

Chapter 2

Arunachal Pradesh

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The State of Arunachal Pradesh (the land of the rising sun) claims some mythological contacts with the rest of India in the distant past. The State represents the eastern most part of the mighty Himalayan extension in India, with the highest mountain peak in the region, Namcha Barwa, in its immediate northern border in Tibet. At least its foothills were occasionally incorporated in various kingdoms of the Brahmaputra valley. The Ahom (13th century to 19th century) rulers certainly had some incorporation of the various ethnic groups from the State in their kingdom, which they managed through the institutions of the “kakotis” (traditional go-between and negotiators on behalf of the Ahom kingdom with the hill tribes) and “posa” (tributes paid in kind). Since then, the territory had a variety of nomenclatures and different shades of administrative arrangements. At long last, it was accorded with state hood in 1987 with full administrative and legislative structures. At present, this is territorially the largest and demographically the second smallest State among the “seven sisters” of the North East frontier region. Divided into 13 districts; Arunachal has a scheduled tribal population of over 61 percent which comprises as much as 20.41 percent of the urban population.

Arunachal Pradesh is surrounded by Bhutan to the west, Myanmar to the east, the Autonomous Tibetan Region of the Peoples Republic of China in the north and the states of Assam and Nagaland to the south. This mountainous tract, located between 26°28'N to 29°28'N latitude and 91°30'E to 97°30'E longitude, has 110 scheduled tribal communities out of the total 219 scheduled tribal communities listed in the North East region. Significant among them are: Adi, Apatani, Bangni, Boker, Bori, Digaru Mishmi, Hill Mishmi, Hrusho (Aka), Idu Mishmi, Khamba, Khamti, Howa, Memba, Miri, Miju, Monpa, Nyishing, Nocte, Pallibo, Poma, Sherdukpen, Shingpho, Sulung, Tagin, Tongsha, and Wangcho. This is the most thinly inhabited region of India: there are only 13 persons per sq. km. as per the 2001 census. During the 40 years since 1961, its population has risen by more than 300 percent from 3,37,000 in 1961 to 10,91,117 in 2001. Its decadal population growth has been between 38.91 percent

during 1961-1971 to 26.21 percent in the decade, 1991 –2001. Its urban population growth, which is only three decades old, has grown phenomenally; between 139.77 percent during 1971-1981 to 101.29 percent between 1991-2001. Consequently the growing percentage of population has risen from 3.7 percent 1971 to 6.56 percent in 1981 to above 12.21 percent in 1991 and 20.41 percent in 2001. Similarly, there has been a considerable fall in the death rate from 15.9 per thousand in 1982 to 6 persons per thousand in 2000.

In the same way, the birth rate has come down from 34.2 per thousand in 1982 to 22.2 per thousand in 2000 (E&Mcell : 2002). Within no time, the State has turned out to be the second most urbanized state in the North East, in which all the districts have been declared as industrially backward as a special incentive for industrial development. Its modern history is about 125 years, in which it passed through different administrative dispensations. It should also be noted that parts of Arunachal continues to be disputed as Indian Territory by China, and both countries have been negotiating for a final settlement.

1. Land and People

Arunachal Pradesh is the home of as many as 110 scheduled tribes constitutionally recognized as the “weaker section” of the Indian population and which accorded special treatment for development. While a large number of them follow a traditional faith of ‘animism’ now called Donyi Polo or Sun and Moon worship, there are Mahayana Buddhists in the western most district (Kameng) such as Monpas and Sherdukpens. Similarly, in the eastern part of the state, there are Khamtis and Singphos, who follow Therawad Buddhism, on the pattern of South East Asia. In the foothills of Tirap district, the Nocte tribe follows a liberal Vaishnavite faith propounded by Srimanta Sankardeva in medieval Assam. Arunachal has not been able to evolve its own lingua franca. In fact, there is not a single language which is followed by most Arunachalis.

Similarly, there is not a single tribe out of odd 110 ones, which is demographically big enough, around which ethos of the State could have been evolved. Its territory is extensive from east to west and mountainous. It is costly to develop a reliable mode of surface transport. Thus, Arunachalis have no lateral road within their territory to travel east to west or vice-a-versa and must go via Assam while the richer or luckier including officials get to travel by helicopters

which current remote hamlets. The State remains, by and large, in the stage of primitive subsistence economy. Its agriculture known as Jhumming, a category of slash-and-burn type of rotational cultivation, provides a limited scope for capital investment and scientific improvement. With the exception of a few small-scale timber industries, there is no industrial establishment in the state.

