

RE-ORGANIZATION  
OF  
NORTH-EAST INDIA

*(Facts and Documents)*

B.B. KUMAR

## **ABOUT THE BOOK**

The North-East region of the India consisted of the State of Assam and Princely states of Manipur and Tripura in pre-independence period. The State of Asam was gradually re-organized into the States of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. The two princely states became part C states, then union territories, and finally, the states of the Indian Union.

The book tells the tale of re-organization. The relevant documents are annexed in the book.

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DEDICATED TO  
THE MEMORY OF  
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## *Preface*

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The emergence of Seven North-Eastern States—Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh—was the result of the Re-organization of North-East India and the dismemberment of Assam due to diverse historical, social, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, administrative and constitutional factors. The existing frame-work of linguistic and bigger States was challenged for the first time in North-East resulting into the formation of Nagaland. The processes further continued and Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were born. The initial attempt to satisfy various ethnic groups by giving District Level Autonomy could not satisfy them.

The need of an additional instrument for Regional Planning was acutely felt after the Re-organization of the region into smaller States. This necessitated the establishment of North-East Council.

The Book deals with the Re-organization of North-Eastern India in light of various facts and the documents. The historical, administrative and constitutional documents are given in the Annexures for reference and further use.

The author shall heartily welcome any comment and criticism on this book from any corner.

**B.B. Kumar**

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# 1

## *Introduction*

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**N**orth-East India consists of the States of Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. This area is strategically placed. It has international boundaries with China, Burma, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Except for Brahmaputra, Surma and Imphal Valleys, most of the area is hilly.

The valleys are predominantly inhabited by Hindus and Muslims. Christianity has taken deep roots in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and the hills of Manipur. Most of the people of Arunachal follow Buddhism and Animism. Nocte Nagas follow Vishnuite faith. Tripuris are mostly Hindus.

Assamese and Bengali spoken in Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys, are Indo-Aryan languages. Nagamese is a pidgin based on Assamese, which is slowly becoming a creole. Languages on Tibetan border in Arunachal Pradesh such as Mompá and Mempa are dialects of Tibetan. A large number of dialects of Central Arunachal Pradesh such as Nishi (previously known as Dafla) Apatani, Hill-Miri and numerous Adi (previously known as Abor) dialects like Padam, Miniyong, Galong, Bokar, Ashing, Borí, Marke, Lodung, Milang, Pailibo, Panggi, Pasi, Ramo, Shimong, Tagin and Tangam differ very little from each other and are mutually intelligible. Mishing (Miri) of Assam also comes under this category.

Three Mishmi dialects of Lohit District of Arunachal namely Taraon (Digrao), Idu (Chulikata) and Mizu (Kaman) differ very much from each other. Akas and Sherdukpens speak distinct languages. The same is true with Khamtis and Singphos.

An area of great linguistic variety is located on Indo-Burma border from Tirap district of Arunachal through Nagaland to North, East and West Hill districts of Manipur, where about three dozen Naga dialects are spoken. Except for Konyak of Nagaland and Wancho of Arunachal and Angami and Chokri of Nagaland, almost all the Naga dialects differ considerably from each other. These languages not only differ phonetically, lexically and syntactically from each other but practically each of them also show dialectical variations. As for example, Tangsa Naga dialect has about one dozen dialects such as Moklum, Longcang, Havi, Mosang, Moran, Tikhak, Panthei (Hoshang), Jogli (Yogli), Kimsing, Bongran, Longri and Longphi. Nocte Naga is a distinct language.

The language of northern and central Nagaland like Ao, Sangtam, Chang, Phom, Yimchunger, Khiamngan and Lotha and that of southern Nagaland like Angami, Sema, Rengma, and Chakhesang (Kheja, Chokri and Pochury) show considerable point of contact and similarities, Zemi, Liangmei and Rongmei Naga languages and Karbi (also known as Mikir) of Assam show link with the Bodo and Kuki-Chin languages. Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Maring etc. of Manipur link Naga and Kuki-Chin languages.

