

**POLITICO - GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS  
OF  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MEGHALAYA**

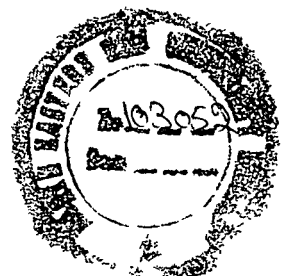
**PALLAB DEY**

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
**Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.)**  
in Geography



DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES  
NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY  
SHILLONG, MEGHALAYA

MAY 1992



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# North-Eastern Hill University

Mayurbhanj Complex, Nongthymmai, Shillong-793014

Department of

*Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan*  
Professor and Dean  
School of Environmental Sciences

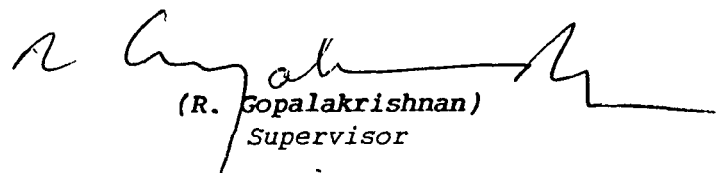
## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**POLITICO-GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN MEGHALAYA**" submitted by **Shri Pallab Dey** in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) in Geography is a bonafide study of the researcher to the best of my knowledge and belief. The researcher has given due acknowledgements to all the quotations, extracts and ideas borrowed from other studies.

This dissertation may now be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

SHILLONG

THE 15 MAY 1992

  
(R. Gopalakrishnan)  
Supervisor

*forwarded to the  
Principal  
15/5/92*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*It is my great pleasure to acknowledge in record the assistance, guidance and help I received from a number of persons from time to time in completing this study.*

*First of all, I express my deep sense of gratitude to my supervisor Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan, Professor, Department of Geography and Dean, School of Environmental Sciences, NEHU, Shillong, for his kind guidance and supervision and also for his constant encouragement during the course of this study.*

*I am also grateful to Dr. A.C. Mohapatra, Professor and Head, Department of Geography, NEHU, and Dr. S.K. Mishra, Professor, Department of Economics for their valuable suggestions.*

*My thanks to my teachers Dr. Ali Ahmed, Reader, Department of Geography, NEHU, and Dr. B.S. Butola, Lecturer, Department of Geography, NEHU, for providing me with valuable help and guidance in my work.*

*I would like to thank all other teachers in the Department of Geography, NEHU, and officials in the Regional Centre for Wastelands Development, NEHU, Shillong, for rendering all possible help to complete this study.*

*Thanks are also due to the officials of the Directorate of Census Operations, Meghalaya; Directorate of Economics, Statistics and Evaluation, Meghalaya, and North Eastern Council Library, Shillong, for providing relevant data and information.*

(ii)

I express my deep gratitude and thanks to all my friends and colleagues - especially to Mr. Abhijit Guha, Mr. Rajib Dutta Majumdar, Mr. Amit Biswas and Mr. T.M. Hariram for assisting me in my cartographic and computer works.

This study would have never been completed without the sincere and constant help and encouragement of my family members. Mr. Sambhu Nath and his family members are also to be thanked for providing me with necessary facilities for my stay and study.

Mr. Joseph F. Khongbuh also deserves thanks for his help in typing the manuscript with great care and patience in a short period of time.

The views expressed in this study are, however, my own and I will be solely responsible for any mistake that may crop up in this work.

SHILLONG

THE 15 MAY 1992

Pallab Deo  
(PALLAB DEY)

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**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1. Introduction

Development is a fundamental process of social, economic and political transformation of a society. The economic development has a considerable influence on the survival and strengthening of a state's political structure. Irrespective of level of economic attainment or political system, development and planning for the same has come to be felt as an issue of prime importance in all the countries of the world. In the post World War II period, a new source of emphasis on economic growth arose mostly concerning the problems and prospects of 'underdeveloped countries'. By 'underdeveloped countries' one means "countries that have been unable to utilize the opportunities afforded by modern material and social technology and have failed to supply minimum subsistence and material comfort to their population".<sup>1</sup> These so called 'underdeveloped' countries, most of which have achieved political freedom recently, are confronted with urgent problems of economic sufficiency and security. The economic aspects of states,

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1. Kuznets, S. "Towards a Theory of Economic Growth", Economic Growth and Structure, Second Indian Reprint, 1974, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, p. 2.

of late, have been modified to a considerable extent by recent technological and political changes which have immensely affected the social outlook of people in different ways in different parts of the world.

In India, with a democratic set up of government and multi-party political system combined with 'mixed' type of economy, the roles played by the political as well as geographical factors in the development process is of immense importance. These interrelated politico-geographical factors can provide a better understanding of the problems and prospects of development in different regions at different times under the different heterogeneous characteristics of the country. District regional and local factors play as much important roles as the common national phenomena in the development process of the country as a whole and different regions and states in particular among which the role of politico-geographical factors cannot be underestimated.

All societies aim for development and economic development is an integral part fo their objectives. Economic development occurs at varying rates in different countries/regions at different periods of time. This is a multiple goal approach and hence such purposes are differently defined by different people, in different societies at

different stages of development. Their relative importance shifts as economic and social structure changes.

Balanced economic development of different regions/states of a large country like India is now considered to be important consideration not only from the economic point of view but also for the unity and political stability of the country. India, after its independence from colonial rule took to state planning as a tool for economic development and although balanced regional development has been one of the major aims of planning in India, it was only in the Fourth Five Year Plan that some attempts were made for the integrated development at the regional level.

The physical and cultural diversity of India does not allow a single and rigid plan to operate in all the regions of the country and it is not feasible either. This has resulted in the decentralization of the planning process and the physical and cultural set up of a particular region/state play important role in shaping the whole planning process. This is basically necessary because different regions apart from possessing widely varying physico-cultural set up are also confronted with different types of problems and thus need different types of solutions to them. The problem is further aggravated by the stances taken and roles played by political forces in different parts of

the country at different periods of time. Different regions/states have some discernable physical peculiarities but differences in their size, location and socio-political institutions force even these physically homogeneous (relatively) regions to adopt different approaches and objectives of planning for development as far as their formulation, implementation and evaluation are concerned.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

The emergence of 'hill areas' as a distinct entity in the planning process is a recent phenomena. This is in accordance with the concept of regional imbalances and also in recognition of the fact that there are a number of areas or pockets in the socio-economic mosaic of India which are relatively backward even by national standards because these areas not only experience greater constraints for development but there also lies special and specific problems for the development of these areas. These handicaps may be due to their location and relative isolation, physical barriers (which sometimes act as cultural barriers also), political factors, plain neglect or a combination of these factors. It is indeed very difficult to identify a single and most important cause for their relative underdevelopment but a better understanding, in this regard, can surely be reached at if one sees them from a broad

perspective. But a number of developmental plans which were basically formulated keeping in view the special features, problems and needs of these regions and the people living in these areas, have either not been able to achieve their targets or have failed miserably in many cases.

The state of Meghalaya situated in the peripheral north-eastern region of the country with characteristic features of underdevelopment and local polity, is like other states of the region a victim of its own geography and the political economy of the country in general and the region in particular.

The state of Meghalaya is relatively underdeveloped as far as its economic development is concerned. In spite of possessing vast natural resources, the level of economic development is very low. The state has to depend on grants from the Central Government to carry out most of its developmental activities. The channelisation of such funds is often influenced by different interest groups and political decisions.

The fragmented autonomy of different administrative and executive agencies of developmental activities often lead to multiple agencies doing the same work adopting different criteria and procedures and consequent waste

of resources and in most cases underutilization of institutional facilities. The situation in Meghalaya is made more complex by the overlapping of the respective jurisdictions of various administrative machineries, namely the central government, the state government, autonomous district councils and the traditional administrative units of the local tribes of the state.

All these provide interesting and ample scope for the political geographers to try to understand the role of politico-geographical factors in the development process of the state. Therefore, to understand the complex problems of development process in such a context, the role of geographical factors, mainly those affecting political decisions and actions must be recognised, understood and taken into consideration.

Attempts will be made in the present study to identify and understand different aspects of economic growth and raise broad questions whose implications may provide some light in the field of economic development from new angles and suggest new interpretations and new directions for further research.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

Keeping the above mentioned problems of development

in mind, the attention of the present study has been focussed on the following objectives:

- i) To understand the inter-relationship between the spatial distribution (territorial concentration) of ethnic groups and rise of regional and sub-regional political forces in Meghalaya.
- ii) To analyse the process of economic development in the state and the resultant political response of the people in relation to development or lack of it.
- iii) To identify the resource potentials of the state in relation to the ongoing developmental activities and to enquire into the political aspirations of the people.

#### **1.4. Research Questions**

Keeping the above objectives in mind, the following research questions were proposed to be tested in the present study:

- (1) Whether the economic development in the state a function of spatial interactions and whether it has corresponding reflections on the political demands of the people?

- (2) Is diversified and specialised use of resources and functioning of modern economic and political institutions likely to reduce the role of traditional institutions in the social and economic life of the people of the state?
- (3) Does the perception about development and decisions to this effect reflect the environmental (physical and cultural) conditioning of the ethnic groups?

### 1.5. Study Area

The state of Meghalaya has been taken up as the area for the present study. It attained its statehood on the 21st January 1972. Meghalaya, which is located in the north-eastern region of India lies between the longitudes of 89°45'E and 92°47'E and the latitudes of 25°47'N and 26°10'N. It is a landlocked territory. The total geographical area of the state is 22,429 square kilometres (Fig. 1.1).

Meghalaya is bounded by Bangladesh in the south and south-eastern corner and the state has a 496 kilometre long international boundary with that country. On all other sides, the state is bounded by the state of Assam. This state, which is basically a hilly region is surrounded by extensive plain lands on its north, west and south drained

by the mighty Brahmaputra, the Surma and their tributaries. On its east lies the Karbi Hills which is, geologically, a continuation of the Meghalaya Plateau.

The altitude of the state ranges from 150 metres above MSL to 1961 metres above MSL. The physiography is marked by heavily dissected terrain in the northern and western sides; while the southern side is characterised by steep scarps and escarpments. The climatic conditions of the state is greatly influenced by the south-west monsoon and vary from tropical type to semi-temperate type depending on the physiography and altitude. The state displays a wide variety of natural vegetation ranging from tropical mixed forests to alpine forests.

Total population of the state, according to the provisional figures of 1991 Census, was 17,60,626 (which constituted 0.21 per cent of the total population of India). The sex ratio in the state was 947 females per thousand males. The average density of population in the state was 78 persons per square kilometre. The growth rate of population during the last decade (1981-1991) was 31.80 per cent per thousand. Only 48.26 per cent of the total population of the state are literates. 'Scheduled tribes' are in majority in the state as far as their numerical strength is concerned and they constituted 80.58 per cent (in 1981)

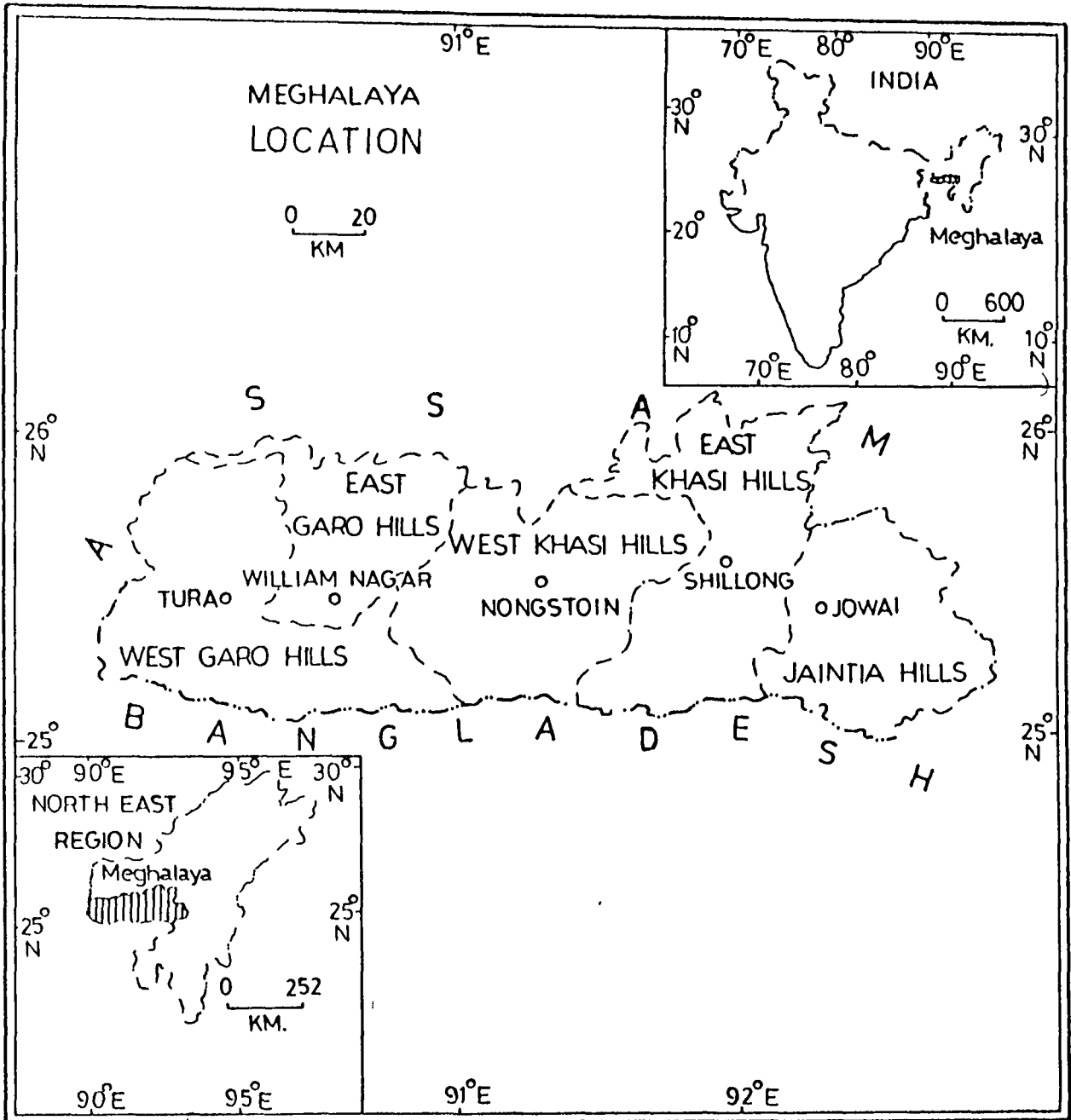


Fig. 1.1

of the total population of the state. A little more than half (52.62 per cent) of the total population of the state practise Christianity. About 47.14 per cent of the population speak Khasi and 29.87 per cent speak Garo as their mother tongues. According to 1981 Census, about 44.54 per cent of the total population falls under the category of main workers and 2.49 per cent in the category of marginal workers. About 42.34 per cent of the total land area is under different types of forests and around 28.5 per cent is lying as wastelands. Only 8.60 per cent is put to agricultural use. Around 72.54 per cent of the total population is engaged in agricultural activities. Agriculture in the State is predominantly the shifting cultivation or 'Jhum' which is practised by about one-fifth of the total number of households. Horticulture, livestock rearing and mining are the other major economic activities of the people of the state.

Meghalaya is potentially very rich in both renewable and non-renewable resources. The state's enormous hydro power potential promises bright future for the state. Coal, limestone, silimanite and clay are the important minerals of the state. Lack of proper transport network is an important deterrent in state's economic development. As far as industrial development is concerned, the state is very underdeveloped even by national standard.

### 1.6. Data Base and Methodology

Data used in the present study were collected from the secondary sources. For data on population, census reports were used. For other data relating to agriculture, forests, industry, transport etc. various departments of the state government and the North-Eastern Council provided published and unpublished literatures and reports. Articles in different journals and project reports published by various government departments provided with some important information. Some books on Meghalaya also provided valuable data and information regarding the political and economic activities in the country. Maps (Census maps and Survey of India maps) were also consulted and interpreted to understand the spatial aspects of development. The present study is, however, handicapped by the lack of adequate data at the micro-level. Even the major variables for which data was available, were limited to district level. Hence, the five districts of the state were chosen as units to show the comparative levels of development. A three-fold category of development indices has been selected based on resource, agriculture, industry and social amenities. Eighteen different indicators were taken into consideration to measure the levels of overall levels of development in the five districts of the state.

The composite indices for these respective categories were computed by using the formula:

$$\text{Composite Index} = \Sigma\left(\frac{X - \bar{X}}{Sd}\right)$$

Where, X = Unit variable.

$\bar{X}$  = Mean of n number of X.

Sd = Standard Deviation of the sum of the data.

$$\text{Where, } Sd = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma(X - \bar{X})^2}{n}}$$

The respective composite indices for the four categories were then added to find out the overall levels of development in the five districts of the state.

Appropriate cartographic techniques like maps, bar-diagrams, pie-charts etc. have been used to represent different types of data.

### 1.7. Brief Survey of Literature

The theme of the present study has clear interdisciplinary connections and approaches. Naturally, fairly good amount of literature dealing with various aspects of economic development and politics is available. Despite this, it can be said that these materials are widely scattered and form parts of different links and disciplines; and is difficult to completely separate them. The present

study is, however, constrained by the lack of such type of literatures which exclusively deal with the problems of development in Meghalaya.

A number of books have been written and articles published both by Indian and foreign scholars which deal with the problems of economic development including the role of politico-geographical factors which affect such development. But very few attempts have been made to conduct such a study at the regional level. In case of Meghalaya, the paucity of literature related to the subject is even more.

However, a number of books which were quite informative and useful in carrying out the present study have been referred below:

A.K. Bagchi, in his book The Political Economy of Underdevelopment (1982) provides an introduction to the problems of development faced by poor third world countries and also makes clear the historical origins of the contemporary problems and discusses the way in which inequalities both within and between countries, are propagated and perpetuated.

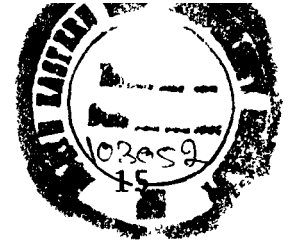
Planning, Politics and the Public Interest (1978) edited by Walter Goldslein, includes contributions from

a number of famous economists and scholars who has analysed the consequences of applying collective planning principles to a market economy.

The role of time factor in the process of economic development is very important. Papers on Planning (1985) by P.C. Mahalanobis (edited by P.K. Bose and M. Mukherjee) includes certain contributions from the famous planner of India where he analyses the role of time factor and has established that a particular temporal sequence of decision making is closely linked with a chosen development path.

Another very important aspect of economic development is the concentration of economic power. The complex problem of economic power and its related consequences on the political life of Indian people has been vividly discussed by Asim Choudhury in his book, Private Economic Power in India.

On the basis of printed materials, interviews, communications, Assembly debates, newspaper articles and the like. Leoward L. Endman has analysed the impact of political factors on the economic development in India in his book, Politics and Economic Development in India (1973).



C.H. Williams, in his article, "Minority Groups in the Modern State" (in the book, Progress in Political Geography, edited by Michael Pacson) reviews and analyses, among other themes, the concepts and applications of core periphery inertia and state formation, uneven development and nationalism, territoriality and perception studies.

Politics and Planning co-authored by M.V. Namjoshi and S.V. Khare, in its first chapter, discusses among other issues, the impact of political decisions and aims of political forces on the entire planning process and developmental activities in India.

The role played by the 'intermediates clan' which has further strengthened its position by effectively penetrating the bureaucracy and the political apparatus needs an impartial assessment. Prem Shankar Jha, in his book, India - A Political Economy of Stagnation (1980), in contrast to the purely economic analyses, suggest that, the answer for a desirable economic development might lie in the changes in the distribution of political power.

Pranab Bardhan in his book, The Political Economy of Development in India (1984), examines the economic and political constraints on Indian development and also shows how a plurality of classes dominate the economy, generating conflicting pressures for patronage and subsidies.

Regional Disparities in India (1986) edited by K.P.G. Nair includes a number of contributions from eminent Indian authors which highlights the factors, including political forces, causing both inter-regional, inter-state and intra-state disparities of economic development in India.

'Pragmatist' in his book Politics of Indian Economy opines that political factors and development cannot be separated in the thinking of those who have to deal with the problem of economic development.

Rajni Kothari, in his B.D. Kale Memorial lectures entitled "Political Economy of Development" in the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics in 1971 discussed various aspects of politics affecting economic development in different parts of our country.

A number of articles in the book Sequence of Development in the North-East (ed. by J.B. Bhattacharjee, 1986) try to look into the process of economic development in different parts of north-east India and their present status in relation to the economy of the region.

Emerging Pattern of North Eastern Economy (1987) edited by V.S. Mahajan contains articles (written by authors engaged in developmental activities or researches) which

tries to evaluate the impact of the existing developmental processes on the future of this region.

K. Alam, in his book, Planning in North East India (1985) discusses various aspects of planning and economic development in different parts of the north-eastern region of India.

B.P. Singh in his book The Problem of Change: A Study of North-East India (1987), looks into the socio-cultural and political implications of economic development or lack of it in different parts of the north-eastern region and also tries to look into the causes behind the slow economic development in the region.

Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya (1985), edited by S.K. Chatterjee includes various papers presented in a Seminar organized by the Department of Education, Government of Meghalaya in the year 1980. The papers deal with the indigenous institutions of Meghalaya.

Hamlet Bareh in his book Meghalaya (1974), tries to deal with all problems at certain level with emphasis on the cultural heritage of the Garos and Khasi-Jaintia polity.

British Annexation of Garo Hills (1970) by P.C.

Kar provides an outline account of the British annexation of Garo Hills and the pattern of its administration introduced by the British authority. The book also provides an account of certain remarkable characteristics of the Garo society, recent political history and administration of the Garo Hills.

Various articles published in different issues of the Yojana and Economic and Political Weekly by eminent authors were of immense help in understanding the complex process of economic development and its politico-geographical aspects in the national and regional level.

A number of national, regional and local newspapers and magazines have been publishing articles and news items related to various aspects of economic development but none of them have ventured to analyse the problem deeply enough and therefore, the paucity of literature on Meghalaya related to the theme was an obvious but unavoidable hurdle for the present study.

The bibliography at the end of the dissertation gives in detail the literatures which have been consulted in the present study.

#### **1.8. Chapter Scheme**

The present study has been divided into six different chapters whose main components are as follows:

The first chapter introduces the present study and then highlights the statement of the problem. It also incorporates in it the objectives and research questions of the study. The personality of the study area is described briefly. Data base and methodology of the study are discussed followed by a brief survey of literature on the theme of the topic. Lastly, the chapter scheme for the present study is included in this section.

The characteristics of the study area are discussed in the second chapter under two broad categories. The first part describes the physical features. The second part which describes the socio-economic features of the study area is further divided into three sections – population characteristics, socio-cultural characteristics and resource characteristics.

The third chapter deals with the concept of development in general and economic development in particular and interrelationship between political aspects and different types of geographical factors and their influence in the developmental process.

The fourth chapter is mainly based on methodology which deals with the collection, processing and analysis of data. An attempt has also been made to represent impor-

tant information as well as analysed results with the help of cartographic techniques.

The fifth chapter describes the politico-historical features of Meghalaya and their impact on the political economy of the state. It also includes the analysis and general evaluation of various developmental activities and their impact on the state's economy.

The last chapter includes the summary of main findings of the study and attempts to make certain suggestions for conducting further research on the topic and for minimizing the economic stagnation and inter-regional disparity in Meghalaya.

---

**CHAPTER II**

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY AREA**

Every part of the world is peculiar in its own way. The study of geography is the study of spatial variations. This very idea calls for the understanding of the basic features or characteristics of any region or area before one tries to comprehend the impact of these phenomena on the different types of economic activities of man with respect to his environment. For this, the physical as well as non-physical features of the study area (Meghalaya) is discussed here in brief.

## **2.1. Physical Features**

Physical features like relief, drainage, climate and natural vegetation of an area play very important role in the economic life of the people. The characteristics of these features in Meghalaya are briefly discussed below:

### **2.1.1. Relief**

The state of Meghalaya has great physiographic diversity. The relief features vary from lowlying alluvial plains to hill ranges whose heights exceed 1500 metres. Meghalaya plateau which covers about 85 per cent of the state's total geographical area consists of the Garo Hills,

Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. The plateau is believed to be a detached block and an extension of the plateau of the Peninsular India.<sup>1</sup> The height of the plateau varies from 200 metres ASL in the north to 1,964 metres in its central part. The plateau is highly dissected. It has an irregular terrain in its western and southern side. The southern face of the plateau is marked by deep gorges, spurs and abrupt slopes. Correspondingly, the northern face of the plateau is marked by foothills that gradually merge with the alluvial plain of the Brahmaputra valley. In its southern portion, the plateau is characterised by steep escarpments and deep valleys overlooking the Sylhet plain of Bangladesh. A narrow strip of plain land encircle the northern, western and southern parts of the plateau. These lowlands are drained by the rivers having sources in the central parts of the plateau. The nature of terrain is one of the most important impediments for the economic development of the state. (Fig. 2.1).

Physiographically, (Fig. 2.2), Meghalaya can be divided into:

#### **1. Western Meghalaya (Garo Hills)**

The average height of the hills in this part of

---

1. Physiographically, Meghalaya represents a remnant of an ancient plateau of Pre-Cambrian Indian Peninsular Shield, blok uplifted to its present height (Geological & Mineral Resources of Meghalaya, Part IV, GSI, December 1974), p. 72.