As the State falls under the 'Inner Line Regulation Act', there has been no appreciable investment and emphasis on tourism as a potential source of livelihood, though Arunachal commands stunning and unspoiled natural beauty. Centres of higher learning are relatively new in the State and they have not been able to make an impact on lives of the people. Similarly, urban centres are new phenomenon and almost all of them are administrative ones. So much so that there has been no city big enough with locational advantage, which could be selected as the State capital. Thus, a site was selected near a historical remains in the Subansiri district in the foothills, where Itanagar, the State capital, was built.

Among the various ethnic groups, it is the Adi (formerly Abor) group of tribes, which dominates the socio- political scene of the state, which is followed by the Nyishi (former Daflas) of Subansiri. Among the significant communities of the State, Noctes and Wanchos of the south -western district of Tirap are organized under their chiefs. As we have mentioned above, the Noctes have adopted an elementary form of Vaishnavism, while Wanchos and Tangsas are closure to their Naga cousins in the adjoining State of Nagaland. Tirap district adjoins the state of Nagaland and is located on the famous Patkai hills, which separate Myanmar from India. Lohit, the eastern most district of Arunachal and also of India, is the home of Mishmis, who are divided in to three on the basis of their hair-do: Digaru or Tarong, Miju or Kaman and Idu or the Chulikatta (Dutta Choudhury, S : 1978). They are known for trading their forest products and handicrafts with the Tibetans in the North.

2. Evolution of Arunachal Pradesh

The tri-junction of the Eastern Himalayan foothills, the Patkai Hills and the plains, may be identified with Sadiya and Matak sub-divisions of Lakhimpur district of British Assam in the 1840. This was where tea plantation made a beginning in 1838. At the time, the Adis (Abors), Miris, Khamtis, Singphos, Mishmis and some Nagas inhabited the adjoining hill areas. Some of them were considered as

the slaves of others, who paid token tributes in kind to the Abors or Singphos. Many of the claimed slaves ran away from the hills and got settled in plains in the British district for protection. These settlers worked for the British and paid taxes as per existing rules. But the hill tribes continued to raid the new settlements and imposed traditional tributes on the plea that they were their run away slaves. On the pattern of the old Ahom system of *posa* (blackmail money or tribute), the British contracted to pay a 100 iron hoes, 30 maunds¹ of salt, 80 bottles of rum, two seers² of opium, and two maunds of tobacco annually to the Abors as tribute (*posa*) in 1862 and a treaty of peace was signed with the chiefs (Michell, J F : 1983). But this arrangement did not deter the Abors, who used to descend on Miri settlements (their “former” slaves) in the plains during the winter, stayed in their houses as free board forced tributes and retired to their hills with the booty. With a view to securing the plains and foothills from raids and reprisals of the hill tribes, a number of armed out posts were established by the British at Dirijeme, Poba, Sessiri, Nizamghat, Bomjor and Rukong by 1882. That was the year, Joseph R Needham was appointed as the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya, who laid the foundation of a personalized administration of this Frontier Tract in his more than two decades old posting.

3. British Himalayan Policy

That was the time the British were evolving a policy to the North East frontier. W. W. Hunter pleaded instead for an enlightened policy of reconciliation instead of policy of one reprisals. Reacting to the alternative policy of permanent occupation and direct management of the hills, Alexander Mackenzie said that this could not be applied to the frontier as it “would only bring us in to contact with the tribes still wilder and less known, nor should we find a resting place for the foot of annexation till we planted it on the plateau of high Asia. And then?” This was the policy, which was outlined by the end of the 1860s and it was a policy of non-interference (Choudhury, D P 1978). Its culmination was guaranteed by the introduction of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873 (which was published in the Calcutta Gazetteer in 1874), by which the non-locals were to obtain written permission from the designated authorities before entering the frontier tract. The avowed intention of this arrangement was to prohibit the tribal raids on the tea plantations in the plains; prohibit the poachers, money lenders, wood cutters, traders, missionaries, etc from exploiting the simple tribal folk and denying settlements of the non-tribes in the tribal areas. The Chief

Commissioner of Assam was empowered by the Scheduled District Act, 1874 to issue the Assam Frontier Tract Regulation in 1880.

