement patterns of the tribal population, which is again governed by clan territorial boundaries, being the outcome of number of their tradition bound cultural aspects (Map 5.2). Thus, the validity of the hypothesis that the distribution and density of the urban Khasi population in the State is a complex relationship between the restrictive and permissive elements of physical environment on one hand, and the socio-cultural environment on the other, is justified.

The above rule of distribution have effective control in spacing the population within the social areas (rural and urban) of the Khasi-Jaintia region. The Khasis, being the largest tribal group, are found to occupy the larger geographical area and have more or less undisturbed concentration in the rural areas of the State. On the contrary, in the urban areas, due to an intermixing with other tribal and specifically with the non-tribals, the distribution pattern becomes distinctly different. Khasis in urban areas have a tendency to settle down in the old town areas and in the satelllite towns.

The density of Khasi population on the average is 28 persons per sq. km. (48 persons per sq. Km. tribal population in
1981 and 79 per sq. km. for total population in 1991), which varies, quite expectedly, from the central parts to the north, south, north-east and to the extreme interior areas of their habitat. Based on the relative impact of physiography, climate, intensity of jhum cultivation, degree of urban impact and proportion of tribal population, three broad density regions (Map 5.) can be identified in the State as (a) high density of 100 persons and above (Mylliem, Thadlaskein, Mawphlang, Mawrynkeng); (b) moderate density of 71 - 100 persons (Amlarem, Pynursla, Shella-Bholaganj, Mawkynrew); (c) low density of 20 - 70 persons (Mawshynrut, Nongstoin, Mawkyrwat, Mairang, Mawshynram, Bhoi-area, Nongpoh, Khliehriat).

The density of Khasi population or for that matter of the tribals is, as a rule, much lower in Meghalaya, but the spatial pattern of the same bears distinct variation between the urban and rural groups of people. The density of tribal population bearing a very direct relation with the jhum cycle of different parts of the State, and in Khasi Jaintia hills, the cycle being quite short (3-4 years on the average), rightly accounts for a low density of Khasi population in the rural areas. Contrary to this, the urban density is very high, which is primarily due to a limited number of towns being located far apart from one another boost up the concentration of Khasis in and around Shillong urban agglomeration.

To get an idea about the real state of density of population, the man-land ratios, in terms of physiological and agricultural densities are to be considered. Both of these being considerably high (Physiological : 733 persons; agricultural :
231 persons) in Meghalaya, the man land ratio appears to be quite acute. A fairly wide practice of jhumming on one hand and rough terrain making availability of cultivable land limited, on the other, together create an intense state of man land ratio leading to a serious environmental problem. The regional variation of these densities more or less same intensity in the districts of the Khasi region (Table 5.5and Map 5.6).

Population growth of Khasi in Meghalaya, as is expected in case of or smaller communities, is conspicuously higher than the average national growth (Table 5.4). However, in the regional context of north-east, the rate is quite low than other hill tribal states. The proportion of non-tribal population being relatively higher in Meghalaya and thus, neutralising the typical characteristics of small isolated communities as regards growth, and the Khasi tribes with matrilineal social system suffering from the problem of low growth (the reason being more social than natural), are held responsible for such a situation.

Population growth of the Khasis, as is the condition with general population in Meghalaya, shows all along a positive trend with phenomenal rises in certain decades, and is more noticiable from 1951 onwards. The spatial pattern of population growth (at block level) being largely determined by the locational aspect, transport and communication network and the extent of intra-state migration within the blocks, leads to sub-regional growth patterns with extreme variations from one another. The growth rates of urban areas all throughout the spatial units, are much higher than that of rural population. This is quite expected for Khasis in Meghalaya, where there are
but only limited number of urban areas with a limited capacity of areal expansion serving the need of large rural hinterlands. A very high urban growth of population, however, has but less significance for the region, because with a slow pace of industrialisation and urbanisation, opportunities of urban employment remain limited. Moreover, the towns having limited expansion, suffer from the problems of proper housing, sanitation, water supply and other amenities. Thus the urban ecology is greatly disturbed which in turn levels to other social and political tensions, for instance growth and spread of slums, sense of social insecurity, shortage of supply of essential commodities and hence an artificial price hike and soon.

The pattern of population movement or migration as outlined in Chapter VI, highlights a greater intensity of internal migration within the areal units of the State than from outside (Table 6). The immigration from outside Meghalaya, whether inter-state or inter-national, involves small scale movement of people, because of limited opportunities in industrial and commercial sectors. This is quite in contrast with its neighbouring state of Assam, though strategically, both the states face similar degree of threats of immigration. A much smaller geographical area of Meghalaya may partially account for a smaller volume of immigration. The migrants from outside the State, specifically those from Bangladesh and Nepal, though smaller in volume, have specific significance in respect of development of primary economics of the people in the State. While the Nepali migrants in Meghalaya introduced grazing and animal husbandry (though a majority of them latter took up
cultivation), the Bangladeshis are credited for introducing wetland paddy cultivation in the State. Thus, the otherwise tribal subsistence agriculture of the Khasis experienced a major breakthrough, which, though initiated as early as with the partition of the India from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) following Independence, accentuated after the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1970-71 and an almost simultaneous creation of separate state of Meghalaya in 1972.

