

# A GEOGRAPHY OF REGIONALISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN ASSAM

**DEBA PRASAD HAZARIKA**

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED

IN

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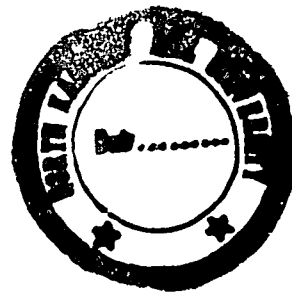


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C H A P T E R - I

INTRODUCTION, SIGNIFICANCE AND RELEVANCE OF SUCH  
THEME IN THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT AND GEOGRAPHICAL  
REGION.

INTRODUCTION :

Group politico-territorial identity a practical realities in our changing dynamic and fragile world. Yet geographers have given little attention or have ignored all together. Elements and processes involved in recognising such territorially bound group identities have been dicussed in the present theme of geography of Regionalism and Social change. With a stress on scale and percêption of regionalism.

Regionalism have been defined for the purpose of the present study as a mean of expression of sentiments and feelings of the concerned population groups to a specific problem. This problem in its structure and application concern revolving of the population group concern in toto. Their response normally classified under socio-political response is a form of regionalism that varies in scale. It is an abstruction of a nation.

In a number of states regionalism and local nationalism have come to the fore and have constituted sources of major problems. The equalising effects of the colonial colonial-control territory, people and resources - has disappeared and with it went the major obstacles of the local people who were divided among themselves by latent and permanent cleavages. In other words, historical centrifugal forces got the better of temporary centripetal forces who origin lay in the colonial period. Unification and adoption of federal form in the country was superimposed on the colonial extent and without exception exhibited divisive stresses. Assam was one such region in the country which illustrated the internal social, political and economic differences. It's accentuation suggested the struggle of the constituent units to maintain themselves. Language and economy became the primary focus on which the politico-geographical development was based. Moreover, the consistent effort towards the recognition of population groups and sub-groups and the consequent balkanisation constituted important aspects.

The period after independence also saw the minority population groups and sub-groups expressing themselves in political and economic terms. This enabled these groups to

adopt a strong ideological star . They made their impact on the existing spatial arrangements by emphasising the need for change in their dependency status and subordinate positions. This exhibited a developmental paradox - for in the context of larger territorial units, they were in minority and in specific locations, they were in majority, spread over a homogenous area. In fact, this suggested the importance of geography and resources as determining factors.

However, contemporary spatial pattern of change and development in the state was largely a product of attitudes and perception of the inhabitants to the stimulus originating both within and from outside the state. It will take quite some time before the traditional pattern and those that were superimposed on the form to cease and reflect the functions and requirements of colonial territorial, political and economic set up in the region.

Pre-independent pattern of administration, objectives and contacts were primarily governed by politico-economic and strategic objectives. Policies in operation encouraged movements of population into the sparsely peopled state from the densely populated Gangetic delta. In addition to this, pattern of land use and land tenure that was in practice

reflected a distinct bias towards preserving the individual economic interests and colonial political and commercial goals for the region - particularly after 1832 when the tea plantations were coming up rapidly in Upper Assam and surrounding hill periphery. This gave the needed impetus migration to accelerate and settle in those areas that were considered to be negative by the inhabitants of the region. In other words, these aspects firmly implanted imperialism in the complex but fluid traditional socio-economic milieu of the region.

The imprint of effective administration penetration (tension of territorial control) and localisation of the impacts at different scales, to a greater extent froze the interests of the minority groups. This resulted in compartmentalisation of the area - each depicting its particular brand of political, economic and social characteristics and interactions.

Colonial requirements, however, demanded ( and were infact carried out in a manner that was ) a system that was not too controlled, In the Brahmaputra Valley. This gave way

to construction of road and railway networks linking the producing area with the points of export ( in this instance with Calcutta and to a lesser extent Chittagong ), growth of towns, spread of education, extension of missionary activities in the interior and peripheral hill areas and other related factors draw the inhabitants of the region from the traditional matrices to broad socio-cultural communications. This was powerful and had profound impact on the inhabitants, particularly in terms of demand.

Broadly speaking, British annexation of the region in 1826, transformed the traditional equations in the region. Location of major population groups and sub-groups was more or less, permanent. The traditional base of subsistence was geared more towards commercial exploitation of resources to the needs of the colonial interests. Competition for space and its attendant consequences became the concern of population of the region. In post-independence period, this aspect alongwith others became important in administrative re-organisation.

Prior to 1947, the region was divided into Assam, consisting of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, North Cachar hills

and Mikir hills, the Naga hills, the Lushai hills; North-Eastern Frontier tracts and the territories of Manipur and Tripura. Later after independence till date, following changes took place -

- i) North-Eastern Frontier Tracts was renamed as North-Eastern Frontier Agency in the 1950's. It continued to be under the purview of the Centre and Assam State. Manipur and Tripura became the Union Territories.
- ii) Naga hills became a separate state in 1963; Naga hills, Tuensang area and the area occupied by the Konyak Tribe in present Arunachal Pradesh were merged together to form the state.
- iii) Between 1963 and 1969, there was all round opposition to the language bill promulgated by the Assam Government from the minorities. This culminated in formation of Meghalaya as a autonomous unit in 1969. It attained full statehood in 1972. In 1972, Lushai hills district was made a Union Territory and was known as Mizoram.

#### RISE OF REGIONALISM IN THE NORTH-EASTERN REGION :

The dissatisfaction among the population minorities, alongwith its manifestation, has become a matter of central concern today. It has remained as a dominant theme in the historical development of the region. Pre-Ahom and post-Ahom periods ( the colonial period ) and the post-independence periods were replace with instance when the Governments were faced with the enorous task of maintaining the territorial unity and political stability. Participation and involvement was to a large extent influenced by concetnation of events

that succeeded the policy decisions and consequent role perception of the inhabitants.

Suffice it to say that with strong possibilities of expressing themselves, the minority population groups found in the fissiparous tendencies elements strengthening their traditional political and social structure. This withstood the constant pressure from the modernizing influence that pervaded as a result of new administrative order in the region after 1826. However, this was not to be so; inter and intra-group conflicts and divergence of interests kept them apart and divided from each other as well as from the development affecting the region. This was because of irrespective of numerical size, location of the minority groups was strong enough to express their need to strengthen their identity and individuality.

This was reinforced by the fact that -

1. linguistic/dialect and cultural differences within and between the various population groups in their spatial context as well as in the region itself, persisted and survival strong pressures of assimilation. The minority groups intensified their activities after independence.
2. Among the population groups and sub-groups in the region, new interests groups emerged. These groups gradually sought more political power, participation varying degree of autonomy for their respective territorial units. They were also able to swing the population to their viewpoints and were able to demonstrate their demands.

3. In all cases, common with the rest of the country perceived and actual exploitation remained one of the major causes ( along with social political backwardness ) for making demands for redressal and eventually separation. This often spilled over to adjacent territorial units.

In the region, the Brahmaputra Valley and Cachar plains became the focal points that encouraged development of distinct regional personality. These became the regional geo-political cores that either controlled the region or permitted access.

Yet, the events were functionally differentiated and never coincided with the administrative or formal divisions of territory. As a result, inter and intra-unit differences surfaced. In addition to this, spatial contiguity and dispersion of the tribal population in the region as well as relative uniformity in socio-economic conditions, suggested the spread of local naturalism among the population groups. The only exception to this in the North-East were the plain tribal like the Bodos, Kacharis, etc. who were spatially intermingled and were considered part of the majority in an enlarged version. At least this was the inference which the present author was able to make when the anti-migrant movement or the Assam movement was at its height between 1979-85. And, in such circumstances, the ethnic minority groups involved in the movement,

exhibited a total lack of geographical distinction and perception that was required for autonomist nationalist movements. This was, in turn, reinforced by political and administrative set-up in the region. Language and religion exerted considerable influence and were responsible in complicating the problems further.

Continuous instability, in one form or the other, has radically transformed the priorities of spatial arrangements in the region; so that no population groups or sub-groups could claim exclusive rights over specific locale. The resultant dilemma, transformed itself to either withholding a group or encouraged them to strive towards full expressions.

In addition to this, the impact of immigrants on the regional landscape has been profound and compelled the inhabitants to reassess their position. But, the situations as they developed indicated the operation of parameters that were directly and indirectly abetted by region's geography and history. These parameters were (1) natives versus outsiders, and (2) natives versus natives, became part of the socio-economic and political crisis and centred around resource allocation, and transfers, political participation and decision-making.

Yet, there has been a conspicuous region-cum-ethnic protests movements that continued to make its impact in the region. The Assam movement, the Bodo movement, movement in Cachar etc. consistently brought to the surface a historical pattern of geographical politics.

This suggested that the multi-ethnic mosaic of the state with several layers of identity contained potential for political expressions including separatism. The question that needs to be resolved is therefore, how, when and to what extent, there is a metamorphosis from social and geographical distinctiveness to political expression.

Thus, the locational perspective offered by the study area can be viewed from both within and outside, as essential feature towards understanding the complex social political processes that shaped the response- reaction of the inhabitants. This led to different forms of ethno-regional movements. Further, if it can be assumed that the nature of pattern of systems in operation in the area, as of local in character, then, it can be stated as affecting the strategy of the inhabitants or those factors that have induced changes in the region's structure.

This left profound changes in the regional landscape and enabled the landscape consequences to undermine the processes of unification of the local and regional territorial units with the mainstream. What was and is essentially needed was the perception and attitude that encouraged the products of inter-dependence, of agglomeration, spatial pattern of resources-use and diffused features of values and symbols.

These points have been raised largely because the study area has distinct counter action areas which are territorially a perception of space and functionally coincided with the area. In fact, the societal factors that operated in the regional preceded the political processes. But, obviously these forces were receptive to change and consulted in conflict between traditionalism and modernism. This had significant impact on space, area and landscape.

#### OBJECTIVES :

The main objective of the study is to develop an outline and framework for the study of regionalism and social change. It is well recognised that geographical factors proved alternative approaches for understanding the spread of the movements. These are often due to situation of the territory, regional

(and local) identity and perception of the people inhabiting the area as well as due to resource endowment and development strategy adopted for improving the socio-economic conditions of the people. Priorities and interests at different scales are often in conflict in the short-term period and may lead to instability if the local and regional needs are not integrated in the national long term perspectives of development. This has accentuated horizontal and vertical disparities in development. In order to discuss the points raised above following chapterization has been resorted to provide a background to this central study.

Assam is a political unit became a part of India only during the British rule. The doors of Assam were thrown open to the free flow of population from the rest of India. And at the same time with the annexation of some parts of Bengal and North-Eastern Hill areas, the British gave birth to greater Assam. Consequently Assam became heterogeneous in character, but Assam never been a homogeneous province<sup>1</sup>. At different period of her history, Assam became a refuge for many people, some of them are Mongoloids and attracted people

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1. E.A. Gait, History of Assam, Calcutta, 1963, Intro., p.viii.

from the rest of India. So there had always been some divergence of language, culture, religion among the population. A process of socio-cultural growth and development of a composite Assamese people and culture was started during the Ahom rule. Again, during British rule this process became weak. So, like the unification of India, the unification of heterogeneous elements of Assam had also become a great problem. Sectional and caste patriotism had developed with the Assam in the name of Assamese. The Assamese caste Hindu elite wanted an internal integration among the heterogeneous elements of the province. They were anxious for the integration of all the groups of people into the mainstream of Assamese culture. They meant by internal integration was the process of "Assamization" so that the Assamese language could become dominant in the region. Their basic quest was to strengthen the common Assamese identity within the broad framework of Indian society. On the other hand, the interests of other ethnic groups, particularly of the Tribals, the Ahoms and the Bengalis were particularistic. Most of them wanted to preserve their distinct identity within the province. They did not want to merge their culture completely with the Assamese caste Hindu culture and developed a non-integrative tendency. As a means of maintaining distinct identity, some of them demanded local autonomy on the basis of their respective ethnic identities within the small

area where they used to inhabit. Sometimes this type of sectional as well as sub-regional patriotism became so strong among some sections of these people that this led them to demand a sovereign independent state outside the Indian Union for the sake of maintaining their ethnic identities. This separatist tendency became considerably stronger with the separation of Burma from India in 1937 and the growing cry for Pakistan as expressed through the Muslim League. But towards the late 'forties the centripetal forces became sufficiently strong capable of controlling the centrifugal urges of various groups of the province. Consequently, Assam became a part of India. In this chapter an endeavour has been made to examine the centrifugal and centripetal tendencies developed in Assam during the 'forties of this century which played a significant role in moulding the attitude of Assamese elite to the question of 'Federalism' when the Constitution was being framed.