4. The Tea Factor

The Chief Commissioner passed the Rules for the administration of Lakhimpur Frontier Tract in 1886. Needham, then Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya, undertook a number of expeditions in tribal areas to befriend them. By large, there were no major confrontations between the British administration and the tribes. However, by the turn of the century, runaway slaves of the tribesmen, inter-tribal feuds, personal jealousies and suspicion led to troubles on the frontiers. So much so that, in May 1900, restrictions were imposed on official tours beyond “the areas of political control through out the Assam frontiers”. This was also the beginning of the change in the British Himalayan policy by adopting a more active and vigorous attitude towards the frontier region as a whole. Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, was an active supporter of the “forward policy to the Himalayas”, in which an ideal Indian boundary in the north was considered to the crest of the Himalayan water shed. Francis Younghusband, J C White, C A Bell, Noel Williamson and a host of other British functionaries were strong proponents of this school.

Then there was a strong lobby of the tea planters, which wanted all obstacles in their booming expansion of plantation in Upper Assam to be removed. They had a perennial demand for more and more local resources such as land and forest. Way back in 1839 in his famous Report on the “Manufacture of Tea in Assam” to the Tea Committee, Charles A Bruce, the pioneer of tea industry in Assam, had made an eloquent appeal to the Government: :

“...the government would confer a lasting blessing on the Assamese and new settler, if immediate and active measures are taken to put down the cultivation of opium...We would in the end be richly rewarded...for our plantations, to fell our forests, to clear the land from the jungle and wild beasts and to plant and cultivate...With respect to what are called the Singpho Tea Tracts, ... unless we establish a(military out) post at Ningrew and secure our tea? The tea from these tracts is very fine. Some of the tracts are extensive and many may run for miles into jungles for what we know. The whole of the country is capable of being turned in to a vast tea garden, the soil being excellent and well adopted for the

growth of tea. On both sides of the Buri Dihing river, tea is grown indigenously; it may be traced from tract to tract to Hootang (Upper Myanmar), forming a chain of tea tracts from Irrawady to the borders of China east of Assam... (Thus), a few years hence, it may be found expedient to advance this frontier post to the top of the Patkoi Hills...They are said to be thinly inhabited, the population being kept down by constant broils and wars, for the state of plunder. Our tea, however, is insecure here. We are at present obliged to have the means of defending ourselves from a sudden attack” (Sinha, A C 1993).

This was the same area, where once more the tea planters and associated timber merchants were active from 1900 onwards pleading for extending the British administration beyond the Inner Line to the hills. They approached the Governor of Assam to guard their interests against the tribal raids and extraction of alleged ‘blackmail’ money, which the later agreed and reported to the matter to the Viceroy of India for his approval. The Government of India did not agree to the proposal as suggested and ordered to the Government of Assam: “The Government of India regrets that they are unable to sanction His Honour’s (Governor’s of Assam) proposal in their entirety...While agreeing that something should be done towards conservation of the forests, they consider it doubtful whether the steps proposed by the Lt. Governor would be effective without further knowledge of the forests. It is also desirable that the country should be surveyed, as far as possible, before a definite scheme for its administration is adopted...the at most to which the Government of India can agree is that Mr. (Noel) Williamson(the successor to Joseph Needham, the Assistant Political Officer) should undertake a tour in the tract between ‘Inner Line ‘ and ‘Outer Line’ in order to ascertain the actual position of affairs... (He) should be accompanied by a forest officer and a surveyor and his instructions should be as follows: (a) to inform the villagers that collection of black mail (money) within our border must cease; (b) to collect information as to forests; (c) to survey the country as far as possible; and (d) to test the feelings of the people in regards to the proposed taxation on settlers within the outer line” (Sinha, A C 1993). While the correspondence between Shillong (the Government of Assam) and Calcutta (the British Indian Government) was on, Noel Williamson did not wait for instructions and went on an official tour to the Lohit valley in December 1907 and January 1908. Instructions to Noel Williamson were drafted finally on October 31, 1908!

