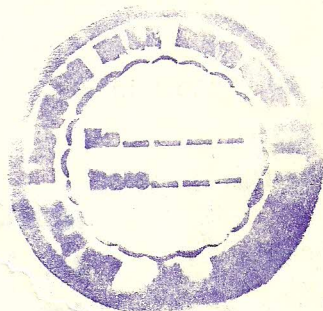


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ETHNIC IDENTITY, ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

N.K. DAS

Foreword by
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TO MY
FATHER AND MOTHER

FOREWORD

THE study of nascent socio-political formations in the North-East is a subject of enormous significance to social scientists and political strategists alike. It has been a frontier region of India's history and culture where scholars like K.L. Barua, S.K. Bhuiyan and J.H. Hutton have tried to identify the structures and processes that are relevant to the understanding of social situations elsewhere in the country. Over the years scholars have been able to reconstruct the outlines of political history and ideological super-structure of the social processes that have been at work. In recent years the process of state formation in North-East India has been critically analysed. Like similar processes elsewhere in the country, state formation was a multi-pronged process here. It involved experiments with a new organisation and technology of production, a new set of social relations. It resulted in the rise of multi-community or multi-ethnic formations in the Brahmaputra valley and beyond. Even those communities which were not brought within state system had a well-integrated, cohesive pre-state system of authority based on a sharing of power. The pre-state system did not exist in a vacuum and did not necessarily imply a situation of chaos. The author's study of the segmentary social system among the Zounuo-Keyhonuo (Southern Angami Naga) throws interesting light on how such a pre-state system worked,

until it was peripherally integrated with the colonial system and the post-colonial state.

✓ A feature of the North-East situation has been the rise of ethnic identities in recent years, more sharply and vividly than ever before. Old tribal communities have assumed new names and sought not only a cross-regional, but also a trans-national identity. A number of small ethnic groups have merged with bigger ethnic groups and in some cases bigger tribes have broken up into several groups. Many factors such as the development process the democratic system of administration and politics, rise of Christianity, influx of outsiders have added to identity consciousness. Ethnicity has been an underlying principle in formation of states in the North-East since 1960s. The political situation therefore is vibrant, which occasionally causes misgivings elsewhere, but Indian democratic system has proved itself resilient enough to absorb and accommodate ethnic aspirations of diverse groups in its frontier regions.

Poverty, inequality and stratification have emerged as yet another area of study in the North-East. On the one hand, the North-East states are on top in terms of per capita investment by the Centre. So much flow of money has created problems in tribal societies. Polarization is in evidence in societies, which were once considered egalitarian.

✓ Exploitation of tribals by tribals has emerged as a crucial issue, and yet intra-tribe contradictions are overshadowed by the tribe non-tribe confrontation. Moreover, nothing is more assuring than the emergence of a professional, confident middle class consisting of members of a tribal community who are looking at their problems in twin terms of modernity and tradition.

I am happy to commend this work by one of our competent officers. We require today a conceptual framework for the study of the North-East that partakes of both historical perspective and anthropological insight. I am glad to note the

application of combined methodology in the exploration of the North-East situation in this book, which I hope will be widely read.

New Delhi:
25th March, 1988.

K.S. SINGH
Director General
Anthropological Survey of India

PREFACE

THE pre-dominant tribal character of the societies in North-East India has been traditionally linked with distinguishable ethno-historical and techno-environmental pressures and processes. Relative isolation, difficult terrain, and exclusiveness had generally influenced the perpetuation of Mongoloid ethnic elements and tribal systems which are based on structural principles such as kinship and descent. The Brahmaputra valley had however experienced the synthesis of Mongoloid and Sanskritic cultures from an early period. Literary sources point to the prevalence of the solar cult and *tantrik* traditions in Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa (the ancient Assam). The widely celebrated festival of the Brahmaputra valley - *Bihu* - is said to be associated with fire worship and fertility rites. The local scholars traced the origin of river and place names such as Kamarupa-Pragajyotisa, Brahmaputra/Lauhitya and deity name *Kamakhya* in tribal idioms.