Being a late-comer into the national mainstream, Assam in her relationship with the rest of India had her own legacy of emotional and psychological ambivalence. The feeling of a certain uniqueness marking Assam out from the rest of the country led to a sense of social autonomy and even 'sovereignty' for each community living in the province. Different linguistic



and ethnic groups of the province whether singly or jointly expressed strong sub-nationalist or centrifugal sentiment. These groups may broadly be categorised into three main divisions for the purposes of our discussion - (i) the people of Mongoloid stock, which includes the tribes and races of both hills and plains; (ii) those who articulated the 'Assamese nationalists' (in some sense sub-nationalists) sentiments through the Ahom Jatiya Mahasabha; and (iii) a section of the upper caste Assamese intelligentsia who individually expressed their centrifugal sentiment.

The tribes and races of Assam ( such as the Nagas, the Mizos, the Khasis, the Garos, the Mikirs, the Ahoms, the Kacharis, the Bodos, the Miris etc ) originally belonged to Mongoloid blood, who came to this region from the East and South-East Asia at different periods of history. In the past, these tribes and races maintained their separate kingdoms - free and independent for a long period. They never came under any foreign domination before the British annexation of this region with the rest of India. The Ahoms had ruled the mainland of Assam continuously for more than six hundred years which is indeed rare in the history of any part of India. But there were other territories on the peripheries of Assam which were

ruled by the Nagas, the Khasis, the Kacharis and so on. These tribes were not prepared to live under what they considered to be the dominance of others. This was so because these tribal people had never been brought together under any central power prior to the advent of the British rule in this region. Some of these tribes and races had always been fighting for their distinct socio-political existence even during the period of the British rule.

Thus it is clear that at the advent of independence there had been a strong sub-regional and even a centrifugal urge among a section of the people of the hills. One of the reasons for this was that these hill tribes had very little scope of mingling with the people of the plains during the British rule.

In addition to this there were some other factors also which stood in the way of integration between the hills and the plains. The hills were not bound with the plains by any ties of religion and language.

In the plain of Assam the Ahom had expressed remarkable centrifugal urges. They had been the latest rulers of the Assam valley and after six centuries of their rule in Assam, the British had taken over the country from them in 1826. Therefore,

it was a natural inclination among the Ahoms to get back their lost power and positions.

The plain tribal had also contradictions with the Assamese caste Hindus. It may be noted that tribals of the plains were somewhat culturally less distinct from the Assamese Hindus than the hill Tribes. This happened because of the relatively greater interaction between them and the caste Hindus through the centuries. One reason for this may have been that tribals of the plains did not live in any single contiguous area, all of them were scattered over wide areas.

Despite this fact, a section of the tribal elite felt strongly that they were markedly different from the Assamese caste Hindus. It is true that the Assamese Caste Hindu had grown into quite a big and homogeneous community in the province. Even during the Ahom rule, they had held important positions in the bureaucracy. During the British administration also, because of their education, they were able to occupy a dominant position in the governmental and commercial undertakings. At the same time as noted earlier, this groups became very powerful in the Congress organisation and played a dominant role in the politics of the province.

On the other hand, the tribal elite realized that they remained economically, educationally and even politically much more backward than the Assamese caste Hindus. It seemed to them that the tribals were being exploited and neglected by the upper caste dominant elite of the province.

At the same time, it has to be noted that the tribal elite were not only afraid of the dominance of the Assamese caste Hindus, they were also apprehensive of the possible 'danger' from the non-Assamese Indians of the state.

In any case, the tribes and races of Assam were not sufficiently organised, capable of asserting the demand for a sovereign independent Assam. On the other hand, the Indian National Congress in Assam was strong enough to check the centrifugal urges developed among the tribals and the Ahom. Moreover, the prevailing political climate was not favourable for accommodating such a demand.

The separatist tendencies developed not only among the tribes and races of Assam, but also even among the Assamese sub-nationalists to a considerable extent. The sentiments of this group were mainly expressed through the **Asom Jatiya** Mahasabha.

It is interesting to note that while putting forward the claim for a free independent status for Assam, this section of the Assamese people have always referred to as the 'brave martial races and tribes' who once ruled over Assam. But they themselves were not the descendants of these 'brave martial race' whom the caste Hindus' dominance had now relegated to a 'backward' status. In fact, with a view to serving their interest, they employed this technique of bargaining with the national elite.

In addition to this, some influential number of the upper caste Assamese intelligentsia who were not closely associated with the Asom J tiya Mahasabha, had also expressed a deep sense of centrifugal sentiments.

Now it is clear that with the growing demand for Pakistan there developed separatist urges among the various groups of people in Assam. It may be noted that national sentiment developed in the country round the democratic right of self determination, it give rise simultaneously and significantly to regional, sub-regional and ethnic sentiments based on cleavages of languages, region, race, tribes and the like. As such in Assam the separatist feeling found expression in two main contexts - narrower and broader.

In this connection, it is important to reiterate the dilemma of the dominant Assamese elite in Assam. Originally, the members of this group came to Assam from others of India during the Ahom rule; due to their education and upper caste status, they gradually acquired position of prestige and power. After the end of Ahom rule and the rise of British power, however, they became the dominant community in Assam. But after attaining their dominant status they feared lest they should lose their power and position.

Under the circumstances, a vague and as yet nebulous centrifugal tendency developed among the various ethnic and linguistic elite of Assam which was, however, not sufficient to materialise the dream of sovereign independent status for Assam for outside the Indian Union. The British, of course, would not have given this option to Assam; indeed, Assam had only two options; either to join India or Pakistan. Of these, the dominant Assamese caste Hindu elite of Assam were naturally interested to remain with India. At the same time, perhaps, the new large state of India would not have also allowed Assam to secede from the rest of the country. In addition to this, there were yet some other factors which inevitably led to the development of centripetal urges in Assam.

In the first place, while it is true that the separatist tendencies had been developing among the different groups of the province, these had not developed due to the same cause; the causes were diverse in nature. As such, there was no common articulation of centrifugal urges among them.

Secondly, as stated earlier, with the growth of freedom movement in India, a strong sense of Indian nationalism developed. The Indian National Congress sought to instil a spirit of solidarity among the people of all parts of India by inducing in them a sense of common grievances and common heritage. The power of Indian nationalism became so strong in the twenties, 'thirties and 'forties of this century, that it was able to submerge the centrifugal tendencies developed in Assam.

Thirdly, it may be argued that after the partition of the country centripetal tendencies were strengthened; indeed the emergence of Pakistan virtually submerged the separatist feelings among the Assamese elite. It created a new type of scare among them. Surprising though it may seem, while only a few months back they had felt so sure of their own strength and had asserted that Assam would be able to defend herself, they now feared that Assam would be able to defend herself, Assamese elite strongly believed that Pakistan would be a real danger to Assam's integrity and, therefore, Assam needed the protection of a stronger India.

It is true that after partition, Assam became strategically more important than it was before. The partition made Assam isolated from the rest of the country giving her one more international border i.e., the border of Pakistan in addition to the common border with China and Burma which Assam which already had.

Significance and relevance of such theme in the national and regional context and geographical region. A Geography of regionalism is the main problem of a society. Due to the different social changes in the society how it plays a significant role on the regionalism. Geography intends to investigate the complex problems of human grouping in the society from time to time. Geography is

India inherits is the oldest civilisation of the world. Popularly known as Indian Civilization, but within this, there are many minor civilisation which are articulated most often in the form of cultural ethnic or religious group. The diversity of the country has further strengthen the autonomy of this cultural entity which in other turn provide ample basis for the formation of a cultural region.

This cultural region in the context of development, geography which stands for change and continuity acquire specific significant in which the socio-cultural attribute of the

society can provides required lead back for economic development.

Here, cultural region are not intended to divide the country into smaller autonomous entity. On the contrary it aimed at to achieve the national planning and development aims and objective by identifying the potential and possibilities of a region that it can contribute in the national development.

During the time, the region will be able to integrate itself in the development process nationaas a whole. After enjoying its autonomy to select the quantity and quality of the contribution it can make.

Any effort apart from the contribution of a region through consensus is bound to be detrimental to both national integrity and development. In the recent years the experiences show that the centre has acquired greater power to manoeuvre in the affairs of the states. As a result the states which are also broadly cultural region in the Indian context find themselves always veaulerble to Jeopardise their cultural indentities.

In many cases the region have experience rise of seperate forces Assam is also located in the periphery of the Indian civilization. For a large part of its history this region had maintained relative isolation from the main cultural stream. On the one hand and also housed numerous cultural and ethnic groups within it.

In the present context this community while accepting the sovereignty of India also like to retain their socio-cultural autonomy which makes it imperative to recommends and if possible formulate the strategy in which a way the development will social justice and regional balance can be made. It is in this context the present agitation tries to exploit the possibilities by taking Assam as a case study.

The Area of study - Here the study area is the State Assam as a whole. It is a pioneer state of the North Eastern region in India, whose economy is full of potentialities. Different valuable natural resources are within the possession of the state. But as the nature is niggardly it never allowed Assam to flourish with its resources as the state

is subject to variety of problem.

This study area is covered an area is about 78,523 sq. km. as against the country's total area of 3280483 sq. km. Thus the state constitutes 2.39 percent of the total land area of the country Assam ranks 12th in respect of area among all the state population of Assam stood at 199 lakh as on 1st March 1981, and Assam ranks thirteenth in respect of population among all the state of the Indian Union Assam is situated at the North Eastern Himalayan sub-region of India.

Literature - The topic geography of Regionalism and social change in Assam is a important reserach topic in the present time. This type of Research work not yet done by any other scholar till today. A lot of research work completed on Assam in different fields by many scholar. But on Regionalism and Social Change in Assam not yet done. So this situation came to mind and it will be helpful in near future.

Data Base - For this research work the different data which are going to use are collected from the

statistical Hand Book of Assam 1984. All data are collected from this source but here also some data are project and some data are not available. Methodology - Here to get the problem of regionalism and how social change took place in Assam different geographic factors has discuss and also how the different resources playing a significant role on this. More over historical background of Assam and what are the different conflicts took place in different period of History is also going to discuss. The other hand what are the different areas of attraction in the state and how migration going in and also how to form a region and social changes took place due to these are also discuss to get the result.

This method only going to use for this research work.

In order to facilitate the unitial study of such a theme following tentative chapterization has been made.

#### Chapter I. Introduction:

Sihnificance and relevance of such theme in the national and regional context and geographical region.

In this chapter effort has been made to give an idea the significance and objective of this type of study in the national and regional context and geographical region. More over here attention has been made about the study of Afea including its boundaries.

Chapter II. The geographical milieu distribution of relief, resource availability and resource potentiality.

In this chapter attention has been made to give an idea about the boundaries of the Assam including surrounding states and that are its position, what are its area, population, its physical features and its description. Moreover, what are the different resources which are generally found in Assam and how it is utilised in the different parts of Assam. Moreover what are the different important minerals of Assam, what are the different forest resources are generally found in Assam. Assam is the frontier province of India in the North Eastern part, surrounded by other administrative units of region, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya, and also by foreign countries like Bhatan, and Bangladesh.