5. Abor Expedition and its Consequences

Noel Williamson along with Dr. Gregorson went across the 'inner line' in the Abor hills in March 1911 and with the exception of six coolies, who managed to escape, Kebang Abors murdered the members of the expedition at village Komsing. The Government of India took it as an affront to the imperial prestige. An impressive expedition under Major General Bower was sent to teach a lesson to the offending Abors. Three survey missions were also sent along with the pacification expedition to map out the entire region up to the Himalayan water shade. The survey missions were to explore and survey the country and recommend a suitable frontier line between India and Tibet. The Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, A H W Bentick, in his 'Political Report on the Expedition', furnished the proposals as to the future of this frontier tract on April 23, 1912. Accordingly, the North East Frontier Tract was divided in to three sections: the central and eastern sections to control the Ponpong Nagas, Singphos, Mijus, Chulikata and Babejia Mishmis and the various tribes of Abors as far as the Siang –Subansiri divide, and the western section (which came to be known as the Balipara Frontier Tract) to deal with the tribes from this divide westwards to Bhutan. The two eastern sections were placed in the charge of one Political Officer with head quarters at Sadiya, which came to be known as 'Sadiya Frontier Tract'.

Under this dispensation, two Assistant Political Officers, one, for Abor subdivision at Pasighat and another, at Wallong for the Lohit Valley subdivision, were proposed. The Government of India Act, 1919 vested with the Governor of Assam with the administration of the three Frontier tracts and declared them as "Backward Tracts". Similarly, the Government of India Act, 1935 termed these tracts as the " Excluded Areas" in 1936, by which it was meant that the State Assembly of Assam was not empowered to frame rules for these 'Excluded Frontier Tracts' and the Governor of the State was to govern them directly. Between 1943 to 1948, these frontier tracts were re-organized in to five Agencies: Sela, Subansiri, Abor, Mishmi, and Tirap.

6. Arunachal Pradesh in the Indian Union

In 1954 North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) Administration Regulation was passed, by which, for the first time, the region was given a nomenclature: NEFA.

The former Agencies were renamed after the rivers within their areas: Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, and Tirap and they were termed as the frontier divisions. It was also decided to shift the headquarters of the divisions from the foothills to the interior of the hills. And for that Bomdila, Ziro, Along, Tezu and Khela were selected as the sites for the five divisions respectively. After the Chinese aggression on India in 1962, another NEFA Regulation was enacted, by which divisions were changed to the districts like anywhere in the country and the Political Officers were termed as the Deputy Commissioners. Further more, NEFA administration was transferred from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Home Affairs and its State capital was to be shifted to a new site in NEFA.

With the Indian parliament enacting North Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act, 1971, NEFA became Arunachal Pradesh with the status of a Union Territory and a Pradesh (provincial) Council of 26 members, and five-member Interim Council of Ministers. Two seats in the Indian lower house of Parliament (Lok Sabha: Arunachal East and West) and one seat in the upper house (Rajya Sabha) of the Parliament were allotted to Arunachal. The Indian National Congress ruled the State from 1972 onwards for almost three decades. Elections to a 30 member territorial council was held for the first time in 1978, in which Janata Party led by P K Thungon came to power, but did not last the long. In 1980, the districts were reorganized from 5 to 9 by dividing Kameng, Subansiri, Siang and Lohit into two each. In course of time, these districts were further reorganized by trifurcating the first three districts and Tirap in to two. In the election to the State assembly in 1980 the Congress party came to power and Gegong Apang took oath as Chief Minister. He continued to be hold office for the next fifteen years, the longest serving Chief Minister of the State. It was inaugurated as a full State within the Indian Union in 1987after 55th amendment to the Indian Constitution. Presently, Arunachal Pradesh has a State Assembly with 60 elected members, a cabinet of ministers answerable to the Assembly, Governor and other requisites of an Indian State.

7. Sino-Indian Border Dispute

The Tibet Expedition, 1903-'04 represents one of the landmarks of British's 'Forward policy' to the Himalaya region. However, the gains made by the expedition were squandered at the altar of British imperial interests. The Chinese,

who were found totally ineffective during the expedition, were permitted to pay the indemnity on behalf of the Tibetans and the British empire made a hasty retreat from its imperial designs in the Eastern Himalayan region. Charles A Bell, Political Officer, Gangtok, and the overseer of the British interests in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, realized in 1909 that the British did not have an effective treaty right over the foreign relations of the communities in the Eastern Himalayan region.