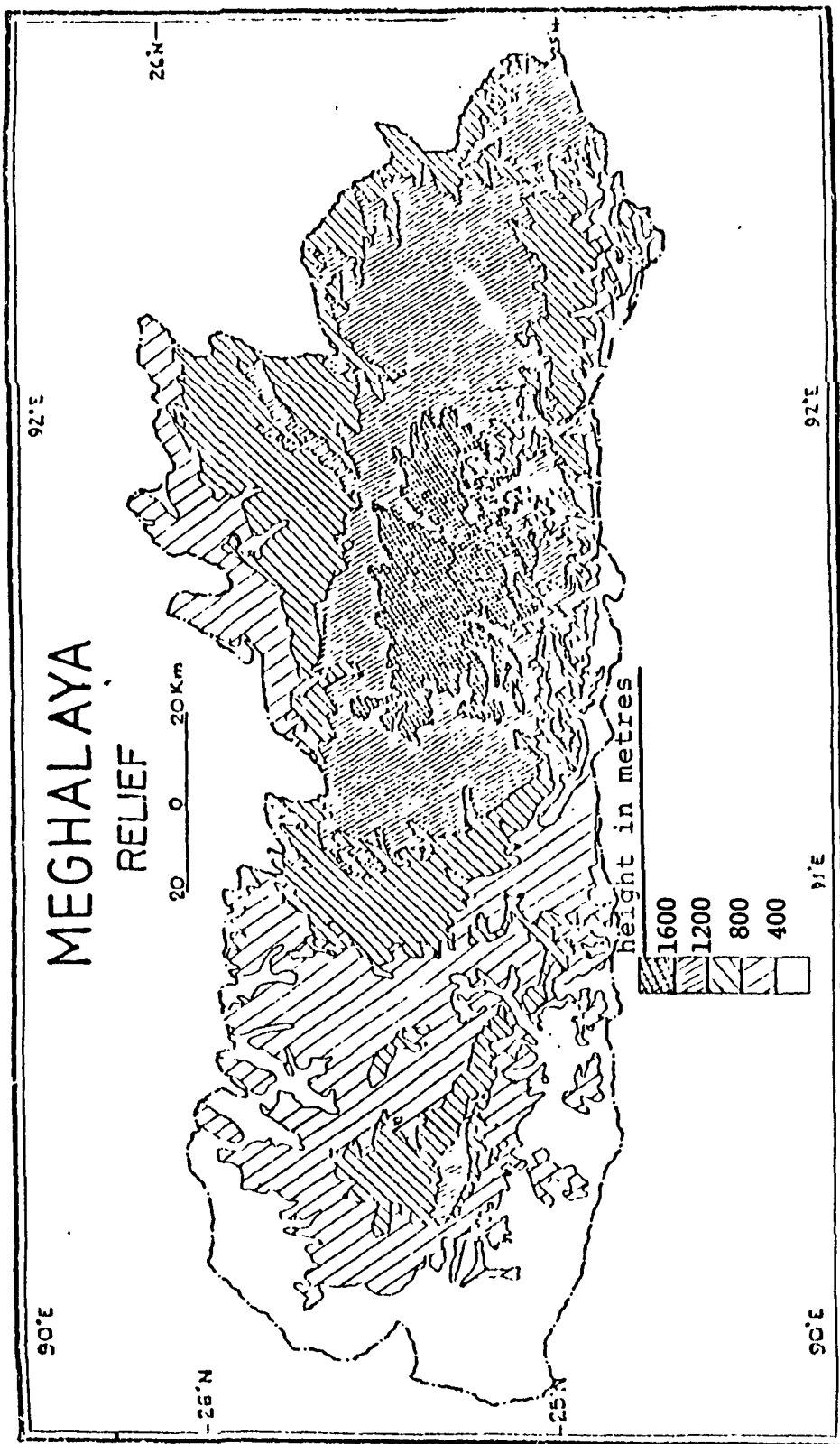


Fig. 2.1

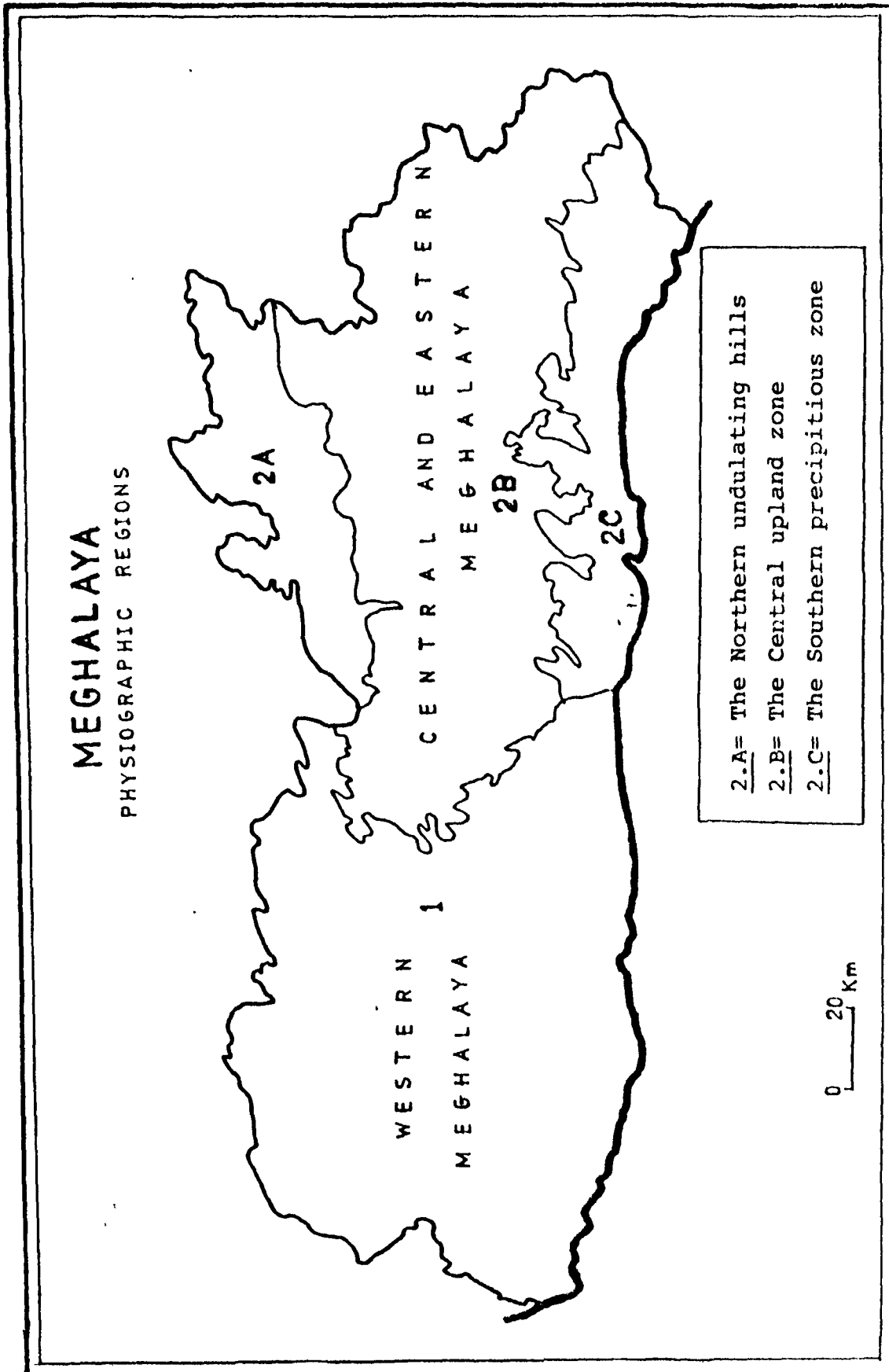


Fig. 2.2

the state varies from 450 metres to 600 metres ASL. The ranges in these regions have the general alignment of the north to south trend. The principal ranges are the Tura Range and Arabela Range. Nokrek (1,411 m) in the Tura Range is the highest peak of this region.

## **2. Central Meghalaya (Khasi Hills)**

The central part of the state or the Khasi Hills may further be divided into three parts depending on their specific physiographic characteristics. They are:

**(a) Low Hills of the Northern Belts** – This region lies in the rain shadow area of the central plateau and reaches a maximum height of about 1500 metres in the south and the average height of the hills vary from 300 metres to 900 metres ASL. This area is locally known as 'Ri Bhoi'.

**(b) Central Upland Zone** – The 1500 metre contour forms the outer boundary of this zone, with Shillong Peak (1,964 m) as the highest peak in the state. Most of the hills in this sub-region have an east-west alignment. The central portion of the plateau acts as a water parting. As a result of which a number of rivers and streams either flow northwards towards Brahmaputra or southwards towards Meghana-Surma in Bangladesh. These highlands are locally known as 'Ri Khasi' or 'Ri Lum'.

(c) **Southern Belt** – South of the Central Uplands is a belt of low hills and valleys that abruptly descend to the Surma plain with escarpments and abrupt falls all along the southern face of the plateau. The hills in this belt have north-south alignment. Structural platforms are evident in many places (due to constant erosion of the face of the escarps by wind and rain water) and form Karst topography. This area is locally known as 'Ri War'.

### 3. Eastern Meghalaya (Jaintia Hills)

The Central portion of this sub-region is marked by east-west alignment. The southern portion is dominated by steep escarpments that are continuation of the central Meghalaya's southern belt. The average altitude of this sub-region is about 1200 m ASL and Marangksih range (1,601 m) is the highest range of this area.

#### 2.1.2. Drainage

The Central portion of Meghalaya plateau (East-West direction) being higher in altitude than the surrounding regions forms the main water divide between the Brahmaputra and the Meghna-Surma systems. Rivers flow in all directions from this part. The northward flowing rivers from flat plains whereas the south flowing rivers while descending to the plains from deep valleys on the faulted surfaces. The drainage pattern in the state reveals extra-

ordinary straight courses of the rivers along joints and faults.

The northern part of the plateau, devoid of any sedimentary cover, is marked by long, incisive valleys formed due to headward erosion along joints in the gneissic rocks and granites. The limestone covered country over the southern Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills represent a typical Karst topography.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the important rivers of the state are Simsang, Nitai, Bhugoi, Krishnai, Dudhnoi, Gonai, Jinari, Ringgi, Jingiram, Kalu, Chagua, Ajagar, Didram, Sanda, Dareng, Bandra (all in Garo Hills), Kynshi, Umiew, Umrilong, Umngi, Piyangang, Umlong, Umtrew, Umiam, Umkhen, Umkhri, Digaru, Kynchaing, Mawpa (all in the Khasi Hills), Lubha, Myntang, Mynring and Myntdu (all in the Jaintia Hills). Of these, Simsang in the Garo Hills is navigable only for about 30 Kms and some other rivers have very negligible length suitable for navigation.

### 2.1.3. Climate

The climate of Meghalaya is influenced by the south-west monsoon and the alternating pressure cells located in the North-West India. Within the state, the climate is modified by the distribution and elevation of physical relief.

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1. Geological & Mineral Resources of Meghalaya, Part IV, G.S.I., December, 1974, p. 72.

The Central Uplands (above 1500 mts ASL) is the coldest area of the state. The temperature is higher in the Jaintia and the Garo Hills. Areas lying to the north and south of the Central Uplands experience comparatively warmer climate.

December and January are the coldest months. During March and April, the entire plateau experiences strong winds due to the northward movement of jet streams from the gangetic plain too the Tibetan plateau (its summer location). This consequently led to the development of low pressure in the Tibetan plateau. Rainy season generally starts from the third week of May and continues right upto the end of September and at sometimes upto the middle of October. During October and November, the climate is cool and the temperature starts decreasing.

In the central uplands of the Khasi Hills, the average temperature drops to 5°C during winter and in the summer the average temperature rises upto 24°C. The temperature increases with decreasing elevation and in the low altitude areas of the Garo Hills the average temperature in the summer is around 29°C and the average winter temperature is about 18°C. (Fig. 2.3).

Table 2.1 shows mean monthly temperature of some selected centres in the state during 1983.

# MEGHALAYA

## DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPERATURE

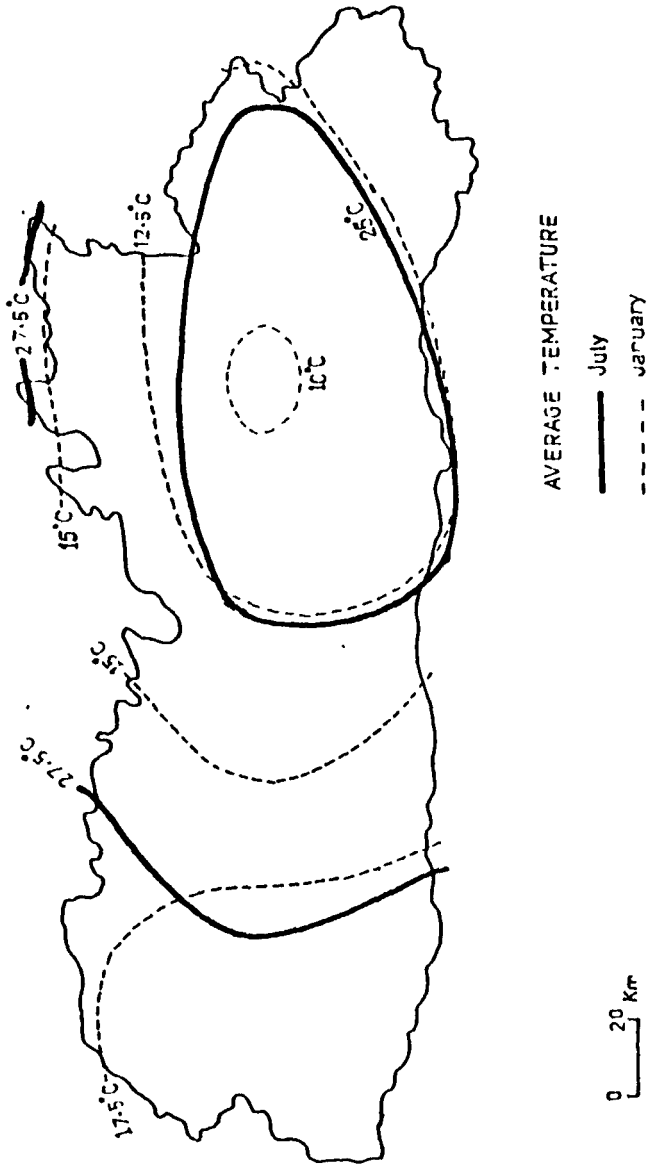


Fig. 2.3

**Table 2.1 - Mean Monthly Temperature (Degree Centigrade) in Selected Centres (1983).**

Month	Selected Centres				
	Shillong	Cherrapunjee	Nongstoin	Jowai	Tura
Jan	9.4	10.6	17	16	13.5
Feb	10.6	11.7	15	11.5	16.5
March	15.3	20	18	16	19.2
Apr	18.1	17.5	17	18	19.2
May	18.9	18.6	21.5	18	18.7
June	21.4	20.7	24	22	20.5
July	21	20.5	23.5	22.5	20.3
Aug	22.2	20.6	22.5	21.5	20
Sept	19.9	20	19.5	21.5	20
Oct	18.9	19.9	21	21	19.4
Nov	10.5	11.8	18	18	17.5
Dec	10.5	11.7	17	18	16

Source: Meteorologist, Guwahati and Agriculture Department, Meghalaya.

Thus, on the basis of weather conditions in the state, the whole year can be divided into the following four distinct seasons:

- (a) The cold season (December to February).
- (b) The warm season (March to April).
- (c) The rainy season (May to September).
- (d) The cool season (October to November).

The amount of rainfall in the state has a significant variation over time and space. The maximum average rainfall (1270 cm) per annum is recorded in the Mawsynram-Cherrapunjee-Pynursla belt in the East Khasi Hills district. The amount of rainfall diminishes uniformly on the backward side of the rainshadow at the adiabatic rate. On the eastern region, rainfall is slightly less and it is lowest in the western part of the state. (Fig. 2.4).

The average annual rainfall in the Garo Hills varies from 250 cm in the north to 400 cm in the south. The average annual rainfall in central and Eastern Meghalaya is 770 cm of which more than 75 per cent falls during May to September period. In this part also the average annual rainfall decreases from 1142 cm in the south to less than 200 cm in the northern fringes.

Table 2.2 shows the amount of average annual rainfall experienced at different centres of the state.

**Table 2.2 - Annual Rainfall in Selected Centres.**

Centres	(in mm)					
	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
Shillong	2003.3*	2341	1923	1995	2215.2	2454.7
Cherrapunjee	6830*	12075	9123	9113	10467.9	9772.9
Mawsynram	NA	NA	6184.4	9738.9	9245.9	12163.1
Jowai	4805.6	2066.4	NA	3775.5	3305	3213.3
Tura	3337.2	NA	3170.8	NA	NA	NA
Nongstoin	NA	NA	3237.5	3642.4	4236.1	4200.1

Source: 1. Meteorologist, Guwahati.

\* Agriculture Department, Meghalaya.

MEGHALAYA  
MEAN ANNUAL RAINFALL

0 20 KM

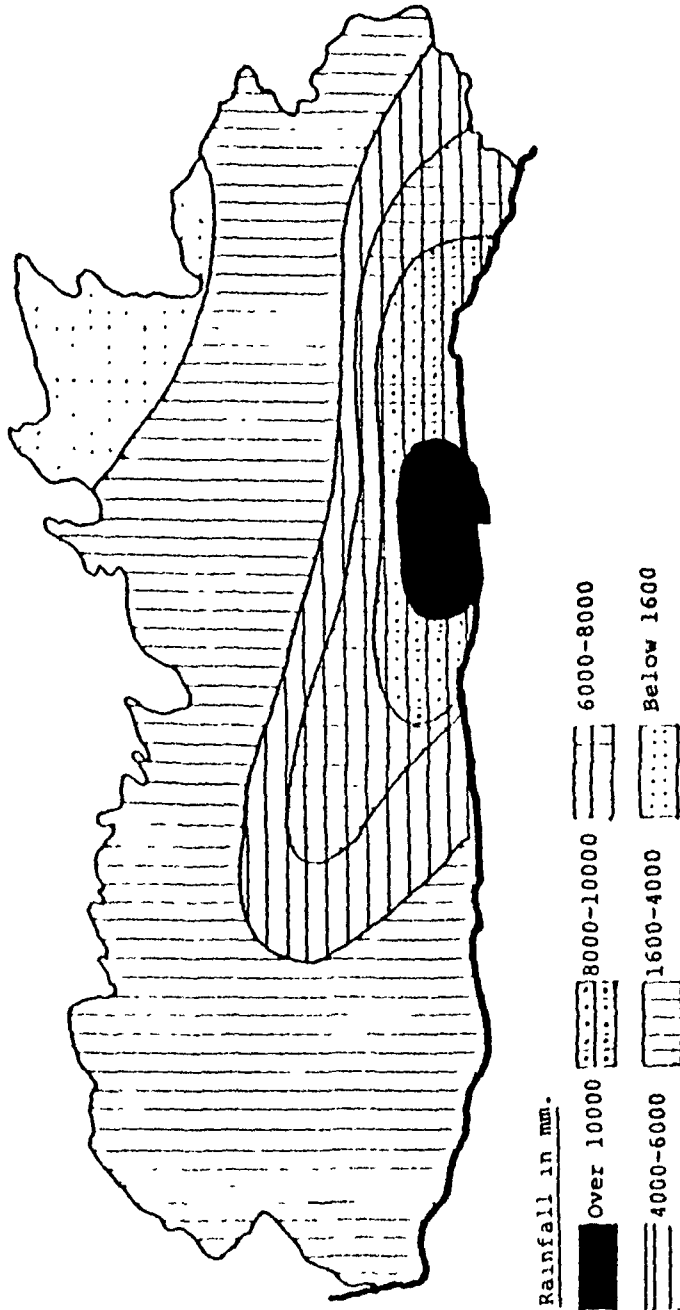


Fig. 2.4

The middle portion of the northern proper and the northern fringe of the plateau also receives Mediterranean type of rain during winter caused by the retreating monsoon winds under the influence of the north-east trades.

#### 2.1.4. Soil

Four distinct categories of soil types can be found in Meghalaya (Fig. 2.5). These are:

**(a) Red Loamy Soils** of central Garo Hills and Upland Zones of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. They have rich organic and nitrogen content but are deficient in phosphate and potash. This type of soils are suitable for rice, potato and fruit cultivation.

**(b) Laterite Soils** can be found in the northern parts of the state from east to west in between the belt of alluvial soils in the north and red loamy soils in the south. This type of soils needs mixing of organic matter to make them suitable for agriculturally viable.

**(c) Red and Yellow Soils** are found in a belt running from east to west in the southern part of the state. The soils are fine textured and are suitable for rice and fruit cultivation.

**(d) Alluvial Soils** occur all along the northern,

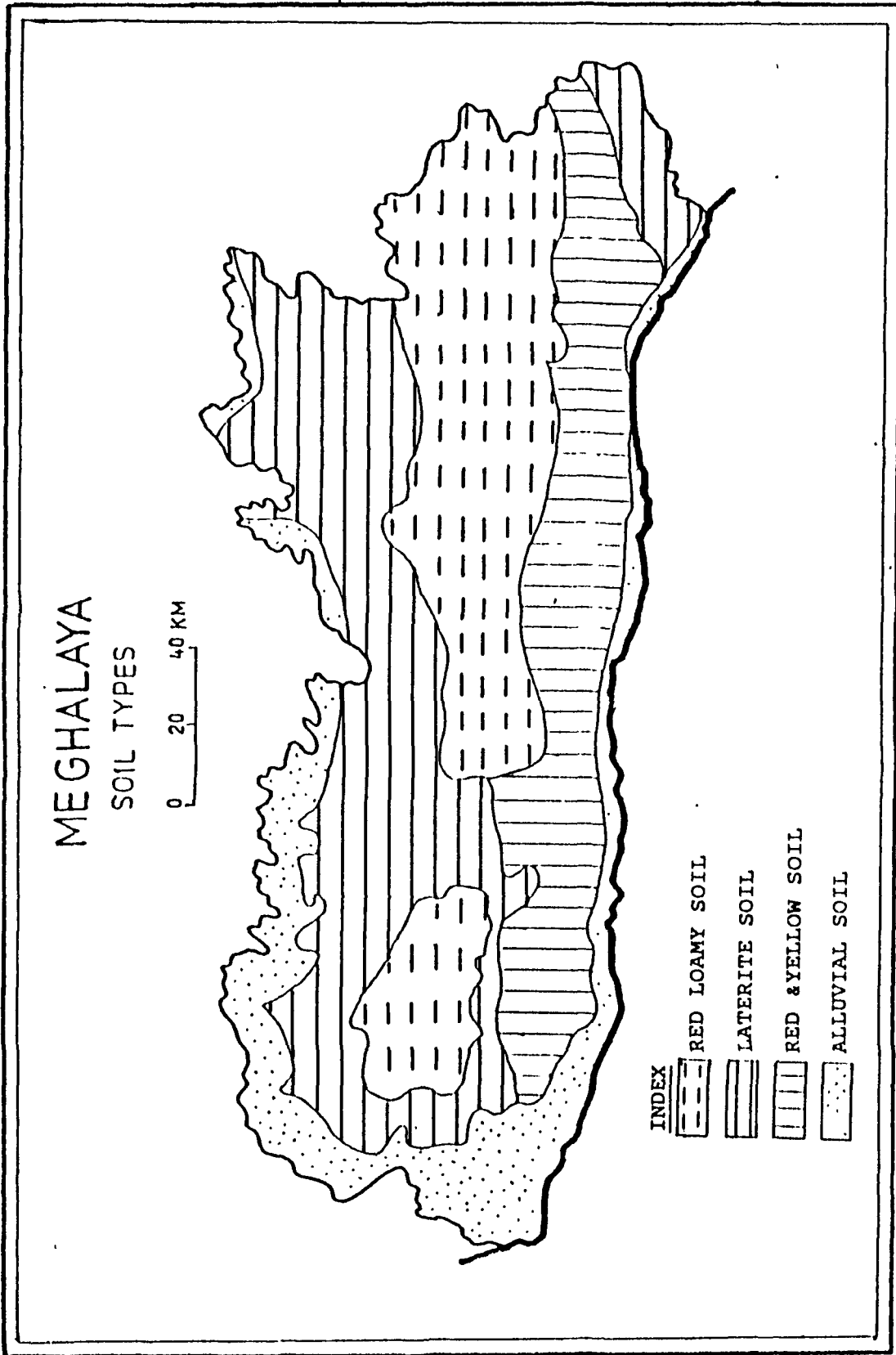


Fig. 2.5

western and southern peripheries of the state where streams and rivers deposit rich alluvium washed away in their higher courses. These are being used for the cultivation of rice, jute and fruits.

Terrain plays an important role in determining the character of the soils and on this basis, the soils of the state can be grouped under two broad categories. They are:

1) **Hill Soils** – On the hill tops soils are often thin, light in colour, less clayey and less fertile.

2) **Plain Alluvium** – In the lowlands and river valleys, soils are more mature, thick, deep in colour, more clayey and more fertile.

The problem of soil erosion is very acute in the state like all other hilly areas of the region. The situation is further aggravated by two other factors. These are:

- i) Jhum or shifting cultivation, and
- ii) Existing land tenure system.

Shifting cultivation has led to heavy soil erosion. Large scale deforestation and heavy precipitation have made the problem of soil erosion very acute.

The existing land tenure system (under which the land belongs to the owner) does not allow the government to interfere in order to conserve and reclaim agricultural land.

#### 2.1.5. Natural Vegetation

Meghalaya is endowed with a rich variety of natural vegetation ranging from tropical mixed forests to sub-temperate pine forests (Fig. 2.6).

Mixed tropical forests are found upto an altitude of 900 metres on the northern and southern parts of the central uplands. The areas above 1500 metres is characterised by the presence of temperate forests of pine (Pinus kesiya) trees. Oaks and rhododendrons are common at higher altitudes. On the middle hills between 900 and 1350 metres, sub-tropical forests abound. In the lower parts of the central uplands, grasslands are found.

The total 'tree-covered area' in the state was about 16,511 square kilometre or 73.6 per cent of the total land area of the state.<sup>3</sup> However, it is important to note that these 'tree-covered area' include grasslands and shrubs which are of very little economic importance.

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3. The above figure was extracted from the publication India's Forests -1987, prepared by the Survey and Utilization Division of the Department of Environment, Forests and Wild Life, Government of India.

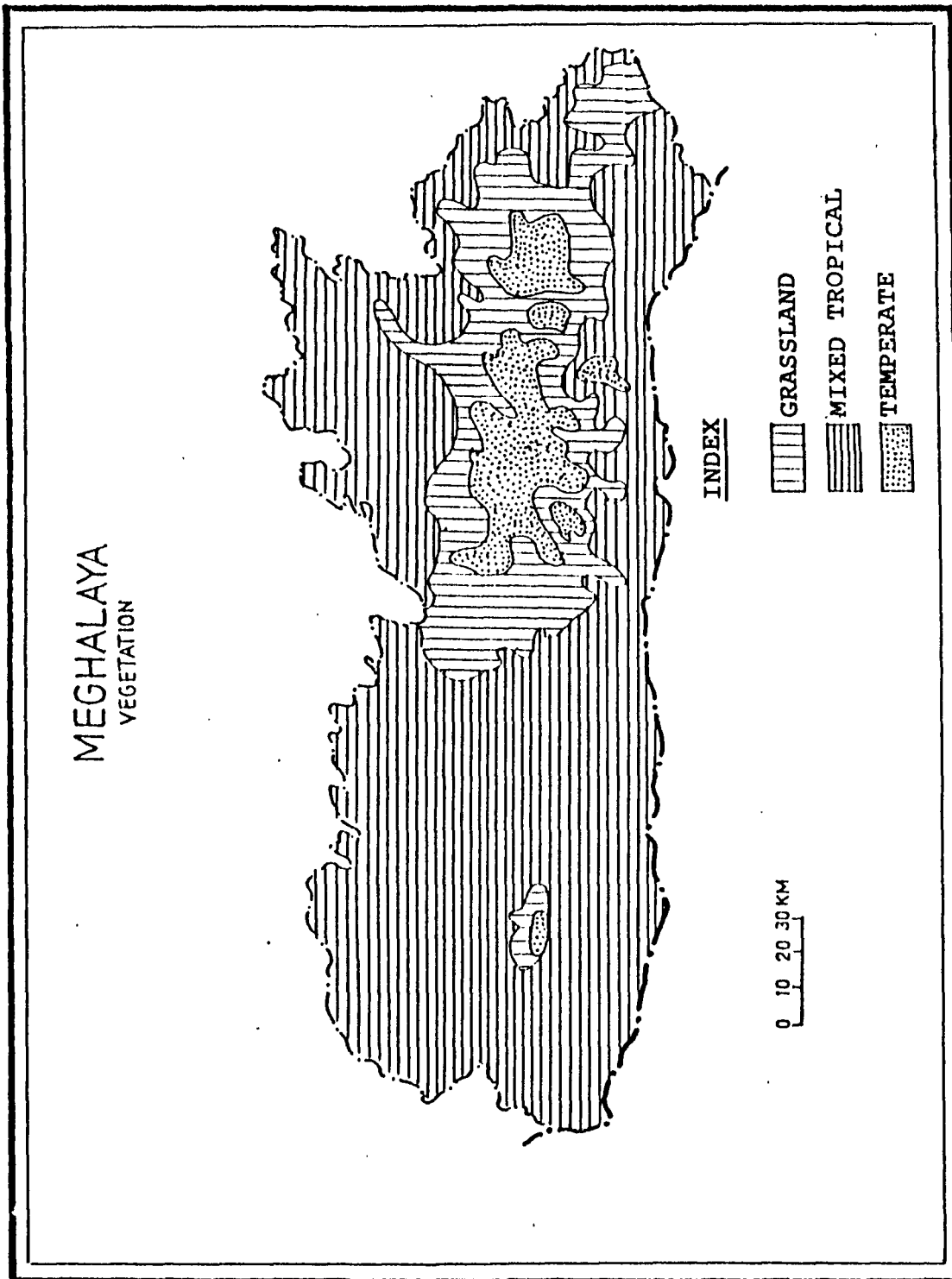


Fig. 2.6

Wastelands – both culturable and unculturable accounts for about 8,150 sq.km. or about 36.37 per cent of the total geographical area of the state. Primary causes of barrenness which is prevalent in the wasteland areas of the state are jhum, fire hazard, heavy precipitation, geology of rocks and nature of soil. Unplanned and random destruction of forests have made the problem more complex.