The Boundaries of Assam lies between latitude  $28^{\circ}18'$  and  $24^{\circ}$  North and longitudes  $89^{\circ}46'$  and  $97^{\circ}4'$  East. It contain at present an area of 78523 sq. kms. With a total popplation is about 199 Lakh in 1981. Physiographi- cally Assam can be divided into two division, Assam plain and Assam hills. Assam is endowed with vast natural resour- ces, with considerable industrial potential offering exten- sive apportunities for the establishment of a wide range of resources - based and demand based industrial units. Coal Crude oil, Natural gas, lime stone etc, are the main resources of Assam. More over Assam is very rich in forest resource also. All above mentioned resources and minerals are going to discuss in this chapter.

### Chapter III. Historical background.

In this chapter attention has been made to give an idea the historical backgrounds of Assam and what are different conflicts happened during its history.

The modern name of Assam is actually of quite recent origin. The tradition of the Ahom themselves is that the

present name is derived from Asama in the sense of unequalled or powerless.

Early in thirteenth century a band of handy hill men entered into the eastern extremity of the Brahmaputra Valley. These were the progenitors of the Ahom. They ruled for several years in Assam. Sukapha was the first Ahom King. From the thirteenth to the fifteen centuries the Ahom were fought with the Nagal, Kacharis and during seventeenth century the history of Ahom was mainly the history of the Ahom Mogul conflicts, and how in 1824 the British entered Assam and ruled upto 1947, all these things are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter IV. Region and social pattern, Identification of areas of attraction and isolation and their impact on social pattern.

In this chapter attention has been made to give an idea about the different religion of Assam, different tribes of Assam and how the migration took place in different times and what are the areas of attraction and isolation and their impact on social pattern.

In one sense, all the people, who live in present day Assam are the people of Assam. Assam is the homeland of several

tribes - Rabha, Boro, Kachari, Karbi (Mikir) Tiwa (Lalung) Mishing (Miri). Each of these has its own language. All these people also migrated to Assam in long past from different direction and at different intervals of time. More over different people from Bangladesh migrated to Assam mostly for economic reason.

The fertile land of Assam and tea garden are the areas of attention.

Immigration to Assam from Bangladesh is going on and gradually they make a isolated region in different parts of the state they impact great influence on the social pattern of Assam.

All these things are going to discuss within this chapter.

#### Chapter V. Conclusion.

##### Dangers of dislocation

In Assam the idea of autonomy, if carried too far, wether applied to peripheral countres of local life or to

regionalism could have grave consequences for the future of the state.

The risk is present in the case of rural as well as urban region. The great effort of mediation among the collecting local interests that this requires provides a school in the practice of democracy and promotes an awareness of the web of regional interrelations in which each region is involved.

Last considerations which is no less alarming, concerns the nature of regional autonomy.

If the conclusions to be drawn from our case study are clear with respect to applied geography they are equally clear concerning general theory. The flexibility of the idea of centre and periphery. A deeper significance of the case we have studied is that one must go beyond a superficial interpretation. Regionalism adopted to social change does not replace the centre periphery model, used in this sense of levelling differences and diffusing the points of decision and power.

On the theoretical plane, it suggests a reversal that does not eliminate the difference understood in the opposition between centre and periphery but propose to attribute the sense of centre to the periphery and vice versa.

## CHAPTER - II

THE GEOGRAPHICAL MILIEU DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF,  
RESOURCE AVAILABILITY AND RESOURCE POTENTIALITY

Chapter - II

Assam is the frontier province of India on the North-Eastern part surrounded by other administrative units of the region, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya and also by foreign countries like Bhutan and Bangladesh.

The boundaries of Assam lie between latitude of  $28^{\circ}18'$  and  $24^{\circ}$  North, and longitudes  $89^{\circ}46'$  and  $97^{\circ}4'$  East.

It contained at present an area of 78,523 sq. km. as against the country's total area of 3,280,483 sq.km. Thus, the state constitutes 2.39 percent of the total land area of the country. Assam ranks 12th in respect of area among all the states.

Population of Assam stood at 199 lakhs as on 1st March 1981 and Assam ranks thirteenth in respect of population among all the states of the Indian Union. (Fig. 1 is showing the location of Assam ).

Assam is situated at the North-Eastern Himalayan sub-region of India. Naturally the state has mainly two different natural regions -

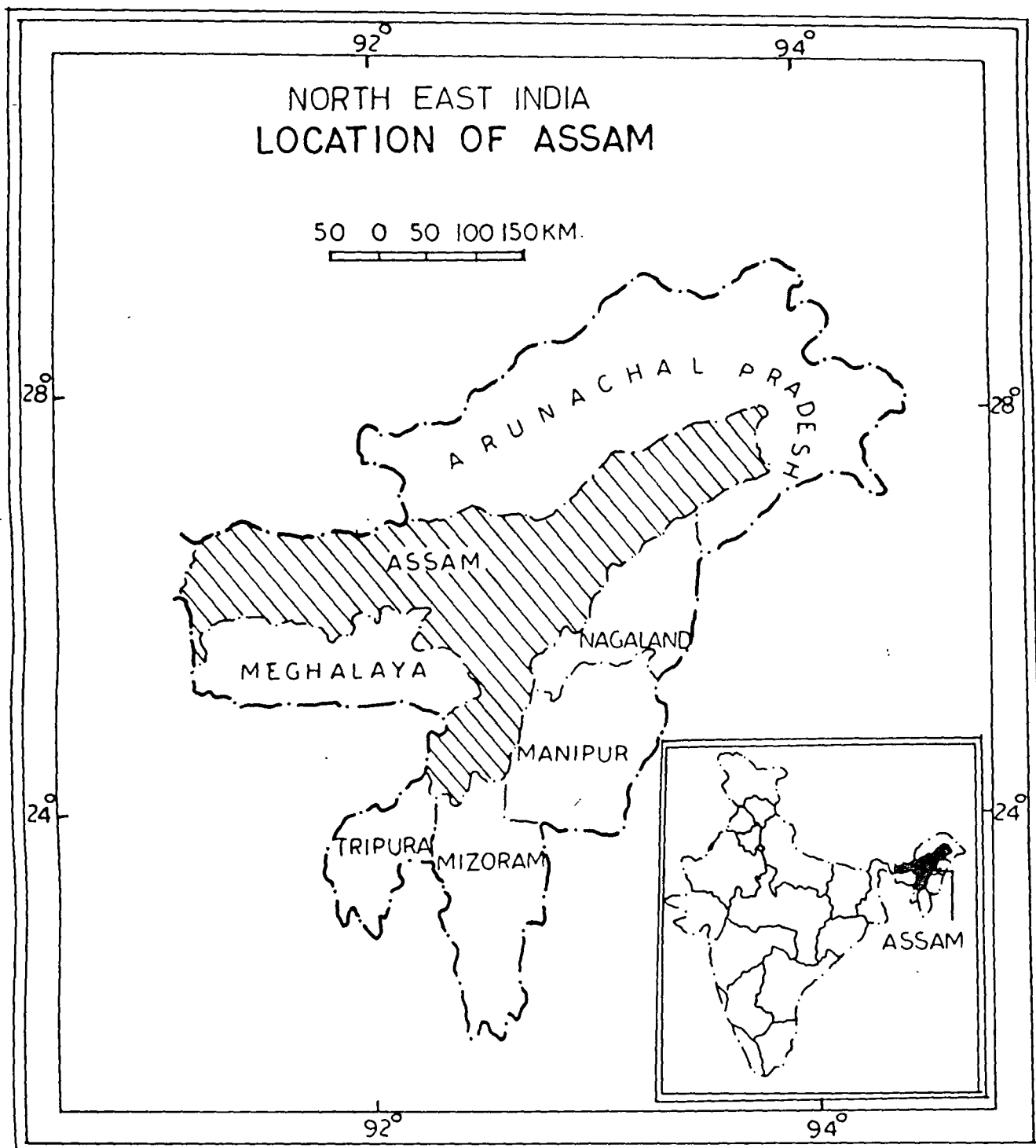


FIG. 1

(a) Assam Plains - comprising of the plain areas of various plain districts of Goalpara, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Kamrup, Barpeta, Darrang, Nagaon, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts and ;

(b) Assam Hills - comprising of United Mikir (present Karbi Anglong) and North Cachar hills. (Fig. 2 is showing the physiographic division of Assam ).

Brahmaputra is the major river of Assam which links all the plain districts except Cachar.

Through the heart of the province run the great river called in Sanskrit the Brahmaputra or Sri Lauhitya in Assam is called Lohit or Luit.

It enters the North Eastern corner of Assam through the Mistimi hills and turning nearly due West, passes through all the districts of North Assam.

The River Brahmaputra is the chief artery and highway of Assam. For generation the Assamese have watered their fields with its life-giving floods and drunk of its blessed water; their whole history and culture are intimately connected with the Brahmaputra.

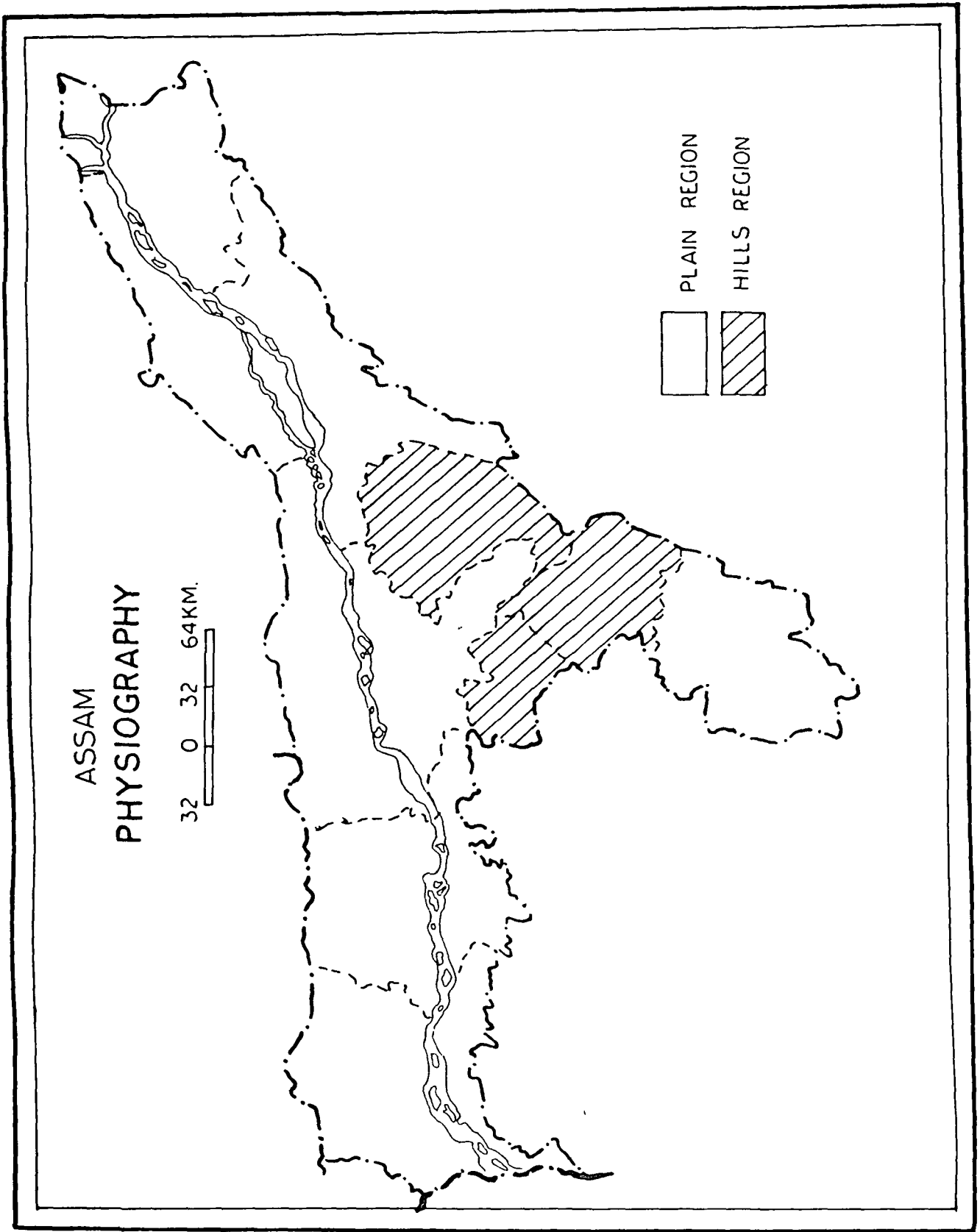


FIG 2

The region extends from  $25^{\circ}44'$  N to  $27^{\circ}55'$  parallels of latitude and from  $89^{\circ}41'$  E to  $96^{\circ}02'$  E meridians of longitudes. The valley stretches for about 720 kilometres in length from East to West and its width varies from 130 kilometres in the western and central parts to about 80 kilometres in the eastern extremity. The valley is comprised of 13 administrative districts, 28 sub-divisions and 108 thanas.

