



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EAST INDIA

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Introduction: North East Region of India is a part of India which is situated in the north eastern most corner of the country. It is linked with the main land of India on its western side through a small land strip. During the entire British colonial period in India, North East India was ruled as a part of Bengal province. The North Eastern region of India occupies a strategic geo-political position due to its international boundaries with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal. The region earlier comprised the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura. In 2002, Sikkim came under the banner of North Eastern states by North Eastern council amendment Act, 2002 was passed in the parliament, which ratified the inclusion of Sikkim in North Eastern council.

Objectives of the paper: The objective is the main principle which focuss the main theme of the paper. The objectives of the paper are as follows.

1. To know the historical development of North East India.
2. To enquire into the Geographical area of the region.
3. To gain knowledge about the attainment of state hood.

Methodology : Methodology is the important part of any research paper as well as research study. The present study is mainly based on descriptive method. As secondary data we have collected from various secondary sources like- Book, Review studies, thesis, internet, journals, Magazine, research article, etc.



Pre-Independence period

It was from the nineteenth century, during the British rule that the territories of this area came to be recognized as “North East India”. Earlier to this, all the territories of the North East existed as different kingdoms and were ruled by different kings and chiefs. Unfortunately, the availability of written records in this region prior to British rule is very scarce. This was mainly due to the lack of a written script for most of the tribes, with few exceptions like Ahoms of Assam and the Meiteis of Manipur. The Buranjis of Assam i.e. the historical chronicles and manuscripts associated with the Ahom dynasty, record the 600 years of their continuous rule in upper Assam, and the rule of the Koch dynasty in the western southern parts of Assam. In Manipur, the history of the Meiteis is documented in various chronicles like the Ningthou Kangbalon and the Cheitharol Kumbaba. The Manikya dynasty was the ruling house in the Twipra kingdom from the 15th to 20th century. In Mizoram, the administration and Political affairs was looked upon by the chiefs of various clans. These chiefs were considered the absolute proprietors of all lands within their territorial jurisdiction. Meghalaya was ruled by kings as well as local chieftains while the Khasi and Jaintia societies were ruled by the King or Siem and his Ministers, the Garo societies were administered by the local chieftains called Nokmas, Similarly the village of Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh were under the administration of their respective chieftains, while Sikkim was ruled by Namgyal chogyal dynasty from 1642 to 1975.

During the British period : The historical development of North East India during the British period can be discussed as follows.

Arunachal Pradesh:

In the pre-independence period, According to Government of India Act 1935 the present Arunachal Pradesh was kept as “excluded areas” In 1947 this region was divided into three frontier tracts loosely administered as “excluded areas” as per Government of India Act 1935. In 1954 the region was brought under a single administrative agency known as the North East frontier agency (NEFA).

According to Talukdar (1992) although the creation of the state of Arunachal Pradesh is often attributed to the policies followed by the British and also its extension by the government of India



for sometime after independence, the beginning of the process of the state formation and the origin of the state legislature can be traced back only to the recommendation of the Dying Ering committee. This committee inter alia recommended the establishment of an Agency Advisory council for the Agency and the transfer of the charge of NEFA to the Home Ministry which was hitherto under the charge of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was a significant recommendation for the process of state formation.

In 1969 the first Agency council was constituted under the North East Frontier Agency Panchayat Raj regulation Act, 1967 which gave effect to the recommendations of the Dying Ering committee. It considered of 21 members of representatives from each of five districts and the members of parliament from NEFA. In the year 1972 Arunachal Pradesh was made a Union Territory and the Agency Council was named as Territorial Council. In 1975 the Territorial Council was made the Provisional Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh. But till then there was no change in the constitution of this body and it remained a 21 member body till the first State Assembly Elections in 1978. In 1974 Arunachal Pradesh was granted a 30 member Legislative Assembly, but till the directly elected Legislature Assembly could be constituted in 1978, the territorial council elected in that year was treated as the Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, the first Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh was a continuation of the Agency council provided under the 1967 regulation. The granting of a Legislative Assembly to Arunachal Pradesh paved the way for its attainment of statehood and raised the aspirations of the people and the leadership to the end. This Provisional Legislative Assembly of Arunachal Pradesh passed a resolution on March 24, 1977 demanding grant of statehood to the union territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Ultimately Arunachal Pradesh was granted full fledged state on February 20, 1987.

Assam : Before the arrival of the British in India the present North East except Manipur and Tripura was one political and administrative setup and this entire region was known as Assam. Assam at that time was on independent sovereign state ruled by the Ahom dynasty. The Ahom kings ruled Assam for about six hundred years starting from 1228 A.D. But in the later part of the Ahom rule the Burmese invaded Assam at the invitation of Badan Chandra Barphukan, during the reign of Chandra Kanta Singha. In that war the Burmese defeated the Ahom king and in the process the British had to



intervene. After the Anglo-Burmese war, the Burmese and the Ahom king signed a peace treaty known as treaty of Yandaboo on 24 February in 1826. According to this treaty, Assam was taken over by the British. But during 60's and 70's Assam was partitioned three times.