#### **2.1.6. Geology**

The state of Meghalaya is occupied by (a) Archaean Gneissic Complex with acid and basic intrusives, (b) Shillong Group of rocks (mostly quartzites, usually friable, phyllites, schists, conglomerates, (c) Lower Gondwana rocks, (d) Sylhet Traps, (e) Cretaceous-Tertiary sediments viz. Khasi group (Jadukata formations, Mahadek formations etc.), Jaintia group (Langpar, Shella and Kopili Formations), Garo group (Simsang, Baghmara, Chengapara formations). These sediments consist of dominantly sandstone, limestone, siltstone, shale, pebbles, clays, conglomerates etc. (Fig. 2.7).

#### **2.2. Socio-Economic Features**

The major socio-economic features of Meghalaya are discussed below:

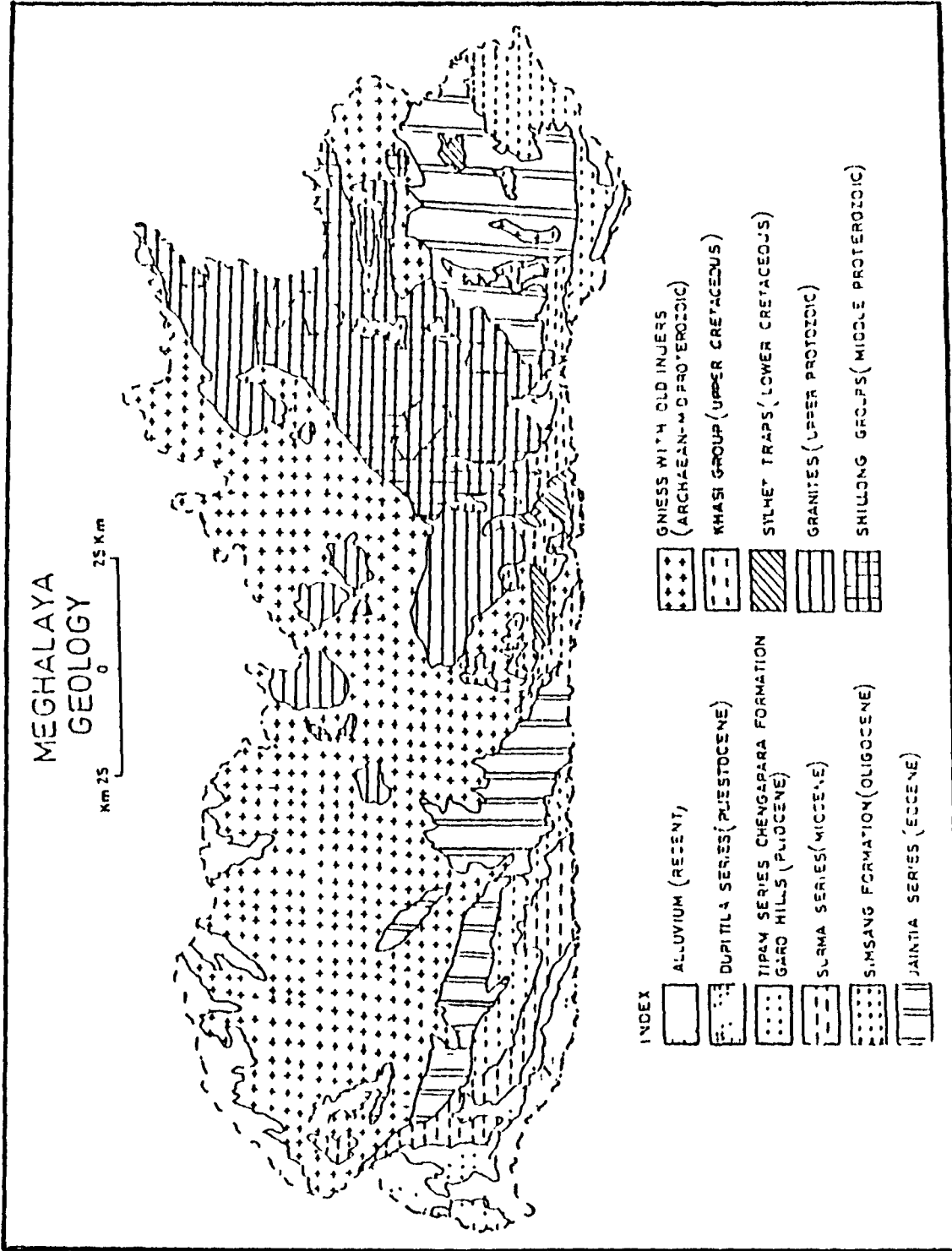


Fig. 2.7

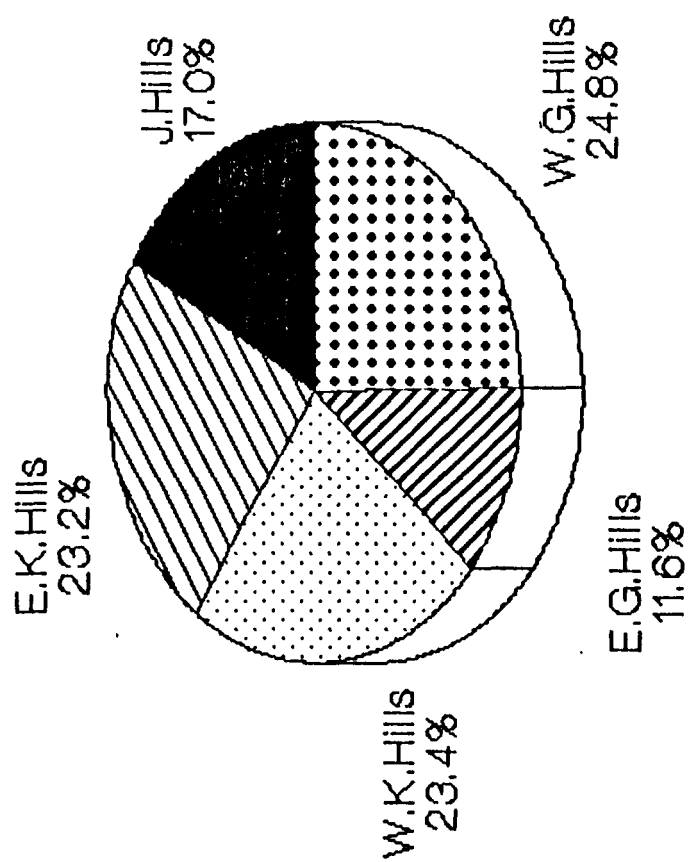
### **2.2.1. Population Characteristics**

Meghalaya is an 'area of relative isolation'. It is mostly inhabited by a population that has been termed as the tribals. About 80 per cent (1981 Census) of the total population of the state belong to the category of 'Scheduled Tribes'. The three major tribes of the state are the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos. However, many of the scholars have opined that the Khasis and the Jaintias are of the same racial origin. Numerically, the Bengalis, the Nepalese and the Assamese are the important communities of the 'non-tribal' section of the population in Meghalaya. They are mostly found in the urban centres of the state and in the lowlying plains of the West Garo Hills district bordering Dhubri and Goalpara districts of Assam.

### **2.2.2. Size and Spatial Distribution of Population**

The total population of Meghalaya, according to the provisional figures of the 1991 Census was 17,60,626. It means that Meghalaya, which constitutes about 68 per cent of the total land area of the country has 0.21 per cent of its total population. Table 2.3 shows the district-wise breaking up of total area/population (Fig. 2.8) and (Fig. 2.9) in the state.

# AREA Districts of Meghalaya



Area in Sq. Kms.

Fig. 2.8

# POPULATION OF MEGHALAYA DISTRICTWISE (1991)

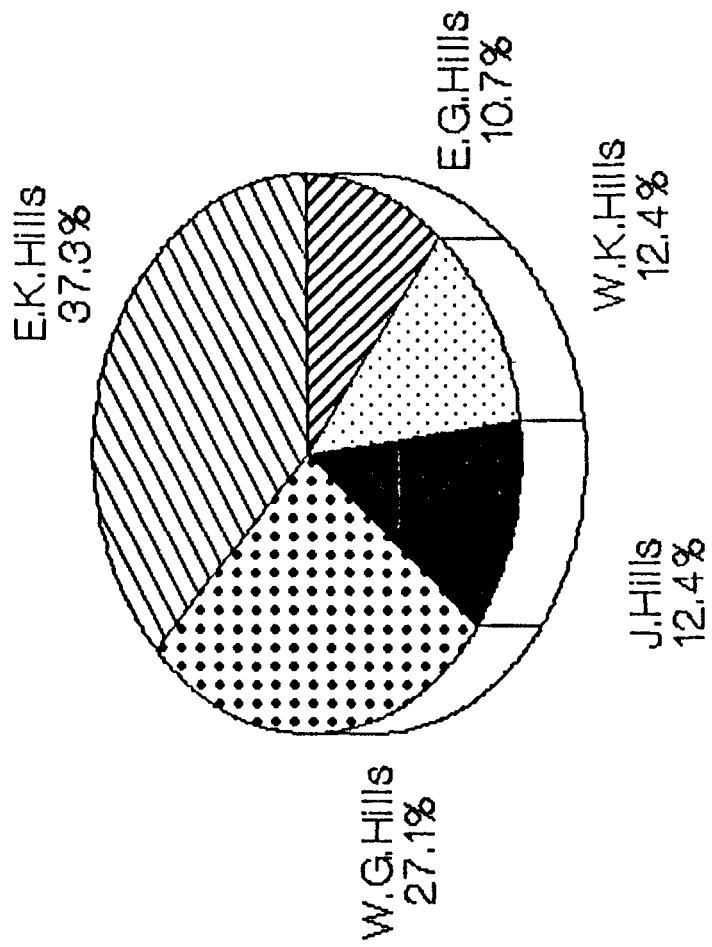


Fig. 2.9

**Table 2.3 - Comparative Area and Population of the Districts, 1991 (Provisional).**

State/District	Total Area (Sq.Km.)	Total Popu- lation	% to the total	
			Area	Popula- tion
MEGHALAYA	22,429	17,60,626	100.00	100.00
Jaintia Hills	3,819	2,19,186	17.03	12.45
East Khasi Hills	5,196	6,57,160	23.17	37.32
West Khasi Hills	5,247	2,17,462	23.39	12.35
East Garo Hills	2,603	1,89,043	11.61	10.74
West Garo Hills	5,664	4,77,775	24.80	27.14

Source: Census of India, Series 16, Meghalaya Paper 1 of 1991, Provisional Population Tables.

It can be observed from the above table that while East Khasi Hills district has more share of population compared to its share of land area the opposite is the case with West Khasi Hills district. Other three districts show more or less proportionate share of land area and population. One can also notice that about 65 per cent of the total population of the state live in the two districts of East Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills whose combined share of land area to the total area of the state is about 48 per cent only. Which means that the other three districts which account for about 52 per cent of the state's total land area has 35 per cent of the state's total

population. This may be the result of high concentration of population the city of Shillong and in the alluvial plains of the West Garo Hills district.

### 2.2.3. Sex Ratio

Out of the total population of 17,60,626 persons in the state, there are 9,04,308 males and 8,56,318 females. Thus the sex ratio (number of females per 1000 males) in the state is 947 (in 1991) which has declined from 954 (in 1981). In this respect the state ranks 12th in the country, the national average being 929.

The table 2.4 shows the sex ratio of different districts during 1981-1991 (Fig. 2.10).

**Table 2.4 - Sex Ratio by Districts, 1981 & 1991.**

State/District	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 males)	
	1981	1991
MEGHALAYA	954	947
Jaintia Hills	978	976
East Khasi Hills	945	926
West Khasi Hills	949	958
East Garo Hills	941	960
West Garo Hills	963	953

Source: Census of India 1991, Series 16, Meghalaya Paper 1 of 1991, Provisional Population Table.

# SEX-RATIO IN MEGHALAYA

## District Wise (1981-91)

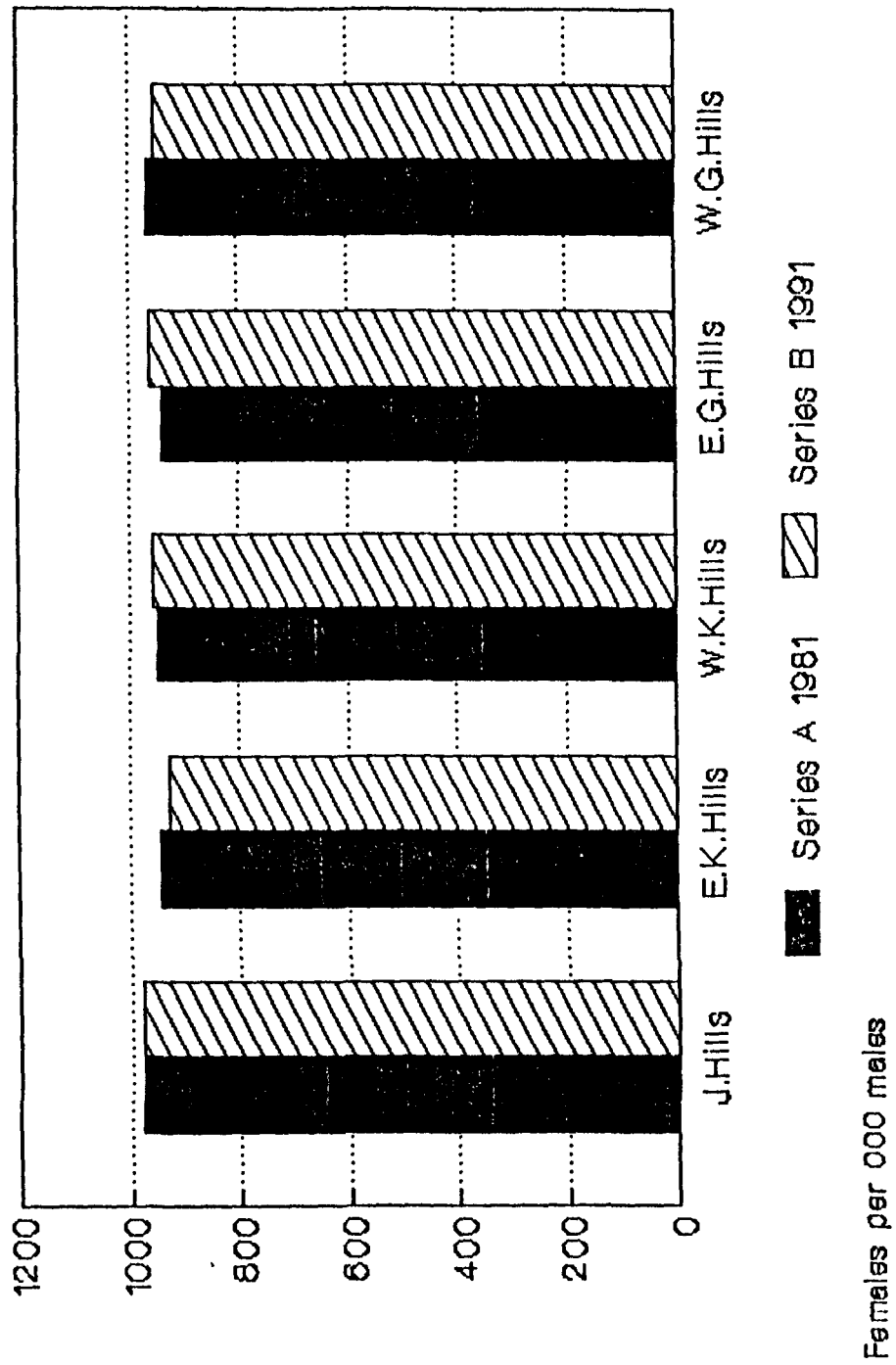


Fig. 2.10

From 1961 to 1971, the sex ratio in Meghalaya increased from 937 to 942 and in the next decade (1971-1991) the figure rose to 954.

#### 2.2.4. Density

Average density of population in the state has increased from 60 persons per square kilometres (in 1981) to 78 persons (in 1991). The density of population of India in 1991 is 267 as against 216 in 1981. Thus, comparatively the state is sparsely populated and ranks 26th among all the 32 states and Union Territories of the country. However, there is a marked variation of population density ranging from 41 persons in the West Garo Hills district to 126 persons in the East Khasi Hills district. Table 2.5 shows the density of population in different districts of Meghalaya during 1981 and 1991.

**Table 2.5 - Density of Population by Districts, 1981 & 1991.**

State/District	Density of population (per Sq.Km.)	
	1981	1991
MEGHALAYA	60	78
Jaintia Hills	41	57
East Khasi Hills	98	126
West Khasi Hills	31	41
East Garo Hills	52	73
West Garo Hills	66	86

Source: Census of India 1991, Series 16, Meghalaya, Paper 1 of 1991, Provisional Population Table.

### 2.2.5. Decadal Growth

The population of the state grew from 3,40,525 in 1901 to 17,60,626 in 1991; thereby registering a growth of about 417 per cent with an average annual growth rate of about 4.63 per cent. Within this period, there were fluctuations in 1911-21 and 1941-51, when the growth rate declined. Epidemics like Cholera and Kal-Azar as well as territorial adjustments were the main reasons for such decline. Table 2.6 shows the percentage decadal growth rate of population in the state since 1901.

**Table 2.6 - Percentage Decadal Growth of Population.**

Decade	Percentage of growth
1901 - 11	+ 15.71
1911 - 21	+ 7.21
1921 - 31	+ 13.81
1931 - 41	+ 15.59
1941 - 51	+ 8.97
1951 - 61	+ 27.03
1961 - 71	+ 31.50
1971 - 81	+ 31.04
1981 - 91	+ 31.80

Source: Census of India, Series 14, 1981.

However, different districts show different growth rates at different periods of time. The highest growth rate (45.73 per cent) during 1971-81 was experienced by the West Khasi Hills district whereas during 1981-91 the Jaintia Hills district showed the highest growth rate (40.14 per cent). On the other hand, the lowest growth rate during their period i.e, 1971-81 and 1981-91 was experienced by the West Garo Hills district (21.70 per cent) and the East Khasi Hills district (21.70 per cent) respectively.

Table 2.7 shows the decadal growth rate of population in the state and districts during 1971-81 and 1981-91.

**Table 2.7 - Percentage Decadal Variation by District, 1971-81 and 1981-91.**

State/District	Percentage Decadal Variation	
	1971-81	1981-91
MEGHALAYA	32.04	31.80
Jaintia Hills	37.72	40.14
East Khasi Hills	34.35	28.50
West Khasi Hills	45.73	34.59
East Garo Hills	32.96	38.44
West Garo Hills	21.70	29.17

Source: Census of India, Series 16, Meghalaya, Paper 1 of 1991, Provisional Population Tables..

Thus from 1951 onwards the state experienced a relatively higher population growth rate. The main reasons for this may be:

- a) Rise in the growth rate of natural increase due to availability of better medical facilities.
- b) In-migration which was the result of the establishment of central and regional institutions in the state.
- c) Location of Shillong as the capital of erstwhile state of united Assam.
- d) Large scale influx of immigrants from Bangladesh and Nepal.

However, the growth was more in the urban areas compared to the rural areas of the state which shows that most of the immigrants opted to make the urban centres their destination, mainly because of the potential job opportunities in this place.

#### **2.2.6. Rural-Urban**

Majority of the population of Meghalaya (9,437,547 out of the total population of 1,760,626) live in the rural areas and they constitute 81.31 per cent of the total population of the state.

The urban population of Meghalaya as per the 1991

Census is 3,29,079 which was 241,333 during the 1981 Census; which means that the urban population of the state as percentage to the total population of the state rose from 18.07 to 18.69 during the last one decade. Table 2.8 shows the distribution of rural and urban population in different districts of Meghalaya.

**Table 2.8 - Districtwise Population by Residence and their Percentage Share to the Total Population of the Districts.**

District	Population			% to total population	
	Total	Rural	Urban	Urban	Rural
Jaintia Hills	2,19,186	198,473	20,713	9.45	90.55
E. Khasi Hills	6,57,160	427,054	230,106	35.02	64.98
W. Khasi Hills	2,17,462	203,084	14,378	6.61	93.39
E. Garo Hills	1,89,043	177,058	11,985	6.34	93.66
W. Garo Hills	4,77,775	425,878	51,897	10.86	89.14
MEGHALAYA	17,60,626	904,308	856,318	18.69	81.31

Source: Census of India, 1991 Series -1, Paper 2 of 1991, Provisional Population Tables.

It is very important to find that, except in East Khasi Hills district, where the share of urban population to the total population is 35.02, all other districts are marked by comparatively very high share of rural population (Fig. 2.11).

# RURAL-URBAN POPULATION OF MEGHALAYA

## District Wise (1991)

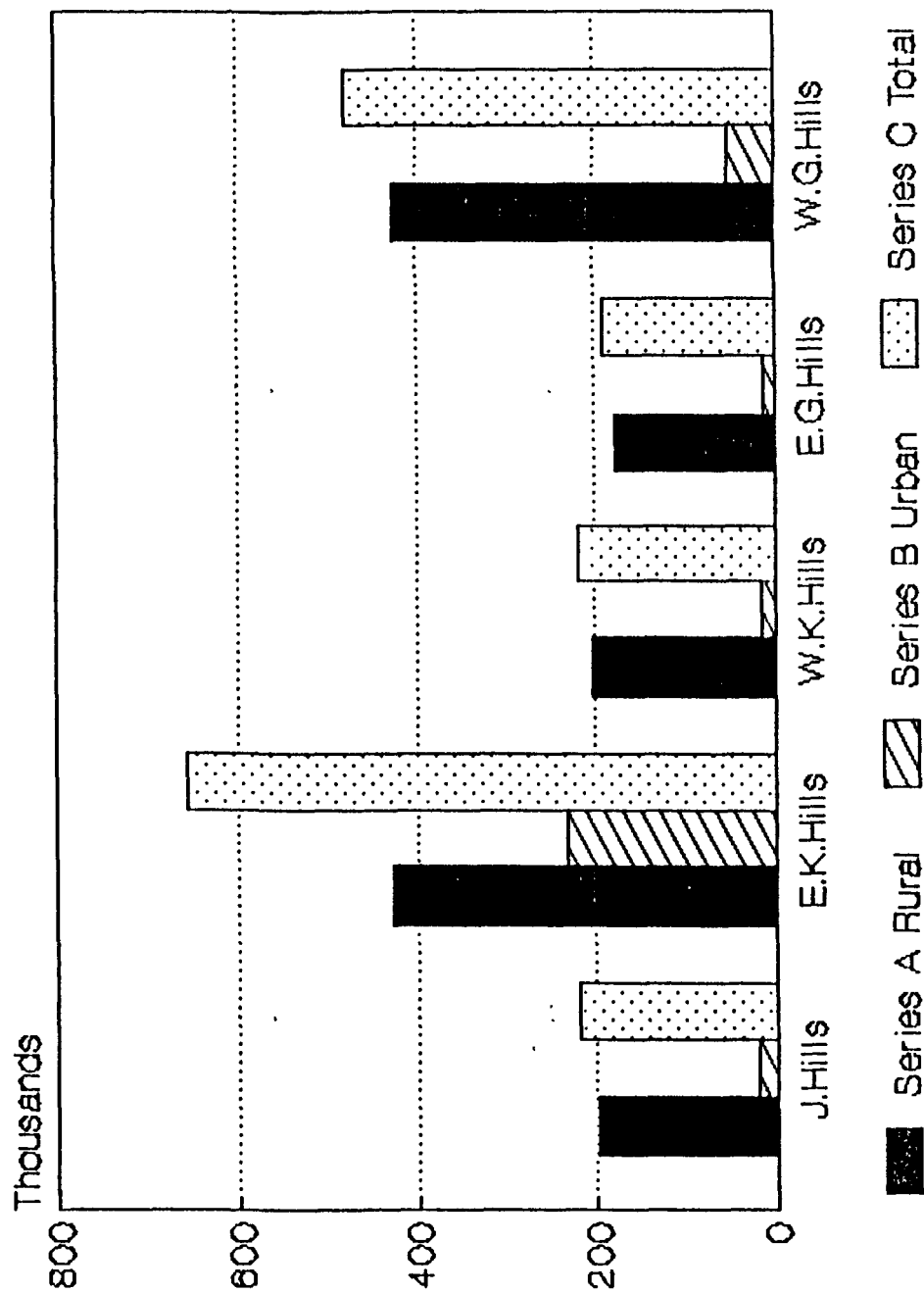


Fig. 2.11

## 2.3. Socio-Demographic Features

### 2.3.1. Ethnic Composition

In Meghalaya, tribals are in majority as far as their share in the total population of the state is concerned. According to 1981 Census, the scheduled tribes constituted 80.58 per cent of the total population of the state. The main tribes of the state are: (i) Khasi, (ii) Jaintia, and (iii) Garo. Important among others are Koch, Rabha, Kuki, Dimasa, Mikir, Hmar, Hajong etc. Their concentrations varied from 55.37 per cent in the urban areas to 86.13 per cent in the rural areas. During 1971-81, the state experienced a rise in the share of tribal population in the urban areas of the state which rose from 45.61 per cent to 55.37 per cent. However, there is a marked variation in the concentration of the tribal population from one district to the other. Table 2.9 shows the percentage share of tribal population to the total population in different districts of the state.

**Table 2.9 - Districtwise Percentage Share of Tribal Population (1981).**

District	Percentage of tribal population (1981)
MEGHALAYA	80.58
Jaintia Hills	95.08
East Khasi Hills	73.15
West Khasi Hills	97.76
East Garo Hills	91.15
West Garo Hills	73.56

Source: Census of India, 1981.

The pattern of immigration of people from outside the state, most of whom are non-tribals is evident from the above table, which shows that the percentage of tribals are lower in case of the East Khasi Hills district and the West Garo Hills district where large-scale migration from both within and outside the country have taken place. This may be attributed to the availability of jobs in the urban areas in the former and cultivable land in the latter.

### 2.3.2. Religious Composition

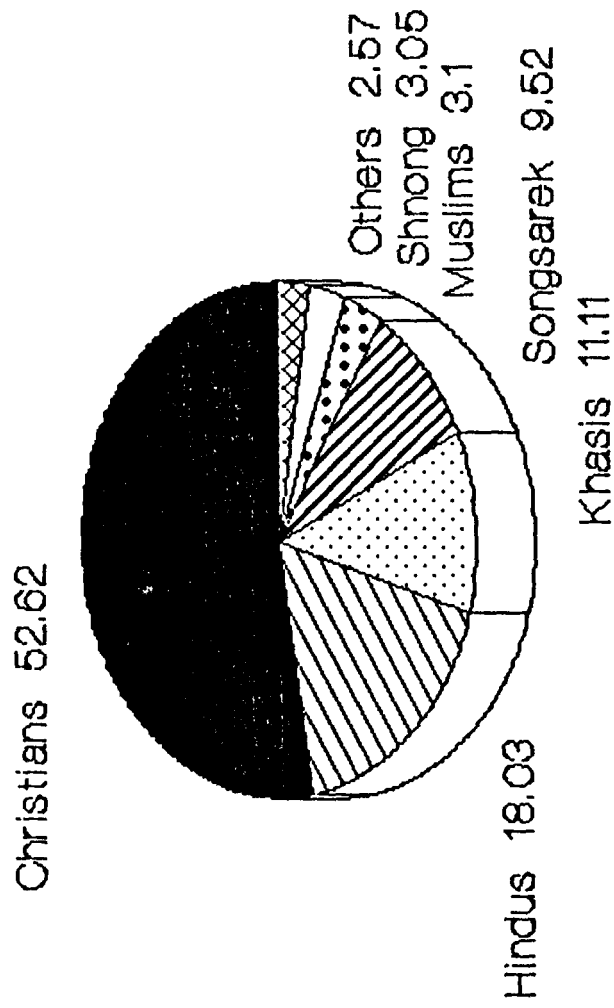
There are many religious groups in Meghalaya. A little more than half of the population practise Christianity which is common to most of the tribal communities living in the north eastern region of the country. Table 2.10 shows the percentage share of different religious groups to the total population of the state (Fig. 2.12).

