CHAPTER II

DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE NORTH EASTERN REGION

The North-Eastern Region of India consists of five States — Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and two Union Territories, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, with a total area of 252,000 square kilometres (km). Geographically, this region stands almost isolated from the Body of the country, its only territorial links with the main land mass of India being a narrow neck of land-only 56 km wide in the north of Bihar and Bengal. Most of the area of North East Region is hilly with valley in between. It is inhabited by a large number of large and small scheduled tribes as also a fair proportion of non-tribal people. It has a very wide variety of culture, languages and dialects and socio-economic conditions.

(A) Arunachal Pradesh

A.1. Geography:

Arunachal Pradesh is spread over an area of about
33,743 sq. km. It touches the international boundaries of Bhutan on the West, Tibet and China on the North and Burma on the South-East, while on the South, it is linked with Assam. This hilly terrain lies roughly between latitudes 26°28'N and 29°30'N and the longitudes 91°E and 97°E on the North-East extremity of the country. Pasighat is the capital of Arunachal Pradesh.

A.2 Population :

Arunachal Pradesh has a population of 628,050**, the male population being 335,941*** and female 292,109**. Out of the total population, 450,223** are rural and only 17,288** are urban. "The present population of Arunachal Pradesh has gone up 'in 1981 by about one third (34.3%)** on the 1971 population during the past one decade."

A.3. Socio-economic conditions :

There are about twenty major tribes, each having a number of sub-tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. Among them, well known tribes are "the Kompas, the Sherdukpen, the Daflas (Mishis), the Hill-Kiris, the Adis (former Abors), the Mishims, the Noctes, the Singphos, the Khumitis etc."** Most

Note: **All figures(such as population, literacy percentage etc.) taken from the Census of India, 1981 are provisional.

2. Thunton, P.K. 'Social, Cultural, Economic and Administrative Development in Arunachal', in the Souvenir, published on the occasion of the North East Session of All India Congress Committee, Guwahati(Asans), 1976, p. 73 (Henceforth cited as 'Souvenir').
of them are cultivators. Crops like Ahu paddy, maize, millet, moong and other miscellaneous crops are cultivated in Arunachal. Shifting cultivation is commonly practised. Cultivation of cashew nuts and mustard seeds has also great potentiality in Arunachal Pradesh. "There are expert weavers and craftsmen among the various tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh. The Monpas and Kameng specialise in weaving woollen carpets which are exquisite pieces of art. The wooden masks and various household utensils turned out by them are marvels of craftsmanship."

Arunachal is endowed with substantial rocks and mineral resources. "A number of occurrences of coal, iron ore, sulphide, base metals like copper, graphite, clay, limestone, marble, dolomite, building stones and petroleum have been reported to occur in this area. It indicates bright future for economic development of this area by utilizing these mineral resources."

The people have a great tradition of artistic and cultural self-reliance. The tribal religious beliefs, customs, songs, dresses, dormitories councils and other institutions form an integral part of their life. Some of


them are Christian in religion. The Government has enforced strict measures against slavery, head-hunting and opium addiction.

A.4. Education and literacy-level:

Arunachal Pradesh had a late start in education as compared to most other parts of the country. Only after Independence attention was given to its educational development. After Independence a number of schools and a college have been established. At present "there are 983 schools (i.e. Higher Secondary, High, Middle and Primary) and one general college."  

The literacy rate of Arunachal Pradesh is very low as compared to the other States of North-East India. Among the present total population, the literacy rate is 27.98% for male, and only 11.02% for females.

A.5. Language:

However, there is a sort of link language, which is a corrupt form of the Assamese language, and is often called Nefamese.  

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Census of India, 1981, Arunachal Pradesh.

6. Taid, Taku, 'A Note on Tribal Languages as Media of Instruction' in Souvenir published on the occasion of the All-India Tribal Conference and National Seminar on Tribal Welfare, Gauhati (Assam), 1976, p. 30.