The intra-state migrations within the districts of the Khasi region or for that matter within the entire state is characterised by a movement over short distances, are they are primarily of inter-district varieties. The flow of migrants is dominated by rural to rural or from rural to urban types of movement resulting largely in intra-occupational (rural-rural) and to some extent inter-occupational (rural-urban) mobility. The latter category, though not extensive, is responsible for a major change in the socio-economic structure of population, and such changes are being more and more noticed in the urban group of population. An overall predominance of female migrants in majority of intra-state movements (Table 6.7), however, should not be misunderstood as an indicator of much better status of women in the society. In the absence of any social inhibition, as already mentioned in Chapter VI, the movements of women are relatively true in the State, but an assessment of their working status and educational background reveals the real situation.

The spatial pattern of distribution of migrants (Table 6.1) reveals that the movements of people related directly with the utilisation of state's resources, being mostly short-distance
movements, concentrate in the smaller towns and rural areas of the State. On the contrary, collection, trade and distribution of the resources and the associated managerial tasks as well, involve long distance movements, being specifically male selective in nature, and they invariably concentrate in the larger urban centres, i.e. in Shillong urban region.

An analysis of structural and compositional attributes of Khasi population, namely, sex composition; age structure; compositions of literacy, religion, language and dialects; economy pattern and occupational structure, as attempted in Chapter VII, reveals several significant findings. As regards the sex composition, it is observed that though the overall sex ratio of the State's population (947 F/1000 M) is not a balanced one, (indicating a male selective migration of population from outside the State) the sex ratios of tribals (1002 F/1000 M) in Meghalaya in general and that of the principal tribes are quite high. A high sex ratio of major tribes in the State, namely Khasis,(1021) Garos (978), Kukis (1017), Hajongs (959), and Mikirs (957) is attributed mainly to high natural growth of tribal population, a phenomenon which is common among the tribal groups of north-eastern region or those of the country as well (Table 7).

The sex ratio of Khasis being highest in the State, indicate a better social system of this group compared to the others, and it becomes more evident from a much higher urban ratio of Khasi females. This is a unique characteristics which has its impact on the cultural and economic attributes of the society. The impact of urbanisation is so high on the sex ratio of Khasis, that, even
the spatial pattern of this attribute is found to be highly controlled by the relative levels of urbanisation of areal units.

The age-structure of Khasi population in Meghalaya which helps understand the demographic history of the region, reveals a high fertility - and a fast growing population; a considerably large infant mortality; and a generally low longevity, all being characteristic to the population of developing areas (Fig. 7.2). The children and old people together accounting for almost half of total population (47 percent) creates a heavy dependency burden for the population. The age-sex composition of the Khasi tribes in Meghalaya is distinct in the sense that the shares of female population is more or less equal in all age groups and being even higher particularly in the age group of 20-49 years. This indicates a naturally high sex ratio of females and, a much free movement of them in the tribal societies. The possibility of outmigration of educated and aspirant male youth cannot be ruled out, which brings down the proportion of male in adult age group. This trend is becoming more and more prominent among the tribals of the State (Table 7-5).

A look at the literacy rate and levels of educational attainment of the Khasis in Meghalaya reveals certain interesting findings. The literacy rate though quite high in comparison with that of the country, at the level of other tribal state of North-East, it remains quite low, indicating a large variation between the spatial units of this social groups. Though, it is a fact that, the processes of education started quite early in Meghalaya, the participation of local people being insignificant with such processes, have kept the literacy lower. However, a
positive aspect of this attribute of population is its steady increase, which was due initially to the work of Christian Missionaries and then the intervention of National and State Governments through various literacy missions. The proportion of literates in different age groups clearly indicates a low participation of tribal people in formal education (only 23.25 percent in the age group 0-9 years). But an abrupt rise in literacy in the higher ages of 10-24 years and then again a reduction in the higher age of 25 years onwards is indicative of large scale immigration of student population into the state. Thus, it becomes evident that, though the Khasi region is endowed with ample opportunities of education, these are largely availed by the non-tribals rather than the local tribal people. This is further justified by the spatial pattern of tribal and non-tribal literates (Maps 7.3a and 7.3b), which shows that in almost all spatial units, the nontribal literacy is quite high than the tribal ones. However, the trend is gradually changing with a growing awareness of local tribals.