The Brahmaputra Valley is a well defined physiographic unit, it is almost a monotonous level alluvial plain dotted with a few elevated hillock scattered along the bank of the it. These hillocks are the outliers of the Meghalaya plateau and extend from Tezpur and Mikir hills of central Assam plain as far as Dhubri in the western extremity. To the North-East the lower ranges of the Himalayas rise abruptly from the plain to the south is the elevated plateau or rather succession of plateau called the Assam Range, irregularly broken at its eastern and western extremities and along its northern face, but in its central portion from the eastern border of the Garo hills to the watershed of the Dhamsire forming a region of tableland and rolling uplands. The broadest part of the valley is where the river divides the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur, below which the isolated block of the Mikir hills on the south ~~is~~ and the projections group of the delta hills to the north,

suddenly contract it. Forty miles lower down it widens out. At the lower ends of the Nagam district it is again restricted by the Khasi hills, among the spurs which the river makes its way through Guwahati. Once again it is almost completely shut in just to the west of that town below the temple crowned hill of Ailachala and Kanakhya where it is only some 800 yards broad. Beyond this point, the hills recede again and the valley widens as far as Goalpara situated on a spur of the Garo hills. Here at its confluence with the Manas between the rocks of Jogighopa and Pagla rock is the " Gate of Assam ". Immediately beyond this point the valley again widens and at Dhubri finally open out into the great delta of Bengal.

As has been pointed out the Brahmaputra valley is a compact geographical unit, the other important river is Barak which is flowing through the district of Cachar. These two major rivers - Brahmaputra and Barak of which has considerable hill catchment. During the monsoon these rivers spill over their banks at frequent intervals and inundate large areas with all their consequences.

Climatically, Assam has mainly two seasons. The rainy season and the cold season. The monsoon usually starts in June and last until the end of October, Rainfall in Assam usually heavy due to its peculiar geographical position.

The annual rainfall ranges from 70" in the plain to 250" or more in the North-Eastern Hills. The Kopili valley lying between the Khasi and Jaintia hills and Mikir hills in the Nagaon district is the only area where the average rainfall is 43" and therefore may be called the **driest** area in the state. The rainfall rapidly diminishes after October and December is usually the **driest** period of the year throughout the state. Even after the monsoon a major part of the plain areas remain water-logged for varying periods, depending upon the depth of the depression.

The soil of Assam is generally characterised by its acidity. There is much acidity on the soil of the hills whereas new alluvial soils representing the lands on the river banks are less acidic. These are often neutral and even alkaline. The phosphoric content of the Upper Brahmaputra valley where tea is grown is good but it is low in the lower valley. Soils of Barak valley are not much different than that of Brahmaputra valley. There is high proportion of nitrogen and organic matter in the soil of the hill district. Acidic alluvial soils are suitable for cultivation of tea. Low land areas containing heavy clays and high percentage of nitrogen provide a good return of rice. The sandy loams above inundation level gives a good yield of jute. Fruit trees respond quickly in the hills areas

which contain heavy clays with a high percentage of organic matter.

Nature was kind enough while blessing Assam with various natural resources. The total deposit of various natural resources indicates that Assam is very rich in this respect. Natural resources in Assam includes mineral resources, power resources and forest resources.

Assam is endowed with vast natural resources with considerable industrial potential offering extensive opportunities for the establishment of a wide range of resource-based and demand-based industrial units. However, due to various reasons especially, the lack of the requisite economic infrastructure, the state has continued to lag behind the pace of industrialisation in the country. Over the recent years more congenial and conducive environment is being created in the state to foster and encourage the growth of industries by providing increased in the infrastructural facilities.

Minerals are the pre-requisite to industrial progress as they provide the raw materials, to heavy industries like Engineering, Chemical and other industries. Assam being a leading state of the North-Eastern Region of India is well wed with some of the important mineral resources. But mineral

resources of the state have not yet completely assessed. These are the following main mineral resources available in Assam -

Coal :- Coal is an important mineral product in Assam. Coal provides fuel to households and industries in Assam alongwith other by-products. Coalfields in Assam are situated at Makum, Margarita, Nazira, Lankadman, Jaipur, Leda, Nandun etc. Total coal reserves of some of the main coal fields in Assam are estimated to be 235.6 million tonnes for Makum, 30.0 million tonnes for Dilli-Joytura, 2.5 million tonnes for Nazira and 0.6 million tonnes for Koliajan in Karbi Anglong district. Total production of coal in Assam which was 5.22 lakh tonnes in 1970, gradually increased to 5.82 lakh tonnes in 1975 and then to 6.49 lakh tonnes in 1978. In 1979-80 the production of coal in Assam comes down to 5.84 lakh tonnes and then increased to 6.46 metric tonnes in 1981. In 1977, total production of coal in Assam constituted 0.6 percent of the total coal production of the country as a whole.

Crude Oil :- Petroleum is the most important mineral products of Assam. Total production of petroleum crude in Assam accounts for nearly 50% of country's total petroleum output. The amount of production of petroleum in Assam varied marginally between 44.7 lakh tonnes in 1977, 6.49 metric tonnes

in 1978 and 584 metric tonnes in 1979. Total production of petroleum then fall down to 575 metric tonnes in 1980 and then again increased to 646 metric tonnes in 1981. In 1984 the total production of petroleum was 840 metric tonnes.

Oil deposits are found in Naharkatiya, Moran, Hugrijan, Rudrasagar, Galeky,, Lanka, Nazira, Teok etc., the first oil refinery in Assam was established at Noonmati ( near Guwahati ) and Bongaigaon. The main products of these refineries are petrol, high speed diesel, kerosene, carbon, wax, Naptha etc.

Natural Gas :- Assam is well blessed by nature in respect of natural gas. Total reserves of natural gas in Assam are estimated to be 23, 600 million cubic metres. This is available at Naharkatiya and Moran area. The quantity of natural gas utilised in Assam however, increased from 591 million cubic metres in 1978 to 942 million cubic metres in 1979. In 1980 there was a fall in its utilisation to only 455 455 million cubic metres. And then its utilization increased to 869 million cubic metres in 1987 again it is fall down to 771 million cubic metres in 1984. Total amount of natural gas utilized in India was 1545 million cubic metres and then Assam's utilization of natural gas accounts for 59.8

percent of the total utilization in the country. Namrup fertilizers plant and Namrup Gas, Thermal Power Project are the main two projects using natural gas in Assam. (Table -1 showing the production of coal, crude oil and limestone in Assam ).

Limestone is also an important mineral product of Assam. This used as an important raw materials for the production of cement. Limestone using in Assam are available at Garampani and Koihajan in the district of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills. Total reserves of limestones in Garampani and Koihajan areas are estimated to be 78 million tonnes and 87 million tonnes respectively. Limestone in Assam is of cement grade. Total production of limestone in Assam has been increased from 143 thousands tonnes in 1978 to 289 thousand tonnes in 1979 and then it is gradually increased to 875 thousand tonnes in 1982.

Moreover, some other mineral resources are also located in Assam which included fire clay, kaoline, Iron Ore etc. ( Fig.3 : showing the distribution of coal, crude oil and natural gas of Assam ).

Fire clay is found available in Selvetta, Kcoilajan Namdeng and Ledo areas of Assam and their probable reserve are 2.10 million tonnes.

TABLE - 1

Production of Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas and Limestone in Assam

Year	Coal ('000 M.T)	Crude Oil ('000 M.T)	Natural Gas (M.Cu.M)	Limestone ('00 M.T)
1978	649	4084	591	143
1979	584	8565	942	289
1980	575	1055	455	196
1981	646	4386	869	269
1982	688	5112	875	232
1983	751	5024	733	201
1984	840	4096	771	209

Note : Quantity of Coal as per Coal India Ltd., Margherita.

Source : (i) India Bureau of Mines, Nagpur (ii) O.N.G.C and Oil India Ltd.,  
(iii) Coal India Ltd., Margherita.

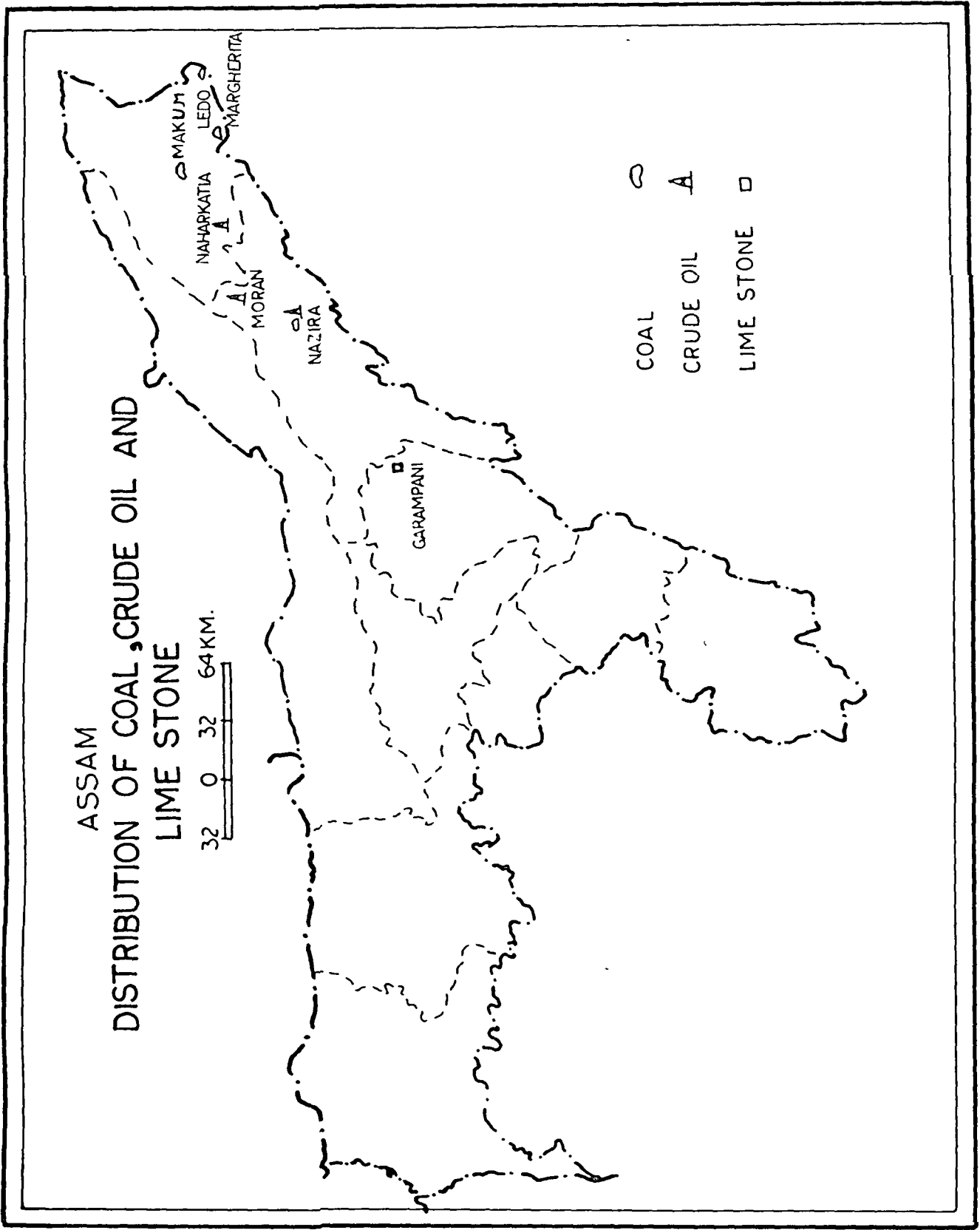


FIG. 3

Kaoline is also found in Selvetta and Jiaguri areas and its reserves are estimated to be 0.58 million tonnes.