**Table 2.10 - Religionwise Break up of Population (in percentage) in Meghalaya (1981).**

Sl.No.	Religious Groups	% to the total population
1.	Christians	52.62
2.	Hindus	18.03
3.	Khasis	11.11
4.	Songsarek	9.52
5.	Muslims	3.10
6.	Shnong	3.05
7.	Buddhists	0.21
8.	Sikhs	0.13
9.	Jains	0.04
10.	Others	2.08
11.	Religion not state	0.11

Source: Census of India, 1981.

# RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION Meghalaya (1981)



\* Others include Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and religions not stated.  
\*\*\* Figures in percentages.

Fig. 2.12

### 2.3.3. Linguistic Composition

Meghalaya, like all other states of the north-east, is a multi-lingual state. English is the official language of the state. Khasi and Garo are the two most important languages of the state spoken as mother tongue by 47.14 and 29.87 per cent of the population respectively. Table 2.11 shows the distribution of different linguistic groups and their percentage share to the total population of the state (Fig. 2.13).

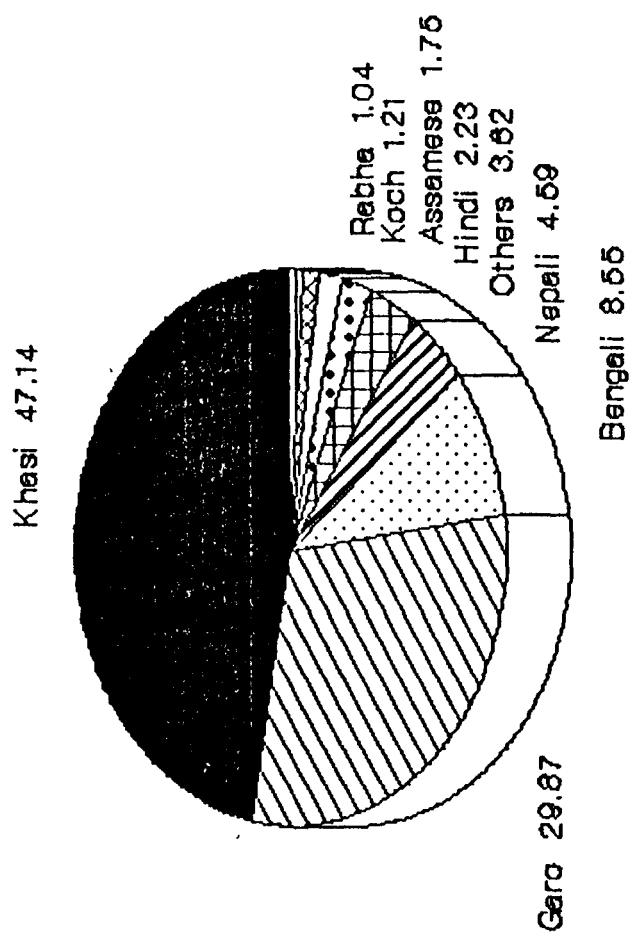
**Table 2.11 - Linguistic Break up of Population in Meghalaya (1981).**

Sl. No.	Major Linguistic Groups	Total Number of Persons	% to total Population
1.	Khasi	6,29,640	47.14
2.	Garo	3,99,669	29.87
3.	Bengali	1,19,571	8.55
4.	Nepali/Gorkha	61,259	4.59
5.	Hindi	29,728	2.23
6.	Assamese	23,356	1.75
7.	Koch	16,156	1.21
8.	Rabha	13,888	1.04
9.	Others	42,558	3.62

Source: Census of India, 1981.

Large scale immigration of refugees from Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) accounts for the comparatively higher number of Bengali speaking population in the state.

# LINGUISTIC COMPOSITION IN MEGHALAYA (1981)



• Figures in percentages

Fig. 2.13

The number of Assamese speaking people is lesser than Nepali speaking people. It is probably the result of shifting of the share capital from Shillong to Dispur which made many Assamese speaking people to move out of the state of Assam.

#### 2.3.4. Literacy

The percentage of literate persons, which is considered to be an important indicator of development is comparatively low in the state. According to the provisional figures of 1991 Census, the percentage of literate persons in the state is only 48.26 compared to the 52.11 per cent of the country as a whole. Table 2.12 gives a brief account of the literacy rates in the state for the year 1981 and 1991 (Fig. 2.14).

**Table 2.12 - Literacy Rate in Meghalaya (1981 & 1991)\***

Year	Total	Males	Females
1981	42.02	46.62	37.15
1991	48.26	51.57	44.78
India (1991)	52.11	63.86	39.42

Source: Census of India (Provisional), Paper 1 of 1991, Series 16.

\* Figures of literate population for 1991 are as per the provisional results of the 1991 Census. The population aged seven years and below are not considered in determining the literacy rate. Literates exclude children in the age-group 0-6 who are treated as illiterates in the 1991 Census.

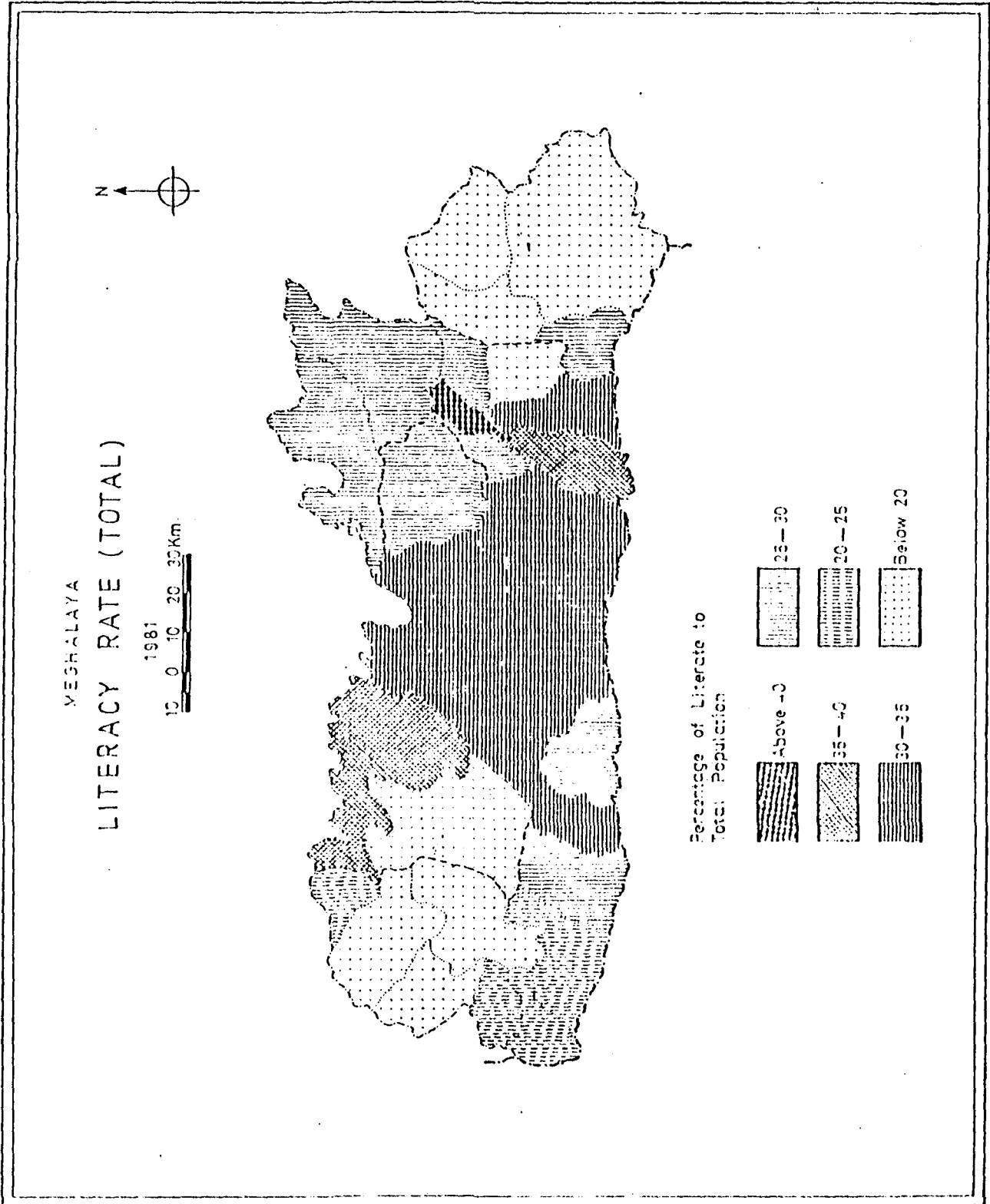


Fig. 2.14

It is important to note that the literacy rate for males in the state is lower than the male literacy rate in the country whereas the state's female literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate in the country.

However, there is a vast difference as far as the literacy rates in the urban and rural areas of the state is concerned. According to the 1981 Census, the percentage of literate persons varied from 27.45 in the rural areas to 64.12 in the urban areas of the state. The figures for literacy in the rural and urban areas in the 1991 Census has risen to 32.60 and 67.88 per cent respectively.

#### **2.3.5. Urbanisation**

According to the 1991 Census, 18.69 per cent of the total population of the state live in urban areas and ranks 23rd among all the states and union territories of the country and is comparatively lower than the national average of 25.72 per cent. However, the share is much lower than two other states of the north-east, i.e., Mizoram (46.20) and Manipur (27.69). The state contributes only about 0.15 per cent to the country's total urban population (1991 Census). The decennial growth rate of urban population in the state during 1981-91 was 36.36 per cent compared to the 30.80 per cent of the population growth in rural areas.

According to 1991 Census, there are 7 urban centre in the state among which Shillong Urban Agglomeration is the biggest with a population of 2,22,273 and contributes about 67.54 per cent of the total urban population of the state. The urban centres of the state along with their states (class) and population size is shown in Table 2.13.

**Table 2.13 - Population of Urban Centres 1991, Their Status and Growth Rate (1981-91) in Meghalaya.**

S.No.	Name of the Urban Centres	Population	Growth rate (1981-91)
Class - I (100,000 & above)			
1.	SHILLONG UA	2,22,273	27.23
	a) Shillong M	1,30,691	19.63
	b) Mawlai	30,442	49.19
	c) Nongthymmai	26,816	24.39
	d) Pynthorumkhrah	14,322	33.71
	e) Shillong Cantt.	11,075	67.30
	f) Madanrting	8,927	44.80
Class - II (50,000 - 99,999)			
Class - III (25,000 - 49,999)			
1.	Tura	45,677	29.55
2.	Jowai	20,713	60.28
Class - IV (10,000 - 24,999)			
1.	Nongstoin	14,378	270.57
2.	Williamnagar	11,985	179.37
Class - V (5,000 - 9,999)			
1.	Cherrapunjee	7,833	28.47
2.	Baghmara	6,220	48.70

Source: Census of India, 1991 Series - 1, Paper 2 of 1991. Provisional Population Tables.

UA - Urban Agglomeration, M - Municipality.

It can be noted from the above table that the urban centres which have come up recently experienced a higher growth rate of population e.g., Nongstoin (270.57 per cent), Williamnagar (179.37) etc. whereas older urban settlements like Shillong, Tura and Cherrapunjee have much lower rate of population growth. This can be possibly because of sudden increase of importance of these newly established administrative centres (district headquarters).

Even within the Urban Agglomeration of Shillong different centres show different rates of population growth ranging from 19.63 per cent in the Shillong Municipality to 67.30 per cent in the cantonment area. From the table 2.13 it is very much clear that area around the Shillong Municipality show higher population growth rate which clearly implies that areas where density of settlements as well as density of population were lesser shows higher growth rates of population.

#### 2.4. Resource Base and Economic Activities

"Resource refers to a function which a thing or a substance may perform or an operation to which it may take part."<sup>1</sup>

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1. Munshi, S.K. "Resource", India, Resource Regions and Regional Disparity. People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1984, p. 3.

Resources may be divided into various categories depending on the criteria adopted in their classification. However, in this study, we will discuss the resource personality of Meghalaya under the three broad categories of (i) Natural, (ii) Human, and (iii) Intra-structural resources.

Different types of resources have an important and intimate relationship in the economic development of any region. It is, therefore, pertinent to discuss briefly the resources available in Meghalaya. There seems to be a predominance of availability of a particular type of resource in a particular area. This is also true in case of Meghalaya and we find that within the state there are areas which can be divided into different types of resources or economic region (Fig. 2.15).

Meghalaya is very rich as far as its resource endowment is concerned. However, the existing weak transport and communication network and very poor infrastructural facility have led to the relatively slow growth rate of economic development in the state.

Different kinds of resources – both real and potential; available in the state is briefly discussed below:

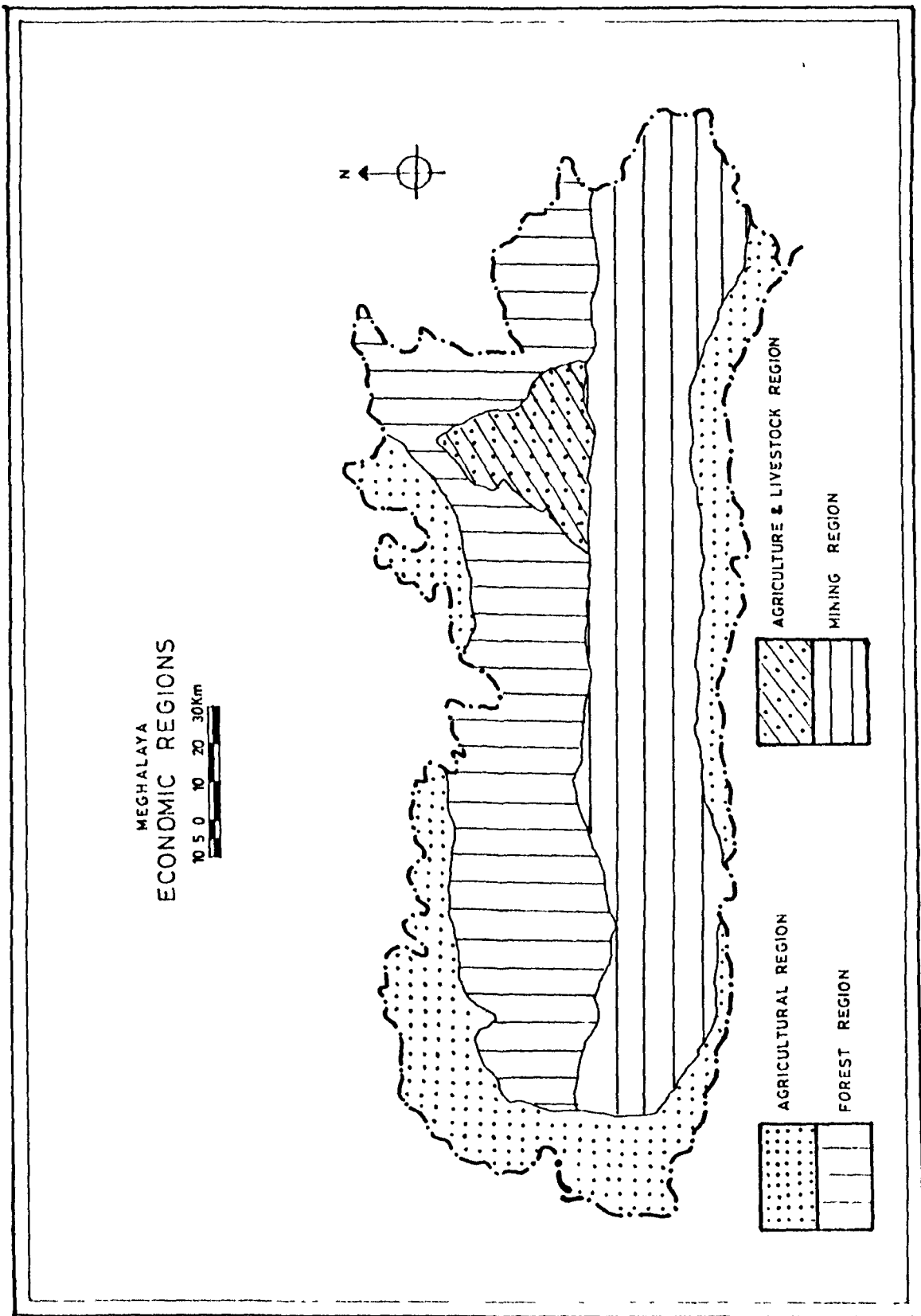


Fig. 2.15

#### **2.4.1. Natural Resources**

Resources like land, forests, minerals, water and livestock can be considered as natural resources since they are found in the Nature. They may be either renewable or non-renewable in nature.

##### **2.4.1.1. Land**

Land as a resource is of special significance in Meghalaya, mainly because of the nature of terrain and paucity of land for permanent agriculture. Plain land with fertile alluvial soil constituting only a minor portion of the total land under agriculture and is located in a few river valleys and in the form of narrow strips in the fringes of the state i.e., in the lower altitude areas to the north, west and south of the plateau region.

The situation is further aggravated by the high growth of population in the state, specially after the creation of the state in 1972. The type of use of land by the people in different parts and areas of the state differ mainly because of the difference in relief, climate, soil types etc. and also because of the difference in socio-cultural outlook of the people. However, in response to the changing technology, people are slowly shifting their economic activities from one type to another which results in the change in the land-use pattern as well as in the work-force structure.

Table 2.14 shows the land use pattern in Meghalaya in the years 1980-81 and 1987-88 (Fig. 2.16).

**Table 2.14 - Land Use Pattern in Meghalaya (1980-81 and 1987-88).**

(Area in hectares)					
Sl. No.	Classification	1980-81	%	1987-88	%
1.	Forests	8,51,728	37.97	9,49,615	42.34
2.	Area not available for cultivation				
	a) Land put to non-agri-use	87,391	3.90	87,764	3.91
	b) Barren and uncultivable land	1,41,938	6.33	1,41,938	6.33
3.	Other uncultivated land excluding fallow land				
	a) Permanent pastures and other grazing land	NA		NA	
	b) Land under Misc. tree crops and groves	2,33,242	10.40	1,32,831	5.92
	c) Cultivable wasteland	4,99,632	22.28	4,98,700	22.23
4.	Fallow lands				
	a) Current fallows	62,002	2.76	1,75,588	2.70
	b) Fallow other than current fallow	1,84,967	8.25	60,464	7.83
5.	Net area sown	1,82,000	8.11	1,96,000	8.60
6.	Area sown more than once	33,754		38,524	
7.	Total cropped area (Gross)	2,15,754		2,34,524	
Total reporting area		22,39,000		22,39,000	

Source: Statistical Handbook of Meghalaya, 1989.

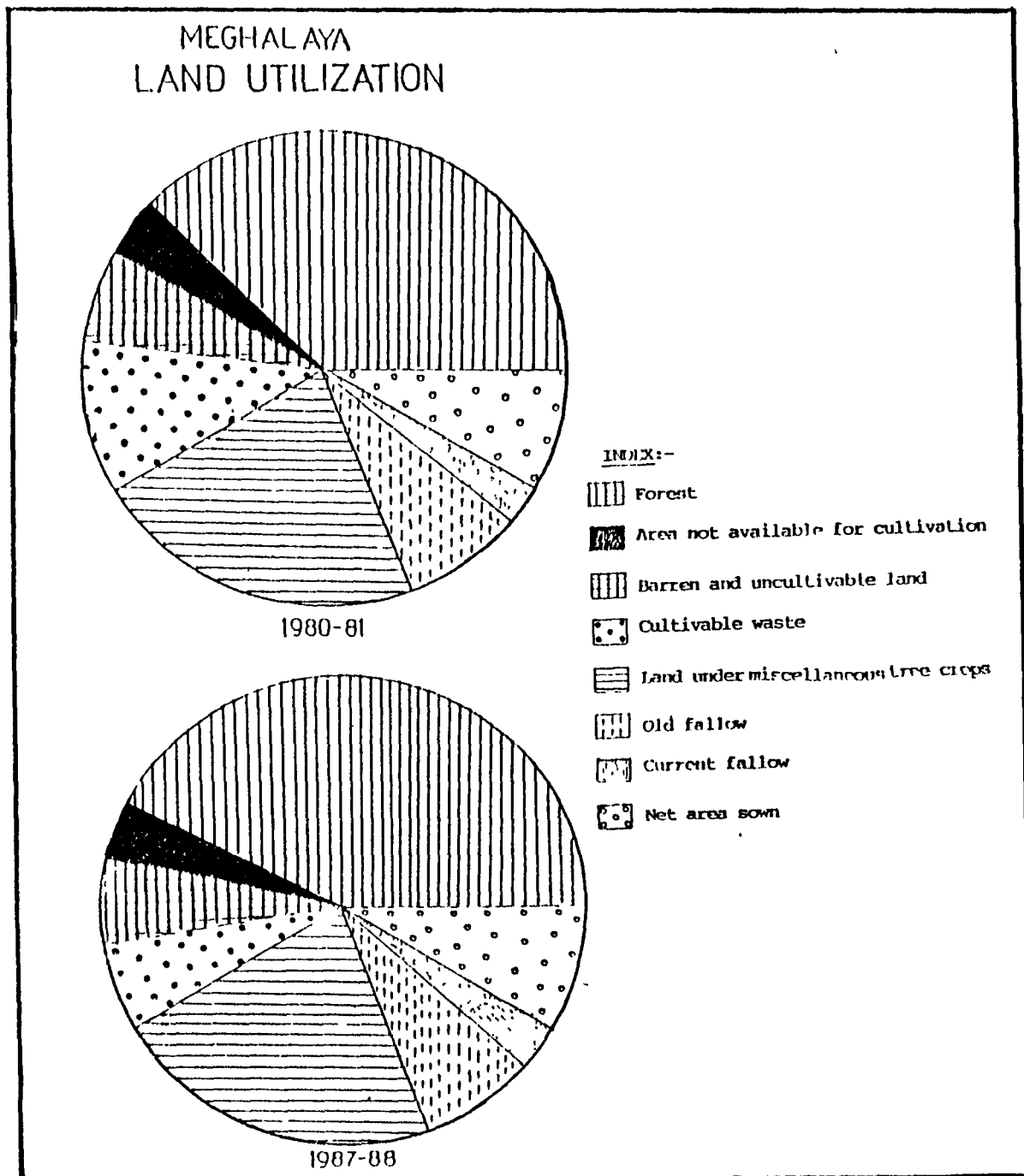


Fig. 2.16

Since, Meghalaya falls under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, most of the lands comes under the jurisdiction of the different District Councils. However, the real authority lies with the owners as per provision of the Section 3(a) of the Sixth Schedule.

About 1,96,000 hectares of land or 8.60 per cent of the state's total land area is used for permanent agriculture out of which only 38,524 hectares or 19.66 per cent area is cropped more than once in a year. During 1986-87, the net irrigated area under different minor irrigation schemes covered 1526 hectares (Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1987).

Proper land management through appropriate land use planning is of immense importance which has failed to receive the required importance in the state's planning process. The major bottleneck in this regard is the existing land ownership system in the tribal reas of the state where the land belongs to the individual and community and not to the government. The age-old customs and beliefs of the tribal society, lack of proper communication and marketing facilities, paucity of skilled work force further aggravate the situation.

Table 2.15 shows the estimated number and area

of operational holdings by size class in Meghalaya during 1980-84.

**Table 2.15 - Estimated Number and Area of Operational Holdings by Size Class in Meghalaya, 1980-81.**

Size Class (Hectares)	Number	% to total Numbers	Area (Hectares)	% to total area
Below 1	59,124	34.72	31,531.5	10.65
1 - 2	51,399	30.19	67,772.9	22.90
2 - 3	30,172	17.90	67,709.3	22.88
3 - 4	14,839	8.71	47,281.7	15.98
4 - 5	7,345	4.31	30,523.5	10.31
5 - 10	6,422	3.78	37,872.5	12.80
10 - 20	844	0.50	9,997.7	3.38
20 - 30	101	0.06	2,290.7	0.77
30 - 40	8	*	256.0	0.09
40 - 50	16	0.01	724.8	0.24
Above 50	-	-	-	-
All Classes	1,70,270	100.00	2,95,960.7	100.00

Source: Agricultural Census, 1980-81.

\* Negligible.

It can be observed from the above table that there is a great disparity in the landholding pattern in Meghalaya. Small landholdings predominant and constitute 82.81 per cent of the total number of landholdings. Basing on the above mentioned table the following broad pattern of landholding distribution in the state can be found out as follows:

Category	Size (Hectares)	% to the total number of holdings	% to the total area
Small	Below 3	82.81	56.43
Medium	3 - 10	16.62	39.09
Big	Above 10	0.57	4.48

Source: Based on the Agricultural Census, 1980-81.

Small landholdings (below 3 hectares) cover more than half of the total operational landholdings and about 40 per cent of the total operational area is shared by only 16.62 per cent of the total number of landholdings which belong to the category of medium size holdings between 3 to 10 hectares.

According to the data interpreted from aerial photos and NRSA report, about 8,150 square kilometre of land lies as wastelands of different types and categories which constitutes about 36.34 per cent of the total geographical area of the state. The share of wastelands too the total land in different districts is shown in Table 2.16.

**Table 2.16 - Districtwise percentage of Wastelands to the Total Area, 1987-88 (Estimated).**

Districts	Total Geographical area (Sq.Km.)	Area Under Wasteland (Sq.Km.)	% of area under Wasteland
East Garo Hills	2,603	1,064	40.88
West Garo Hills	5,564	1,772	31.85
East Khasi Hills	5,196	2,124	40.88
West Khasi Hills	5,274	1,772	33.60
Jaintia Hills	3,819	1,418	37.13
Meghalaya	22,429	8,150	36.34

Source: Land Utilisation Statistics, Meghalaya (Provisional) 1988-89.

The percentage of wastelands is very high in case of East Garo Hills and East Khasi Hills districts and this is mainly because of besides other factors, due to the mining activities and shifting cultivation which are being carried out in these two districts in a relatively larger scale.

About 6.33 per cent of the total land comes under the category of 'barren and cultivable land' whereas 22.23 per cent comes under the category of 'cultivable wasteland'. The primary causes of barrenness are practice of jhum, forest fire, heavy precipitation, geology of rocks and nature of soils. Mining of coal by open-cast and rat-hole process compounds the problem.

Land is a very important resource of the state since 69.58 per cent (1991 Census) of the population of the state is either directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture. Paucity of favourable agricultural land necessitates judicious exploration and utilisation of land for the state's overall development.

Land used for permanent agriculture constitute a minor portion (8.60 per cent) of the total land area of the and about 20 per cent of such land is cropped more than once in a year. Till 1980-81, net irrigated area under

different irrigation schemes accounted for about 50,000 hectares (Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1989).

Rice is the major food crop grown in the state. Taking the whole state into consideration, it is observed that most of the agricultural land (37.66 per cent) remain under rice cultivation which is cultivated in one or more than one season. Maize is more or less cultivated in all the districts, but only in Jaintia Hills district a substantial percentage of area is devoted to this crop. Potato is another important crop which is cultivated in about 9.8 per cent of total agricultural land. However, due to the variations in the agro-climatic conditions, the percentage of area under potato cultivation varies from 27.82 per cent in the Khasi Hills (which has very suitable conditions for the crop) to only 0.67 per cent in the Garo Hills. Other important crops in the state are oilseeds, jute, mesta, cotton, arecanut, sweet potato, tapira, pineapple, ginger, citrus fruits etc. Table 2.17 shows the area under, and production of different crops in Meghalaya during 1986-87.

Table 2.17 - Area and Production of Different Crops in Meghalaya (1986-87).