The literacy of the Khasis, however, among the tribes is quite high. The spatial variation of Khasi literates in the State is controlled by several factors, notable among them being the availability of educational opportunities controlled by the relative degree of urbanisation of each tribe; the economic status— the relative dominance of jhum population, and differential proportion of practice of early marriage; among the tribes.

The real assessment of literacy rate in any population is possible when the educational attainments at various levels are
considered. In this respect again, among the local population, the Khasis acquire a higher position with more number of literates taking education up to graduation (Table 7.10). The number of post graduate degree holders are also more among them. Thus, the Khasis are in a privileged position in the State and are in a position to participate in any kind of professional services requiring specialised knowledge.

The religions composition of the population is not much complex, since about half of its total population (52.62 percent) practice Christianity (Table 7.12). The indigenous Tribal religions practiced by this tribal group, though have a significant representation (25.77 percent), this religion is losing its grip gradually because of an increasing rate of conversion into Christianity. It is interesting to note that, both Christianity and Tribal Religions have strongest control over the rural section of people. In urban areas, on the contrary, the religious composition is more heterogeneous, with the presence of almost all major religious groups, and thus the chances of conversion into other religions, beliefs remain a pertinent condition. Following such considerations the religion of urban Khasis present a reasonably heterogenous composition (Table 7.13). There are people in the community practising religion other than Christianity and tribal religions. They are Hindus (963 persons), Muslims (459 persons), Sikhs (8 persons) and Buddhists (6 persons).

Linguistically, Khasi population in Meghalaya presents a homogenous composition and speak a dialect which belongs to Non VIII schedule Languages. The speakers of such languages use the Roman script due to the absence of their own script. A strong
control of Welsch and American Mission who took keen interest in educating this group of population is held responsible for such use of Roman script.

The work participation rate of Khasis in Meghalaya as is the rule with tribal population is quite high. This is typical for a less developed tribal group of population who because of their subsistence method of cultivation practiced in the form of jhumming demands more number of manual labour to conduct the tedious but less profitable production procedures. The participation rate of Khasis, however, is slightly lower (47.52 per cent) than that of other major tribal groups namely Garos (49.76), Hajongs (46.61) and Mikirs (53.39).

The spatial distribution of Khasi workers in Meghalaya is primarily controlled, as expected, by the relative proportions of this group of tribal workers and the extent of jhumming. Thus, participation rate becomes minimum in Mylliem block and maximum in Khliehriat block. The female participation rate, as a rule of tribal areas, is quite high with an equally high tribal female participation being primarily controlled by the existing socio-economic system of population. Thus, being basically an egalitarian society, the Khasi women are free to participate in any kind of economic activity. However, the proportionate shares of female workers in different sectors of economy reveal that, a majority of them are engaged in primary sectors and also show an increasing trend in the participation of agricultural labour. The spatial pattern of female participation is so distributed that Mylliem stands out with lowest proportion (18.36 percent) and Mawshynrult with highest (44.40 percent).
The occupational structure, being characteristic of a small tribal group, shows a predominance of agricultural workers (about 70 percent). A high dependence on agriculture, being practiced more or less on a subsistence scale, indicates a low level of economic development (7.15). However, with the introduction of extraction industries primarily in the form of mining, a gradual shift of workers is being noticed from farming to mining and allied activities. The proportion of workers in secondary sectors is very small (0.99 percent) indicating a general absence of industries in the region. The proportion of workers in tertiary sector is however quite significant (29.43 percent) and this conforms with the functional nature of the urban centres of the State. The occupation of urban Khasis in Meghalaya is primarily due to the administrative and to certain extent religious and educational functions of major towns which create opportunities for different types of salaried jobs. Thus, an overwhelming concentration of urban Khasi workers in tertiary sectors (Table 7.16) characterise their occupation structure. A general predominance of female workers over male in urban occupation is indicative of great entrepreneurship of Khasi women on the one hand and a growing outward mobility if young educated Khasi males on the other.

The socio-economic composition and characteristics of Khasi population in Shillong (chapter VIII) reveals an advantageous position of this section of urban Khasis. Shillong being the largest urban centre has maximum environmental opportunities to its population. However, the major deviations of Shillong Khasis
from those in general, in respect of their demographis and socio-economic characteristics are reflected in their age structure (Fig. 8.1) and dependancy ratio (Table 8.2), literacy rate (Table 8.5), educational levels (Table 8.6), religious composition (Table 8.7) and occupation patterns (Table 8.8, 8.10, 8.12). The highest level of urbanisation of Shillong town on the one and the impact of cultural intermixing with other population groups (both tribal and non-tribal) on the other have together consequenced in such situations.