Iron Ore is also found in Assam in the Chandardings, Lengupara and Kumari areas of Coalpara district, and also in Mahim area of Kamrup district and its probable reserves are estimated to be 17.6 million tonnes.

Thus it is found that Assam is quite rich with its deposits of some of the basic mineral resources which will provide scope for industrialisation through fuller utilization of these vast mineral resources.

Assam has its rich potential for the development of forest. The Upper Brahmaputra Valley alongwith two hill districts is covered by evergreen forests and the lower Brahmaputra Valley is covered by tropical deciduous forests. Total area covered by forests in Assam is 28,608 sq. km. in 1978, which is 36.4 percent of the total geographical area of the state. But reserved forests area covers 22 percent of the total geographical area of the state. Among all the districts, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills possesses highest concentration of forests in the state and its area constitutes 40.2 percent of the total forest area of the state.

Forest provide timber like Sal, Dansun, Jhigun, Karoi, Sishu, Ganari etc. which are very much valuable for different construction works. Thus, forests provide not only timber but also excellent employment opportunities to thousands. Forest also provide fuel for households which is comparatively cheaper. Many people are getting their livelihood by supplying fuel in the form of fire wood from forests.

Forests in Assam provides raw materials for various industries like Plywood industry, match industry and the paper industry. Timber which are required for the production of plywood are sufficiently available in the different forests in Assam.

Forest in Assam also provide sand and stone chips for construction purposes which are available in plenty in the side of forests, streams and rivers.

Among all wild animals available in the forests of Assam, elephant, tiger, deer, bear, one horn rhino are quite famous.

Thus forests resources in Assam are providing huge amount of revenue to the Government.

From the above going discussion, it is clear that forest resources are occupying a very important place in the

Output from forest in Assam is composed of timber, fuel and some minor forest products i.e. bamboo, cane etc. Total out-turn of timber in thousands cubic metres were 447 in 1973-74, 557 in 1974-75, 480 in 1977-78 and 351 in 1978-89.

The value of minor forest products which includes bamboos and cane was Rs. 72 lakhs in 1970-71 than increased to Rs. 143 lakhs in 1976-77.

Forest in Assam has contributed only Rs. 57 lakhs in 1950-51 to the revenue of Assam Government and its contribution rose to Rs. 966 lakhs in 1977-78, Rs. 1110 lakhs in 1978-79, Rs. 1221 lakhs in 1980-81 and finally to Rs. 15.6 crores in 1981-82.

Forest resources are having its strategic importance to the economy of Assam. About 22 percent of the total land area of Assam is covered with reserved forest. Assam is favoured with its south-western monsoon which helped her to grow various valuable trees and plants. Forest in Assam is composed of evergreen forests and tropical deciduous forests. This huge forests in Assam contribute its economy in many respects ( Table- 2 showing the total area under forest in Assam ).

TABLE - 2

Area Under Forests in Assam

Year	Forest Division		
	Reserved Forest ( in Sq.km.)	Proposed Reserved Forest ( in sq. km. )	Total Forest Ex- cluding unclassified state forests ( in sq. km. )
1981-82	17166	3468	20634
1982-83	17273	3371	20644
1983-84	17277	3373	20650
1984-85	17409	3277	20686

Source : Chief Conservator of Forests, Assam, Guwahati.

economy of Assam. There is much scope for the development of forest resources which will provide scope for the development of forest-based industries in Assam.

Power is an essential pre-requisite for industrial development. Assam is generously blessed by nature with its huge power potential based on water, natural gas, coal and oil. Assam alone has 28 percent of the total hydro potential of the country which remained under utilized. Chandrapur Thermal, Namrup Thermal and Eongaigaon Thermal power stations are the main power stations in Assam.

Thus, Assam has its rich power potential which still largely remain under utilised. In spite of having huge amount of natural resources, the state's economy still remain largely of natural resources which are under-developed and involves itself into the wastage of huge quantity of natural resources. Investment in Assam are mainly towards exploitation of rich resources viz., tea, jute and oil which is a reflection of the continuation of old colonial pattern of investment. Earning the setting up of a fertilizers and three refineries no significant utilization of natural resources has come about. Assam has 28 percent of the total hydro-power potential of the country which remains under utilised. The vast coal resources have not

been exploited, despite several possibilities for use as fuel for production of coke and as base for several chemical industries. The forest resources in Assam also under utilised. In the coming future we can hope that different natural resources.

From the above going discussion, it is clear that we can come to the conclusion that natural region of Assam, climate of Assam and the resource of Assam are directly or indirectly co-related with each other.

The natural region are mostly influenced by the climate of Assam. Due to the climatic condition the two natural regions of Assam became the attracted places for the people. Because, climate provide necessary rainfall for cultivation, for the growth of forest and also it helps water resources of the state.

On the other hand, natural region and location of the state helps for this type of climate. Generally, both the natural regions and climate have a good relation. Relief and climate play a very important role in the development of different resources of the state. Mostly relief playing a significant role in the different resources of the region. On the rugged hills

region, transportation facilities will be more difficult for carrying the different resources to the factory. In Assam most of the area are occupied by the main region, so transportation facilities will be easier. Thus, relief play a significant role in the source of Assam. Due to the suitable climatic conditions the workers can live at the site of the resources. So climate also play a role on the resource.

As a factor relief help to develop a climatic region and also to develop the different resources in the region, and climate also play a very important role on the two natural regions. Thus they help on the different regionalism of the state.

C H A P T E R - I I I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter - III

The modern name of the State 'Assam' is actually of quite recent origin. It is connected with the shan invaders who entered the Brahmaputra valley in the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D. and who were known as Ahoms. The tradition of the Ahom is that, the present name is derived from 'Asana' in the sense of "unequaled" or "peerless". They say that this was the term applied to them at the time of their invasion of the valley by the local tribes, in token of their admiration of the way in which the Ahom King first conquered.

However, another view has been suggested the name (Asan) observed Baden-Powell is most probably traceable to the Ha-com of the low or level country. In this case, it was the country which gave its name to the people.

Assam is a part of the country known in ancient times as Pragjyotisa. By this name the country was known in the great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as well as in some of the principal puranas.

Pragjyotisa was a famous kingdom in early times and is often mentioned in the Mahabharata.

The Markendeya purana places pragjyotisa on the face of tortoise. It is also mentioned in the list of the people of the East as given by Varahamihir in the Brhat Samhita. The same statement are also found in the Matsya and the Brahmanda puranas. The Bhagavata Purana to Pragjyotisa when recounting the story of Narakao. The Kalika purana a work of the 18th Century A.D. says " Formerly Brahma staying here created the stars : so the city is called Pragjyotispura a city equal to the city of India " .

Kamarupa - It has been described in the Kalika purana that immediately after Naraka of Mithalla became King and was placed in charge of the goddess Kamakhya. The name of the land was changed from Pragjyotisa to Kamarupa. The term Kamarupa symbolised a new cult, and in exaltation of it the land itself was rechristened. The earliest epigraphic reference to Kamarupa is however to be found in the well known Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta where Kamarupa is mentioned as a frontier territory.

Thus the name of Pragjyotisa changed to Kamarupa. The Assam valley was a part to the ancient territory of Kamarupa. The whole of the North East India is a great reservoir of a composite population derived from various ethnolinguistic backgrounds and drawn from different directions at different times. The four major elements of population of the

region include the Austrics, the Dravidians, the Aryans and the Mongoloids. The people of different ethnic origins having diverse socio-cultural backgrounds entered Assam from different direction at the pre-historic, historic and recent past. It was probably from the third millennium B.C. that the great Sino-Tibetan speaking people started infiltrating into the Brahmaputra Valley. Thus, the population of the valley is comprised of a large number of tribal groups of the Mongoloid, Bodos with certain Australoids strains alongwith the Aryan and the Dravidian elements. The Assamese speaking masses of the area is a population group formed out of the cultural synthesis and fusion of all the four major elements of population mentioned above.

From the pre-historic times to the 12th century A.D. the Brahmaputra valley was ruled by a number of tribal kings. Even, if this was a politically stable period, there was influx of different groups of people from the neighbouring Tibetan, Chinese and Burmese territories as well as from the North and Central Indian Kingdoms from time to time. During this period, groups of people of different origin started settling in various parts of the valley. There is historical evidence that these tribal groups did not settle down permanently in any

particular locality for sufficiently long time. Their migration from one part to another in search of better agricultural land and suitable physical environment can be traced by locating their habitation space in different period of time. Thus, the history of land occupancy of this period is a record of evolution and diffusion of settlements of various groups of tribal population in most parts of the territory and of vast tracts of land laying uninhabited.

Thus, from the 13th century to the coming of the British rule in 1826 A.D., the Brahmaputra Valley was politically unstable and witnessed many battles. As a result of political and social instability, the inhabitants migrated from one locality to another in search of security. The political situation in the valley did not permit the inhabitants to grow permanent settlement in many portions of the region. Only in the Upper Brahmaputra Plains, where the Ahoms ruled for a longer period and which remained relatively unaffected by the wars, settlements could grow under stable atmosphere.

Further, the unique land revenue administration of the Ahom kings had maintained little scope for uniform growth of permanent settlements within their territories. During the

Ahom rule the King assumed the absolute right over both land and its occupants. No individuals could acquire ownership over land. Individuals were treated as the possessors of the land without any priority rights. Under that systems commonly known as 'Pikan System' of revenue administration, the occupants of the land had to pay the state specified manual labour or in lieu of that higher rate of pole tax. But, the major disadvantage of the system was that the rate of land revenue was different in different parts of the territory. This was because of the fact that the ~~revenue~~ revenue administration of a particular area was left to the protectorate kings or appointed officials for the area and his revenue assessment was final for that part of the territory. The protectorate king or appointed officials assessed revenue on the basis of the revenue he had to pay to the King. The differential rates of land revenue in various parts of the kingdom resulted in the migration of the cultivators from high rent paying areas to the low rent paying areas. The only areas of higher population concentration within the high rent paying areas were the revenue free grant lands of the Ahom Kings, which were commonly known as 'Dharmottar', 'Debottar' and 'Brahmottar' lands.

In Assam the early system of revenue administration has been recorded in the introduction to Assam Land and Revenue Regulation as follows :-

" Under native rule the soil was the absolute property

of the sovereign and the "rayats" who cultivated it were themselves more like serf than freeman. The whole population was divided into 'khals' of from 1000 to 5000 persons and these again were subdivided into 'gots'. Each 'got' contained three or four 'Paiks' or 'rayats' and one Paik of each got was bound to render personal service throughout the year to the kaja or to some of the officers of the State. In return each member of the 'got' was allowed two 'purse' (nearly three acres) of rice land or 'guamatī', free of rent the two 'Paiks' who remained at home cultivating not only their own shares but also that of the third member of the 'got', whose turn it was to give his labour to the state. Each 'Paik' was allowed a piece of land for his house and garden for which he paid one rupee annually as house poll or hearth tax. If a 'paik' cultivated any rice land in excess of his two 'purse', he was assessed on it at the rate of one rupee per pura. The non-cultivating section of the community paid a higher rate of poll tax and 'Pan' cultivators (persons taking up land for temporary cultivation at a distance from their permanent holdings) a tax on their ploughs while the hill tribes were muloted in a hoe-tax on their cotton cultivation" (page. liv).