Before he finalized the Anglo-Bhutanese Treaty, 1910, he wrote to the Secretary to the State, Government of India, in respect of each of the tribes' on the following points:

“(i) How far does the territory of the tribe stretch towards Tibet from the Indian frontiers? (ii) How far is the country cultivable, e.g. how far would it be able to support troops, if and when, the lands were fully cultivated? It may be, as in Bhutan, that there were large areas of the government land at present uncultivated. (iii) To what extent the tribal territory would act as a barrier to invaders, e.g. its physical difficulties, breadth (of the land) to be crossed and the supplies (when the lands are cultivated as fully as possible) obtainable? (iv) Whether the tribes in any way have recognized the suzerainty of Tibet or China? The claims of these countries are often so shadowy that it would be well to clear up the point as far as possible. (v) (Is there a) possibility of inducing the tribes to agree to the treaty? I understand that the use of bazaar in the plains give us a good hold over the tribes. We may have some other pressures to bear.”

China invaded Tibet in 1910 and this time, unlike in 1904, the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan theocrat, took refuge in India. Worried of the Chinese advance and ambitions in the Himalayas, the British thought about its vulnerable hold on the eastern Himalayan ranges. The British hurried in to holding the Shimla Conference in 1913-1914, in which the Tibetan and Chinese representatives were joined by Henry McMahon, the Chief British Negotiator, with Charles A Bell and Fredric M Bailey, the then Political Officer and his successor respectively. The Conference could arrive at initialling an agreed boundary on the Eastern Himalayan region between the three delegates, but it was not finally signed by the three delegations. Though they had no reason for that at that time, but the Chinese government repudiated the claimed and agreed boundary in course of time.

The British had their reasons to be convinced that the agreed boundary running

across the Himalayan water-divide, (which came to be known as the McMahon line) was the long existing natural northern boundary in the region. Bell, who had been keeping a close watch on the going on in the region, proposed another step to bring the Assam Hills under more effective administrative control from the British. He suggested to the government the creation of a “North Eastern Frontier Agency” on the pattern of the North West Frontier Agency (NWFA). The Agency, headed by an Agent, would be head quartered at Tawang, on the western most district of Arunachal on the shortest route between Lhasa, the Tibetan capital and Calcutta, the British imperial seat of power in India. It was to include the British ‘political’ works connected with Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and Assam Hills. The First World War 1914-1918, its aftermath, the world-wide economic depression, the Second World War and the British withdrawal from India were some of the reasons, which came in the way of affecting the McMahon Line as the northern boundary of Arunachal Pradesh. Thus, the British were not in a position to implement the decisions of the Simla Conference or give serious consideration to Bell’s suggestions on time.

The two distinct world-views represented by the Indian Union and the People’s Republic of China led to a “silent” conflict between the two neighbours from 1950’s. This exploded into an open armed clash between the two regimes in 1962. Since then, the two governments have been holding a series of talks to sort out the boundary dispute. Arunachal Pradesh is one of the Indian regions which China claims is disputed territory. India has been careful to evolve special dispensation suited to the largely tribal population of the state. Keeping in view of the national policy to integrate the small ethnic groups with the larger nationalities., Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister of and the self-confessed “missionary” of his gospel on the policy to the tribes, Verrier Elwin, evolved a set of five principles known as the “tribal Panchsheel” as the magna carta of the tribal administration in India (Elwin 1964). Not only that, they also created in the 1950s a new inspired and committed bureaucracy known as the Indian Frontier Administrative Service (I FAS), which extended the limits of administration slowly and presently was disbanded in the aftermath of the Indian army debacle.