Gradual emigration of peasants, artisans and other caste-groups had considerably affected the technological and other aspects of production, but in the absence of spread of *jati/varna* model, the Brahmaputra valley did not witness the articulation and spread of the organic inter-group *jajamani* relations. At the same time, *sanskritization*, as a structural-functional and cultural mobilization process had little impact because Brahmanical

and Hinduization traditions and processes remained confined to royal lineages/families. A borrowed Indo-Sanskritic language could be established, however, as a major link language in Brahmaputra valley. This was partly to rationalize the state formation. This language imbibed local tribal phrases, folklore and myths and thus provided scope for a synthetic Assamese culture to grow. The predominant Mongoloid-Kirata ethnic elements thus continued to exist and perpetuate, unaffected by any strong force of socio-cultural transformation either in pre-colonial or colonial period and afterwards. The penetration of Hinduism, and particularly the caste system, was partly checked under the influence of Shankar Deo, the Assamese social reformer, who had generally spoken against the caste system and its component institutions.

In this book we have generally followed the theoretical approaches, procedures and methods of political anthropology and ethno-history. One of the major concerns of this work is to show how different kinds of ethno-historical and techno-environmental processes generate varied social formations with lesser or greater political integration and complexity. The chapters that follow are organized around specific themes and subject-matters. We start with the analysis of regional ethnic history in Chapter 2 whereby we have tried to describe in brief the ethnic, cultural and political history of the region. We have also touched upon the issue of sanskritization, - *vis-a-vis* tribalization in pre-colonial and colonial periods. In Chapter 3 we deal with tribal social structures in the context of unilineal and cognatic kinship/descent principles. Our emphasis in this chapter is mainly to reveal the politico-jural dimensions of descent system among a few matrilineal and patrilineal tribes. In Chapter 3, as also in next two chapters, the relation of authority and power to social structures are critically examined and thereby the types of social-stratification are demonstrated.

This exercise could not ignore the processes and problems of tribal political systems and state formation which we have described and discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Three dominant types of tribal polity discernable in North-East India are 'tribe', 'chiefdom' and 'state'. We have described, examined, re-interpreted, and re-constructed several cases showing crucial linkages between political formations and economic and socio-cultural developments and transformation. It is found that drawing the dividing line between the state and the chiefdom in North East India is not an easy task because of the similarity of certain structural elements in both the systems. We also discover an undercurrent oscillatory tendency amongst the political systems, who tend to move towards an opposite direction, that is, from an acephalous/segmentary non-state structural level towards chieftainship/early-state/state formation and *vice versa*. Amongst several structural elements which emerge between or during such transformations are fission of one ethnic group into two or more groups, fusion of small ethnic groups, reconstruction of folklore and myths, institutional arrangements to gain prestige and to become 'bigmen' within and beyond kinship and descent frameworks, 'military' role of such elders (in pre-colonial phase) etc., which we have examined in ethno-historical contexts.

It has been possible to establish the 'tribe' as an analytic category, a real group of people united by basic structural principles and demonstrable through tribal/ethnic boundaries. I have generally described a tribe in North-East India in terms of segmentary/non-state socio-political structure. My emphasis on segmentary processes is guided by the fact that in tribal societies the political order does not exclude the order of kinship. The tribesmen of North-East have always maintained their ethnic boundaries and ethnic identities through kinship, cosmology and territory which could not

be altered to any great extent by exogenous factors during colonial or post-colonial periods. However, the colonial period had considerably influenced the economic domain which came to be influenced by exogenous factors swiftly. As a result of this factor and on account of several modernization processes, such as education, Christianity, participation in democratic institutions and processes in post-colonial period, the social stratification within tribal societies and class formation at inter-tribal level got intensified. The economic dimensions of social stratification are described and analysed in Chapter 5 of this book. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to more contemporary ethno-political situations. The ethnic boundaries and identities which were maintained through traditional means in pre-colonial period were further shaped and re-enforced in colonial period. In the wake of Independence of India the hills-tribesmen of North East in particular had become apprehensive of losing their economic resources (land, forest) and privileges, which, they thought, they had enjoyed under protective measures adopted by the British. The fear of interference and exploitation by the plainsmen/outsideers was linked with losing distinctive ethnic identities, the consciousness of which was politically encouraged by the British. The question of ethnic-identity thus remained crucial factor in post-colonial era because all tribal and social movements came to be centred around the question of preservation of cultural/ethnic identities. Redefinition of ethnic boundaries at expanded territorial levels came to be emphasized more and more in the context of political mobilization observable in post-Independence era within and outside the framework of the democratic institutions and constitutional framework. Yet another dimension of ethnicity has been the renewal and re-enforcement of socio-linguistic and cultural 'revivalistic' movements, generally associated with the demands of politico-administrative auto-

nomy, such as the demand of "homeland" by the Bodo, Zeliangrong, Karbi-Kachari and others in their respective territories.