(B) ASSAM

Most of the facts and figures about Assam given below as based on the Census of 1971, since census figures for Assam for 1981 are not yet available. In 1971 Assam included Mizoram also which was excluded from it and constituted into a separate administrative unit in 1972. (Details about Mizoram on the basis of 1981 Census have been given separately in this chapter).

B.1. Geography:

In 1971, Assam lay between latitudes $28^\circ 13'$ and $24^\circ$ North and longitudes $90^\circ 46'$ and $97^\circ 4$ East, and it had an area of 9961.10 sq. kms, while at present (in the year 1980) it is 78,523 sq. kms. It is bounded on the North by the Himalayan ranges of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, on the East by a part of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur; on the South by Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya, and on the West by a part of Bangladesh and part of Bengal. It is to be noted that Assam has been reduced to its present size from a much bigger area comprising 165,991 km sq. — due to formation of such states as Arunachal, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur. Shillong was the capital of Assam till 1970, but now Dispur (Guwahati) is its capital (Shillong become the capital of Meghalaya when the latter was carried out of Assam as a separate state).
B.2. **Population**

The total population of Assam in 1971 was 14,625,152. Out of the total population, 13,335,930 belonged to the rural areas and 1,239,222 to the urban areas.

B.3. **Socio-Economic Conditions**

The economy of Assam is predominantly agricultural, and, consequently, the prosperity of Assam is linked with the development of agriculture. Besides agricultural potential, Assam is also rich in tea, coal, and petroleum. At present a number of industries have come up in Assam, in addition to various cottage industries for manufacturing cloth from Kri, Muga, fibers and silk. Bell-metal articles are also manufactured as an item of cottage industry.

Assam is a hot, low valley with adequate amount of rainfall spread over nearly 8 months, and excellent conditions for the growth of rice, tea, jute, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane, etc. exist. 8

B.4. **Education and Literacy Level**

Immediately after Independence, there was a great spurt in education in Assam. The Gauhati University was set up in 1948 and a large number of schools and colleges were opened. When the First Five Year Plan was launched in

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1951-52. there were in Assam 10,154 Primary Schools, 840 Middle Schools, and 254 High Schools and a few colleges. At that time, English was the medium of instruction for High Schools and Colleges. But in the Primary and Middle Schools the medium of instruction was Assamese. There was a lot of expansion in schools and colleges during the next three decades. In 1980, there were "128 general colleges, 4 Medical Colleges, 3 Engineering Colleges, one Teachers’ Training College and three Universities (Gauhati and Dibrugarh, and an Agricultural University at Jorhat) and a total of 27,077 schools (i.e. Higher Secondary, High Middle and Primary)". Besides the educational institutions mention above, there are various types of technical institutes. In schools and colleges, the medium of instruction now is Assamese. But in the case of universities the medium is still English.

According to the 1971 Census over 28.72 per cent people in Assam were literate. Percentage of literacy among males was 37.19 while among females it is 19.27.

B.5. Language:

The present Assamese language is a well-developed language, which is written in its own script which is also called Assamese. Some tribal people of Assam speak their

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own dialects. Assamese is one of the languages recognized
in the Constitution of India.

(C) MANIPUR:

C.1. Geography:

Manipur came under the British rule in 1891\(^{10}\) as a
Princely state. Manipur became a full-fledged state of the
Indian Union in January, 1972.\(^{11}\)

The State of Manipur lies at the Eastern most corner
of India. It is situated "between 23\(^{0}\)50' and 25\(^{0}\)41' North
latitudes and 93\(^{0}\)2' and 94\(^{0}\)47' East longitudes and has an
area of 22,35652 kms.\(^{12}\)" It is bounded on the North by a
series of hills called the Naga Hills; on the North-East,
East and South by Burma, and on the South-West, West and
North-West by the present state of Assam. Imphal is the
capital of Manipur.

C.2. Population:

The total population of Manipur is 1,433,694\(^{**}\). The
population in the rural areas of Manipur is 931,261\(^{**}\) and

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10. Kabui, G. : 'Social Reforms and Religious Movements in
Manipur: Nineteenth and twentieth century', in the

11. The Land of Seven Sisters, op. cit., p. 91.

Souvenir, 1976, p. 59.