Sl. No.	Crops	Area (in hectares)	Production (in tonnes)
1.	Rice (Total)	1,08,540	98,711
	(a) Autumn	33,127	25,303
	(b) Winter	73,341	70,308
	(c) Spring	2,072	3,100
2.	Wheat	4,769	6,661
3.	Maize	19,153	20,095
4.	Other cereals	3,107	3,134
5.	Pulses	3,207	2,589
6.	Seasum	1,317	663
7.	Castor	45	24
8.	Rape & Mustard	6,595	3,941
9.	Jute *	3,136	29,895
10.	Mesta *	3,711	16,885
11.	Cotton **	6,923	4,179
12.	Sugarcane	142	456
13.	Dry chillies	1,809	1,132
14.	Tobacco	710	481
15.	Turmeric	1,282	1,802
16.	Areca nut	6,105	5,478
17.	Potato	18,876	1,54,626
18.	Sweet Potato	3,834	12,746
19.	Tapioca	4,032	23,304
20.	Soyabean	925	855
21.	Pineapple	7,246 (P)	60,580 (P)
22.	Citrus fruits	6,040 (P)	36,297 (P)
23.	Ginger	5,470	N.A.

Source: Directorate of Economics, Statistics and Evaluation, Meghalaya, Shillong.

\* Production in bales of 180 Kgs.

\*\* Production in bales of 170 Kgs.

P - Provisional

NA - Information not available.

Agriculture in the state is predominantly the shifting cultivation or 'Jhum'. About one-fifth (19-23 per cent) of the total households in the state practise this type of cultivation which is a characteristic feature of the tribals' life-style in the hilly areas of this region. However, there is a great variation in the share of households of 40.28 is found in the West Garo Hills, followed by 33.84 per cent in East Garo Hills, 12.44 per cent in West Khasi Hills, 11.47 per cent in Jaintia Hills and only 7.01 per cent in East Khasi Hills. At block level the variation is more marked and one can find the percentage to be as high as 67.65 in Songsak Community Development Block (East Garo Hills) to as low as 0.27 in Mawsynram Community Development Block (East Khasi Hills).\* It clearly shows that the scope for secondary and tertiary activities like mining, transport and other services leads to the reduction in the percentage share of households engaged in jhumming, e.g. Jaintia Hills and East Khasi Hills districts.

#### **2.4.1.2. Forests**

Forest is one of the most important resources of the state and in 1987-88 covered about 42.34 per cent of the total geographical area of state. However, the present share of forest area is far below the minimum prescribed

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\* Census Special Report on Jhum Cultivation, 1983.

requirement of 60 per cent for the hilly areas. Forest and its products have been ruthlessly cut down and exploited for the last few decades to achieve quick economic gain by some people with active cooperation of the political leaders. Since, Meghalaya falls under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, most of the land under forest (about 90 per cent) comes under the jurisdiction of the Autonomous District Councils and Government's control over forest areas is confined to the Reserved Forests, National Parks and Sanctuaries which all together constitute a bare 10.47 per cent of the total forest area of the state. (Fig. 2.17).

Table 2.18 shows the area under different categories of forests as per their legal status.

**Table 2.18 - Area Under Different Categories of Forests in Meghalaya (By Legal Status) 1987-1988.**

Sl. No.	Status	Area (Sq.Km.)
1.	Reserved forests including Govt. Forests, National Parks and Sanctuaries	993.0
2.	Unclassed forests	7,146.5
3.	Private forests	384.0
4.	Protected forests	179.0
5.	Village forests	25.9
6.	Raid (Community) forests	768.0
Total		9,496.4

Source: Chief Conservator of Forests, Meghalaya.

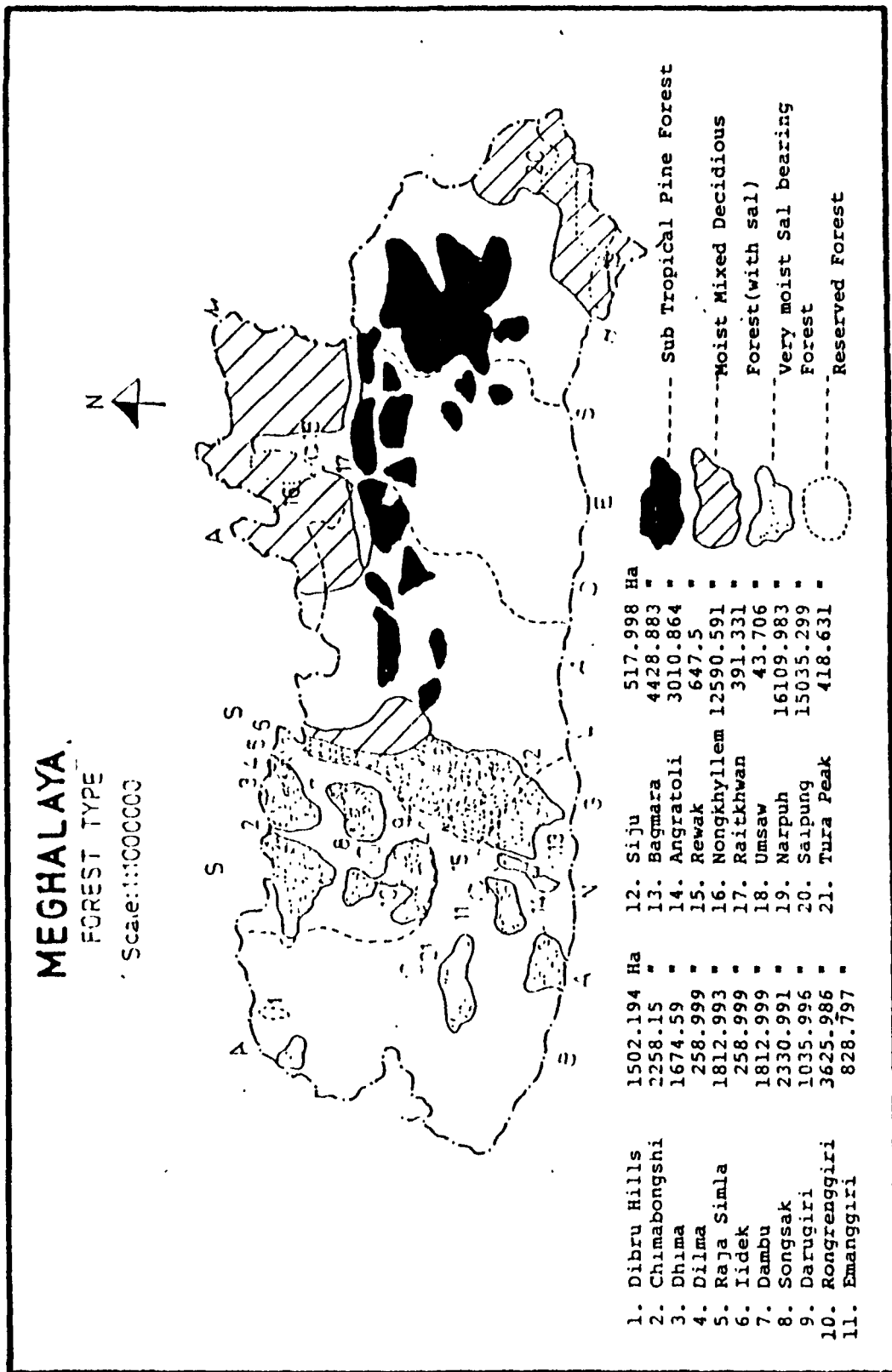


Fig. 2.17

Unplanned destruction of forests to meet the growing needs of the fast expanding population coupled with the practice of jhumming, forest fires and grazing by cattle have dissipated the state's otherwise rich natural wealth to a large extent. The state government has undertaken large scale afforestation programme and the social forestry wing of the State Forest Department has taken up plantation/afforestation activities in all the five districts of the state and till 1986-87 covered an area of about under such programmes. However, considering the extent of deforestation and large share of wastelands in the state, the need to bring more and more areas under such programme cannot be over emphasized.

#### **2.4.1.3. Minerals**

Meghalaya is very rich in mineral resources and these resources play very important role in the state's economy. Coal, limestone, silimanite and clay are the important minerals of the state that are at present subjected to commercial exploitation. Besides these, geologists have predicted potential exploitable reserves of atomic minerals, iron ore, gypsum, quartz, feldspar, copper, lead, zinc and phosphate in different parts of the state.

The state has an estimated coal reserve of about 4,000 lakh tonnes and produces about 60,000 tonnes annually

most of which is exported outside the state. Important places where coal is found are Bapung, Raliang, Lakaing, Khunsonong, Sutnga, Mukuroi, Cherrapunji, Laitryngew, Maw-synram, Rangsokham, Jathang, Darrengiri, Siju, Mawlong, Jarain, Tkontlang, Ullatdoh, Lyngkyrdem, Pynursla, Nangwal-bira etc.

Sonapahar region of the West Khasi Hills district is rich in sillimanite reserves and produces nearly 90 per cent of the country's total production of the mineral. The state is estimated to have a reserve of about 0.2 million tonnes of sillimanite.

The largest deposit of limestone of the north-eastern is located in the Shella-Bholaganj Zone and the Khliehriat Community Development Block.

No evidence about any existence of potential petroleum or natural gas reserve in Meghalaya has so far been reported.

#### **2.4.1.4. Water**

Water is a very important resource from the point that unlike other fixed energy resources, its supply is unlimited in the Nature on a time scale. So development of this resource is prime necessity for the economic development of the state. According to an estimate, Meghalaya

has the highest hydro-electric/potential in the north-eastern region, second only to Arunachal Pradesh. The enormous hydro power potential of the state, if properly developed and utilised, promises bright future not only for itself but for the neighbouring states also. Till 1986-87, the Meghalaya State Electricity Board had two hydel projects whose combined installed capacity was 125.2 Megawatt. Since, the state depends totally on South-West monsoon for its water supply, development of proper irrigation facility to provide water during months of the year is an important problem which needs urgent attention of the planners. Construction of more dams giving full respect to the ecological consequences is a must to boost agricultural production in the state. Numerous streams and lakes in the state also provide ideal fish-breeding grounds for both cold and warm water species.

#### **2.4.1.5. Livestock**

Animal husbandry and dairy farming is another important resources which, if developed properly, can cater to the economic needs of the people. This sector of the economy is yet to be developed properly in Meghalaya. Poultry farming is extensively practised in the state, particularly in the rural areas. Government has set up 3 cattle farms, 10 poultry farms, 9 pig farms and 1 goat farm till

1986-87, which obviously is not sufficient. There are 109 veterinary institutions of all types of which 59 are in East Khasi Hills district, 22 in West Garo Hills, 12 in Jaintia Hills, 9 in West Khasi Hills and only 7 in East Garo Hills. Table 2.19 shows the numbers of different types of livestock in the state.

**Table 2.19 - Livestock Population of Meghalaya, 1982.**

Livestock	Numbers
Poultry	14,18,904
Cattle	5,49,795
Pigs	2,06,520
Goats	1,86,282
Buffaloes	28,836
Sheep	25,559
Horses and Ponies	7,953
Other livestock	11,635

Source: Livestock Census, Meghalaya, 1982.

#### 2.4.2. Human Resource

Man plays the most important role in shaping the economy of a region. No planning can be complete without taking human-resource into consideration and hence, the need for proper manpower planning which includes development and effective utilisation of scientific, technical and other skills which are used for creating, designing and developing organisation, managing and operating productive

services, enterprises and economic institutions and activities, is of great importance.

The quality and quantity of human resource depend much on the extent of literacy and urbanization of the population of any region because with changes in these parameters changes occurs in the types of economic activities.

#### **2.4.2.1. Workers & Non-Workers**

On the basis of economic activities, the population can be broadly divided into two categories – workers and non-workers (dependants). According to 1991 Census, 43.06 per cent of the state's population were grouped as 'working population' which was 45.92 per cent during 1981. The all India percentage of 'working population' (1991) is 37.68. Percentage of male workers in Meghalaya is 49.09 (India: 51.56) and that of female workers is 36.69 (India: 22.73). Over the last ten years, percentage of workers both among males and females have decreased. In rural areas of the state, 45.95 per cent of the population are working as against only 30.47 per cent in the urban areas.

Table 2.20 shows the proportion of total workers, main workers and marginal workers to the total population in each district of Meghalaya during 1981 and 1991.

**Table 2.20 - Proportion of Total Workers, Main Workers and Marginal Workers in Different Districts of Meghalaya, 1981-1991.**

District/ State	Percentage of Total Population					
	Total Workers		Main Workers		Marginal Workers	
	1981	1991	1981	1991	1981	1991
Jaintia Hills	49.36	46.35	48.80	45.15	0.56	1.20
East Khasi Hills	41.62	41.67	40.67	40.64	0.95	1.35
West Khasi Hills	51.24	41.94	50.08	40.39	1.16	1.55
East Garo Hills	45.59	43.77	40.09	39.96	5.50	3.81
West Gao Hills	48.21	43.70	43.32	39.73	4.89	3.97
MEGHALAYA	45.92	43.06	43.43	40.85	2.49	2.21

Source: Census of India, Paper 3 of 1991 (Provisional Population Tables).

It can be observed from the above table that while the percentage of workers in each category has declined in the state as a whole, percentage of total workers has increased in East Khasi Hills and the decline of total workers share is very sharp in the West Garo Hills share of marginal workers have decreased in the Garo Hills while the Khasi and Jaintia Hills show an marginal increase in this category.

Again, if one considers the case of the 'main workers', one can find that this section of the working population is again divided into some major sections which more or less reflect the type of economic activities being carried out in the state.

Table 2.21 shows the percentage distribution of main workers as cultivators, agricultural labourers, household industry workers and other workers in the state and in its different districts (Fig. 2.18).

**Table 2.21 - Percentage Distribution of Main Workers, Agricultural Labourers, Household Industry Workers and Other Workers in Districts by Residence, 1991.**

Districts/ State	Total Rural Urban	Percentage of Main Workers			
		Cultiva- tors	Agricul- tural labourers	Household/ Industry workers	Other workers
Meghalaya	T	56.25	13.33	1.0	29.42
	R	64.64	14.99	0.87	19.50
	U	3.51	2.92	1.76	91.81
Jaintia Hills	T	59.33	16.18	0.86	23.63
	R	63.75	17.39	0.80	18.06
	U	0.92	0.30	1.62	97.16
East Khasi Hills	T	33.23	13.63	1.17	51.97
	R	44.50	17.86	0.93	36.71
	U	1.25	1.62	1.83	95.30
West Khasi Hills	T	71.64	16.36	0.83	11.17
	R	74.48	16.46	0.74	8.32
	U	18.54	14.36	2.61	64.49
East Garo Hills	T	83.93	5.36	0.36	10.35
	R	86.45	5.34	0.33	7.88
	U	32.05	5.72	0.91	61.32
West Garo Hills	T	68.90	13.21	1.15	16.74
	R	74.12	13.76	1.13	10.99
	U	4.14	6.28	1.41	88.17

Source: Census of India, Series 1, Paper 3 of 1991. Provisional Population Tables.

# WORKING POPULATION Meghalaya (1981)

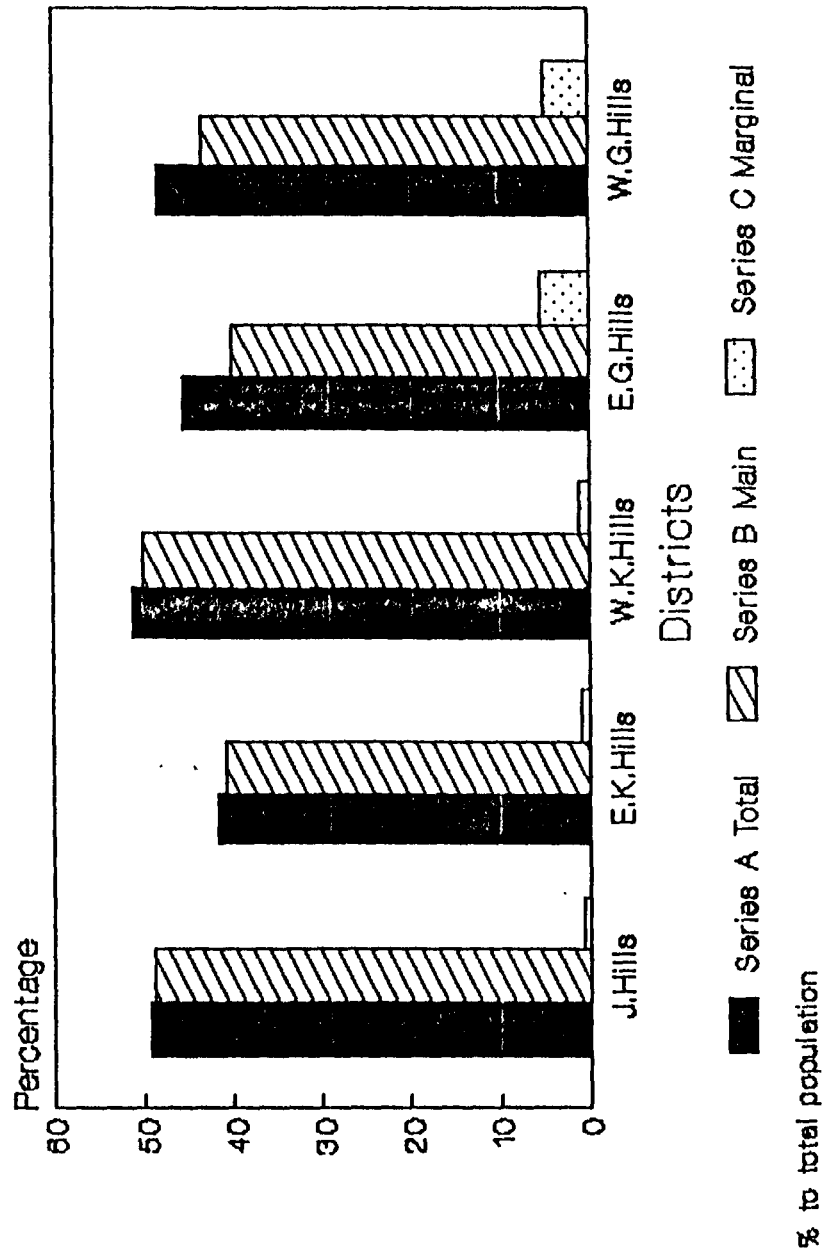


Fig. 2.18

The above table shows that about 70 per cent of the total work-force in the state is engaged directly in agricultural activities either as cultivator (56.25 per cent) or as agricultural labourers (13.33 per cent). Only 1 per cent work in the household industries and 29.42 per cent falls in the category of 'other workers'. All these amply shows the predominance of 'primary' economic activities followed by the activities in the tertiary or service sector and projects the low level of industrial activities being carried out in the state.

#### **2.4.2.2. Literacy and Level of Education**

According to 1981 Census, when the literacy rate of the state's population was 34.08, the same for the scheduled tribes was 31.55, for the scheduled castes 25.78 and for others 44.97. So, it can be seen that although the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have been accorded special facilities like reservations during admission in educational institutions and scholarships, their level of literacy lags far behind than that of others. The socio-economic conditions of these people play an important role in their attitude towards education.

As far as level of education (1981) is concerned, only 3.58 per cent of the population have studied upto graduation or above, 3.09 per cent upto XIIth standard,

3.41 per cent upto Xth standard, 36.64 upto VIth standard and 28.58 per cent upto IIIrd standard. About 20 per cent of the literates have not achieved any educational level.

Table 2.22 shows the number of educational institutions in Meghalaya during 1985-86.

**Table 2.22 - Number of Educational Institutions in Meghalaya, 1985-86.**

Sl. No.	Types of Institutions	Number of Institutions
1.	Pre-Primary and Pre-Basic	1,080
2.	Primary and Junior Basic	4,129
3.	Middle and Senior Basic	622
4.	High/Higher Secondary	268
5.	Basic/Non-Basic Training School	10
6.	Teachers' Training College	1
7.	Polytechnic	1
8.	Colleges (Arts, Science & Commerce)	14
9.	University	1

Source: Directorate of Public Instructions, Meghalaya.

Except one polytechnic college, the state does not have any other higher institutions to impart vocational training to the students. The Government has approved the setting up of a medical college in the state which is yet

to start functioning. Looking at the growing unemployment problem, the government must take up steps to see that the educated and non-educated youths get proper facilities to train themselves so that they can start their own enterprises and thus reduce the burden on the so called 'white collar' jobs of the service sector. This will not only reduce the unemployment problem but will also induce a new lease of life to the economy of the state.

#### **2.4.3. Infrastructure**

Rich endowment of resources does not necessarily induce development. Presence of creation of proper and adequate infrastructural facilities is a basic pre-requisite for accelerated growth and development. For proper socio-economic development, all types of resources must be used judiciously. And to make it possible, proper infrastructure must be developed and made available to the people.

Meghalaya, while compared to the other relatively developed regions of the country, deplorably lags behind in its infrastructural facilities for socio-economic development. Important infrastructure which play significant roles in the development process is briefly discussed below:

##### **2.4.3.1. Industries**

There are no important industries worth mentioning

in the state. However, there are a number of factors which have retarded the development of industries in the state. The lack of communication had never allowed early transfer of raw materials for industries as well as finished product to the market. Climate is also a determinant factor. Dearth of capital, technical manpower and nature terrain are other factors which reduced the pace of development in the state. Locational isolation and peripherality and remoteness of the state from the major production centres and market of the country plays an important role in the slow rate of industrial development of the state. In spite of the prevailing difficulties, the government is trying to promote industrial ventures within the state based on locally available resources. Keeping this in view, the Meghalaya Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) was established in April 1971, which has helped in setting up a number of small and medium sized units. Two areas in the state have been declared as Industrial Areas. They are Burnihat and Khwan in East Khasi Hills district. Small scale cottage industry is still dominant in the state. The government is exploring all possibilities to augment the rural economy to ensure speedy and all round development of the states. Till 1980, there were 2513 Agricultural Enterprises\* in

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\* An enterprise is an undertaking engaged in production and/or distribution of goods and/or services not for the sole purpose of own consumption.

the state of which 1884 (74.97) were in the rural areas and 629 (25.03 per cent) were in the urban areas. Out of 29,857 non-agricultural enterprises 18,955 (63.49 per cent) were in the rural areas and 10,902 (36.51 per cent) were in the urban areas. Again out of a total 32,370 (both agricultural and non-agricultural) enterprises, 14,957 (46.21 per cent) are in East Khasi Hills district only. This type of high concentration of industrial enterprises in one district clearly reveals the regional disparity in their location.

#### **2.4.3.2. Transport and Communication**

Transport and communication is the backbone of modern economic growth which play a very important role along with other factors in accelerating economic development. The newly formed state of Meghalaya was all along lacking in proper transport and communication system and about three-fourth of road-mileage were still gravelled and kaccha. However, after achieving statehood a number of projects were taken up by the government to provide accessibility to interior areas of the state and to connect those areas with the growth centres and administrative centres of the state.

Till 1986-87, the state had a total road length of about 5,218 kilometres, of which 2122.74 kilometres

(40.68 per cent) was surfaced. Average length of the surfaced road in the state was 9.46 kilometres for every 100 square kilometre of area while average road length per 100 square kilometre of area was 23.27 kilometres.

Table 2.23 shows the road mileage by class of roads in Meghalaya during 1986-87.

**Table 2.23 - Road Mileage by Class of Roads in Meghalaya, 1986-87.**

							(in Kms)
Sl. No.	Class of	Jaintia Hills	E. Khasi Hills	W. Khasi Hills	E. Garo Hills	W. Garo Hills	Meghalaya
1.	National Highway	122.49	210.20	-	-	127.31	460.00
2.	State Highway	137.68	235.42	156.70	199.00	188.00	916.00
3.	Major District Roads	175.49	273.33	155.12	177.06	291.10	1072.10
4.	Other District Roads	586.08	1035.54	396.18	179.34	570.56	2769.70
Total		1021.74	1754.49	710.00	555.40	1176.97	5218.60

Source: Public Works Department, Meghalaya.

It can be seen that out of a total of 5218.60 Kms, 1754.49 Kilometres (33.62 per cent) lies in East Khasi Hills district alone while only 555.40 Kilometres (10.64 per cent) lies in East Garo Hills district. The eastern parts of the state is located in an area which lies on the direct path of the National Highway (No. 44) that links

the state of Tripura, Mizoram and parts of Assam with the rest of the country. This helped in the spreading of the transport linkages in this area in a much faster rate than in the middle and western parts of the state. The location and strategic importance of the state calls for the development of more all weather roads connecting the different urban and production centres of the state (the route from Shillong to Tura – the two most important urban centres of the state has to pass through Assam – is a glaring example of the existing communication facilities) and also the state with the other parts of the country.

The state does not have any railway line (only of its kind in the north-east) within its territory. Due to opposition from some section of the state's population, any move to introduce rail communication in the state have been postponed till date.

At present the state does not have any commercially viable waterways and is linked by air to Guwahati, Agartala and Calcutta through 'Vayudoot' service which operates to and from Umroi near Shillong.

#### **2.4.3.3. Power**

It is an accepted fact that availability of power is one of the basic infrastructure necessary for the econo-

mic development of any region. In Meghalaya which is gifted by Nature with so much of natural wealth like minerals, forests and unused land, this enormous wealth of natural resources can be exploited more judiciously for development with the availability of power. The state, in spite of its enormous scope for power development, still lags behind in power generation.

The total hydel power potential of the Umtru-Khri valley is about 400 MW of which the capacity to generate 125.2 MW have been developed so far (1986-87) in the Umiam and Umtrew Hydel Projects.

The Kopili Hydel Power Project is expected to have a generating capacity of 250 MW. Other projects based on the rivers Kynshi, Umgri, Myntdu, are also under consideration.

There is a small thermal station in Nangalbibra in the Garo Hills with a generating capacity of 5 MW and the possibility of another such power station being set up in the Garo Hills with a capacity of 30 MW<sup>4</sup> is being investigated. The total installed capacity of different power projects in the state in 1986-87 was 133.76 MW. Meghalaya exported bulk of its electricity ranging from 86 per cent (in 1980-81) to 54 per cent (in 1986-87) to other states.

Till 1980-81, only 700 villages were electrified which covered only 15.3 per cent of the inhabited villages and by 1986-87, about 30 per cent (1397) of the total number of villages (4902) were provided with electricity.

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**CHAPTER III**

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### 3.1. Concept of Development and Underdevelopment

There is no concensus as to which theory of 'economic development' is suitable. They are ridden with disputes and controversies as how the term 'development' could be adequately defined. Different scholars have defined development in different ways. Some of the opinions are discussed below in brief,

Economic development can be defined as a move toward ever more efficient and differentiated methods of supplying people with the requirements for survival and improvement.<sup>1</sup>

The words 'economic development' were introduced into economic theory by the German economist, Joseph Schumpeter in his "Theory of Economic Development."

Economic development is an integral part of the objectives that all societies aim for. But it occurs at varying rates in different countries/regions at different periods of time. Development is a multiple goal approach and hence for specific purposes are defined individually by different sections of people in different societies at different stages. Their relative importance shifts,

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1. Baerwald, Friedrich. History and Structure of Economic Development, Oxford & IBH Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1969, p. 4.

as economic and social structure changes. The economic development has a considerable influence on the survival and strength of a state's political structure.

Clifford and Osmond describe economic development as a "... wider concept [than that of 'economic growth'], which includes economic growth together with a number of other economic phenomena"<sup>2</sup> like,

What changes are taking place in the structure of the economy, and what effects are they expected to have on the rate of economic growth in the future ... and ... what social changes are taking place within the country which have a bearing on the economy etc.<sup>3</sup>

Conclusions as to whether economic development is occurring will depend upon the effects which one expects current economic and social changes to have upon the future rate of economic growth and upon the relative importance of ... changes.<sup>4</sup>

Evolutionists believe that the 'ideal society' would be gradually developed from the existing social order through peaceful evolution whereas the revolutionists believe that to bring about 'ideal social order' there is a need

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2. Clifford J. and Osmond, G. "What is Development?" World Development Handbook, Charles Knight & Co. Ltd., London, 1971, p. 17.