According to historian Gait, Suargadeo Godadhar Singha introduced land measurement. Godadhar Singha came to know about

that the P.S. System prevented future enhancement of revenue. There was also intense rack renting which perverted peasantry resulting shrinkage of markets for British goods. Though reasons were not recorded, the then British administration according to introduction to A.L.R.R. (page (1v1) thought that "in every way a preferable course to give the actual occupant of the soil as secure a tenure as can be conferred upon him subject to the payment of revenue to the Govt. at rates fixed for long periods, and to preserve a clear distinction between the right and obligations of proprietorship and the duties of fiscal and official administration". The then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal held a conference with the Board of Revenue and it was decided amongst others that (a) term of settlement should ordinarily be 10 years; (b) settlement was to be made with the occupants cultivators; (c) Rate of assessment to be fixed for term of settlement and liable for enhancement; (d) permanent holdings were heritable and transferable and (e) lands brought under cultivation during the currency of a settlement were to be assessed year by year but the heritable and transferable title was to be conferred until next settlement. It was on this basis the Commissioner of Assam then drew up a set up of Rules known as Settlement Rules of 1870 by declaring Revenue Officers to be the Commissioner, Mouzuadars & Mandals. The Mouzuadars were required to record the result of his measurement in a field

land measurement system from the Mohammadans when he came in their contact while he was forced to leave his kingdom temporarily. After becoming the King again Gadadhar Singha recruited surveyors from Bengal and Coch-Bihar and ordered survey of land which was completed after his death.

In Assam, there were also classification of land according to its use. The classification were as follows :

1. Rupit ( rice land )
2. Faringhati ( high land )
3. Kathiya toli ( land for raising seedlings)
4. Bao Toli ( land fit for deep water paddy )
5. Bengena toli ( land for raising crops of brinjals )
6. Eari or Bhati ( Homestead land )
7. Habi ( Forest land )
8. Dalani ( marshy land with dal grass )
9. Bakari ( open waste land )
10. Bil ( fishing waters ).

Waste land not settled with anybody were treated as 'Ubar'. The above classification is still being followed with certain modification.

By the time Assam Valley came under British Rule, the demerits and other pernicious effects of the permanently settled systems surfaced and because of these Zamindari system remained confined to Goalpara and Sylhet districts only. The demerits was

Register ( Chitha ) from which an abstract (Khatian) and a revenue roll ( Janabandi ) were prepared. Apart from these, other concessional grants like Free simple grants, Lease hold grants of 1854 were there mainly to encourage the tea industry. It was clearly stated in A.L.I.R. that " for nearly a century after the discovery of tea in Assam in 1826, it was the policy of Govt. to encourage the opening out of the sparsely populated tracts of the state by the offer of land specially favourable terms". The total geographical area of the present state of Assam is 78,523 sq.km. of which 63,301 sq.km. are in 14 plain districts and 15,222 sq.km. are in two autonomous Hills District. The total population according to 1971 Census is 146.25 lakhs of which total work force is 40,88,493 and 22,23,698 were cultivators and there were 4,05,440 agricultural labourers. According to 1971 Census the new sown area is about 22 lakh hectares and 1,79,000 hectares are under tea and 1,20,000 hectares are under jute cultivation.

The general character of the settlement in Assam was 'Ryotwari' in the sense that the principle aimed at is that of dealing directly with actual occupants without the intervention of any middleman or land lords and between the settlers and Govt., in all the districts except Goalpara and Karimganj, temporary settlement was introduced and the settlement of land was made by granting annual lease or periodic lease which were ordinarily valid from

one settlement operation to next settlement operation. Prior to abolition of Zamindari in the district of Goalpara and Karimganj the estates were settled under the provisions of the Bengal Decennial Settlement Regulation of 1793 with the persons known as proprietors having same rights and obligations of the Zamindars of Bengal. The rights of the proprietors i.e., Zamindaris and other big tenures holders have been since acquired and the erstwhile tenants of the Zamindars and tenure holders are now holding their land directly under Govt. with the status of land holder under A.L.R.R. The Assam Land and Revenue Act, 1886 ( Regulation I of 1886 ) regulates and governs the land revenue administration and the terms and conditions of settlement.

The land reforms policies of post-independence period were mainly the policies of the Congress party on which the important imprint of mass movement often led by lefts were also there. There is the details of the policy formation first under Dr. Rajendra Prasad and later under J.C. Kumarappa have been discussed in the Report (Vol.XV) of the National Commission on Agriculture in 1976.

Immediately after enactment of the legislation the landlords launched big offensive both against the law and the tenants

resorting to large scale eviction of Ahirs. The Act was amended in 1974 by incorporating a new section viz., Sec. 54A which conferred powers upon the Revenue Officers to restore possession to illegally evicted tenants on application. As regards implementation, the Rules were framed in 1972 and immediately thereafter an operation to operate and prepare the records of rights of the tenants was launched in all the plains district. After tardy progress, the recording of tenants received a big push during emergency and as a result 3,02,471 persons have been recorded as tenants.

In Assam, Govt. Waste land, P.G.Rs, V.G.Rs and Forests lands are opened from time to time for offering settlement by adopting policies. It was found that the settlement policies of 1939, 1942, 1943, 1945 (2 policies), 1950, 1958 and 1968 laid down inter-alia the policies and quantum of land for individual settlement. But the settlement policy of 1972 stopped individual settlement and laid down the principles of collective use of land by forming Agricultural Farming Corporation, An Act viz. the Assam Agricultural Farming Corporations Act, 1973 was enacted with a view to establishing and working of Agricultural Farming Corporations by enlisting landless cultivators as share holders in a Corporate body. About 34 Farming Corporations have been established on Govt. khas

land but results are not yet encouraging. The experiment is a welcome measure as availability of land is fast diminishing in the face of ever increasing number of landless agriculturists in Assam where industry did not develop to absorb a part of the population for gainful employment.

In Assam any independent critical review of the progress of land reforms enactments and other laws has not been attempted by any non-official with indept study. All such attempts had to rely on official version of facts and figures. It can be inferred that achievements on the whole may not be impressive but all the efforts succeeded in abolition of inter-mediaries to a great extent and amounting an attack to break the landlord-tenant nexus.

As already state the economy of Assam is rural and without developing the agriculture, the progress of Assam is not possible . There is vast mineral resources, but the potentiality of agriculture os equally vast. It is absolutely necessary to have an integrated improved under one organisation for land, land reforms, improved agricultural technique, irrigation and fl w of credit. Past experience has shown that all the placemeal efforts did not succeed to lift the economy out of stagnation.

Another important factor causing migration of people from the frontier areas of the Assam Valley adjacent to the hills that some warlike hill tribes living in the Himalayan foothills such as the Nagas in the south and the Mishis, the Adis and the Bhutias in the north used to collect 'posa' or local tax from the settlements situated along the 'duais'. Such tax claimed by the hill tribes existed during the rules of all the earlier Kings. The 'posa' included specified amount of paddy, cloths, cowries etc. even during the British rule, the then administrative had to agree to pay quit rents to such hill tribes to stop the practice of collecting such taxes from the settlements situated along the duars. Over and above the hill tribes frequently raided neighbouring settlements situated in the valley. Thus, the uneven growth and distribution of settlements and the frequent migration of people from one part of the valley to another prior to the following causes -

- (i) Social insecurity created by the successive battles that took place among the neighbouring political powers in and around the region since the dawn of the thirteenth century;
- (ii) frequent invasion of the area by the Mughals and the Burmese during the six hundred years prior to the British rule and the raids and tortured lashed out by the invaders over the common people ;

- (iii) the 'Posa' being an additional burden to the inhabitants living in the peripheral tracts of the valley restricted the growth the settlements in such areas;
- (iv) the frequent raids of the hill tribes in the settlements around the duars; and,
- (v) differential rates of land revenue imposed by the Ahom rules on the occupants living in the different parts of their territory.

At the time when the British took possession of the region, the Assam Valley was very thinly populated with vast tracts of waste land laying uninhabited. There were higher concentration of population and fairly high growth of settlements in the south bank plain of the Brahmaputra in comparison to the North bank plain. Also in and around the temple sites all over the valley, there were higher concentration of both population and settlements because of the location of revenue free grant lands of the Ahom Kings in such places. At that time, there was a common practice among the cultivators that they cultivated over any particular plot of land for two or three years and then abandoned the plot and selected a new one. This practice created problems in the revenue administration of the British Government. The initial steps taken by the British administration in the settlement of land during the period 1826-1886 A.D. were :-

- (i) Abolition of the Faikan system of revenue administration;
- (ii) fixation of land revenue on the basis of land productivity and classification of land based on utility and fertility;
- (iii) prevention of blackmailing by the hill tribes over the cultivators settled in the peripheral areas of the valley and of the harassment over the cultivators by the Revenue Officers;
- (iv) institution of simple periodic lease system of land occupancy to facilitate the growth of permanent settlements;
- (v) imposition of partial restrictions over the earlier practice of frequent change of cultivable plots by the cultivators; and,
- (vi) leasing out the cultivable waste lands for tea plantations under liberal terms and conditions of the Free-Simple Rules of 1854.

Through a liberal form of revenue administration and the creation of a stable socio-economic atmosphere, the British rulers would provide a congenial environment for a steady growth of permanent settlements in the whole of the Assam.

Simply the above going discussion about the Historical Background of Assam.

## CHAPTER - IV

REGIONS AND SOCIAL PATTERNS, IDENTIFICATION OF  
AREAS OF ATTRACTION AND ISOLATION AND IMPACT ON SOCIAL PATTERNS.

Human activity are determined by social structure of the people. Social environment and social structure of the people influenced the level of economic activities and growth of economic organisations etc. There are some peculiarities in the behaviour, customs and traditions and social institutions of every nation or any section thereof.

Similarly, population of Assam is composed of heterogeneous elements of different races, castes, languages and cultures. This diversity led to the growth of diverse social institutions. In the past, caste system played a significant role and still plays important role in the determination of economic activities of the people of the state. In Assam many castes have grown largely due to the influence of the non-Aryan population. Joint family system, which was very popular among the people of the state, started declining its popularity with the growth of industries and disintegration of the old feudal system.

There are different types of tribal population in Assam and they maintain different languages and different faiths. Every tribe has its own peculiarities and peculiar social institutions. Nowadays, it is observed that the old type of static

society is fast disintegrating in Assam which has an important influence in determining life and shape of the economy of the people of the state.

#### AREAS OF ATTRACTION :

The immigration and migration generally took place due to some attraction of a particular place. In this respect, we can say that there are many areas of attraction in Assam. They are -

1. The fertile land of Assam,
2. Tea Garden

Immigration to Assam from Bangladesh is going on unabated since the beginning of the present century. The fertile land of Assam attracted the East Bengali farmers ( mostly Muslims ). Immigration started. Firstly, they established settlements in Goalpara district mostly in the char land and reserved forests and then tanned out like bees to other parts of the state and gradually they made an isolated regions in different parts of the state. They impact great influence on the social pattern of Assam.

Assam witnessed a series of immigration in the modern time. Reference has already been made to the labourers in the tea

garden. With the opening of the tea garden in the beginning of the second half of the last century, labourers to work in the gardens were brought from Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh etc. The number went on increasing till 1941. Even then in natural course their number increased. Many labourers left the tea gardens and settled down as farmers in Government wastelands or plot provided by the garden authority. They are referred to as ex-tea garden workers. In Assam, they are regarded as forming one unit, gradually they started their culture, and invited their friends to the tea garden to join as a labourer and they formed another isolated region which are generally found in upper Assam areas, and thus they influenced the social pattern of Assam.