** Census of India, 1981, Manipur.
that in urban areas is 141,492**, with 727,108** males and
706,583** females.

C.3. Socio-Economic Conditions:

Most of the people of Manipur belong to the scheduled
Tribes which are 29 in number. The main tribe—Kukis have no
settled form of cultivation as they practise "Jhumming".13
Mustard, wheat and Bengal gram or peas, rice and chillies,
cotton and ground-nut are produced in Manipur.

About 70% of the total population depends on
agriculture. "Spinning, weaving and dyeing are important
cottage industries. Handlooms are installed in almost every
house to weave cloth mainly for their own use. Bed covers
made in Manipur State are famous throughout India. Baskets
of cane and bamboo are also made."14

"The Manipur Valley is mostly inhabited by the
Meiteis who are Hindus, Vaishnavites to be more specific."15
It may be noted here that during the 1930's and 1940's a
movement, know as the "Sonamahi Movement"16, took place
among the Meiteis of Gachar and Manipur with the aim of

** Census of India, 1981, Manipur.
Region', In the 'North Eastern Spectrum', Vol.I(1), 1976,
p. 12.
Study'. In the 'North Eastern Spectrum', Vol. 2(7-8),
1976, p. 32.
Manipur: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century'. In the
reviving the indigenous form of religion and culture of the Meiteis. Beside, the Meitei form of Hinduism, other religions professed by sections of Manipuris are Islam and Christianity.

C.4. Education and Literacy-Level:

Modern education in Manipur on the Western model came quite late. The department of education of this princely state was started only in 1917.

The number of schools and pupils increased by leaps and bounds after independence. At present, there are 4199 schools, 3 Teachers' Training Colleges, one Medical College and 21 general colleges.¹⁷

In 1970, Jawaharlal Nehru University Centre at Imphal was established under Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. In 1981 it is an independent University, named "Manipur University". "The percentage of literacy of the population of the State as a whole is 41.99 as against 31.91 returned in 1971. Percentage of literacy among males is 52 and females is 30.69."¹⁸

C.5. Language:

There are about 100 dialects in Manipur, and they are

According to the Census Report of 1981, Meghalaya is a newly-born state with beautiful hills, attractive scenery and a healthy climate. Earlier the capital of Assam was at Shillong which is now the capital of Meghalaya. This state was created in 1970.

According to the Census Report of 1981, Meghalaya is located between the latitudes 25° and 60° North and the longitudes 90° and 93° East. It is bounded on the North by Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong districts of Assam and on the East by Karbi-Anglong District (Previously Mikir Hills) and Cachar Hills districts of Assam. On its South and West lies Bangladesh. The State of Meghalaya comprises an area of 22,429 sq. metres. Shillong is the capital of Meghalaya.

Meghalaya has a population of 13,27,874.** Out of the total population, 2,40,671** i.e. 18.12** reside in urban areas and 10,872,03 in the rural areas. Out of the total population males are 6,78,383** and females are 6,48,991**.

** Census of India, 1981. Meghalaya.
D.3. Socio-Economic Conditions:

The people of Meghalaya mostly depend upon cultivation for their livelihood. While the form of cultivation practised in Meghalaya is predominantly "shifting cultivation known as 'Jhuming', including terracing, the traditional Indian pattern of cultivation is followed in the bordering plains of the State. The agricultural produce includes mainly paddy, potato, maize, betel-nuts and such commercial crops as cotton, jute etc. Meghalayans also grow various fruits, specially pineapples, oranges, palms, etc. Rice is the dominant crop, particularly in the low-level area, where water is easily available.

"The State also has a peculiar character of retaining its own matrilined system of inheritance of property and the regulation of the social system where the position of the mother is unique and supreme."19

A large section of the total population has been converted to Christianity by various Christian missions. A number of people, specially inhabiting the interior areas, profess the traditional mode of faith based on animism, belief in blackmagic, and other forms of superstitions.