Nagaland: Prior to the independence of India, the area inhabited by the Naga Tribes was divided into four administrative units Viz.,

- a) Naga Hills district a part of Assam which was an excluded area according to 1935 Govt. of India Act.
- b) The Tuensang Area, an un-administered area under the district control of Governor of Assam.
- c) Ukhrul Mao and
- d) Tamenglong sub division in Manipur state. According to Horam, (1988) the Nagas formed a club titled as Naga club in 1918 and this club submitted a memorandum to the Simon commission in 1929 where in it was stated that the Nagas should be excluded from the scope of the proposed constitutional changes and they should be kept under the direct British Administration even after the British left India and if not they should be left alone to determine their future political identity. Mishra stated that more than 20 representatives from different tribes signed this memorandum. But in spite of it the Britisher did not fulfill this demand of the Nagas. The Britisher turned down the demand of the Nagas but club's effort to collect signatures of leading Naga personalities succeeds in building the concept of Naga nationality and also in forming aspiration for creation of independent Naga nation. The movement for autonomous state gained momentum among the Nagas immediately after the formation of Naga Hills district Tribal council in 1945 at the initiation of the then Deputy Commissioner, C.R. Pawsey. The council however was reorganized as Naga National Council in 1946. This NNC was an enlarged body with 29 members representing the various Naga tribes. The NNC was divided into two groups on the eve of India's independence as a section of the leaders of NNC favored secession from India while another section did not favour this opinion. But most Nagas favoured the first and as such Phizo declared Nagaland as an independent state in 1947. At the time of India's independence Naga Hills was a district of Assam. The constitution of India granted the 6th schedule status to the Naga Hills district



as in the case other hills area of Assam. The NNC was not satisfied on this. Armed insurgency particularly from 1954 was practiced by the extremist group of NNC and ultimately the government of India granted the statehood to Nagaland in 1963.

Meghalaya : The state of Meghalaya was created in 1972 by carving out the two hills districts Viz, Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills of the then Assam. The tribal population of these two districts before the creation of Meghalaya had opposed the imposition of Assamese as official language throughout the state of the then Assam. The political leaders of different tribal groups formed All Party Hill Leaders conference (APHLC) in 1960 for opposing Assamese official language Bill (1960) as well as to demand for creation of separate Hill state consisting of the Hill districts inhabited by different tribal groups APHLC later on was converted to a regional political party which spearheaded the movement of a separated hill state. This demand of the APHLC was accepted by the Govt. of India by creating the full fledged state of Meghalaya comprising the Khasi and Jaintia and Garo Hills district of Assam.

Mizoram: Formerly, Mizoram, it was known as Lushai Hills district in the state of Assam. The district of Lushai Hills was upgraded to Union Territory in 1972 and finally the status of a state was given in 1986. In the pre-independence period the territory categorized as Back ward Trade under the provision of the Government of India Act, 1919 and as excluded area under 1935 Act. According to the constitution of India Lushai Hills District was declared as a 6th schedule district. In 1954 the district was renamed as Mizo Hills District.

The geographical location has isolated the state from Assam and the rest of India. The only communication to Mizoram is through roads and that too not open for all weather reason. Taking advantage of the situation one adventurer, Laldenga formed an organization known as Mizo National Front or MNF in the year 1961 with the objective to form an independent state for the Mizo. Ultimately, got statehood on 20th February 1987.

Manipur: Previously, Manipur was a princely state. It was ruled by Meitei Maharaja. This



state was merged into India union in October, 1949 as a result of agreement between the then princely ruler of Manipur and Government of India. At the time of merger of Manipur with India the status of Union Territory was given to Manipur. The Status of statehood was granted to Manipur in 1972. The land area of Manipur is 90% Hills and 10% Plains. The people inhabited in Manipur are Meiteis who are Hindus and followers of Chaitanya Vaishnavism and scheduled Tribes living in hill areas.

Tripura : Previously, Tripura was a princely state and the Maharaja was a Tripuri. Mazumdar (1988) states that the political movement in this princely state was started from the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Mazumdar the political movement in Tripura launches for civil rights and responsible government gained momentum during the reign of Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya organization “Tripura Rajya Janamongal Samity” and the “Tripura Rajya Parishad”. Spearheaded the movement for the establishment of democratic government in Tripura early as 1937-38 Eventually Tripura was merged into the Indian Union in 1947.

The people living in Tripura are the indigenous tribal population, Hindu Bengalis and immigrants from the erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The tribal in Tripura are living in the hilly areas of the state Land is the main source of livelihood of the tribal people. But the land meant for the tribal are being grabbed by the immigrants. The indigenous population in Tripura became political orphanage as the government in the state since the time of annexation was formed by persons who immigrated from East Pakistan after partition.

Sikkim : Sikkim was integrated as the eight North Eastern council state in 2002. On April 14, 1975, a referendum was held, in which Sikkim voted to merge with the union of India. Sikkim became the 22nd India state on April 26, 1976. On May 16, 1975, Sikkim officially became a state of the Indian union and Lhendup Dorji became the first Chief Minister. The scenic grandeur of mighty snow capped peaks, the highest of which is the 28, 162 feet Kanchanjunga on the Nepal-Sikkim border, has been a symbol romantic awe and wonder for the world. It is the world’s third highest peak. Kanchanjunga has five satellite



peaks, Jano, Kabru, Pandim, Narsim and Simiolchu. Two principal mountain ranges are the Singilela and Chola which start in the north and continue, following a more or less southerly direction. Between these ranges are the principal rivers, the Rangit and the Teesta, forming the main channels of drainage.

Conclusion : The North East India is one of the most important parts of Indian Union which is situated in the middle of 24⁰ N to 28⁰ N Latitude & 89⁰46 east to 97⁰4 east long latidue. The North East region of India presently comprises eight states namely- Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam, Tripura and Sikkim is endowed with vast natural resources and has enormous potential for development. The total geographical area of NER is 262179 sq. km. constituting 7. 9 of the total geographical area of the country with the international border of Bangladesh, Myanmar, China and Bhutan. The major part of the region is hilly.

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