3. Ibid., p. 18.

4. Ibid.

to destroy the present unjust society through a revolution. Formulation of societies undergoing change from one stage to the other "... draw their theoretical and ideological support from both classical and functionalist orientations".<sup>5</sup>

Economic development, like most other phenomena, does not take place uniformly over time and space. History of economic development probably started when man acquired the art of agriculture. With the introduction of machines during the industrial revolution in Europe, the economic scenario of most of the European countries took a sudden turn of change when imperial countries started exploiting the resources of their respective colonized countries for their own economic interest through political manipulations. Emergence of modern independent nations opened up a new era around the middle of the present century. While many countries followed the socialist path to achieve development, many others kept their market open to follow the 'laissez faire' policy to enhance economic development. Some countries like India, however, opted for a "mixed economy ... in which productive enterprise is owned and controlled

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5. Mukherji, Partha N. "Development Dilemmas: Towards a Conceptualisation of Social Development", social Development - Processes and Consequences (Ed.) by Pimpley, Singh and Mahajan, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1989, p. 27.

both by private individuals and companies and by government".<sup>6</sup>

Most of these newly formed nations were called 'underdeveloped' countries. However, some prefer to use the term 'developing' for such countries. The main features<sup>7</sup> of such 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' countries are:

- i) Low per capita income.
- ii) Unequal distribution of income.
- iii) High density of population.
- iv) High growth rate of population.
- v) Unemployment and underemployment.
- vi) Overdependence on the agricultural sector.
- vii) Deficiency of capital.
- viii) Absence of latest technology.
- ix) Poor (technical) quality of human resource.
- x) Low rate of savings.
- xi) Lack of proper infrastructure for economic development.

the developing countries face a number of problems in choosing their respective strategies for economic development.

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6. Clifford and Osmond, op.cit., p. 32.

7. Ibid., p. 19.

Modernization, national unification and population exchanges, of late, have brought populations belonging to different groups viz. linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds to live together in different parts of India which have put these different population groups in competition with one another for land, education, jobs and political power. Such competitions which have often turned into conflicts is complicated in the Indian context by its long history of feudalism and colonialism, its relative new existence as a country and the conflicts between national and regional interests and also by the fact that in most cases the traditional ethnic groups cut across inter-regional boundaries. The conflict among various population groups and states is further aggravated by the scarcity of exploitable resources, uneven economic development and rising expectations and aspirations of the people. This calls for a need to understand and review the complex socio-economic milieu of different areas and their inhabitants of the various territories that together constitute the country.

### **3.2. Economic Development in Modern Nations**

The location and situation of any region or country not only sets preconditions for its economic development but also influences the course through which such processes must undergo. Physical milieu of any region is, thus, impor-

tant in the economic development of any region. Different types of land provide different types of opportunities at different periods of time. The same thing can be applied to other physical factors like climate, soil, geology, natural vegetation etc. Homogeneity or positive correlation of these factors provide uniformity in the structure and process of economic development of any given region at a given period of time, whereas the degree of uniformity of economic activities decreases with the increase in the heterogeneity of such physical variables.

Economic development of any region is not independent of non-physical factors either. In modern nations, such questions as 'commerical liberty' cannot be determined by purely physical factors. The extent and nature of roles played by different political parties, ethnic and pressure groups etc., have a profound impact on the nature and efficacy of developmental programmes of any region. Nature and extent of economic development is often guided by political decisions which may be the result of purely ideological commitments of political parties or may be due to other political compulsions which the political parties are sometimes bound to take and do take for their political/electoral gains.

It is, therefore, but natural that different politi-

cal structures including the consideration of traditional institutions that continue to exist, will result into different types of developments and differences in the ideologies of political parties will give more emphasis on the direction as well as to certain types of developmental programmes and territories over others. Again, the nature of politico-administrative structure varies from one state to the other. This also creates differences in the approach in the planning and implementation of development programmes. The same development programme with a common goal, is thus, often modified and altered in its structure to suit to the needs of the people of different states where different political parties form the governments. The rigidity in the planning and development process adversely affects the desired results of such development programmes as the diversity of various physical and cultural factors demands suitable modifications in the implementation of such programmes to achieve highest possible benefit.

There is a basic difference between the 'national' level parties and 'regional' level parties in their approach towards development. Their attitudes towards policy planning for development is generally reflected in their political demands which are again reflected in their political (election) manifestoes. The main difference between the ideolo-

gies of these two categories of political parties which is reflected in their decisions and actions in the development activities and policy planning is that while the national level parties put more and primary emphasis on aspects like national integration, national security and development of the country as a whole; often overlooking the regional interests, the regional parties on the other hand, always opt and give priority to programmes related to regional development. However, it is important to understand that the influence of these regional level parties exist over a limited area (space) of the country and hence, the stance taken by them in this regard is often necessitated by the fact that the very existence and strength of such parties largely depends on their capability to solve regional and local level problems or at least to project such problems at the national platform through demands to the central government for their solution.

### **3.3. Politics of Economic Development in India**

Formally, the federal structure in India is characterised by a bias in favour of the Centre which has been a subject of controversy since the adoption of the system in the country. The system is often termed as 'quasi-federal'<sup>8</sup> where the centre has an upper hand and obvious

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8. Wheare, Kenneth. Federal Government, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981, p. 28.



advantage in the division of power.

The paramount position of the Centre is understood by the power of Parliament to create new states, to alter the boundaries of existing states, and even to abolish a state by ordinary legislative procedure, without recourse to constitutional amendment.<sup>9</sup>

The distribution of revenue resources plays an important role in determining the centre-states relations. In India, the Union's financial resources are considerably greater than those of the states. The states, in their financial allocations are dependent upon the central government. However, the Centre is always dependent on the states for the implementation of its policies. This interdependence of the Centre and states have been termed as 'cooperative federalism',<sup>10</sup> by many scholars. The larger the size and the population of a particular state, greater is the chance of gaining move from 'cooperative bargaining process' between the Centre and the States. In any state, with any political party in power, "... the ability of the party to mobilize the populace for political action are major sources of state autonomy".<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon between the Centre and the state often bring about conflicts and confrontations

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9. Hardgrave, R.L. (Jr.) "Federalism and the States", India-Government and Politics in a Developing Nation. (2nd ed.), Freeman Book Co., Delhi, 1979, p. 85.

10. Ibid., p. 86.

11. Franda, Marcus F. West Bengal and the Federalizing Process in India, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1968, pp. 201-204.

between the centre and the state and also among various neighbouring states. With the rapid growth of population, the crunch in resources, there has been a rise in the inter-state border disputes, disputing over sharing of water between riparian states. All these greatly affect the course of economic development of different states. States having international border with other countries need stability in these areas for smooth functioning of their economic activities in order to achieve faster economic development. But this aspect in India seems to be always adversely affecting the economic development of border areas/states. India's borders with China, Myanmar (Burma) and Sri Lanka are almost 'national' boundaries whereas its boundary with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal is man-made. It can be observed that these man-made boundaries create more problem than the natural boundaries as far as economic development is concerned. Man-made boundaries are relatively more open to human movements and thus more prone to migration across them. This creates tension not only between the respective countries but also affects the development process due to changes in demographic structures of the states and their consequent impact on the political scenario.

#### **3.4. Concept of Regional Development**

The term 'region' has provided an issue for debate

and disagreement among contemporary geographers, other social scientists and regional planners. Many developing countries have incorporated regional planning goals in their five year plans in the post-war period. According to Friedmann and Weaver (1979), the two main important aspects of Regional Planning doctrine are:

- i) 'Nation-building', central planning, the spatial integration of the national economy etc., and
- ii) Problems of 'backward regions'.

Perroux (1950, 1971) propounded the theory of 'growth pole', which was originally associated the aspect of "interactions among industrial sectors".<sup>12</sup> Growth poles, according to Perroux were located in an economic space and the geographic space was considered to be of homogeneous in nature. With the application of the concept of growth poles to geographic spaces the concept of 'growth centres' emerged.

These development poles became the range of activities which located around the original propulsive activity. Spatial development, and economic development, became concentrated on an urban growth strategy, in which stress upon a few dynamic sectoral

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12. Forbes, D.K. "Social Theory and Regional Uneven Development", The Geography of Underdevelopment - A Critical Survey, Select Book Service Syndicate, New Delhi, 1985, p. 116.

clusters and upon urban-industrial growth [was] the key to more generalised development (Hansen, 1981: 19).<sup>13</sup>

The application of such theoretical concepts in the real world situation was, however, found to be not applicable as the 'space' on which man live, is not homogeneous. And all phenomena tha make a 'geographic space' tends to bring variations in the economic activities.

### 3.5. Spatial Inequalities and Backward Area Development

More economically developed centres, tend to be located in places and areas which are congenial to economic activities. This may be due to a certain factors of physical environment of the area (like relief, climate, soil, vegetation etc.) or socio-cultural factors (like population density, migration of people, political factors) or a combination of such factors.

The advanced regions are supposed to be characterised by a scarcity of natural resources and of labour, while peripheral areas usually have a scarcity of capital and technology.<sup>14</sup>

Under neo-classical assumptions, ... factors are expected to move from areas of low return to those of high returns .... These flows will increase factor supply in areas of scarcity and reduce it in areas of abundance.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Ibid., p. 116.

14. Sundaram, K.V. "Spatial Inequalities and Backward Area Development", Geography of Underdevelopment, Concept Publishing Co., New Delhi, 1983, p. 70.

15. Ibid., p. 71.

In reality, however, on account of different degrees of mobility and heterogeneity of spatial phenomena, distortions occur in such kind of assumptions. These assumptions and theories "... are, by and large, unrealistic to the Third World solution".<sup>16</sup> In developing countries, on the contrary, capital flows from peripheral (backward) areas to the advanced areas and skilled labour "(productive element of the population strata i.e., the potential high wage earners)"<sup>17</sup> from the peripheral areas to the advanced areas.

To counter this problem of underdevelopment of backward areas, many countries have tried various policies through planning. However, the area specificity of the region, nature and scale of the problem encountered will determine the "specific policies adopted in each country and the resources devoted to programmes for reducing the (inter) regional gap ..."<sup>18</sup> between various regions of the country.

Capital and technology transfer has been adopted as a major instrument of regional policy in bringing about economic development of the backward areas. According to

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16. Ibid., p. 72.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

this philosophy, the backward areas are usually deficient in capital and technology and inducing or transferring of such provisions to economically backward areas will help these areas to reduce their level of underdeveloped.

Specifically, the capital transfer measures <sup>19</sup> are done by:

- i) By locating some capital intensive or modern industries characterised by high demand elasticity of products and/or export band industries.
- ii) By making adequate provision for economic infrastructure (that is, through transfer of public investment); and
- iii) By providing various forms of public incentives or subsidies, making them area-specific that is, benefitting the relatively backward areas, (that is, inducement policies).

While inter-state disparities in economic development is obvious in a big country like India, the greater complexity of development problems is better revealed at the intra-state (or inter-district) level.

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19. Ibid., p. 73.

According to a study done by K.V. Sundaram,\* "the relatively less developed districts of India are in the east, centre and middle south parts rather than in its north, west and deep south".

The geographical characteristics of underdeveloped areas in India reveals that these areas "are quite extensive in character falling in diverse regions of markedly different natural resource endowments and socio-economic environments".<sup>20</sup>

In geographical context, the resource endowment of different regions holds important position in the developmental process. In India "there are regions that are rich because of their raw material endowment; there are regions that are poor despite their rich resources".<sup>21</sup>

The North-east region of India has been identified as a 'compact backward area' by the Indian Planning Commission among four other such regions in the country.<sup>22</sup>

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\* The study (not yet published) was undertaken by the author in the Planning Commission by which he was appointed a member of the Committee on Backward Areas Development.

20. Sundaram, op.cit., p. 164.

21. Mathur, Om. P. "The problem of regional disparities: An analysis of Indian Policies and Programmes", Growth Pole Strategy and Regional Planning in Asia, United Nations Centre for Regional Development, Nagoya, 1976.

22. Sundaram, op.cit., pp. 164, 165.

Aside from area planning, the backward areas of the country have received much attention of the Planning Commission in another direction, i.e. through substantial effort in district planning.

In the late 1960s, when growth with social justice became the predominant objective, district planning, was advocated in recognition of the idea that without district or local planning, there could be no hope for acceleration of the development of the underdeveloped areas as well as regional closure.<sup>23</sup>

Among numerous other specific approaches tried by the Indian Government, the following ten policy measures may be specially mentioned:<sup>24</sup>

- i) capital and technology transfers to backward areas;
- ii) incentive policies for peripheral areas;
- iii) growth centre policies;
- iv) the basic needs-oriented approach;
- v) target group-oriented approach;
- vi) resource problem-oriented approach;
- vii) asset redistribution policies;
- viii) sub-plan approach, e.g. hill and tribal areas;
- ix) regional planning approach for special problem areas; and

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23. Ibid., p. 177.

24. Ibid., p. 178.

- x) integrated rural development oriented approach to provide full employment in Development Blocks.

Balanced economic development of different regions and states in a large country like India, which provides a wide range of physical and cultural diversity, is considered to be an important factor not only from the economic point of view but also for the unity and political stability of the country. But the heterogeneous characteristics – both physical and cultural – do not allow a single and rigid plan to operate in all the regions of the country and it is not feasible either; because, different regions, apart from possessing widely varying physico-cultural set-up, are also confronted with different types of development related problems and need problem-specific approaches for their solution.

Although balanced regional development has been one of the major aims of planning in India, it was only in the Fourth Five Year Plan that some attempts were made for the integrated development at the regional level.

### **3.6. Hill Area Development**

The emergence of 'Hill Areas' as a distinct entity in the planning process is a recent phenomena. Most of

these 'Hill Areas' are not only relatively backward even by national standards but experience greater constraints for economic development due to some special and special problems common to these areas. These handicaps may be due to their location and relative isolation in which they are situated, their physical barriers (which sometime act as cultural barriers also), political factors, plain neglect of such areas by the government or a combination of these factors.

The main objective of the hill area development plan is to orient the programmes specifically to the local conditions so as to benefit directly the people of the hills.

The Planning Commission have emphasized that the nature of linkages and interactions that should be reflected in the hill areas sub-plan must give priority to the following aspects:<sup>25</sup>

- a) Development of sheep, cattle, poultry and darying with marketing, pasture development and provision of health cover;

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25. Sundaram, K.V. op.cit., pp. 192-193.

- b) crop husbandry and plantation crops with soil and moisture conservation and land management practices; and
- c) development of horticulture and forestry with programmes relating to the opening of inaccessible areas and marketing.

Certain special problems associated with the hill areas like shifting cultivation, soil erosion, minor irrigation etc. have also been taken into account in this plan. The hill areas sub-plans are basically medium term plan and a comprehensive policy planning for long term economic development needs to be drawn up and implemented for raising economic development of these areas.

### **3.7. Tribal Area Development**

Most of the areas of tribal concentration are also the areas of most underdevelopment in India. Tribal Area Development approach attempts to combine both functional as well as area programmes involving a multi-dimensional approach.

At the second level, i.e. below the Tribal Sub-Plan level, is the Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs). The entire sub-plan area in the country has been divided in 180 ITDPs. These ITDPs are important components of the micro-planning process.

The level of investment in tribal areas has gone up after the country had adopted planned economic development but it is unfortunate to find that the bigger programmes and infrastructural development have overshadowed the small programmes of direct relevance to the tribals. Obviously, administrative complicacy and political linkages of pressure groups appears to have come up as an important constraint in the effective implementation of tribal development programmes.

The tribal areas force the biggest challenge of financial, manpower and institutional constraints. This calls for both structural as well as programmatic solutions. "A conscientisation process has to go hand in hand with a broad-based development of the subsistence sector and building up of technical and institutional capabilities".<sup>26</sup>

A working group on Tribal Development for the Sixth Plan emphasized on a broader planning framework at regional levels to bring about harmony between the programmes at the micro and macro levels and thus ensuring maximum utility of such programmes.

North-eastern region of India is a special case in the national scene, both in terms of its economic deve-

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26. Ibid., p. 195.

lopment as well as for political importance. This region which is 'almost' secluded from the other parts of the country is confronted with multi-dimensional problems.

The region shares a very long international boundary with four other countries (Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Bangladesh). Many of these border areas are either extremist-infested or are prone to immigration across them. Land available for permanent agriculture is scarce (most of them lie in the narrow valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Barak) in this region.

Population growth is relatively high in this region which puts tremendous pressure on the agricultural land. Relative inaccessibility of the region, absence of adequate transport and communication network and lack of proper infrastructure are the major handicaps for smooth and fast economic development of this region.

The state of Meghalaya, located in the peripheral north-eastern region of the country with characteristic features of underdevelopment and local polity, is like other states of the region, a victim of its own geography and political economy of the country in general and that of the north-eastern region in particular.

In spite of being richly endowed with various natural resources, the present level of economic development

is very low in the state. The state, to a large extent, has to depend on grants from the Central Government to carry out most of its developmental activities. The channelisation of such funds are the result of political factors as they are often influenced by different interest groups and the decisions and ideologies of different political parties both at the centre and the state.

The state has a three-tier administrative set up, viz. the State Legislative Assembly, the District Councils and the (traditional) village Durbars. The fragmented autonomy of different administrative and executive agencies often lead to multiple agencies doing the same work adopting different criteria and procedures and consequent waste or underutilization of resources. Overlappings of the respective jurisdictions of various administrative machineries over various aspects of social and economic activities make the situation more complex in the state. It is in this regard, that a detailed analysis of the development approaches practised – both by the centre and the state needs to be carried out and the role of different types of geographical factors, mainly those influencing political decisions and actions and also having political overtones must be understood, recognised and taken into consideration. All these aspects of the present study have been mentioned in the consequent chapters that follow this.

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**CHAPTER IV**

**LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT – A METHODOLOGY**

"History is a flux of events and society a web of several interrelated activities".<sup>1</sup> Therefore, to understand the process of development with a single indicator is not possible. Paucity of adequate data has always been a major constraint in comprehending the problems of underdeveloped hill areas. This makes a historical analysis difficult. Due to the circumstances that is common to the north-eastern region as a whole, the researcher has used data and information mainly from the secondary sources. As a result, the analysis has been possible at the district level only.

In order to make the study more precise, available and necessary information is put into perceived theoretical framework to find out the levels of development of different districts of Meghalaya.

Eighteen indicators have been chosen to measure the levels of development. These indicators have been divided

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1. M. Raza and Harjit Singh, "Problems of Regional Development in the Trans Himalayas: A Case Study of Ladakh", Development of Hill Areas Issues and Approaches. T.S. Papola et al., Himalaya Publishing House, Bombay, 1983, p. 248.

into four groups each to measure the sector-wise level of development.

#### 4.1. Indicators of Resource Base

Resources are the base for the development of an area. But in turn, the stage of development, particularly the level of technological knowhow and institutional and administrative set-up, also influences the resource base.<sup>2</sup>

Both physical and human resources are important for the development process. Keeping this in mind five indicators have been taken into account to find out the levels of resource base development in different districts. These are:

- i) Percentage of area under forest to total land area.
- ii) Average road length (in Km per hundred Sq.Km).
- iii) Density of population (per hundred sq.km).
- iv) Percentage of workers to total population.
- v) Percentage of literates to total population.

Forest is an important resource in hilly, backward and tribal areas of our country. The extent of land under forest is a good indicator as far as the resource endowment

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2. Butola, B.S. "Spatial Interaction and Underdevelopment: A Methodology", Political Economy of Underdevelopment – A Study Case of Uttar Pradesh Himalayas, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, pp. 151, 155.

of the area is concerned. This is because forests and their products form an important component of the tribal economy of this region.

Good transport and communication network is a basic pre-requisite for any kind of developmental activity. Density of road (per unit area) inflicts the accessibility to a particular area on which the level of exploitation of resources is dependent.

Development is meant for the people and thus presence of human beings in any area is another important aspect of the whole process. In Meghalaya, which a few decades back was considered as an area of relative isolation and which is located in a remote region of the country, the density of population clearly reveals the trends of resource exploitation in its different parts.

Percentage of workers to the total population reveals the extent of the people's physical involvement in the developmental process. Areas undergoing more developmental activities facilitate the involvement of more people giving rise to a higher percentage of work force in the demographic structure of that particular area.

Education plays an important role in the socio-economic development of the people. The level of educational

attainment shows the level of socio-economic development of any region. In the absence of this sort of data, another indicator i.e. literacy rate which is surrogate in nature has been taken into consideration. Like other hilly regions of the north-east, Meghalaya also was exposed to the process of modern education relatively late and thus the basic education (of which percentage of literates is a good indicator) is an important component which reveals the trend of development process.

Table 4.1. shows the different indicators of resource development in the state mentioned above in different districts of the state.

**Table 4.1. - Indicators of Resource Development.**

District	% of Area under Forest to total land area	Average Road length (Km/100 km <sup>2</sup> )	Density of population per 100 sq. km.	% of Workers to the total population	% of literate to total population
East Khasi Hills	37.47	33.77	126	41.67	43.73
West Khasi Hills	33.02	13.53	41	41.94	31.97
East Garo Hills	42.77	21.34	73	43.77	33.51
West Garo Hills	41.25	21.15	86	43.70	25.91
Jaintia Hills	24.38	26.75	57	46.35	24.51

#### **4.2. Indicators of Agricultural Development**

As mentioned earlier, about 70 per cent of the state's population is dependent on agriculture whereas only about 8.60 per cent of the total land in the state is utilised for cultivation of different types of crops. Thus, to get a clear picture of the level of development, development of agricultural sector must be taken into account. Percentage of agricultural area to the total land area and percentage of irrigated area to the total agricultural area show on what scales agricultural activities are carried out different districts of the state. In an economy where the agricultural sector is more of subsistence in nature, higher percentage of agricultural labourers show higher level of agricultural development. Similarly, higher consumption of chemical fertilizers can be considered to be an important indicator of higher level of agricultural development.

Table 4.2. shows the indicators in this category.

#### **4.3. Indicators of Industrial Development**

Meghalaya is relatively a backward state as far as the industrial development is concerned. The relief, climate, lack of adequate transport and communication network, paucity of financial resources availability of technological and managerial skills have retarded the growth of industries

Table 4.2 - Indicators of Agricultural Development.

District	% of Agricultural area to total geographical area	% of Irrigated area to total agricultural area	% of Agricultural labourers to total main workers	Consumption of chemical fertilizers per 100 hectares of Agricultural land (in Metric Tonnes)
East Khasi Hills	7.72	18.40	13.63	4.12
West Khasi Hills	3.85	31.70	16.36	7.00
East Garo Hills	7.81	26.10	5.36	0.31
West Garo Hills	13.71	24.61	13.21	0.22
Jaintia Hills	10.96	32.75	16.18	0.24

in this state. Whatever industry is found in the state, are basically linked with agriculture. Thus, both agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises must be considered to understand the level of industrial development in the state. Coal is the major mineral produced in the state and a large number of industrial units do depend on it for operation and a substantial units to depend on it for operation and a substantial section of the industrial work force in the state is as one indicator for industrial development. The other indicator taken is the percentage of workers in 'household industries' to total main workers since, the largest section of the industrial work force in the state belong to this category (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3 - Indicators of Industrial Development.**

District	No. of Agricultural Enterprises	Number of non-agricultural Enterprises	% of workers in household industries to total main workers	Production of coal (.000 tonnes)
East Khasi Hills	13,573	1,384	1.17	8
West Khasi Hills	2,625	160	0.83	35
East Garo Hills	2,713	379	0.36	-
West Garo Hills	7,340	346	1.15	4
Jaintia Hills	8,606	3,606	0.86	8,606

#### 4.4. Indicators of Development of Social Amenities

Development of the economy is not sufficient; for a region to be called 'developed'. The level of development of basic amenities which are often meant for the society to be benefitted at large and are known as 'social amenities' is an important indicator of the overall development of any region. It has been very often seen that economic development leads to the development of social amenities in certain areas whereas in some other areas (where economic development is not expected to take place as fast as in economically developed areas), the development of such facilities are generally done by the Government. With higher

level of economic development, the aspirations of the people of a particular region after turn into political demands and development of such social amenities reflect how far their demands have been catered to. Percentage of villages electrified, number of vehicles, number of hospital beds, number of banks and number of post offices per unit number of persons have been taken in the present study as indicators of development of such 'social amenities' in the state (Table 4.4).

**Table 4.4 - Indicators of Development of Social Amenities**

District	% of vil- lages electri- fied	No. of vehicles (per 1000 persons)	No. of hospital beds (per 1000 persons)	Number of Banks (per 1000 persons)	Number of Post offices (per 1000 persons)
East Khasi Hills	41.04	19.86	1.67	0.10	0.23
West Khasi Hills	26.20	0.65	0.19	0.07	0.35
East Garo Hills	30.64	1.98	0.16	0.06	0.21
West Garo Hills	16.21	2.16	0.30	0.05	0.18
Jaintia Hills	51.24	7.24	0.52	0.08	0.31

Above mentioned are the indicators selected for measuring the level of economic development in Meghalaya at district level. Attempt has been made to maintain consistency in the selection of indicators. Selection of more

indicators was restrained by the paucity of data regarding them. The above mentioned indicators are expected to project the complex phenomenon of economic development in Meghalaya.

#### 4.5. Composite Index

Composite value of all the indicators is most important to understand the overall levels of development.

Composition of values helps in reducing the multi-dimensional aspects into a single or a few most representative dimensions of overall reality ... and ... involves measuring disparities within the region and comparing its different parts.<sup>3</sup>

The data used in the present study was on a different scale which provided a serious limitation in comparing the levels of economic development in the state. In order to minimise the apparent limitations, a simple statistical method have been used. First of all the variables in each set, viz. resource, agriculture, industry and social amenities have been made scale free by using the formula,

$$\frac{X - \bar{X}}{Sd}$$

Where, X is the unit variable,  $\bar{X}$  is the mean of n number of variables and Sd is the standard deviation of the sum of variables.

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3. Butola, op.cit., p. 160.

The scale free units in case of each district were summed up to find out the composite index for that district.

$$\Sigma\left(\frac{X - \bar{X}}{Sd}\right) = \text{Composite index}$$

"This method was found suitable because it retained the magnitude as well as the relative range between raw data and the data which were compared on scale".<sup>4</sup> Moreover, this method is found suitable when the number of observations are very few. The variables, when converted to scale free units, were often accompanied by '-' sign. But, it does not mean negative development. On the other hand, it shows the magnitude of differences between different variables on the free scales. Similar, is the case with the composite indices.

Composite indices for all the set of variables were computed by adding the scale free values of the indicators to find out the respective levels of development of each district in respective categories, viz. resource, industry etc.

In the next stage, the composite indices for all the four nets were taken as single variables and were added to find the overall levels of development of each district in Meghalaya.

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4. Gopalakrishnan, R. "Levels of Development and Urbanisation", Geography of Meghalaya, Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p. 96.