Numerous Kuki-chin dialects spoken in southern Manipur, Mizoram and parts of Tripura and Assam are divided into Old and New Kuki groups. Most of the Kuki-chin clans claim their languages to be distinct due to non-linguistic reasons as there is practically very little difference between the languages spoken by them. However, Kom, Anal, Gangte, Vaiphei, Purum, Hiroi (Lamgang), Koireng, Purum etc. come under old Kuki and Simte, Thadou (known as Kuki in Nagaland) Haokip etc. are known as New Kuki dialects. Meithei (or Manipuri) and Mizo (previously known as Lushai) are also Kuki-chin languages. Manipuri is a literary language. Mizo is developing very fast. Aimol, Allam, Banjogi, Baite, Paite, Chimbok, Chibon, Cha, Chinmei, Chiru, Kolrhen, Kom, Khami, Khyangsho, Langrong, Lakher, Lai Paite, Pankhu, Ralte, Rangkhoh, Jiroi-Lamgang, Siyin, Sokte etc. are other

Kuki-chin groups. Numerous Boro languages — such as Boro, Dimasa Kachari, Laluing, Rabha, Hojai, Koch etc. of Assam, Garo of Meghalaya, Kok-Borok (Tripura) and Reang of Tripura differ very little from each other.

All these languages spoken in North-East India are Tibeto-Burman languages.

Khasi language of Meghalaya belongs to Austric family Ahom (now dead) and Khamti which were considered to belong to Siami-Chinese family in reality belongs to Austro-Thai. This is a major departure from earlier stand.

Mundas, Santhals and Hos (Tea-garden labourers) speak Munda dialects of Austric family. Kurukh (or Oraon) and Sadari (Nagpuri) spoken in the tea gardens are Dravidian and Aryan languages respectively.

It is true that there is great linguistic variety in this part of the country but it is also equally true that our emphasis in all these years was to search for the differences rather than to search for the thread of unity running through them.

The people of this region followed different kinds of polity, which may be summed up as follows :

- i) In Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Cachar and Jayantia hills there existed monarchies. While the areas under Ahom, Cachar and Jayantia kings were merged in the British State of Assam, Manipur and Tripura continued to have their kings under British paramountcy.
- ii) The Khasis, Mizos, Sema and Konyak, Nagas etc. had their tribal chiefs. While there was moderation and dilution of Khasi "Syiems" powers by the super imposed democratic system, the Mizo Chiefs had perfect autocratic power.
- iii) Most of the tribes had their village tribal councils with different degrees of political, administrative and judicial powers.
- iv) Some tribals, like Angami Nagas followed ultra-democratic norms in running their village and community affairs.

The tribes of North-East India are rich in colour and variety in their dresses and customs, social structures, norms, beliefs, values, material culture etc.

Some of the tribes such as Angami and Chakhesang Nagas, Apatanis and Mompas followed advanced terraced cultivation with indigenously developed methods of irrigation. Most of the others followed primitive methods of Jhuming.

The Nagas prefer to have their villages on hil tops, whereas many other tribes prefer to settle near river-banks. Availability of abundant fertile land, water sources and security conditions were supreme factors in the selection of the village sites.

The houses built by different tribes differ in their sizes, materials used and in other details. In the extreme north, many tribes such as Mompas, Khambas and Membas build stone houses. Their neighbours in the south use bamboo and wood for house construction. The houses of the Adis and a large number of tribes are of platform type. They have anthropozoological latrines. Aos, Kukis, Mikirs etc. also have machang type houses. The Angamis build their houses on ground. Lotha houses are of Machang type, but they often cover it with earth. The Changs build their houses partly on ground with part of the house extending on raised platforms. The same is the case with many Kuki tribes.

Many tribal-chiefs such as Adi, Angami and Sema chiefs have larger houses, while some have smaller ones. Use of nails or metals is taboo in house-building in the case of a large number of tribes. Some tribes like Angamis keep domestic animals inside the house, while some others like Semas do not do so. Many tribes such as Rengmas build their granaries outside the village. Many tribes such as Akas prefer to build it near their houses.

Khasis build their houses on raised plinths on the ground.

Some tribes build houses on two sides of the streets. Some have scattered houses without following a proper village design.

The design and the colour of the clothes used and the dresses of various tribes greatly vary. Most of the tribes have settled habits and they have old and very big villages. Some others like Kuki-chin tribes, Karbis, Semas etc. had migratory habits with usually smaller villages.