This work is largely based on research experiences and information collected by me during 1976-86. I am thankful to the Director General, Anthropological Survey of India, for allowing me to conduct anthropological research in North-East India. I have depended on the published material of self and works of several scholars in preparation of this volume. I therefore acknowledge my thankfulness to those scholars. I am extremely grateful to Dr. K.S. Singh for having agreed to write the Foreword to this volume. I am thankful to Shri M.C. Mittal of Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, for accepting this volume for publication. My wife, Snehalata, had helped me in several ways during the preparation of this work. Several colleagues from within and outside the Survey had helped me in several ways, and Shri P.K. Guha and Shri P.S. Khisti had helped me in preparing the figures. I am thankful to all of them. The views expressed in this book are those of the author. I respectfully dedicate this book to my parents, Shri Chiranjiv Dash and Shrimati Indumati Dash.

Shillong:

N.K. DAS



CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
	7
FOREWORD	11
PREFACE	19
LIST OF TABLES	21
1. Introduction	33
2. Outline of Regional Ethnic History	47
3. Patterns of Social Structure : Fallacy of Unilineal Models	77
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4. Tribal Polity and State Formation	142
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5. Economic Dimensions of Social Stratification	197
6. Ethnic Identity, and Cultural Revivalism	243
7. Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict in North-East : Current Trends	274
EPILOGUE	283
APPENDIX I	286
APPENDIX II	291
BIBLIOGRAPHY	308
INDEX	

LIST OF TABLES

5.1 Categories of Occupations	144
5.2 Extent of Jhuming in North-East India	159
5.3 Eco-Cultural Background of Some Ethnic Groups of North- East India	160
5.4 Calendar of Agricultural Operations among the Karbi of Assam	180

ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE anthropologists are generally concerned with the varying ways in which men have organized their culture, and the structural pattern of inter-relationships which differentiate one society from another. Anthropology has experienced two major developments during past several decades. The first was a fieldwork revolution which helped it to do away with simplistic evolutionism of the later nineteenth century. Out of this development came the wholistic approach, social structural studies, acculturation studies and the selection of a specific 'unit' the tribe or ethnic group. These groups had some meaningful integrity as wholes and thus the interrelationships of their parts and the comparisons of these relationships across a number of such ethnic units were methodologically appropriate, and enriching to the general social science community. The second major development in anthropology began with the end of World War II. During past decades the tribal societies have come more and more to play a role in modern nation states. The ethnic group has lost much of its wholeness because one of its most significant features is its belonging to a larger nation state. There are now several new emergent community activities, neighbourhood and ward organisations, attitudes to modern vs. traditional ways of doing things, all of these are vital features of contemporary social life in the new nations. Ethnicity

thus emerges as one significant variable in the new research situation.

It is only rarely that the anthropologists have come to appreciate and study the socio-cultural milieu of political life. Their traditional field of interests could not be expanded mainly because this discipline was not equipped with a suitable body of theory and techniques directed at the new variables. In the realm of theory anthropologists have traditionally had an over-simplified view of what the political system is and what kinds of categories of behaviour must be observed in order to report fully on the political life of the people. Through the study of contemporary theorists, however, much more adequate conceptualization of politics is being diffused into anthropology (Easton, 1959, Almond and Powell, 1966).

One of the distinguishing features of anthropology, however, remains to be its wholistic approach to the study of human beings. Anthropologists not only study all varieties of people, they also study many aspects of human experience. It is, therefore, that in most monographs that the anthropologists write we find a discussion of the history of the area in which the people live, the physical environment, the organization of their family life, features of their language, the peoples' settlement pattern, political and economic systems, religion, art and craft, and so on. Today the field of anthropology has become so broad and so much knowledge has been gathered that anthropologists tend to specialize in one topic or one area. Despite this specialization, however, the discipline of anthropology retains its wholistic orientation.