**Table 4.5 - Levels of Resource Development - Composite Index.**

District	% of area under forest	Average road length	Density of population	Percentage of workers	% of literate persons	Composite Index
East Khasi Hills	0.26	1.56	1.71	-1.08	1.73	4.18
West Khasi Hills	-0.42	-1.46	-1.23	-0.92	-.005	-4.035
East Garo Hills	1.06	-0.29	-0.12	0.16	0.23	1.04
West Garo Hills	0.83	-0.32	0.33	0.125	-0.88	0.085
Jaintia Hills	-1.72	0.51	-0.68	1.70	-1.09	-1.28

**Table 4.6 - Levels of Agricultural Development - Composite Index.**

District	% of agricultural area	% of irrigated area	% of agricultural labourer	Consumption of chemical fertilizers	Composite Index
East Khasi Hills	-0.327	-1.598	0.17	0.633	-1.122
West Khasi Hills	-1.489	0.96	0.853	1.68	2.004
East Garo Hills	-0.3	-0.117	-1.898	-0.753	-3.068
West Garo Hills	1.471	-0.404	0.065	-0.785	0.217
Jaintia Hills	0.646	1.162	0.808	-0.778	1.838

**Table 4.7 - Levels of Industrial Development - Composite Index.**

District	Number of Agricultural Enterprises	Number of non-agricultural enterprises	% of workers in household industries to total main workers	Production of coal	Composite Index
East Khasi Hills	1.616	0.162	1.024	-0.591	2.211
West Khasi Hills	-1.064	-0.788	-0.137	-0.543	-2.532
East Garo Hills	-1.043	-0.618	-1.741	-	-3.402
West Garo Hills	0.09	-0.732	0.956	-0.598	-0.248
Jaintia Hills	0.4	1.887	-0.034	1.732	3.985

**Table 4.8 - Levels of Development of Social Amenities - Composite Index.**

District	% of villages electrified	No. of vehicles	No. of Hospital beds	No. of Banks	No. of Post Offices	Composite Index
East Khasi Hills	0.659	1.896	1.93	1.5	-0.506	5.479
West Khasi Hills	-0.568	-0.806	0.667	0	1.469	0.762
East Garo Hills	-0.201	-0.619	-0.719	-0.5	-0.719	-2.758
West Garo Hills	-2.897	-0.594	-0.474	-1.0	-1.183	-6.148
Jaintia Hills	1.503	0.121	-0.088	0.5	0.844	2.88

**Table 4.9 - Levels of Overall Development**

Districts	Resource	Agriculture	Industry	Social Amenities	Overall Level
East Khasi Hills	4.18	-1.122	2.211	5.479	10.748
West Khasi Hills	-4.035	2.004	-2.532	0.762	-3.801
East Garo Hills	1.04	-3.068	-3.402	-2.758	-8.188
West Gao Hills	0.085	0.217	-0.284	-6.148	-6.13
Jaintia Hills	-1.28	1.838	3.985	2.88	7.423

#### 4.6. Analysis of Data

Resource-wise, the district of East Khasi Hills indicated (Table 4.5) the highest composit index (4.18) among all the districts in the state followed by the East Garo Hills (1.04), West Garo Hills (0.085), Jaintia Hills (-1.28) and West Khasi Hills (-4.035). It shows that the district of East Khasi Hills, with Shillong as both the district headquarters and the state capital, has a very high potential for reasource development. This can be partially explained by the accessibility factors. Average road length being highest in the East Khasi Hills district (35 Km per 100 Sq.Km.) provides a better scope and infrastructure for the economic development. In case of West Khasi Hills district the lowest level of resources base

development can be similarly attributed, among other factors, to the lowest level of accessibility in the state (13.53 Km per 100 Sq.Km). Relatively higher density of population and higher literacy rate, in case of East Khasi Hills district, seem to provide the impetus for better development of resources in the district (Fig. 4.1).

West Khasi Hills district has the highest level of agricultural development (Table 4.6). The district has a relatively higher percentage of agricultural area under irrigation, highest percentage of agricultural labourers to total main workers and a comparatively very high consumption of chemical fertilizers. However, the district has the lowest percentage of area under agricultural operations compared to the other four districts. Thus, it can be inferred that in order to overcome the limitations of agriculture in the district more inputs are used to maximise agricultural output, as a result of which the district has attained the highest level of agricultural development. Except in the two districts of the Khasi Hills, consumption of chemical fertilizers are dismay low in the other three districts. West Garo Hills district which has more flat lands than other districts in the state also poses the highest percentage of agricultural land (13.71) to the total land area of the district. But only 24.61 per cent

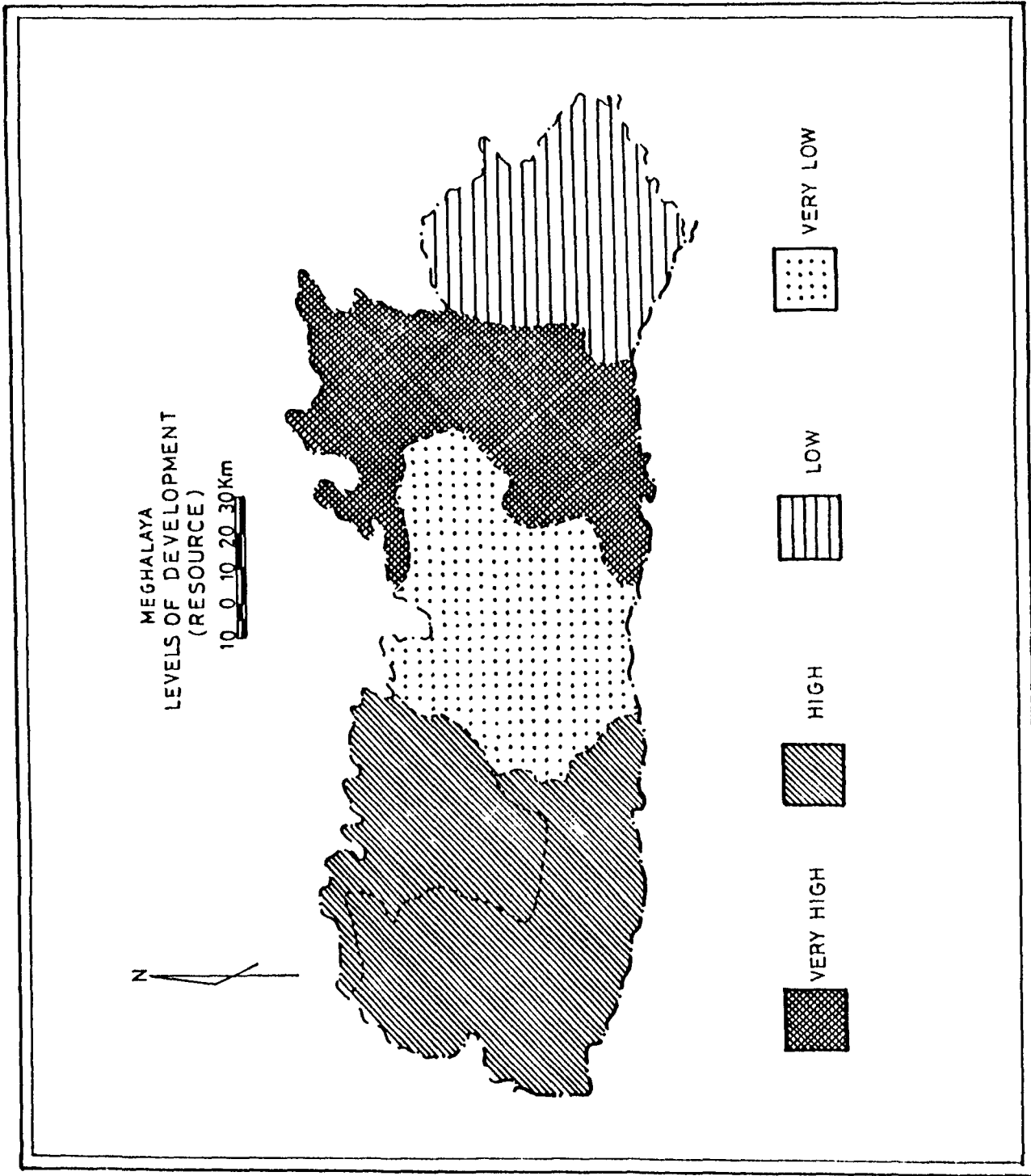


Fig. 4.1

of its agricultural area is irrigated and the district has the lowest consumption of chemical fertilizer which has put the district relatively lower in the development ladder in spite of its vast potential for agricultural development (Fig. 4.2).

As far as the industrial development (Table 4.7) of the state is concerned, the district of Jaintia Hills showed the highest (3.985) level of development followed by the East Khasi Hills (2.211), West Garo Hills (-0.284), West Khasi Hills (-2.532) and East Garo Hills (-3.402). Higher level of industrial development in the two districts of Jaintia Hills and East Khasi Hills may be attributed to the transport facilities (e.g. national highway) that these two districts poses and as a result of which the interior areas come closer (in terms of time) towards the production centres and markets both inside and outside the state. Similarly, the districts of East Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills show the negative impacts of location and inaccessibility (Fig. 4.3).

Table 4.8 clearly shows that the district of East Khasi Hills by virtue of its location and reinforced by the location of the state's capital at Shillong had the maximum numbers of factors conducive for economic development. The location of the biggest urban centre of the state,

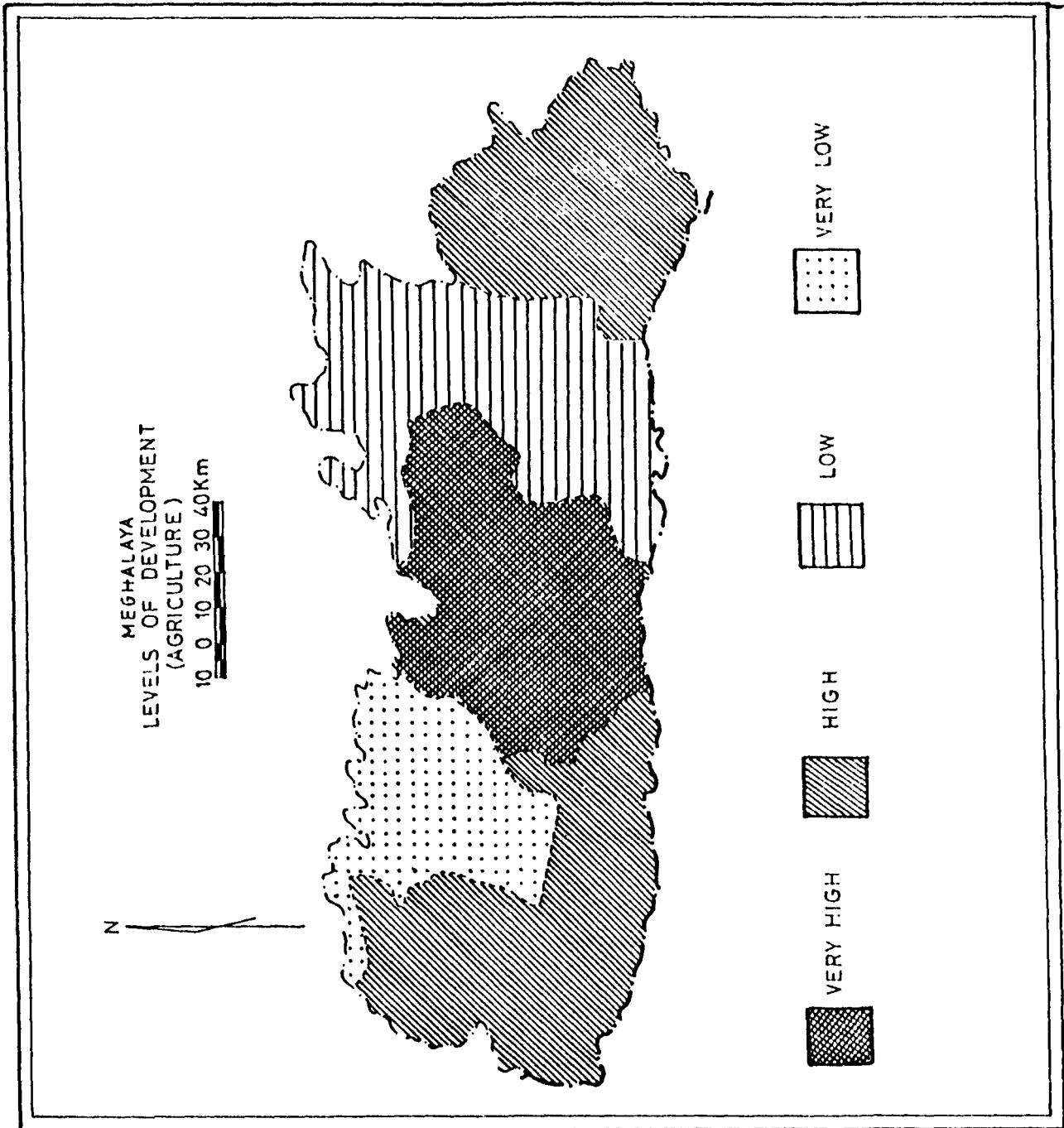


Fig. 4.2

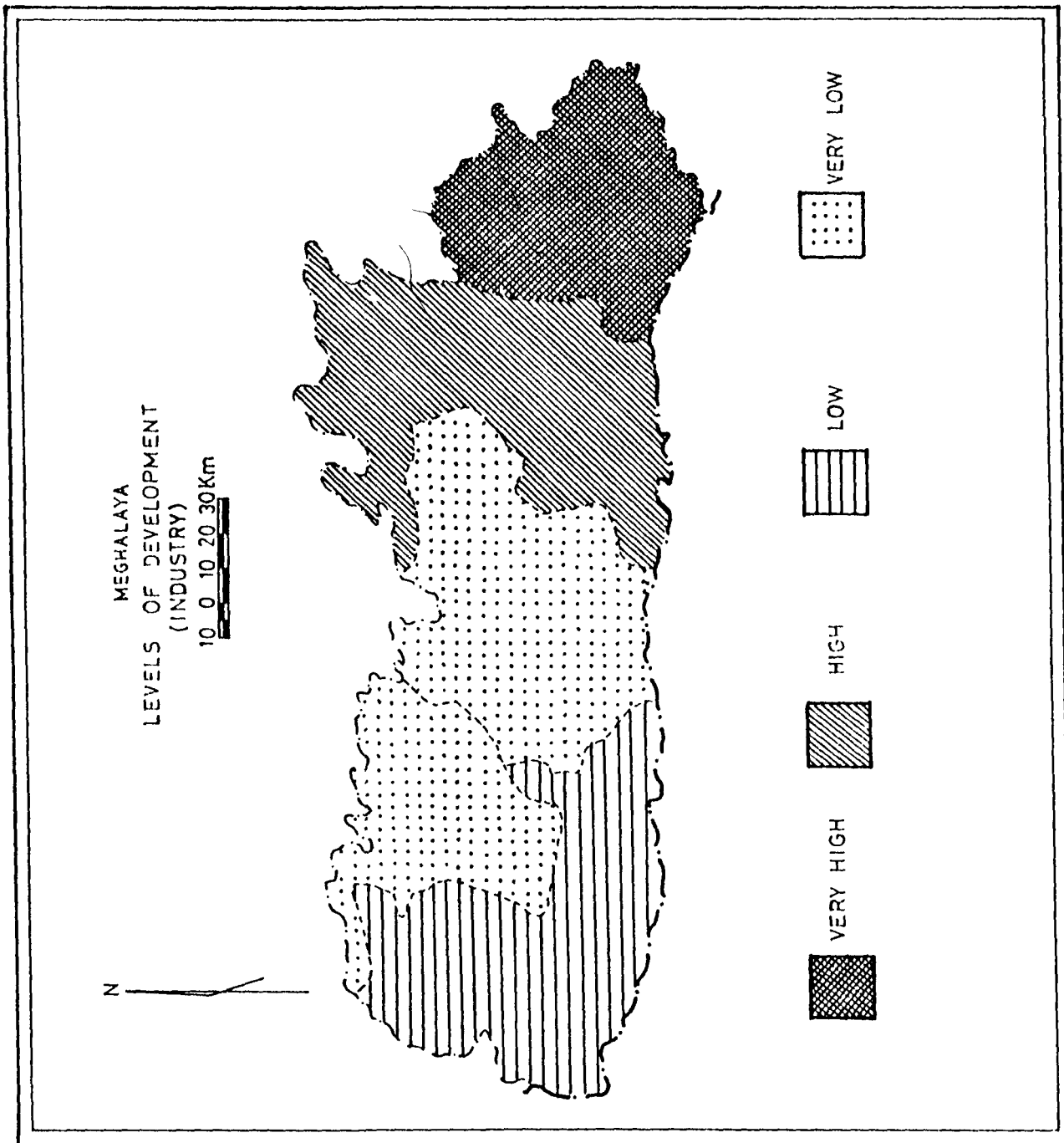


Fig. 4.3

Shillong tended to attract most of the economic and allied activities to be concentrated in and around it. "Moreover, ... secondary and tertiary sectors ... have simultaneously developed to keep pace with the urban growth".<sup>5</sup> For example, two 'industrial areas' viz. Byrnihat and Umiam Khwan have been set up in this district. West Garo Hills district shows the lowest level of development of social amenities (Fig. 4.4).

#### 4.7. Levels of Overall Development

After having seen the levels of development in turns of the four set of variables it is equally important to find out the overall levels of development or "to comprehend development in totality".<sup>6</sup>

It has been mentioned earlier also that because of the relatively early exposure and better communication facilities, location of Shillong and other socio-economic factors, the district of East Khasi Hills have achieved the highest level of development. Relatively isolated location have contributed to the underdevelopment of the East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills districts. Availability of minerals in huge quantity (Fig.4.5) its

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5. Gopalakrishnan, op.cit., p. 99.

6. Butola, op.cit., p. 179.

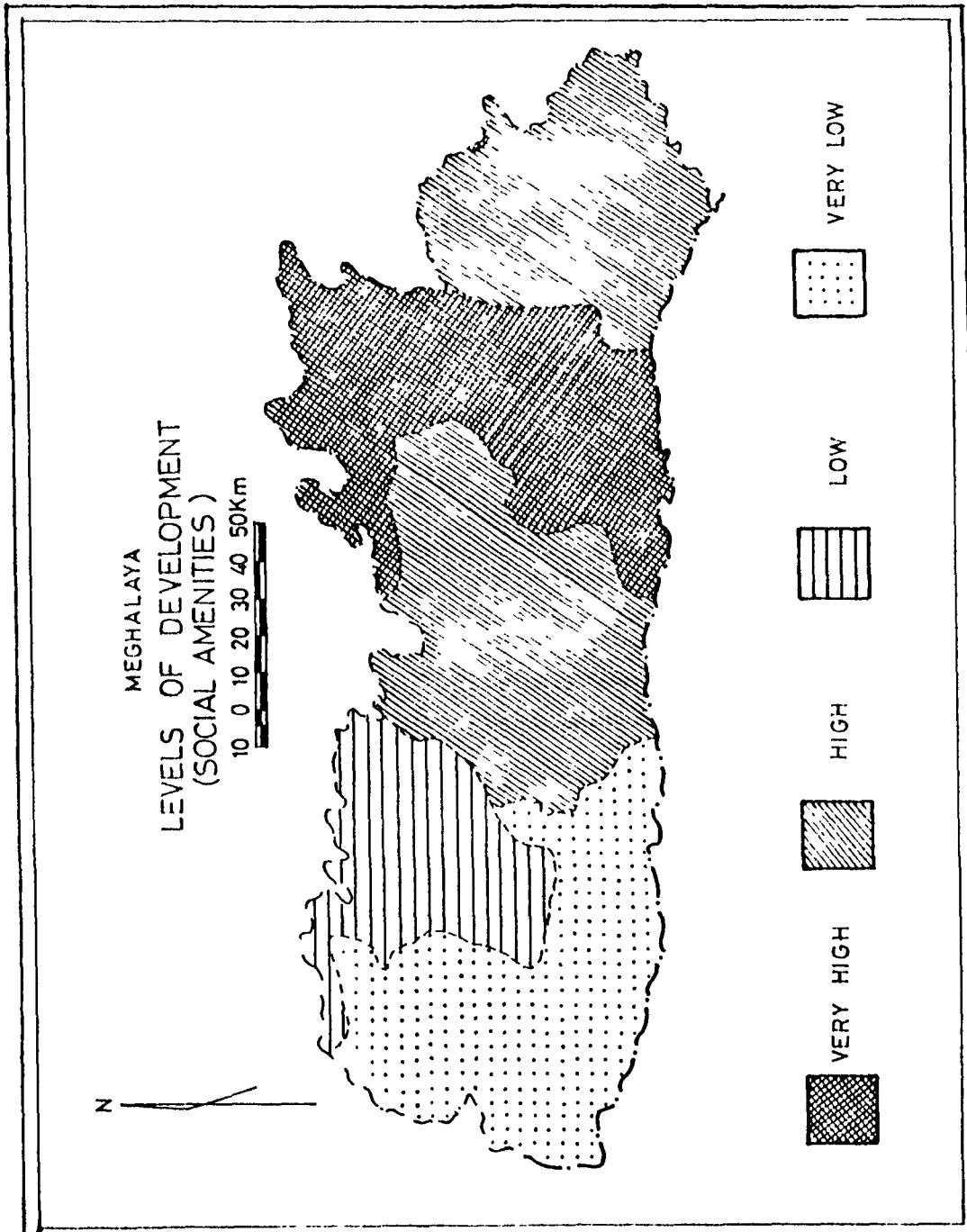


Fig. 4.4

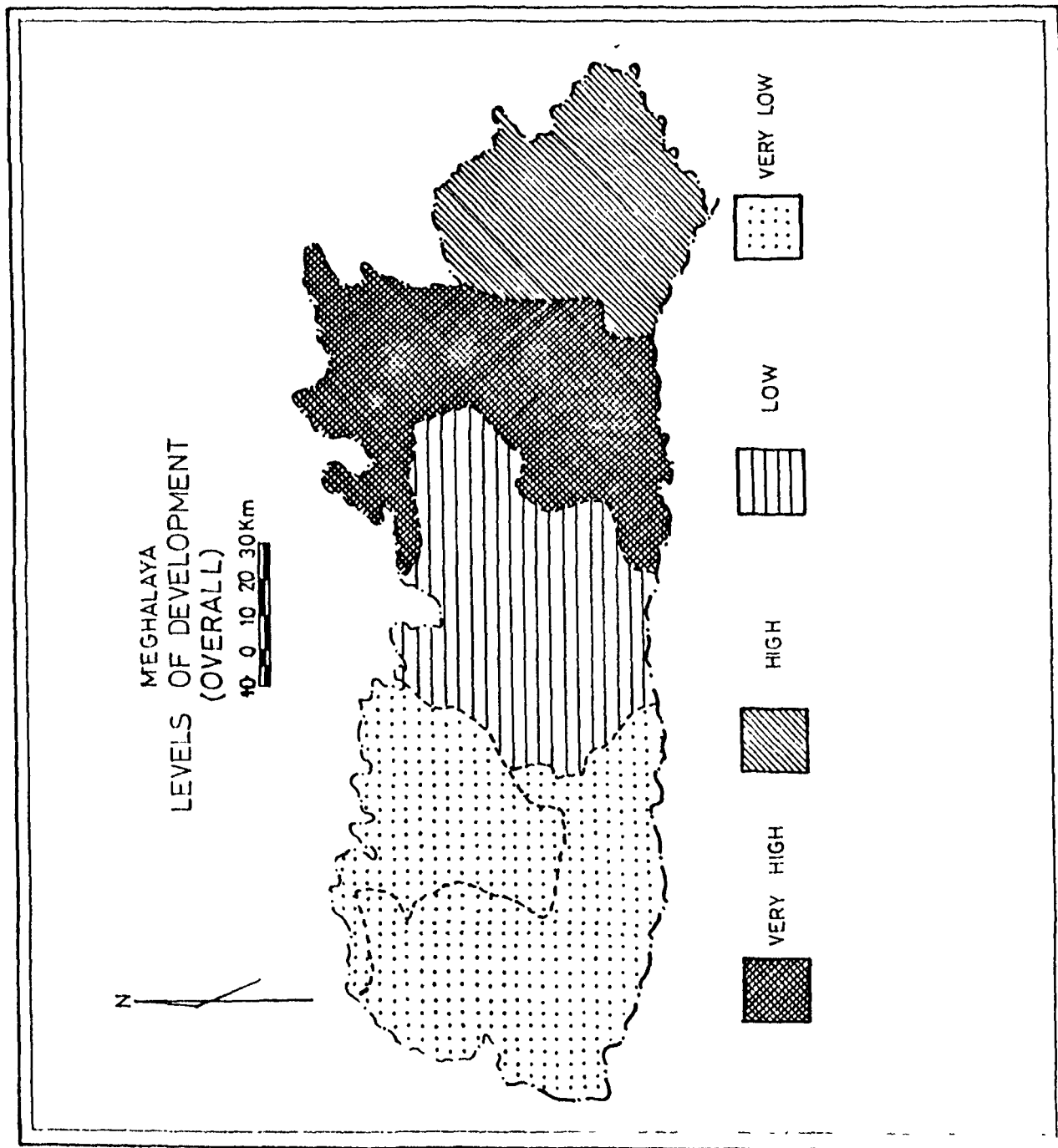


Fig. 4.5

vicinity to the state capital and its location has helped the district of Jaintia Hills to attain a higher level of development compound to the other three backward districts of the state (Table 4.9). Physiography, climate, transport and communication and other socio-cultural factors clearly exhibits their influence on the developmental process in the state.

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**CHAPTER V**

**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF DEVELOPMENT  
IN MEGHALAYA**

This chapter deals with those aspects of development in Meghalaya which have some political geographical overtones. To have a clear understanding of the present developmental process that is being carried out in the state, it is necessary to trace the necessary background that have significant bearing on existing conditions of development in the state.

### **5.1. Politico-Historical Features of Meghalaya**

Physiography and inaccessibility along with a restricted field of activity were to a large extent responsible for enforcing isolation of the tribes from the outside world. Lack of written historical records makes it difficult to know about the history of Meghalaya and its indigenous people. There is no record about the pre-historic settlements in the state. However, some references about the tribal inhabitants in the state are found in Buranjis of the Ahom rulers. In the pre-British period,<sup>1</sup> the inhabitants of the state had maintained a loose relationship with the Ahom rulers.

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1. Gopalakrishnan, R. "Levels of Development and Urbanisation", Geography of Meghalaya, Rajesh Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p. 96.

The geographical location influenced the political and social systems of Meghalaya. The splendid isolation in which the tribals lived induced them to invent their own political and social systems which are different from that of the plains.<sup>2</sup>

Garos are believed to be a section of the Bodo family both by ethnic group and language whereas the Khasis are of Indo-Mongoloid race but speak a language which is of Austric origin.<sup>3</sup>

The Khasis living in different parts have their own dialects. Based on the dialects, the community is generally divided into five groups, namely the Khyntriams of the Central Plateau, the Pnars or Jaintias in the east, the Wars in the south, the Bhois in the north, and the Lyngngams in the west.<sup>4</sup>

The Garo tribal groups consist of the following sub-tribes:

- i) Ambeng (in the western part including Tura).
- ii) Atong (in the lower Simsang valley).
- iii) Akawa (north-eastern parts and extend to Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam).
- iv) Matchi (Upper reaches; of Simsang valley).

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2. Rao, V.V., Pakem, B.B. The Khasi Political System, Book 3, p. 32.

3. Lyngdoh, H. Ka Niam Khasi, 1937, p. 5.

4. Gopalakrishnan, R. op.cit., pp. 25-26.

- v) Chibok (Upper Bhugi valley).
- vi) Ruga (Lower Bhugi valley).
- vii) Dual (Upper Simsang valley).
- viii) Chisak (north of Matchi and Dual in Central highlands).
- ix) Gao-Ganching (south-western parts and west of Atang).
- x) Kotchu (eastern parts).
- xi) Koch (south-eastern parts).
- xii) Megamo (mid-western parts).

Besides these, there are Mikirs (on the north) Lalung, Viate and Vaiphe tribes are found in the Jaintia Hills whereas Rabhas and Hajongs are found in the Garo Hills.

The process of immigration of different tribes into the state continued over a long period of time; and "an analysis of their settlement sites, types, settlement patterns and function clearly explains the inhabitants effort to adjust and exploit the environment and resources for their development".<sup>5</sup> The people living in these areas remained more or less isolated before the advent of the British. "Their economy was dominated by the practice of

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5. Ibid., p. 45.

jhum cultivation ... and ... they were engaged in making pottery and crude implements which enabled them to acquire the produce of the surrounding forests".<sup>6</sup> Their economy, in other words, was entirely forest based.

People of these hills practised their own social practices and had nurtured their own political institutions (like the 'Syiemsships' or locally called 'Hima' in the Khasi Hills and the 'Nokmaship' in the Garo Hills).

#### **Annexation of the Hill Areas by the British**

The British acquired Sylhet from the Mughals in 1765 and became the immediate neighbours to the Khasis.<sup>7</sup> The East India Company started to bring the Garo Hills under its political control by recognising the powerful local Chiefs as their Zamindars. In 1765 itself, the Mughal Emperor renounced his right to rule Goalpara and ceded it to the British.<sup>8</sup> In 1826, after the Treaty of Yandabu, the Garo Hills were transferred to Assam together with three Dewani Thanas of Bijni, Karaibari and Goalpara. "David Scott concluded agreements with a number of Nokmas and brought them under the control of the British".<sup>9</sup>

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6. Ibid., p. 45.