In recent years, a large number of people from other parts of India having different ethnic identities have come to Assam to settle permanently. This includes people of various linguistic and cultural groups. Moreover, many Nepalis have also come from the neighbouring country, Nepal. Many of the Nepalis have adopted Assamese as their mother tongue and hence they are not included under Nepali. Most of the Nepalis came to Assam as livestock farmers mostly cattle and buffaloes but later on they took up farming of land also as a profession and gradually became permanent settlers.

Moreover, the different tribal groups which are found generally like to live in hilly region. So they are generally found in the different hilly regions of the state. On the other hand, the climate of Assam is very suitable for living and also for cultivation. Then they are attracted to the Assam and gradually became permanent settlers.

So from the above going discussion, it is clear that different people attracted by the fertile valley of Assam and by the tea gardens of Assam and finally, by the climate of Assam.

Gradually they developed their culture in the different regions, make an isolated regions and thus they impact on the social pattern of Assam.

In one sense, all the people who live in present day Assam are the people of Assam. But in fact when one talks of the people of Assam all such people are not included. Usually by 'the people of Assam' is meant the people whose mother tongue is Assamese and the indigenous tribal inhabitants of this part of the country.

In Assam itself certain languages evolved and developed to attain specific form with regards to different aspects. These

are the local languages spoken outside Assam, but these are typical of Assam. The present day Assamese people at the time of their migration to Assam were not known as the Assamese, their languages was also not the Assamese of the modern form, like other elements of culture, the languages one of the most important components also changes with time. The Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language and it has its root in the Sanskrit. The languages had to pass through different stages of development in different times to assume its present form. This transformation took place in Assam itself and the language came to be known as Asomiya in this part of India, which is called Assam. This language of Assam is the language which has been spoken till today. Therefore, the people whose mother tongue is Assamese, form of the people of Assam.

Assam is the homeland of several tribes - Rabha, Bodo, Kachari, Karbi (Mikir), Tiwa (Lalung), Mishing (Miri) etc. Each of these has its own language.

These people are also migrated to Assam in long part from different direction and at different intervals of time. Perhaps at that time they were not called by their respective names mentioned above. They had their own culture including language

and physical characteristics when they come to Assam. But in course of time on account of various factors changes took place in different aspects. Whatever might be the root of their languages, the languages that they speak today assumed their present forms in Assam itself. Hence the speakers of these languages are undoubtedly a part of the people of Assam.

The different tea garden labours also a part of the people of Assam. In this regard we give a quote from the book, "The Savaras of Moncotta" (Kar 1981 ).

As regards their languages for communication, the majority of the people have been found to be bi-lingual. Amongst themselves, they used a medium which is a mixture of Hindi and their own dialects, while with the local people they speak broken and tribalized Assamese ( char Eagichar Ahomia i.e. Tea Garden Assamese ). The majority of the people have been living here for generations together have never been spoken their dialect as the means of communication with the fellow members. Consequently, most of them have forgotten the same - it can be stated that a new lingua-franca, with a mixed but nevertheless independent basic structure has emerged among the tea garden people in the present social context.

If we accept that this situation projects the true linguistic picture of the tea garden and ex-tea garden labourers

than according to our definition unquestionably, they form a section of the people of Assam. As a matter of fact quite a large number of them have accepted Assamese as their languages. In their way of life too, some of them are undistinguishable from the local Assamese people. This section has become inseparable part of the Assamese speaking Assamese.

In this context, another population comes to the picture. Mostly because of economic reason, they came to Assam from erstwhile East Bengal ( present Bangladesh ) more particularly from Mymensingh district. In the course of time they are on the way to become part of the people of Assam. Some of them have already become so.

In addition to these, people of Assam, several other population also live in Assam. Assam is a state of India, therefore, it is quite natural that in Assam there will be certain population which have come in different times from different parts of India. They migrated to Assam mostly for economic reasons. This sort of migration started mainly with the coming of the British after the fall of the Ahom rule. Some of them have come Assamese and many of them have been Assamized.

These people are part and parcel of the Assamese, society. Other, however, are maintained their own socio-cultural identities.

The other division include two categories of people. One is in Assam for its own economic benefit. The members of this category are vast concerned with Assam's interest so long as they are not directly affected. They have their second foot in their respective home states. In time of crisis in Assam they can leave their homsteads at any moment. This may affect their economy to a certain extent, but not vitally. Therefore, this section of people could leave Assam without any second. Though during the last Chinese aggression.

The number of second category though they have no second footing in their own states are in Assam physically but their mind and soul are in their own state. They know more about their own state than of Assam. They have never tried to be acquainted with the Assamese way of life, not to speak of accepting, following or even participating in it. They are always guided by the so called leader of their own state. Assam has not been benefited in any way by the presence of these people. On the other hand, sometime they do not hesitate to work against the interest of Assam. In this context, it should clearly be stated that the employees of various organisations who are temporarily posted in Assam have not been taken into account in this discussion.

According to the 1971 census, 71.04 percent of the people of Assam are Hindu. The Muslim constitute 24.03 percent

percent of the total population. The Christian, Sikh, Buddhist and Jain 4.46 percent, 0.08 percent, 0.30 percent and 0.09 percent respectively. One is yet to know what the present position is.

In some of the districts of Upper Assam, there are certain small population which we called Buddhist by religion. They are the Khamyang, Aiton, Tai, Phake, Turung, Duania etc., living in small areas surrounded by people of other religions. They are faithfully following their own religions.

The Sikh include two categories, one is the Punjab Sikhs who come in recent years for various purposes and the other the Assamese Sikhs. The majority of the Assamese Sikhs are concentrated in a village called Borkala in Nagaon district. Some of them are lived in Darrang district also. They are the descendants of those Sikh soldiers who came from Punjab to help one of the Ahom rulers to fight against the Burmese invaders. After the war many soldiers preferred to settle in Assam permanently. They married local girls and in due course one religious community came into being.

History tells that Assam came into being contact with the Muslim for the first time in the early part of the thirteenth century when Muhammad Bin Bakhtiyar Khilji, a Muslim general of

Kutub-uddin led a Turkish army to this region. Following him on several occasions other Muslim invaders came to Assam. Every time they were defeated. It may perhaps be assumed that a few muslim soldiers preferred to live in Assam instead of going back with their defeated leaders.

Many local people were converted to Islam because of his unfluence. However, many conversion generally took place through marriage, because the Muslim soldiers did not bring their wives with them and hence they had to marry local girls. Again the Ahom kings encouraged certain Muslim artisans families to migrate to Assam to take part in different activities. Thus, there were slow incorporation of Muslim into Assam in small numbers over a long period of time. At various socio-cultural levels the Assamese Hindus and Muslims interact freely. Many, socio-cultural elements more particularly at folk level of the Assamese Hindus and Muslims are very similar.

Christianity spread with the coming of the British and American missionaries. However, it is mostly confined to the tribal people more particularly the hill tribes now inhabiting the adjoining states. Most of the Assam tribe,

more particularly the hill tribes now inhabiting the adjoining states. Most of the Assam tribe, particularly the plains are Hindu though many of them practicing their own religion.

Many of the Assam tribes, who belong to Tibeto-Burman linguistic family still speak their own respective languages of that language family. Others have forgotten their own dialects and have accepted Assamese as their mother tongue.

Looking at from a different angle, the people of Assam can be divided into two broad categories, tribal and non-tribal. The government has given a list of Scheduled tribes (The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes ordered (Amendments) Act, 1976. (No. 108 of 1976 dated the 18th September, 1976). Census of India. And the state of Assam excluding the autonomous districts.

1. Barman in Cachar;
2. Boro, Borkachari
3. Deori
4. Hajai
5. Kachari, Sonowal
6. Lalung
7. Mech
8. Miri
9. Rabha

The Kachari are distributed almost all over the state. They have several sub-divisions. One is the Dimasa, who are a hill people and are concentrated in the North Cachar hills. The Sonowal, Thengal and Tharua are met within Upper Assam. The Kacharis of lower and middle Assam are very often older referred to as the Boro-Kachari or Boro.

The Rabhas are mostly met within Lower Assam. They too have several sub-division, the main three being the Pati, Rangdani and the Maitori. The Mishings (Miri) and the Deories inhabit some parts of Upper Assam. The Tiwas (Lalung) are mostly confined to Middle Assam, where the Hajais also live. The Meches mostly live in Lower Assam.

Some Garo settlement are found in Assam, though Garo homeland in the Garo hills of Meghalaya. The same is true of the Khasi and the allied population. Nagaland is the state of the Nagas but some of them are met within Assam also. The 'Man' settlement are mostly found in the Garo hills. The Kuki tribes and the Hmars live in the southern hilly regions of the state. The Karbi are mostly concentrated in Karbi Anglong, though many of them are scattered in some parts of the plain region particularly in middle and lower Assam.

Besides, the Assam tribes which are of Mongoloid origin, some other Mongoloid population, not included under scheduled tribes, also live in different parts of the Assam in large numbers, for example, the Ahoms, Chutiyas, Moran and small Buddhist population like the Tai, Phak, Aiton, Turung and Duania. The Kachos are also considered to be of Mongoloid origin. Many of these are included under other backward classes.

The non-tribal category includes aside the above mentioned Mongoloid population, the caste Hindu Scheduled Castes and the Muslims. Government has identified some of the population groups as Scheduled Castes. Some of the important scheduled castes of Assam are the Hiras, Jalkeot, Kaibarta, Bania, Mamusudra etc. The Hiras are potters, they make pottery with hand without using potters' wheel. The traditional occupation of the Kaibartas is fishing, some are boatman, Jalkeot are also fisherman. Some Hindu castes are also included under "Other Backward Classes".

The Caste system is one of the most important features of Hindu Society. In Assam in general practice two broad categories of Hindu Castes are recognised. These are the "Bamun" (Brahmin) and Sudir ( Non-Brahmin ). The Sudir group includes several castes.

The Kalitas formed the most populous caste of Assam. Perhaps it may be said that the Kalita caste is a specially of Assam caste system.

The Kalitas are divided into two main sub-divisions, namely, the Bar Kalita and Saru Kalita.

The Kayastha, popularly known as the "Kaith" are mainly found in Lower Assam. They wear scard thread.

Rajbanshis who are referred to as Koch also scattered in the parts of Morigaon district ( Morigaon district declared on 15th August, 1989 ).

From the above going discussion, it is clear that different tribes, different castes of different religions, people living in the different parts of Assam.

The Assam valley also known as Brahmaputra Valley is an alluvial plain par excellence. A narrow elongated valley with an area of 56,270 sq.km., it is the home of 9,179127 people (1961) and about 19,000,000 in 1981 with a density of 163 per sq.km. (1961) and 234 in 1981. Since ancient time the valley has been regarded as a labenssraum and as such there had been immigration from different parts of India and beyond to it. The Aryans the Mongoloids and the Muslims, have migrated to the valley at

different times of history. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century immigration to the valley has become more sharp and large number of immigrants from East Bengal ( Bangladesh ) Nepal as well as from different states of India began to move in. The apparently low pressure of population in the Assam valley received wide publicity and it was probably for this sole reason that late Mr. Jinnah and his Muslim League demanded the inclusion of Assam Valley in East Pakistan though it was known to him that it was never a Muslim majority province.

The chronics and records shows that in 1826 when the British rule was established in Assam, the population of the valley was fairly small. In 1835, the entire population was estimated at 799519 being distributed as shown below .

Population of Assam Valley, 1835

<u>Districts</u>	<u>Population</u>
Native states of upper Assam ( Sibsagar and Lakhimpur )	220,000
Nowgong	90,519
Darrang	89,519
Kamrup	300,000
Goalpara	100,000
Total Assam Valley	799,519

Source : E.A. Gait, "History of Assam".