Singphos and Khamtis, migrated from Shan State of Burma towards the end of 18th century and were known as war like- peoples. Today they are enterprising and extremely progressive business group and progressive farmers and traders, who are in touch with the plains of the Assam. Siang district is the home of the Adi group considered to be one of the most progressive in the State. They are

divided into two: Gallong section (Ramos, Bokar and Pailibos) and Padam-Minyong section consisting besides Padam and Minyong, Passis, Pangis, Boris, Ashings, Tangams and Shimongs. Though these communities are known for their strong democratic spirit, they also had the tradition of slavery, which still reflects at societal levels. “An important feature of many Adi villages is the dormitory, the club of the boys and men, which organizes the youth of the tribe and used for deliberations of the Kebang or tribal council” (Elwin 1964). Again, this was the region, where Noel Williamson, the British Assistant Political Officer and members of the expedition were murdered in 1911 leading to the above mentioned Abor expedition.

Subansiri is the home of the Nyishis as well as the most agricultural enterprising and environmentally sensitive of the State's communities, the Apatanis. In the year 1890 the first European visitor to the Apatani plateau found: “in a remote, well-watered valley lived a society of highly organized, industrious people, who had developed an extensive system of irrigated fields and, though ignorant of plough, succeeded with their hoes in raising two annual crops for themselves and their neighbours. But they had no contacts with the outside world; the Daflas prevented them going down to trade in the plains; and so they lived, fairly prosperous. Fairly happy, in complete isolation” (Elwin 1964). The Nyishis and Hill Miris are other communities of the district. A near revolution has occurred of late, when a site was selected to establish a modern township, Itanagar, for the state capital in the thinly populated foothills of Subansiri. The Nyshis rose to the occasion took full advantage of the opportunity and are on their way to being one of the most powerful communities of the state.

Monpa and Sherdukpens are the residents of Kameng district in west. They keep large herds of cattle; graze them on the various elevations as per the season; have an economy around bovine rearing. They follow the Geylugpa (yellow hat) sect of Mahayan Buddhism. Tawang, the seat of one of the most important monasteries in the Himalayas, is located here and is about 350 years old. It is one of the living centres of Buddhist scholarship in the world, where hundreds of monks and nuns are trained. This is the land of one of the most progressive communities of the state, who are famous farmers, trader's as well as good animal husband. This was also the region through which the Tibetan Dharamaguru, the Dalai Lama, descended to India in 1959 leaving behind his official abode in Lhasa in Tibet. Since then, this has also been the Himalayan battle ground between the Indian and the Chinese army in their border skirmishes.

Arunachal Pradesh is also saddled with another problem: integration of two sets of foreign refugees; the Chakmas and Tibetans, both settled in Lohit district. About 20, 000 Chakma refugees from East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and some refugees from Tibet were settled in the district way back in 1960's. They were allotted some land to support them through cultivation. This step was taken in the period in Arunachal history, in which it was not only shocking defeat of the Indian army in NEFA, but its identity as a distinct political unit was yet to be carved; its own administration was to be established; and some political education was to be imparted to its leaders for a democratic system to function. After nearly four decades, Chakmas' population has risen to above 60, 0000, who demand their citizenship, which is opposed by a sizeable public opinion of the State on the ground that this numerically large ethnic group will affect the fragile ethnic equation among the indigenous communities in the State.

8. Arunachal and her Neighbouring States

Arunachal is a relatively new administrative player in the region. Naturally, its inter-state relations draw on its earlier affiliate, Assam and the Central Government, which administered it as an Excluded Area or a Union Territory. Naturally, Arunachal does not deal with inter-state relations with the People's Republic of China, Royal Government of Bhutan and Myanmar, which are handled by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in New Delhi. However, the very nature of the terrain is such that small local communities, whose cousins reside across the border, maintain contacts with one another in a number of ways. For example, Monpas and Sherdukpens will like to travel to Tibet on pilgrimage, as their ancestors did in the past. They as well had transhumance relations with the Mira-Sakden people of Eastern Bhutan, which they would like to maintain. Similarly, these Buddhist communities will like to keep the past ecclesiastic contacts intact with Bhutan. The closed border between Arunachal and these countries adversely affect the lives of small ethnic communities of the State, as they are restrained from interacting with their cousin from cross the national divides. Arunachalis have a different kind of problem; the People's Republic of China does not deal with the either with Arunachal administration or with the Arunachalis, as their status is under dispute.