9.2 Observations and Suggestions

From the synthesis made in the foregoing paragraphs the following observations can be drawn relating to the various attributes of the urban Khasi population.

i. The distribution and density of urban Khasi population being strongly controlled by the restrictive and permissive aspects of physical and socio-cultural factors present a situation in which a wide gap emerges between the Shillong urban centre, on the one hand, and the rest of the urban areas on the other.

ii. The growth of urban Khasis is highly accelerating particularly during the last decade, which though indicates an improving state of their development is also leading to a socio-economic and cultural problems in the cities.

iii. The urban centres being very much limited in number make the accommodation of steadily increasing urban population quite difficult. The increase in urban population being largely due to migration of Khasis from rural areas to towns (besides natural growth) is also posing threat to employment sectors.
iv. The growing tendency of internal migration from villages to towns spells out a trend of transformation of the Khasis from a land based economy to an urban diversified economy. However, the primitive subsistence agriculture in the form of jhumming still dominate the much larger section of rural Khasis, which makes a setback for the development of the urban Khasis.

v. An excess of female workers over the males in almost every sector of economy is a misnomer of the real status of economy of this group of population. A close look at the occupation structure and working status reveals a larger participation of females mainly due to a free and permissive social atmosphere and also larger responsibility of females to look after the family.

vi. Even though the Khasi society is matrilineal, the status of women in the society is quite ill defined. These affect particularly the growth and economic development of the tribe.

vii. The rate of literacy of the urban Khasis though quite high than any other tribe in the State, at the regional level of north east, it remains quite low compared to that of urban Mizos or urban Nagas. A slow rate of conversion into Christianity and slower spread of various literacy missions are held responsible for this.

viii. The Khasis, though quite progressive in the context of the north eastern hill tribes, their socio-economic development is quite low when compared with other tribal areas of the country. A general lack of resources (with the exception of forests) and an
absence of large scale producing and manufacturing industries are held responsible for this.

ix. Within the Khasi region, however, marked regional differences are noticed in the level of socio-economic development. The groups of urban Khasis occupying the central part of their habitat (Shillong town and its immediate surroundings) have witnessed the maximum possible socio-economic development, while those inhabiting the peripheral and interior locations lag far behind from the former group.

In view of the above observations certain suggestions are offered which could be of some help for the further development of socio-economic conditions of this group of people.

i. In view of the fast increase of urban population appropriate measures should be taken up by the concerned departments of town and urban planning in order to minimise the problems of urban housing, water supply, market space, etc.

ii. The flow of rural-urban migration of population should be effectively checked. This needs a simultaneous improvement in the rural sectors and rural economies. In this context it becomes necessary to regulate the practice of jhumming and replace wherever it is possible by sedentary cultivation. Though this requires a total change of tribal outlook to this practice, any successful attempt in this line should increase the productivity of land in rural areas and reducing, as a result, the pressure from the urban economic sectors.

iii. The transport and communication system needs a total facelift which can promote the pace of development. Though Shillong town is well connected with places from within and
outside the State the situation is not very hopeful in the rest of the urban areas of the region.

iv. Even though the literacy rate of urban Khasis is quite high, the attainment of education at higher levels (Graduates and above) is limited. This has led to the process of immigrants of non-Khasi population in order to occupy the higher places in all types of jobs. Thus, in order to check this problem of immigration the local educated youths have to promote themselves in higher level of education at a much larger rate. Such improvements in educational status could lead to a better socio-economic condition of the population.

v. Since the geographical and socio-economic setup of urban Khasis vary from one urban area to the other, the same scheme of development cannot hold good for all these groups. The development programmes should be framed keeping in view the locational and existing socio-economic conditions of the respective urban groups. This can lead to a balanced situation but the failure of which can give rise to feelings of neglect and apprehensions among the people.

vi. The towns being limited in number have made the entire situation quite serious. This is gradually stagnating the growth and development of existing towns particularly Shillong urban agglomeration. Providing necessary amenities and thereby creating urban environment new towns should be developed. This can be highly effective in case of those semi-urban and market centres spread along the national highway No. 40. This may reduce the pressure of urban Khasis from Shillong town to a considerable extent and also in bringing development for both old and new
groups of urban population.

The suggestions made above is just a humble attempt which could help in further development of the population. Since this is outside the scope of the present work, no detailed discussion is attempted at this juncture. The present work is basically a comprehensive geographic treatment of a tribal group in their urban milieu analysing their demographic, economic and soci-cultural characteristics. It is an attempt to highlight such conditions of a tribal group which is little known in the context of the mainstream population of the country. There remains enough scope for further improvement of the work in a number of ways. Even then it is hoped that the study will fill up the gap at least partially in the concerned academic arena and also provide some basis for further studies in this line which could lead to chalk out population and regional planning for the Khasis and urban Khasi population.

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