The above table of population were mainly worked out from the official returns prepared in connection with the assessment of land revenue and such they are not quite reliable and the actual state of population prior to 1872 ( The first census Year ) is not accurately known.

The population of the valley according to the census of 1901 was only 2618,566 which in the subsequent years grew considerably.

During the last 60 years ( 1401-1461 ) the population of Assam valley has recorded a net addition of 6560,561 persons or a percentage of 250 as against the country's 84.

According to census figures, 1961, the total number of immigrants in Assam valley is 1,099,902 of which 660927 are foreign born persons and 438775 are Indian Nationals.

The foreign born immigrants to Assam valley may be classified into two separate categories, permanent and temporary. Most of the immigrants from Pakistan, Nepal, Burma and China have permanently settled and accepted Indian citizenship. The immigrants from Europe and America and other continents have come for temporary sojourn or managerial and technical assignments in tea and oil industries and a few other commercial undertakings. They usually go back to their own country.

### Movement of Pakistani Immigrants

Immigrants from the former East Bengal (Bangladesh) who number 593745 are not equally distributed in all the six districts of the valley. They are mostly to be found in the four lower Assam Valley districts. The two Upper Assam Valley districts. The two upper Assam Valley districts have only 86369 persons. Goalpara, the westernmost district of the valley, being adjacent to East Pakistan, received naturally a large number of immigrants. Most of these immigrants have come from the former East Bengal district of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra and Rangpur. Most of them belong to Muslim community and are poor landless farmers. Almost 95 percent of them have come before the partition of the country. The landless farmers of the then East Bengal, being attracted by the unoccupied cultivated areas lying here and there in Goalpara district, started moving into it as early as 1900. At the initial stage they occupied the classlands of the Brahmaputra. The magnitude of the immigration to the Goalpara district thereafter can be realised from the fact that the population of the district which increased by only 2 percent in 1891-1901, registered an abnormal increase of 30% in 1901-11. It is recorded that in 1911 the immigrants and persons of immigrant origin constituted one-fifth of the total population of the district. After 1911 the immigrants slowly began to spread to

other districts of Assam Valley namely Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong and Sibsagar.

The movement of the East Bengal Muslim farmers began merely as a result of the interplay of economic forces in East Pakistan vis-a-vis Assam. They were driven apparently by pressure on soil and also due to actual loss of their lands and even the homesteads by devastating floods in their home districts. These landless people occupied the uncultivated charlands of the Assam Valley. This was due to availability of plentiful and cheap virgin land in the valley and the freedom of Ryotwari settlement in place of expensive small and uncomfortable holdings as tenants or under-tenants in East Bengal. The incoming of the immense number of the hardy and labourious cultivators undoubtedly made immense contribution to the economic and political structure of the Assam Valley. They cultivated rice, jute, mustard, and vegetables in the charlands and brought changes to the agricultural landscape of the valley. These Muslim immigrants together with their children born in Assam accounting for one-sixth of the total population of the valley constituted a major section of the present Assamese population. The immigrants are mostly illiterate, landless poor peasants and they have educated their children through Assamese medium and have now identified themselves with the interests of the indigenous people and have

greatly contributed to the development of agricultural economy but the pace of integration is considerably slow. The main reason for their slow integration with the social and cultural life of the valley is that they have settled in blocks or in separate colonies away from settlements of the indigenous population.

### Nepali Immigrants

The total number of Nepali immigrants at the time of the 1961 census stood at 64216. More than two thirds of the Nepalis are settled in Lakhimpur and Darrang district. The movement of the Nepalis from Nepal is an important event of considerable interest. Their movement to Assam Valley was associated with the movement of the Gorkha soldiers who after retirement began to settle in Assam Valley. The settlement of the Ex-Servicemen encouraged the movement of their relatives in Nepal who were poor landless cultivators and livestock farmers. Most of the Nepalis are graziers by profession and as they preferred to settle in the grassland areas of the Brahmaputra charlands and the foot hills of the north. Besides livestock farming, they have been taken to the cultivation of lands and have grown crops like rice, mustard, seed, jute and sugar-cane. Some of them engaged themselves as wood cutters while some of them are employed as chowkidars and darvans in different official establishments.

### Inter-State Immigration

The movement of people from different parts of India to Assam Valley is also a matter of considerable economic and social importance. The immigrants from Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Punjab have come in large numbers and have increased the general population in Assam Valley.

### The Tea Garden Labourers:

By bringing labourers to work in the tea gardens from other parts of India had to be done as there were a very few surplus and landless labourers in Assam. The indigenous peasants who had land naturally prefer the independence and ease of their position as owner cultivators to the disciplined and regular labour of tea gardens. It was found thus necessary at every stage, to seek for tea garden labourers elsewhere and in 1835, the Assam company began to bring labourers from the ~~W~~ then Bengal, the most suitable labourers were the aboriginal tribes of Chota Nagpur and the neighbouring states, but the supply of these was insufficient and had to be supplemented by men brought from the plains of U.P, and elsewhere. These plain people took a long period for acclimatization even the, were seldom quite satisfactory. After 1860 the rate of incoming of the garden labourers were accelerated

when they had to be procured through commissioned agents posted at Calcutta. Many of the labourers died on their transit to Assam by streamers. In 1901, out of the total number of outsiders registered in Assam, 85 percent were tea garden labourers and their number in Assam valley may be estimated at 45000. During the next decades, upto 1921 there was considerable expansion of tea industries and many more labourers were brought in. From 1931 onwards, however, the movement of tea garden labourers began to decline very considerably, as the tea industry became fully established by them. It is to be seen that the immigration of the garden labourers from Southern Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu was its highest during the period 1911 to 1931.

Many of the tea gardens labourers have given up their jobs in the tea gardens and have permanently settled by now with agricultural labourers. Though they speak Adibhasi languages such as Santhali, Oriya, Nundari, Telegu, they have received their education through Assamese medium. In recent times a few youngmen of ex-tea garden labour community have qualified with higher education and have become professional like doctors, lawyers and teachers. They are now an integral part of the Assamese society and have taken parts in the all round economic, social and political reconstruction of the state.

Wage-earners and Manual Labourers :

The last category of immigrants to Assam Valley is the wage earners and manual labourers who have migrated mainly from Northern Bihar and Eastern U.P., they have 200000 in number and they essentially belong to the classes of temporary and seasonal immigrants. The immigrants mostly includes male members and the sex ratio is only 376 females for every 1000 males. They keep their families at home and have migrated only to work and earn their livelihood for their family. These immigrants were mostly unemployed in their homesteads and are under acute economic hardship. They are mostly distributed in the urban areas and other commercial centres where the scope of their employment is sufficiently big.

It will be seen that upto the time of last census, 1961, the number of immigrants together with their children born to them in Assam Valley was approximately as follows.

Except the wage earners and seasonal labourers all categories of immigrants have settled permanently. Though the inflow of immigrants have declined in recent years yet a large number of jobseekers manual labourers and people of other occupational groups are migrating such year to find themselves engaged in different occasions of life should be continued as such. The number of immigrants settlers in Assam would be large enough in real future raising many socio-economic problems whose consequences might not appear to be inspiring the general interests of the original population.

C H A P T E R - V

CONCLUSION, DANGERS OF DISLOCATION.

Chapter - V

Although greatly increased efforts have been made in our time to lessen the weight of the differences and diversities that arise from the heritage of nature, and to reduce the inequalities due to the heritage of history, one can hardly say that the objective has as yet been achieved.

This persistent inequality, which is not necessarily linked to the diversification of the earth's surface, but often conditions it, results in widespread "geographic injustice", and to study this the concept of centre and periphery is a useful instrument. It is a flexible tool, whether one studies the different types of space that can be imagined (in that case, the concept is reduced to sectors of forces, sets of relations, economic space, and so on) or, in a more traditional but, also, increasingly complex manner, historic organized space, which nowadays tends to coincide, even in political geography, with social space.

An accepted concept in geography, the idea of centrality, may be encountered as a basic condition (and sometimes a synonym) of many concepts and cognitive tools used in this research: from that of crossroads, which Jean Gottman sees as the centre around which are woven the universal phenomena

of circulation and movement characterizing the reality of this epoch, to that of the well-known theory of Central place. In an economic view of space, centre and periphery may be associated with the poles of development that Perroux employs to introduce into economic analysis a closer conformity to the differentiations of reality. In political geography, it will suffice to cite Lucien Febvre's remark that "there is no state, no matter how small, that has not its vital nucleus, its geographic point of departure; there is no lasting political formation which does not owe its origin to a combination of forces, a kind of frame around which other territories will be able to grow, like flesh around a skeleton".

A wider use of the concept of centrality extended to its equivalent periphery is to be found in the theme of the relations between city and country. This had led to the use in the conceptual tool, centre-periphery, in urban and social geography.

The following remarks seem called for : In a short essay it is not possible to reconstruct the long road followed by the idea of centre and periphery in the most recent theoretical endeavours of geography. In order to make a contribu-

tion to the validity of its use in setting forth and understanding very different geographic cases, one could try to examine specific examples of geographic situations introduced into the conceptual framework, with particular attention to the facts and phenomena that come within the purview of political Geography. One could deduce therefrom indications of the possibility of using the concept of centre and periphery as an intermediary between systematic geography and regional geography, without losing sight of the complexity of reality. No less useful are indications regarding the flexibility of the concept as an intermediary with respect to other disciplines interested in territory and space - generally for applied research - and that make use of systematic methods and quantitative models.

The most remarkable phenomenon in the Assam has been the mobility of the population. The migration of several million inhabitants to Assam is also a great problem. All This could not fail to have an impact on the social transformation, increasing in the particular the homogeneity of Assamese society.

Against the background of the political and social changes that have taken place in recent years in Assam, regionalism has made great strides. The centralized structure of the

political and territorial organisation of Assam has entered a period of crisis. This has occurred not so much because of the weakening of the structure of the centralized state and the system of social values in what had been essentially a rural society, but also because this issue has been transformed by opposing the "real country" ( the slums, local communities, and regions ) and the "official country" in a kind of class struggle.

Dangers of Dislocation :

In Assam the idea of autonomy, if carried too far, whether applied to peripheral centres of local life or to regionalism could have grave consequences for the future of the state.

The risk is present in the case of rural as well as urban regions. The great effort of mediation among the collecting local interests that this requires provides a school in the practice of democracy and promotes an awareness of the web of regional interrelations in which each region is evolved.

Last considerations which is no less alarming, concerns the nature of regional autonomy.

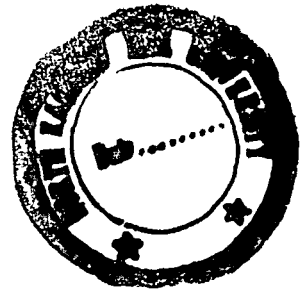
If the conclusions is to be drawn from this case study are clear with respect to applied geography, they are equally clear concerning general theory. The flexibility of the idea of centre and periphery, of which we spoke at the beginning of this chapter, has gradually assumed a somewhat ambiguous character. A deeper significance of the case which have studied is that one must go beyond a superficial interpretation. Regionalism adapted to social change does not replace the centre-periphery model, used in the sense of levelling differences and diffusing the points of decision and power. Such a proposal leads to a reversal of relations, in attributing all power to the periphery, and to removing power from the centre. On the theoretical place, it suggests a reversal that does not eliminate the difference understood in the opposition between centre and periphery, but proposes to attributethe sense of centre to the periphery and vice versa. The inference from a geographic standpoint is that one must be very cautious with regard to formal structures that make use of the centre-periphery paradigm.

From the above study it is possible to generalise :

1. That Assam is a multi-lingual and multi-religion state who have more or less adjusted themselves over the period of time,

2. Nature and level of economic participation has determined the level of change and degree of regionalism,
3. Distribution, concentrations and exploitation of resources as well as the consequent participation has substantially influenced the responses of the population,
4. Immigrants have transferred the traditional equation between the various population groups and sub-groups. They have encouraged the competition-confrontation situations to develop and dominate.

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