D.4. Education and Literacy Level:

Since Independence, the variety and the number of

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educational institutions has increased in Meghalaya. At present there are a total of 7,041 schools (Primary, Middle, Higher Secondary and High), one Teachers' Training (T.T.) College and 13 general colleges. The high school leaving certificate examination for the tribal students is conducted in English. Meghalaya further developed into a cosmopolitan education centre with the establishment of the North Eastern Hill University in 1973.

In Meghalaya out of the total population, there are 441,077 literate persons out of which 251,056 are males and 190,021 are females. The percentage of literacy rate of the total population is 33.2%. Percentage of male literates is 36.98% and of female literates 29.28% according to the 1981 Census.

D.5. Language:

People of Meghalaya are speaking only four dialects. One of these dialects is Khasi. Efforts are now being made to level it into a language. There is script of Khasi and the Roman script has been adopted.


** Census of India, 1981. Meghalaya.
E. MIZORAM

E.1. Geography

It is one of the youngest Union Territories of India. It became a Union Territory on 21st January, 1972. It is situated in the North-East corner of India. Mizoram lies between the latitudes 22°20' and 24°02' North and the longitudes 92°20' and 93°29' East. It covers an area of 21,090 sq. kms according to the 1981 census. It is bounded on the North by Manipur and Cachar Districts of Assam on the East and South by Burma, on the West by Bangladesh and Tripura State. The people who live in the present Mizoram (Previously called the Lushai Hills District and Mizo Hills District) call themselves as the Mizo. Aizawl is the capital of Mizoram.

E.2. Population

The population figures of 4,87,774 recorded in the 1981 census signifies a considerable growth in the decade 1971-1981. Out of this total population, 2,51,988 are males and 2,35,786 females. In 1981, the number of urban dwellers has gone up to 1,22,765, that is, 25.1% of the total population.

21. The Land of Seven Sisters, op. cit., p. 89.

** Census of India, 1981. Mizoram.**
E.3. Socio-Economic Conditions:

Previously, the Mizos were semi-nomadic people moving from place to place. "Most of the area of Mizoram being hilly and forested, very little land is under cultivation." The Mizo society is undergoing changes in all respects as a result of religious and political changes. Most of the people of Mizoram have embraced Christianity.

E.4. Education and Literacy Level:

The present educational system of Mizoram is exclusively the result of the work of Christian missionaries, before whose arrival there was no organized educational institution in the area. Remarkable progress has been achieved in the educational field in Mizoram in the post-Independence period. English is the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. At present there are 871 schools (i.e. Primary, Middle and High), 6 general colleges and one Teachers' Training College. These colleges are affiliated to the Gauhati University (Assam).

The literacy percentage of Mizoram is second in the literacy percentage at all India level. Out of the total population of 487,774** male literates are 1,66,296** and

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** Census of India, 1981. Mizoram.
female literate 1,23,945** according to the 1981 census. These figures work out to 59.50%**, 65.99%** and 52.56%** respectively.

E.5. Language:

Barring a few Chakmas and Lakhers, all the people of Mizoram speak the Mizo dialect, which is now written in Roman script.

F. NAGALAND

F.1. Geography:

On November 30, 197124, the former Naga Hills District and the Tuensang District of Arunachal Pradesh (then NEFA) were formed into a new administrative unit known as Nagaland.

Nagaland lies between latitudes 25°11'55" and 27°21'10" North and between longitudes 93°20' and 95°17'10" East and covers an area of 16,579 sq. km.** On the North, it is bounded by Assam, on the East by Burma, on the South by Manipur and a part of a Assam, and on the West by Assam. The entire state is covered with ranges of hills. Kohima is the capital of Nagaland.

F.2. Population:

The total population of Nagaland is 773,281** out of

**Census of India, 1981. Mizoram.
24. The land of seven sisters, op. cit., p. 94.
**Census of India, 1981. Nagaland.
which 414,231** are males and 359,050** females according to the Census of 1981. "The population of Nagaland has shown an unprecedented increase of 49.73%** during the decade 1971-81."25

F.3. Socio-Economic Conditions:

"The Nagas belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of man." Christianity is the predominant religion of the Nagas today, but some people are still animistic in their religious beliefs.