Trends of Anthropological Research in North-East India

North-East India has a long tradition of anthropological research. Right from second quarter of the past century the British administrators,

explorers, soldiers and tea-planters took great interest in the culture of local people and prepared valuable notes based on their impressions. Although the old reports are frequently tainted by personal bias of early authors (Elwin, 1959), one must bear in mind that the age of formal social anthropology had not yet begun in Britain, Europe or America when these men made their sojourns in the rugged hills of the North-East (Bhagabati, 1974). The roots of anthropological research in this region may thus be traced back to more than one hundred years ago from today. In the present century also social anthropological research had an early start in this region as compared with many regions elsewhere in India. This could be related with the production of sixteen detailed monographs under the auspices of an honorary director of ethnography of the Government of Assam. Hodson's work on *Meiteis* was published in 1908; Plafair published his book on the *Garos* in 1909; a book on *Lushai-Kuki clans* by Shakespeare was published in 1912; Gurdon's book on the *Khasi* was published in 1914. Maintaining the same tradition anthropologically trained administrators, such as J.H. Hutton and J.P. Mills wrote very interesting monographs on various Naga tribes, such as Angami, Ao, Sema, Lotha and Rengma. Some of these monographs have since been reprinted by the present Nagaland Government. Mention may be made here of Parry's and Endle's monographs on *Lakher* and plains-dwelling *Kacharis*. Based on Lyall's initial works, Stack published a monograph on the *Mikirs*. Furer-Haimendorf may be described as the first professional social anthropologist, who was commissioned by the Government of Assam, prior to Independence, to establish friendly contacts with the tribes of hilly areas of eastern areas. Many of his own early works have been revised and reprinted by Professor Furer-Haimendorf. T.C. Das undertook a five-month long field-work between 1931 and

1936 among the *Purums*, a small Kuki tribal group of Manipur and wrote a monograph on the community (Das, 1945). The significance of this work lies in the fact that in 1958 Rodney Needham of Oxford could attempt a detailed structural analysis of Purum society based on Das's ethnography. Besides Das, J.K. Bose made a study of some aspects of the *Garo social organization* (Bose, 1941). K.P. Chattopadhyay published an account of *Khasi kinship and social organization* in 1941. In view of Bhagabati, as a formal subject of study, anthropology in North-East India received a thrust forward when a department of anthropology was established at the new University of Gauhati in 1948, which became a post-graduate department in 1956. Then we find the arrival of Verrier Elwin as Anthropological Adviser to the Governor of Assam on NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh). Since 1950s reports on a number of Arunachal tribes have been prepared by anthropologists belonging to the research cell organized by Elwin, though most of these reports are of a preliminary nature. Mention may be made here of *The Apa-Tanis and their Neighbours* by Furer-Haimendorf (1962). In 1963 Burling published his study of a *Garo village* in which he provided a clear analysis of Garo kinship and social structure. In 1967 Chie Nakane, the Japanese anthropologist, published her comparative study of matrilineal systems of the Garo and Khasi. This author has made an attempt to re-examine and re-interpret the material provided by Burling and Nakane (Das, 1982, also see Das, 1985).

Since the late 1950s several research organizations have been engaged in conducting research among the tribal and non-tribal communities of North-East India. These are : (1) Anthropological Survey of India, (2) Census Organization of India, (3) Tribal Research Institutes of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal, Mizoram and Nagaland, (4) Agro-Economic Research Centre of North-East India (Jorhat)

etc. Anthropological Survey of India has published valuable works on a large number of communities. The Survey has also published edited volumes on specific themes such as *Tribal Movements in India*, and *Economies of the Tribes and their Transformation*, both of these are edited by Dr. K.S. Singh. Other thematic works include "Agrarian Situation in India" and "Tribal Education in India", edited by Dr. Ajit K. Danda and others. In all these volumes the North-East India is prominently covered by several scholars. "Cultural Profile of Shillong", edited by Dr. B.B. Goswami, is yet another valuable publication of the Survey. D.N. Mazumdar's "Culture Change in Garo Villages", which has been published by the Survey, is also a very significant work. The other research institutes such as Arunachal Research Department, Nagaland's Directorate of Art and Culture and Assam's Tribal Research Institute have all brought out from time to time several valuable works. Mention may be made here of S.K. Chattopadhyay's edited volume *Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya* published on behalf of Education Department of Meghalaya. One of the important contributions of Agro-Economic Research Centre of Jorhat is *Economic Change in a Mikir village* by P.D. Saikia. This centre has also published a valuable "Bibliography of Studies in Social Sciences in North-East India".

Social anthropological research conducted by University personnel of North-East India has been very significant. Professor M.C. Goswami remains the most prominent figure in the area of social/cultural anthropology of North-East India. Being the Head of the Department of Anthropology in Gauhati University since its inception he had contributed much more than anyone else in the all round development of anthropology in the whole region of North-East India. The felicitation volume published in honour of Prof. Goswami (Sharma and Mazumdar, 1980) describes the works and achievements of Prof. Goswami. As Head of the

Eastern India Law Research Institute of Gauhati High Court, Prof. M.C. Goswami has recently brought out a series of works on "Customary Laws" of several tribals of the region. Besides these works, Professor Goswami has always remained the Ph.D. guide for several workers (including this author) of the region. The space here is not sufficient to mention the individual works of a large number of scholars.