Arunachal and Assam and Nagaland: Arunachal has a very cordial and intimate

relation with states of Assam and Nagaland from ethnic, commercial, transport and trade points of view. All important roads and railway outlets to Arunachal have to pass through Assam. In the absence of a lateral road, a railhead and airport within its territory, Arunachal's dependence on her immediate southern neighbour, Assam, is unavoidable and absolute. For services and goods from outside, it depends on Assam. Similarly, Arunachal has to find market for its products outside the state, as it has a thin population base. However, there is a problem between the two States as well. As NEFA was considered as a part of Assam during the British period, its boundaries were drawn keeping in mind the administrative convenience of rulers and not the ethnic or the historical limits of one another. Now the time has changed. The Arunachalis feel it otherwise. They feel that their southern boundary has been unfairly drawn against their interest. With Nagaland, it has an ethnic association, as Wanchos of Tirap district consider themselves Nagas. And even the State of Nagaland claims that all Naga inhabited areas are to be integrated in to a 'Greater Nagaland', an idea, which is opposed by most of her neighbours. And, thus, the talks between the rebel Naga rebels and the Union Government have run in to rough weather. However, Tirap provides with the famous corridor to the 'East', as it is located on the strategic link line between the Assam's Brahmaputra valley and Irawaddy in Myanmar, through which the historical 'China road' (Ledo or Stillwell road of Second World War vantage)passed and the future trans-Asian highway and the Trans-Asian Railway Link are to traverse.

9. Potential for Trade and Commerce across the Boundaries

Arunachalis are inveterate traders. There used to be two significant trade routes on its western and eastern extremities. There was a trade route passing through Tawang, Bomdila and Sela from Tibet to Assam, which used to pass through Guwahati, Hajo, Khasi hills and then to Bengal. On the foot hills near Dewangiri, there used to be a three months long fair, in which traders from up to Dacca in the south and Lhasa in the north used to participate through a process of barter system. Tibetans used to barter relatively light commodities such as precious stones, yak tails, borax, silk and woollen cloth and other handicrafts. From south it was mainly cotton cloth, glass, brassware, imitation ornaments, rice and salt. There was a less frequented trade route in Upper Assam from Sadiya in the foothills to Wallong, Rima and then to Unan province of China. This was the famous silk route, which was followed by famous traveler F M Bailey as late as 1909 on his

way from Peking to Sadiya. The British organized a series of markets way in 1860 for the tribes of Arunachal at suitable locations in the foothills, where they could exchange their commodities with factory produced consumer goods required for their daily use. These markets were used as venues for “taming” the “hostile” tribes. Those communities which the British found difficult, were debarred from trading in the market as a punishment.

On the coast of Nathu-la pass in Sikkim, the ‘Kunming initiative’ has great relevance for Arunachal, has the potential to open an “eastern gateway” from Brahmaputra valley to yunnan province across Shan and Kachin States of Myanmar. This was the shortest road from India to China, 483 (772.8 kms) miles long from Ledo in India to Wangdting in China, which was used for transporting supply to the armed forces during the Second World War. Since then, this road has fallen into disuse and the area has turned into a hotbed of insurgency in India and Myanmar. China has developed its Yunnan province adjoining Myanmar and part of the road has been turned into a four lane highway; the Myanmar part of it is in bad shape, but it can be repaired. About 50 miles between Ledo to the border in Arunachal Pradesh is in good condition, as it is the National Highway. So with a little initiative, this famous historical road may be made operational. But the most important point to be noted that all through the stretch of land in three countries has a thin population base. With the exception of Mytkyina in Myanmar, there is no major township on the way.

The Allied Forces used the road for transporting gasoline, arms and military hardware and food for the forces. It had not been used for civilian and commercial purposes in the past. So it requires careful planning for creating infrastructure, services, linkages and a synergy of will of three entirely different political regimes to make it a success. But the most important aspect of this enterprise is to convince the Arunachalis, Nagas and Assamese, the three immediate stake holders in India that it is they who are the key players and it is for their benefit that the initiative is being undertaken. Ideally, three states should come forward and impress upon the Indian Union to take up the issue with the other two governments so that no further time is lost.