Most of the tribes are patriarchal and patrilocal, and nuolocal after the birth of first child. Khasis and Garos are matriarchal. They usually have the nuclear family.

The degree of modernization and literacy varies from tribe to tribe. The literacy is highest in Mizoram and lowest in Arunachal Pradesh.

The Ahoms followed paik-system and revenue was collected in terms of labour. The same was true with Manipur. Thus, cash was in a very limited circulation. British introduced cash economy but huge money circulation started only after independence.

The phenomenal growth of schools, colleges, universities and professional institutions is a post independence phenomena. There were limited number of schools and colleges and no university in the region before independence. Gauhati University was started only after independence. The Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh had no college before 1947.

The rail link was cut off due to partition and was restored only after independence. New roads were constructed in every part of the region. The construction of new roads got impetus after Chinese aggression.

The region was pioneer in the field of tea and petroleum production. However, industrialization continued to be slow, rather very slow and many industrial schemes were not successful.

## **North-East Region During Independence**

The North-East India at the time of independence consisted of :—

1. The province of Assam, which has the following districts :—
  - (a) Brahmaputra Valley Districts :
    - i) Goalpara;
    - ii) Kamrup;
    - iii) Nowgong;
    - iv) Darrang;
    - v) Sibsagar; and
    - vi) Lakhimpur.

- (b) Surma Valley Districts :
    - i) Cachar; and
    - ii) Sylhet.
  - (c) Hill Districts :
    - i) Garo hills;
    - ii) United Khasi and Jaintiya hills;
    - iii) Naga hills; and
    - iv) Lushai hills.
2. The North East Frontier Tracts consisting of :—
- (a) Balipara frontier tract later on divided into :
    - i) Kameng Frontier Division; and
    - ii) Subansiri Frontier Division.
  - (b) Abor Hills district later on named as Siang Frontier Division; and
  - (c) Mishni Frontier district later on named as Lohit Frontier Division;
  - (d) Tirap Frontier; and
  - (e) The Naga or Tuensang Frontier Tract.
3. The Princely States were :—
- (a) Manipur;
  - (b) Tripura; and
  - (c) Khasi states.

The predominantly Muslim areas of Sylhet district were transferred to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) at the time of independence—after a referendum. The eight thanas of that district, which form Karimganj district now, were merged with Cachar district. A portion of Duar area, which was taken from Bhutan after Bhutanese war by the British was transferred to that country after independence as per the decisions of the Assam Legislative Assembly and Parliament.

## Adjustments and Reorganization After Independence

After independence, an attempt was made to provide limited autonomy to the hill districts of Assam under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Naga Hills district did not accept the same and the District Council was never formed there. The Nagas followed the path of violence and insurgency and a section of them wanted to secede. This led to gradual emergence of Nagaland State. The Mizo Hill district gradually became Mizoram State, following almost the path of Nagaland. The state of Meghalaya was formed by a peaceful democratic process. Thus there was gradual dismemberment of Assam leading to the formation of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram. The Assam ultimately was confined to Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys and the two hill districts, namely, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts.

The North-East Frontier Agency i.e. NEFA was already a distinct Administrative unit at the time of independence. It gradually emerged as the State of Arunachal Pradesh by a most painless constitutional process.

The Manipur and Tripura were princely states when the independence dawned. They became Group-C states and had their Territorial councils. Gradually they acquired Union Territory status and finally became states after re-organisation of North-East region.

Thus North-East India ultimately has now the following seven States :—

1. Assam;
2. Nagaland;
3. Meghalaya;
4. Manipur;
5. Tripura;
6. Arunachal Pradesh; and
7. Mizoram.

Most of the states are very small and the need of the supplementary regional planning was acutely felt due to various

reasons. Thus North-Eastern Council was formed to help the States in formulating and executing plans of inter-states nature in certain areas, such as power generation and communication. The North-Eastern Council is an advisory body.

The various aspects of the re-organization of the region and the emergence of States is discussed in detail in the various chapter. There are separate chapters on the Sixth Schedule and the North-Eastern Council.

All the important regulations, Acts and Orders are given in the Appendix for reference and study.

The principle of linguistic states was successfully challenged in North-East India. The autonomy movements leading to re-organization of the region were violent and of secessionist nature in certain areas. In other areas the people adopted peaceful democratic means of achieving the Statehood.



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