The tradition of research on the tribes is well-established in India. This is more particularly so in case of tribal groups of this region on whom excellent ethnographic accounts have been published. A clear general outline of the tribal cultures has thus emerged as a result of these studies. But majority of the works that are available remain simplistic. They generally do not involve theoretical/conceptual considerations and frameworks.

Tribal groups of this region represent different levels of socio-cultural development. Some have just moved away from their food gathering stage, some have been traditionally prosperous peasants and some belong to the level of "feudal rulers". They all carry the tribal label, and differences among them are pronounced and significant. The tribal heritage is an important component of composite culture of our country. In contrast to peninsular tribal India the tribal cultures in North-East India have demonstrated a rare capacity to survive. At the same time there has emerged amongst them new aspirations. A review of literature on tribal cultures of this region helps us to isolate the following domains of social life which are of great theoretical and social relevance.

1. Loss and fusion of identity,
2. Emergence of new identities,
3. Tribes and the new economic opportunities,
4. Patterns of inter-tribal relations,
5. Patterns of tribal and non-tribal interaction,
6. Revivalism and social-cultural movements among the tribes,

7. Traditional and modern political structures,
8. Religion of the tribes and their interaction with major religions,
9. Matriliney,
10. Youth dormitories,
11. Tribal Property Laws and Land Relations,
12. Tribal Crafts and Technology,
13. Sanitation and indigenous health practices,
14. Folklore, Dance, Music and Art,
15. Customary Laws,
16. Tribal social systems.

It is to be stated that the above themes are still worth studying in the context of the contemporary tribal situation in North-East India. It is indeed deplorable that we have either very scanty or very fragmentary information on most of the above themes in relation to the tribes of North-East India.

This book is then addressed to problems of relationships between tribal and rural peoples of North-East India. Several questions are dealt with in this volume. Some of which are - What is a Tribe? What are the tribes of this region and how are they distributed? What is the nature of the relationships between these groups? How are these relationships affected and influenced by the general processes of modernization and existing social-political situations within the Indian Union? Attempts are also made to deal with some of the above mentioned sixteen major themes, depending on the existing published material as well as the material gathered by this author from amongst several tribes of North-East India during last ten years.

North-East : The Land of Seven Sisters

(Every North-East India society is obviously "tribal" or "civilized". Membership in either set is based upon ecological adaptation. In general, civilized

people farm irrigated rice in valleys and river basins, tribesmen cultivate rice swiddens (*jhuming*) in the hills. To define a "Tribe" is very complex. Anthropologists use the word "Tribe" in several distinct, but related ways: to stipulate an evolutionary stage (*i.e.*, Service, 1962), to distinguish one type of society from others (as in India, Africa and Southeast Asia; Moerman, 1968), and to label any population whose members share a common culture. We shall try to understand the tribal situation in North-East India in terms of their structural elements and common cultural factors. In fact the groups in question have never been completely isolated nor have they been entirely independent of the dominant political and economic structures of the region (see Goswami, 1971). Many of their cultural features reflect long-term contact with the great religions and traditions of the country and its neighbourhood.

(The North-East India is today divided into seven autonomous units. These units of Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura and have the status of State. About three quarters of this region are rugged hilly terrain, while remaining one quarter is split into Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. Broadly speaking the hills of North-East India constitute eastern part of the mountain wall formed by the Himalaya. North-Eastern region occupies an unique place in the socio-cultural, biological, linguistic and economic map of India.) Perhaps a few regions of the country can be said to be so lavishly endowed as this region in respect of mineral and hydel resources. Even then the general economic profile of this region is one of backwardness. The setting up of the North-Eastern Council (NEC) has shown Government's concern about speedy and stimulating development of the region.

The hill areas of the region were administered, until 1937, as 'backward tracts' exclusively under Chief Commissioner's jurisdiction and exercised by the British District Officers. Under the

Introduction

Government of India Act, 1935, the Mizo Hills, the Naga Hills, the North-Cachar Hills, and the North-Eastern Frontier Tracts were called 'excluded' areas, excluded from ministerial jurisdiction; and the Garo Hills, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Mikir Hills 'partially excluded' areas. The excluded areas were further guarded by the 'Inner Line' that prevented the entry of outsiders without permit. The Inner Line regulation continues to be in force in many hill areas. After the Independence of India some re-organization took place and thus by the year 1971 seven separate administrative units described above were created from the erstwhile united state of Assam. There exists perfect amity and coordination between these seven units in launching developmental schemes through several agencies, such as NEC, and the phrase 'Unit of Seven Sisters' works as a guiding principle within the constitutional framework of India.