7. Rao, op.cit., p. 3.

8. Ibid., p. 5.

9. Ibid., p. 5.

The Company, however, had to face a number of independent and powerful local rulers in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The necessity to bring these hills under the British control was felt after the annexation of the two valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Barak as there arose a need to open a communicating line between the two villages.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the British were looking for a hill resort to escape the unhealthy conditions prevailing in the valleys.

David Scott, the Agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier, who has resided in the hills for a time during the parleys with the Jaintia Raja was delighted by the climate of the hills. He brought it to the notice of the Government that locations in the Khasi Hills could be developed for sanatory stations for Europeans in the Lower Provinces.<sup>11</sup>

Direct British contact with the interiors of the Khasi Hills began in 1826 when an agreement was reached between David Scott and the Chief of Nongkhlaw for constructing a road between Sylhet and Assam.<sup>12</sup> Raja of Nongkhlaw

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10. The road connecting Jaintiapur and Nowgong was closed as the Burmese occupied Nowgong. This road was constructed by David Scott who reached an agreement with the Syiem of Sohra (Cherrapunji) by which he secured the permission of the Syiem to construct a road from Sylhet to Assam. (Rao, 1976), p.3.
  11. Syiemlieh, D.R. "British Policy Towards the Khasi States", Studies in the History of North-East India, (Ed.) Bhattacharjee, J.B., p. 186.
  12. According to Article 2 of the Agreement, "the said Raja agrees to give a free passage for troops through his country to go and come between Assam and Sylhet."

voluntarily surrendered his independence. A series of Agreements between the British and the Khasi Chiefs followed and the local chiefs were allowed to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction over their own subjects in all matters pertaining to them; but they were required to obey the decisions of the British Government which was final.

The Raja of Cherra ceded land for a station at Cherrapunji in exchange for an equivalent in the district of Sylhet through an agreement in September 1829. In 1835, political agency was established for the administration of the affairs of Khasi Hills and Col. Lister was appointed the Political Agent.<sup>13</sup> In 1840, a perpetual lease on the local hills at Cherrapunji and Birangpunji coal mines was granted to the British Government. In 1876, these villages were brought under British control.<sup>14</sup>

Moffat Mills reported in 1853 that there were 24 Khasi chieftainships. The form of government in 1853 in the Khasi Hills; according to Rev. Lewis, was a mixed one.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Chatterjee, S.K. (Ed.) Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1985, p. 43.

14. Syam, S. Politico-Administrative Re-organisation of the North-East India (1947-1987). Unpublished M.Phil dissertation submitted to the Department of Geography, NEHU, Shillong, 1991.

15. Rao, op.cit., p. 32.

However, the names of only 21 units into which the Khasi Hills was divided can be found.<sup>16</sup> They are:

- |               |                     |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. Nongkhlaw  | 12. Nongsohpoh      |
| 2. Myliem     | 13. Maoflang        |
| 3. Maharam    | 14. Jirang          |
| 4. Shella     | 15. Longlang        |
| 5. Mariaio    | 16. Bhawal          |
| 6. Rambrai    | 17. Dwara Nongtyrem |
| 7. Sohlong    | 18. Malasohmat      |
| 8. Maolong    | 19. Maodon          |
| 9. Nongspung  | 20. Mongilwal       |
| 10. Langrin   | 21. Pomsanngut      |
| 11. Maosenram |                     |

Among these Nongkhlaw, Myliem, Langrin and Nongspung were the most important. As per an Agreement in 1830, the land "... on the south and east of the Umiam...."<sup>17</sup> was handed over to the British. "In 1863, the Chief of Myliem signed an agreement by which he ceded the lands required for the military cantonment and sanitarium of Shillong and renounced all his sovereign and personal rights therein."<sup>18</sup>

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16. Syam, op.cit., p. 113.

17. Ibid., p. 114.

18. Ibid., p. 114.

In 1864, the headquarters of the hills was shifted from Cherrapunji to Shillong.

Gradually, several treaties and agreements were signed with other chiefs and the entire Khasi Hills was annexed.

The Jaintia Hills was annexed by British in 1835 and a Political Agent was appointed in 1835.

Thus, the whole area inhabited by the Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos came under British control as the native states recognised as British sovereignty. By 1874, the entire North-Eastern region was tagged to the Assam Administration.

The native states were all small in size and some were very small by all standards. So, none of them could resist the British power from annexing their respective territories although some of them had put up brave fights to remain independent. But the superior military strength of the British was responsible for suppress the local rulers.

## **5.2. Constitutional Position of the Hill Areas**

The whole of Assam was declared to be a scheduled district under the Scheduled District Act, 1874. This was done taking into consideration the large area covered by

hills and the share of primitive tribes in the districts total population. When Assam was constituted into a Chief Commissionership, the Khasi, Jaintia and the Garo Hills were included in Assam. In 1917, the Montagu-Chemsford report recommended that the typically backward areas should be excluded from the jurisdiction of the reformed council.

The Functions Committee (the Southborough Committee) 1918, recommended that the excluded areas should be administered by the Government of India.

The Government of India agreed that all the hill areas should be excluded from the reforms but further suggested that some areas which are not completely backward can be subjected to the introduction of certain reforms. The Chief Commissioner included the Garo Hills in the list of the completely excluded areas list and the Khasi Hills in the second.

The Khasis and Jaintias in the British enclaves demanded representation in the Legislative Council but not the Garos ... (and) ... the Syiems and their subjects of the Khasi States were not in favour of their inclusion in the Reformed Council.<sup>19</sup>

In 1919, the Governor-General in Council declared the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills (excepting the Shillong

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19. Rao, op.cit., p. 7.

Municipal Area and the Cantonment in the Khasi Hills) as backward areas through the Government of India Act, 1919. He also framed a rule by which all cases affecting the backward areas affecting the backward areas were made compulsory to be taken to his notice.<sup>20</sup>

The constitutional position of the hill areas was discussed when the Simon Commission visited this province. The Government of Assam advocated for the exclusion of the hill areas (except Shillong Municipal Area) on the plea that "... the union of the Hills and Plains was artificial, resented by both".<sup>21</sup> The Legislative Council considered the hill districts as deficit district and hence as a burden on their finance. The Government of Assam advocated the exclusion of the hill areas from the Province for another reason, i.e. defence. It said that the Government of India should take over the administration of these areas for their strategic and military importance.

In 1930, after much deliberation on the question of inclusion or exclusion of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills, the Government of Assam, in their supplementary memorandum to the Simon Commission, recommended the inclusion

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20. Ibid., p. 7.

21. Ibid., p. 8.

of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills in the Reforms Scheme.<sup>22</sup> The Commission recommends the classification of the backward areas into 'Excluded' and 'Partially Excluded' areas; but the Commission failed to give any specific indicator for the identification of such areas.

"The Commission also recommended that the term backward which would offend the tender feelings of the tribals should be replaced by the term excluded ...."<sup>23</sup> The Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills were classified as partially excluded areas by the Sixth Schedule of the Government of India Act, 1935. But soon, there was disagreement among the government officials and politicians about the tribal problem and the Government withdrew the entire Sixth Schedule. However, after much deliberations and discussions, the Government recommended the partial exclusion of the Khasi, Jaintia and the Garo Hills and its was accepted; and the Order in Council containing the recommendation was issued on 3rd March 1936.<sup>24</sup> The exclusion was criticised by the Indian National Congress. In 1940, the problem was referred to the Bordoloi Committee. The Committee discussed the problem with the Hill leaders and made some recommendations which were included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution.

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22. Ibid., p. 9.

23. Ibid., p. 10.

24. Ibid., p. 11.

### 5.3. Process of State Formation

During independence of India in 1947, the whole of North-eastern region of the country had only three administrative divisions – the Assam Province and the Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura. The Indian Constitution Order of 1947, placed all these areas (except Tripura and Manipur) under the direct charge of the Government of Assam. But based on the recommendations made by the Bordoloi Committee, the hill districts were again placed under the authority of the Governor of Assam in 1950.

The process of territorial and administrative adjustments over time and space, gave the region its unique characteristics of heterogeneity. This later aspect extended its influences on various regional activities in the form of variations in socio-political and economic representation and participation of the population groups and sub-groups.<sup>25</sup>

Rev. Nichols Roy, a versatile politician made a number of suggestions from time to time. He suggested the integration of the Khasi States but was against the conversion of these areas into a crown colony. He advocated for a Legislative Council for the Khasi federated states and keep it "... in some ways connected with the Province of Assam".<sup>26</sup> However, in 1954, he gave his "... moral support

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25. Syam, op.cit., p. 122.

26. Rao, op.cit., p. 37.

to (the) demand for a Hill State...."<sup>27</sup> The Government of Assam was opposed to the formation of Hill States. The demand for a separate hill state became forceful under the leadership of Captain Sangma and continued to gain momentum.<sup>28</sup> The General Elections of 1957 to the Legislative Assembly and Parliament were fought on the issue of Hill State and the tremendous success of the supporters of the Hill State at the poll made them more vocal about their demand. All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC), in its Third Conference held at Haflong on the 10th November 1960, demanded a separate State for the Hill areas of Assam. But this demand was rejected by the Centre on several grounds like geographical heterogeneity and lack of contiguity of the hill areas, financial problems, small area of these hills etc. The APHLC decided to campaign for the realization of the hill state and called upon the people of these areas to launch a non-violent Satyagraha. Nehru, "... promised ninety nine per cent autonomy for the Hill Areas provided they remain within Assam".<sup>29</sup>

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27. Ibid., p. 38.

28. Captain Sangma was then the Chief Executive Member of the Garo Hills District Council. He said that the Sixth Schedule did not provide adequate safeguard for the preservation of the identity of race, language and culture of the Hill people.

29. Ibid., p. 46.

As a result of the discussion of the APHLC leaders with the Prime Minister of India and Chief Minister of Assam, the Government of India announced its Federal plan on January 13, 1967, and decided to reorganise Assam on the basis of federation; giving the hill areas equal status with rest of the State of Assam. There would be equal distribution of powers and functions. "The subjects of common interest would be the Governor, the High Court, the Accountant General, Electricity, flood control, major irrigation, inter-state transport, communication, food supply and national security".<sup>30</sup> The APHLC welcomed the federal plan but the Government of Assam rejected the plan. On 11th September 1968, the Government of India announced its plan of reorganization of Assam which contemplated the creation of an autonomous Hill State which was opposed by the Government of Assam.

### 5.3.1. Autonomous State of Meghalaya

Meghalaya<sup>31</sup> was formed as the Autonomous State by virtue of the Assam Re-organisation (Meghalaya) Act, 1969. The autonomous state was inaugurated on April 2,

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30. Ibid., p. 56.

31. The term 'Meghalaya' was coined by S.P. Chatterjee, Professor Emeritus, Geography Department, Calcutta University. The term in Sanskrit means 'the abode of clouds'.

1970, and consisted of the two Hill districts of (erstwhile) Assam – the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district and the Garo Hills district. Earlier, the Bill for the Constitution of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya was introduced in the Lok Sabha on December 10, 1968. The same Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on December 24, 1969.

The major proposals made for the new autonomous State were:

- 1) The autonomous state would have a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers.
- 2) Fifty nine of the 66 subjects in the State List would be transferred to the Autonomous State of Meghalaya. (Highways, Major Projects, hydro electricity, drainage, storage, irrigation and flood control would be under the Autonomous State of Meghalaya).
- 3) The Autonomous State would have the power of taxation in certain respect.
- 4) The bills passed by the Legislative Assembly of the Autonomous State shall be submitted to the Governor for his assent.

- 5) The Legislative State would have representation in the Assam Legislative Assembly and Cabinet.
- 6) The District Councils would continue with their present powers and functions. They would be given more powers and would be under the administrative control of the Autonomous State.
- 7) Shillong would continue to be the capital of Assam and Autonomous State and the former would have jurisdiction over it.
- 8) The Autonomous State would continue to be a part of Assam and yet independent of Assam in certain respects.

#### **5.3.2. Attainment of Statehood**

A section of the APHLC members who were extremists, in the sense that, they were for a full-fledged state left the party after the creation of the Autonomous State and formed Hill State People's Democratic Party (HSPDP) 15 days after the inauguration of the Autonomous State, the APHLC requested the Prime Minister to grant total statehood to Meghalaya on the ground that Manipur and Tripura would be States. On 30th September, 1970, the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly passed a resolution by a unanimous vote requesting the Government of India to give Meghalaya the status of

a full-fledged state. On 10th November, the Prime Minister informed the Lok Sabha about the Government's decision to accept in principle the demand of Meghalaya as a State. On 21st January 1972, Meghalaya became the 21st State of India under the North-Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act, 1971, when the then Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi formally inaugurated the statehood.

The State was to be represented by two members in the Lok Sabha and one in the Rajya Sabha. The total strength of the Legislative Assembly was fixed at 60 out of which 50 were reserved for the tribals and 10 for non-tribals. However, owing to some criticisms about the reservation for the majority community, it was abolished by an amendment. All the sixty members of the Legislative Assembly were to be elected from single member constituencies.

"As far as possible they shall be compact geographically".<sup>32</sup> The boundaries of the constituencies would be demarcated after taking into consideration their "... physical features, facilities for communication and the existing administrative divisions"<sup>33</sup> and their will not be overlapping

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32. Rao, *op.cit.*, p. 71.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

of boundaries of the Lok Sabha and the State Assembly Constituencies and the decisions of the Election Commission in this regard will be final.

The Governor of Assam will also act as the Governor of Meghalaya. Provisions were made for the establishment of a Bench of the Guwahati High Court in Shillong and the creation of a separate Public Service Commission for Meghalaya. The capital of Assam was shifted from Shillong to Dispur (near Guwahati).

#### **5.4. Evolution of Politico-Administrative and Developmental Units in the State**

The Autonomous State of Meghalaya had two districts – the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills. On 21st February 1972, the Jaintia Hills was separated from the Khasi Hills. It was upgraded from the status of Sub-division to that of a separate district with its headquarters at Jowai. On 22nd October 1976, the Garo Hills district was divided into two districts; East Garo Hills and West Garo Hills districts with headquarters at Williamnagar and Tura respectively. Six days later, on the 28th October 1976, the Khasi Hills district was divided into East Khasi Hills district with its headquarters at Shillong and West Khasi Hills district with its headquarters at Nongstoin. "The reason given for these divisions was administrative and developmental expediency".<sup>34</sup>

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34. Gopalakrishnan, op.cit., p. 3.

Subsequent to this, to bring about greater administrative control and for better management of developmental efforts, specific areas were created and designated as sub-divisions. There are at present 10 such sub-divisions in the State. They are:

<u>Name of the District</u>	<u>Name of the Sub-divisions</u>
1. Jaintia Hills	a) Amlarem b) Khliehriat
2. East Khasi Hills	a) Ri Bhoi b) Mairang c) Sohra
3. West Khasi Hills	a) Mawkyrwat
4. East Garo Hills	a) Resubelpara b) Dadengiri
5. West Garo Hills	a) Baghmara

#### 5.4.1. Evolution of Community Development Blocks

The districts and even the sub-divisions were found to be too big to supervise, implement and manage developmental activities in them. So, in order to carry out development activities in a more practical and meaningful order the whole state was divided into a number of community development blocks. These blocks are taken as the smallest unit for carrying out developmental planning. Till 1981, there were 24 developmental blocks and by 1991 there were 30 such blocks (Fig. 5.1). They are:



<u>Name of the District</u>	<u>Names of the Community Development Blocks</u>
1. Jaintia Hills	1. Laskein 2. Khliehriat 3. Thadlaskein 4. Amlarem
2. East Khasi Hills	1. Bhoi Area 2. Mawryngkneng 3. Myllem 4. Mawphlang 5. Pynursla 6. Shella-Bholaganj 7. Mawsynram 8. Mawkynrew 9. Nongpoh
3. West Khasi Hills	1. Mairang 2. Mawkyrwat 3. Nongstoin 4. Mawshynreit
4. East Garo Hills	1. Resubelpara 2. Dembo-Ronsong 3. Sonsak 4. Samanda

<u>Name of the District</u>	<u>Names of the Community Development Blocks</u>
5. West Garo Hills	1. Rongpara
	2. Betasing
	3. Dambu Aga
	4. Chokpot
	5. Dalu
	6. Zikzak
	7. Rongram
	8. Dadenggiri
	9. Selsella

Thus, at present the whole State of Meghalaya is divided into five districts, 10 sub-divisions and 30 community development blocks.

#### **5.5. Politico-Administrative Structure and Economic Development in Meghalaya**

Politics has a great influence on the economic development of any region as it has a profound impact on the administrative system. Administrative policies can also be policies of development since, most of them are largely designed for the welfare of a particular area, region, state or country and its people.

The political structure erected by every group of people is an ideal device that facilitated the considerations of economic and social life of the community such as the traditional Durbars and the District Councils.<sup>35</sup>

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35. Syam, op.cit., p. 172.

There are variations in administration in different parts of the country and it nonetheless important to remember that many of these variations are the results of geographical compulsions. In many cases, particularly in the north-eastern region of the country it can be found that many of the traditional administrative systems and institutions have continued to co-exist and operate being superimposed on the modern administrative structures. This has ensured speedy development in some cases while in many cases this aspect has been the bone of contention and a major obstacle in the whole process of development.

#### 5.5.1. Indigenous Administrative Institutions

All the tribes of the state had a primary place of territory in the form of a village and the role of village chief in the administration was very important because, interaction among the villages was at a very low level. However, village chiefs were primarily concerned with the defence, administration of justice and management of land. Land was the resource on which all sorts of developmental activities were based.

The annexation of the hills by the British saw the emergence of a new administrative pattern in the State where Laskars (in Garo Hills), Syiems (in Khasi Hills), and Dollois (in Jaintia Hills) held the most prominent positions in their respective areas.

Village Councils were made up of the village elders who represented and guided the entire population of the village and directed administration and development of their respective territories but these indigenous institutions were not concerned with the "... basic needs of the people like public health and communications".<sup>36</sup>

The traditional set up was safeguarded by laws enacted from time to time by the indigenous tribal institutions such as the allocation of land which had resulted into the emergence and continuation of distinctive patterns of landholding in different parts of the state. For example, the Ri Raid (community land) and Ri Kynti (individual land) of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Ri Kur is the land belonging to the members of a particular clan. The management of such categories of land is done by the respective community, individual and clan to which they belong. These traditional institutions operate even today side by side along with the modern administrative machineries.

#### 5.5.2. District Councils

The second category of local authorities in Meghalaya is the District Councils established in 1952. At first, there were only two district councils, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills. In 1966, Jowai District Council was established.

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1. Rao, op.cit., p. 151.

The Bordoloi Committee recommended the formation of suitable administrative machinery like district councils, through which the tribals would be able to look after themselves. The Committee also recommended that the following subjects should be left with these proposed district councils:

- i) Power of legislation over the occupation and use of land other than land comprising reserved forests.
- ii) Control of jhumming.
- iii) Administration of justice.
- iv) Management of village forests.
- v) Regulation of agriculture.
- vi) Taxation on certain subjects.
- vii) Licensing money lenders and traders from the plains.
- viii) Share in the revenue of minerals.

Ambedkar defended the creation of the District Councils in the Constituent Assembly.<sup>37</sup> He was of the view that to bring about a gradual integration of the Hills and the plains; the political aspirations of the people in these areas should be satisfied which would also ensure protection of the frontier of the country where these tribal people live.

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37. Rao, op.cit., p. 163.

### **Powers and Functions of the District Councils**

District Councils in Meghalaya have four kinds of powers and functions. They are:

- i) Legislative,
- ii) Executive,
- iii) Financial, and
- iv) Judicial.

The District Council has power to make laws on certain subjects. They include among others, land, forests (other than reserved forests), water for agricultural use, jhumming, town and village councils, village police, public health, trading by persons other than scheduled tribes etc.

The District Council is empowered to execute its decisions on subjects pertaining to establishment, constructive and management of primary and middle schools, dispensaries, markets, forest, road, waterways and can determine the language that must be used as the medium of instruction in schools.

As far as financial functions of the District Council are concerned, it has the power to assess and collect land revenue, levy a tax on land, buildings, tolls, on persons residing within the district, on professions and

trades, on the entry of goods, on the maintenance of schools, dispensaries and roads and can also issue licences or leases for extracting minerals.

The District Council may constitute Village Courts, Additional Subordinate District Council Courts and District Council Courts and may appoint suitable persons as judges of these courts.

In 1971, more functions<sup>38</sup> were entrusted to the District Council. They include agriculture, public works, flood control, irrigation, soil conservation, animal husbandry, veterinary services, fisheries, forests, Panchayat Raj and community development, cottage industries, roads and buildings and family planning.

Forests are the major source of income for the District Councils in Meghalaya and constitute about 65 per cent of its total income. Substantial amount of its expenditure is met from the Grants-in-aid allotted to it by the State Government.

### 5.5.3. Union-State Relations

The role of the relationship between the Centre

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38. The District Council has no power to make laws on the entrusted functions. It simply acts as the Agent of the State Government. If a District Council does not perform these functions properly, the State Government may take over these development departments.

and the States government is of immense importance for the economic development of the states, and in turn, for the whole country. The division of powers between the Centre and the State is laid down in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.

The distribution of revenue resources is especially critical in determining the nature of the states' relationship to the Center. The Union's tax resources as specified in the constitution are considerably greater than those of the states, ... thus the states are open to Union intervention. The states are further dependent upon the Center for grants-in-aid.<sup>39</sup>

The sources of revenue allotted to the states are 'comparatively inelastic and inadequate'. Article 275 of the Constitution provides grant of various amounts to Meghalaya by the Centre from year to year for developmental schemes. Besides the statutory grants, there are Plan Grants which are discretionary in nature as these grants are conditional. These grants constitute 75 per cent of the grant-in-aid to the state. These grants "circumscribe the freedom of the States in the matter of formulation of plans according to individual needs..." and "... has given the Central Government a powerful leverage in influencing the policies and programmes of the states even in spheres such as education, medical and public health".<sup>40</sup> Besides grants, the

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39. Hardgrave, op.cit., p. 86.

40. Rao, op.cit., p. 20.

Central Government give loans and provide assistance during natural calamities. It can obviously be expected that the Government at the Centre would help those states more where the same political party forms the government. In this the role played by the MPs of the State seems to be very important.

#### **5.5.4. Role of the North-Eastern Council**

The heterogeneous character of the entire north-eastern region and existence of small states in the area has created the problem of coordination of the development programmes. Geopolitically this region is very important as no other parts of the country is situated in such a strategically important location. All these states lack even the basic elements required for rapid economic development. In order to coordinate in different spheres of development the North-Eastern Council (NEC) was created in 1972.

Different spheres of development in which the states can cooperate with each other and the NEC can coordinate their activities include water resource, flood control, power generation and distribution, development of transport and communication network etc.

The future prosperity of the region lies on the

degree of dependence of one part of the region to the other and although the north-eastern region is politically divided into minor units, no "political separation can undo the geographical factor". All these have necessitated the existence of the NEC which is playing an important role in economic development of the whole region including that of Meghalaya. In order to attract large investments both from the public and the private sectors, a common organisation like NEC is most needed. It can also supply the necessary technical expertise for rapid economic development in which the state, like its counterparts in the region, is lagging behind.

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**OBSERVATIONS  
AND  
MAJOR FINDINGS**

The present study, notwithstanding its visible limitations, has been able to reveal some important observations and findings. They are briefly stated below:

The State of Meghalaya is small both in terms of its area and population in the national context. It is located in the peripheral (north-eastern) region of the country and its remoteness is accentuated by the fact that it is a hilly landlocked state with inadequate and underdeveloped transport network and communication facilities.

Diverse physical features like hills, valleys and plains provide scope for comparatively diverse economic activities like shifting cultivation, permanent agriculture, pisciculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, lumbering etc.

The drainage system as well as the relief of the State does not allow the setting up of any large scale irrigation projects in the state. Most of the water resources in the state is untapped and needs to be given more emphasis for the economic development of the state. Water transport in the state has very little prospect and scope

for development. However, with the adoption of suitable technology the numerous drainage channels can be interconnected to form reservoirs that can then supply water for domestic, agricultural and industrial purposes. This is a distinct potential as well as one that is feasible.

The land management system in the state is not scientific. Under the existing land tenure system in the state where the Government has no right over the land, comprehensive policy planning for land management and its implementation is very difficult. This results in underutilization of land and other related resources like minerals. This has also resulted into large scale tree felling and fast depletion of forests in the state. Large scale deforestation coupled with other phenomena like shifting cultivation and heavy rainfall has resulted in other major problems like soil erosion and occurrence of flood in the lowlying areas in the lower altitudes of the state.

The State lacks in adequate skilled labour force, scientific extraction of its mineral resources and capital investment. All these attract technologically skilled immigrants and capital investors from outside the state which leads to inter-ethnic conflicts and various complex issues of socio-economic, including political adjustments. This, then suggests that the State is strategically important

because of its location in the border area and in a peripheral region of the country.

Climate plays an important role in the spatial interaction and development of the State. Some climatic advantages propelled development of administrative centres in the area leading to immigration, urbanisation and development of the tourism industry in the state. Modernisation in the true sense was initiated by the colonial rulers. But, it mainly aimed at consolidating the political and administrative control over the state. This had led to the integration of the interior and isolated areas within the overall colonial framework for buttressing their exploitative interest. The state was to some extent subjected to the colonial exploitative mechanism particularly of forest and mineral resources.

The state is numerically dominated by the scheduled tribes who have remained isolated from the areas around the hills for centuries and thus have developed their own socio-cultural institutions and distinct economic situation and system largely modified by their surrounding environment. The economy is primarily agrarian in nature and the secondary sector is weak in the state. The tertiary sector is relatively developed which has its routes in the colonial past when the area came under the British imperialism.

Urban centres are also the nodes of economic development in the state and continues to attract resources for further development. Areas or villages nearer to these urban centres enjoy better communication facilities and social amenities compared to the interior areas.

The concentration of different ethnic groups in different parts of the state is a result of the long politico-historical process that the north-eastern region in general, and Meghalya in particular, have witnessed throughout the history.

The changes in the politico-administrative boundaries and political system (both internal and external) led to changes in the economic linkages, economic activities and population structure of the state.

With changes in the political systems and reorganisation of administrative units, the political demands of the people have undergone changes and their concept about development has also changed under different political systems.

Different politico-administrative units show different levels of economic development. East Khasi Hills district by virtue of the location of the state capital at Shillong and other factors conducive for economic develop-

ment, has achieved the highest level of development among all the districts.

Availability of minerals in huge quantity and the vicinity of Jaintia Hills to the state capital and the location of important transport network has helped the Jaintia Hills district to attain a better level of economic development compared to other three relatively backward districts of the state.

It emerges from the study that the State of Meghalaya due to its smallness – both in size and its population and because of being located in the border area in the peripheral north-eastern region of the country, faces a number of obstacles that hinder its economic development. This is accentuated by its relief features, climate and lack of proper infrastructure for sustained economic development like proper transport and communication facilities, adequate supply of power and investment of capital. Lack of skilled labour and absence of modern technology for scientific exploitation of resources are other important factors that are, at present, retarding the economic development of the state.

The fluid ethnic and political situation in the state, like other parts of the north-eastern region does

not allow smooth economic development and needs prompt political solution to the problem. Traditional socio-political institutions of the tribals play an important role in the development process of the state and there is a great need of involving such institutions in the whole planning process in order to bring about sustained economic development at the grass root level by involving the people in the development process which will perhaps create a more conducive social atmosphere for economic development.

The problems of the border areas and the most interior areas in their economic development need attention at a priority basis and in this aspect also, political forces may play a very vital role.

All these aspects of the present study can be looked into in more details in future and may be a subject of further study.

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