The people of Nagaland mainly depend upon agriculture for their livelihood. "Jhuming"26 (shifting cultivation) is still widely practised by the Nagas.

The "main food of the Nagas consists of boiled rice, with some vegetables, and occasionally supplemented by meat or fish. Depending upon the local growth, bamboo, wild vegetables, mushrooms, gourds, bamboo shoots, beans, potatoes, yam, and fruit like orange, papaya, banana and pineapples, whenever available, are taken either separately or along with other food. Maize, sugarcane and millets introduce variety in their food."27

** Census of India, 1981. Nagaland.
27. Ibid., p. 74.
"Coal is mined at a few places in Nagaland."\(^{28}\)

"Eight bands of limestone, base metal sulphides have recently been known to occur in Tuensang District of Nagaland."\(^{29}\)

F.4. **Education and literacy-level:**

In Nagaland, missionaries were the first to spread education. After the formation of the state Nagaland, the Government gave considerable attention to education. The number of educational institutions and the number of students are increasing every year at different levels. Nagaland Board of School Education was formed in 1975. There are 1,498 schools (Primary, Middle and High), one Teachers' Training College and 7 general colleges in Nagaland.\(^{30}\) The colleges of Nagaland are affiliated to the Guwahati University (Assam).

According to the Census of 1981 literacy increased to 41.99\(^{e}\). The percentage of female literacy is 33.72\(^{e}\) while that of males is 49.16\(^{e}\).

F.5. **Language:**

The use of English is quite widespread. Roman script has been adopted for reducing various dialects to writing.

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** Census of India, 1981. Nagaland.**
The most favourite dialect is Angam, which has been recognized as a medium of instruction up to the Matriculation standard.

G. TRIPURA

G.1. Geography:

Tripura was a princely state till October 15, 1949. In 1972 it became a full-fledged State of the Union of India.

"Tripura, lies between latitudes 22°56' and 24°32' North and longitudes 91°10' and 92°22' East, and covers an area of 10,477 sq. kms.** It is bounded on the North by Bangladesh, and a part of Assam, on the East by part of Assam and Mizoram and on the South and West by Bangladesh. Agartala is the capital of Tripura.

G.2. Population:

According to the 1981 Census, the total population of Tripura is 2,060,189** of which 1,057,714** are males and 1,002,475** are females.

Sixty per cent of the area of Tripura is inhabited by Hill Tribes.

G.3. Socio-Economic Conditions:

The people of Tripura can be broadly divided into two categories - the Tripura and the non-tribals. Some of

** Census of India, 1981. Tripura.
them are Hindus by religion, while the rest are Buddhists.

Agriculture is the major occupation of the people of Tripura. Previously, they carried on "shifting cultivation," but now-a-days they are forced to take recourse to the mode of cultivation conforming to the usual all-India pattern. Agricultural economy here is self-sufficient. Commercial crops, like jute, tobacco etc. are also grown.

Another important limb of Tripura's economy is cottage industry. Tripura is well-known for handloom cloth and bamboo and wood articles particularly decoration pieces.

0.4. Education and Literacy Level:

"In 1901 only 2.3% of the population (4.1% males and 0.2% females) could read and write." The growth of education in Tripura in the 20th century has really been remarkable. Maharaja Bir Bikram Singh started free and compulsory education in Tripura. However, education became more developed after the State merged into the Indian Union in the year 1949. "The expansion of educational facilities in Tripura has been spectacular almost at all levels since the launching of the First Five Year Plan."33 At present


there are "Four Teachers Training Colleges, one Engineering College, 6 general colleges and a total of 2018 schools (i.e. Primary, Middle, High and Higher Secondary)." A Post-Graduate Centre of the Calcutta University was opened in Agartala in 1976-77.

Out of the total population, 356,688 people i.e., 41.38% are literate. The literacy rate was 30.98% in 1971 and increase in the decade is more than 3½% over the base line. The percentage of literate males is 51.05% while that of literate females is 31.60%.

G.5. Language :

People of Tripura speak a dialect known as "Tripura Kagborak."

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** Census of India, 1981. Tripura.