In fact the four political units of the region, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, are hilly areas and these are also predominantly 'tribal' in ethnic composition, with over 80 per cent population being tribal in each unit. Even in other three States (Assam, Manipur and Tripura) there are vast hilly areas which are inhabited by the tribals; the non-tribal populations are in majority only in plains areas. This geoethnic character has had important social and political implications. Tribal ethnicity could here be formulated and expressed in territorial terms, the result of which has been the emergence of 'Hill States'.

Ecology and Geography

The North-East India features various forms of land reliefs. The eastern Great Himalayan mountain lies in the whole Arunachal Pradesh, which bands into Patkoi, Naga hills, Manipur hills in the direction of North-East to South-West in Tirap District

of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur States respectively. The ranges also extend up to Mizoram hills and Tripura hills. The extension of Deccan plateau of peninsular India also finds place in this region, such as Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills and Mikir/Rengma hills. The part of the North India plains is also in existence here as Brahmaputra valley in whole of Assam State and in the South and West foothills of Meghalaya.

The plains area having a height of less than 200 m occupies whole of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam. It is a fertile and levelled valley formed by Brahmaputra river. It is a rice, tea, jute and cotton producing area but invariably it experiences hazards of flood during rainy season.

Imphal valley in Manipur is although located at the height of between 500 and 1000 metres but it is also fertile river valley. Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills form Meghalaya plateau, and lie between the height of 500 and 2000 m. Both, wet rice cultivation and *Jhuming*, are done depending on altitudes.

In Arunachal Pradesh the Great Himalaya lies from west to the east in the State. Kangto Peak is located at the height of 7089 m which is the highest peak in N.-E. India. "Sela Pass" is situated at the height of 4740 m. The height gradually decreases down to 2300 m, when the Himalayan range comes to the eastern most point. Arunachal Pradesh thus consists of snow peaks in the north and rugged mountains and valleys in the south.

The Brahmaputra has the dominant control over the drainage system of N.-E. India. Brahmaputra is an antecedent river which enters into territory in Siyang District of Arunachal Pradesh crossing the Himalaya. In the long profile flowing N.-S. direction up to N.-E. corner of Assam and thence flowing in N.-E. to S.-W. direction in Assam, it receives number of tributaries mingling from North East and South directions and thus makes

a dendrite pattern of drainage system. Besides, two other small systems also exist: (1) The Barak system of Cachar plains comprising Barak river and the tributaries originating from North Cachar hills, west Manipur hills and North Mizo hills, (2) Few small rivers originating from Mizo hills and Manipur hills and flowing southward direction have their small drainage system exclusively in Mizoram.

The climate of the N.-E. India varies from tropical to alpine snow-clad Tundra types. The tropical climatic zone occupies up to the height of 800 metres in Assam valley, Cachar plains, and Mizo hills. The sub-tropical climatic zone falls in between the contours of 800 m and 1200 m. in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya plateau. The southern slopes of Meghalaya plateau emerges as the first barrier in the way of Bay of Bengal branch of N.W. Monsoon, hence the area between Cherrapunji and Mawsynram receives highest rainfall in the world (*i.e.* around 1300 mm).

The average annual rainfall in Assam, Manipur and Tripura is 2990 cm (1961 Census). The temperature in Arunachal Pradesh varies from freezing point in winter to 26.7° C in summer. In Nagaland, temperature rises up to 27° C in hottest seasons. In Manipur it varies from 37° C to 40° C and in the same way tropical climate also prevails in Tripura.

The forest in N.-E. India varies from tropical evergreen (up to 1200 m), in Assam valley and Cachar plains; to mountains sub-tropical in the hills of Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Garo Hills of Meghalaya.

Soils are rich in humus content in North-East India. The Brahmaputra plains, Cachar plain, Tripura State and Imphal valley consist of alluvial soils bodied by the rivers. Same type of soils are also marked in flat valleys of Apatani, Kaya, Sangta Chhug, etc., in Arunachal Pradesh. In Manipur,

clay to clayey loam soil is found. In the Meghalaya plateau, Karbi hills and some part of Manipur hills lateristic soil is found but sandy loam is predominant in rest of the hills areas.