10. Prospects of Industry

As there is no urban-industrial outlet from the State, it is difficult to effectively

assess the volume of out-going trade. However, State sponsored imports in the important commodities such as cereals, salt, edible oil, cement, C I sheets etc. can be obtained. But this will provide a partial view of the picture. It is essential that the State develops its own dry entra-port as a hub of ever increasing commercial activities. Similarly, it is of prime importance for the State to get itself linked with the Indian railway network for a reliable and inexpensive supply of the essential commodities. Arunachal should plead for speedy implementation of the 'National Highway System' so that all the state capitals of the region are linked effectively with the national metropolis, which control the commercial nerve of the country. The state will be ready to take advantage of the future 'Trans-Asian Highway' and 'Asian Railway Link' passing from west to the East Asian Countries in the near future. However, an adequate its prime technological institution, North East Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST), has not been able to play role as a to be the catalyst in industrial development. Among the many bottlenecks of its way to prosperity, the State has to reconsider legislation on the land ownership and revocation of 'the Inner Line Regulation' for initiating an industrial establishment.

11. Ranching and Meat Processing Industry

Animal husbandry has great potential, especially for the upper reaches of Kameng district, as land-man ratio is favourable. Arunachal may even think of developing ranches, which will be unique for India. This may lead to canning and meat processing industry in a predominantly non-vegetarian population base. On the agricultural front, the State is still at the stage of subsistence level of farming. There are horticultural products such as apple, orange, banana, and other tropical fruits, which may be grown commercially. It has some of the rare orchids and rhododendrons in the world, found only on high Himalayan reaches. They have an instant world market, provided they are presented in an attractive manner on time to the users. Similarly, its climate and topography is such that black cardamom can be grown in Siang, Lohit and Tirap districts, where heavy rainfall is coupled with hot and humid climate in the foothills. There used to be tapping of natural rubber in the wilds in Arunachal jungles in the past. There is no reason, why it can not be re-introduced with profit in an organized way.

12. Eco and Adventure Tourism

Similarly, eco-tourism has a great potential for development. There are a large number of tourists on pilgrimage, who would like to visit Tawang monastery along with similar places of interests in Eastern Bhutan, which may be ideal for pilgrim tourism for the Buddhists. For that a massive investment in infrastructure and manpower planning will be required. Arunachal possesses fantastically breadth taking natural beauty and scenery within its limits, which very few States in India command. Tawang in particular and former Kameng district in general commands famous Buddhist sites, which have an instant international attraction to the potential tourists. It may be an ideal location winter games and sports in India. Once the relations with China are normalized, the Tawang and Bomdila, located on the shortest possible route from the Indian plains to Lhasa will open up a new possibility of prosperity. Similarly, the Tsango- Brahmaputra river system does not only have the possibility of generating only electricity and providing irrigation water to the parched agricultural fields, but also will lead to adventure tourism across the boundary in the region. Incidentally, this is also the region, where bird and wild life sanctuaries are located. in which gibbons, “spectacle” monkeys, rare breeds of squirrels and a number of birds, not found any where in the world are located.

13. Conclusions

Arunachal has great potential for tourism but to convert this into a reality, inexpensive, clean, lodge and boarding arrangements at various locations and training the local entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry is required. The great treasures of Arunachal Pradesh are hidden from the outside world; they have to be packaged in an attractive, efficient and inexpensive manner so that local entrepreneurs may develop it into an unspoiled international tourist site, which environmental checks and balances.

However, there has to be caution. We would like to repeat that a major part of the state is still very closed to the world and its economy continues to remain largely subsistence. Now the winds of change are blowing and there are genuine apprehensions that globalization may engulf local skills, expertise, and entrepreneurship, and reduce them to mere unskilled labour. The proponents of change and development have to ensure against the local apprehensions and

disabuse the genuine and imagined misgivings in the minds of the local opinion leaders. Only then, will local people buy these new ideas.

Arunachalis are basically meat eaters; they have thin population and ample land with a variety of animals and birds. Hunting and fishing are part and parcel of their lifestyle. They have a unique animal in the mithun, a yak-like creature which is part domesticated, and its meat is a delicacy.

As forest cover is shrinking and human population increasing, meat and fish are being imported from distant places at considerable cost to meet an ever increasing local demand. Keeping this scenario in mind, there is a potential for ranching, canning and meat processing. This may go along with horticultural activities such as orchid and rhododendron cultivation and bee keeping for commercial purposes. It will also support the tourism industry.

Arunachal has rich natural resources, a small population base and a relatively young leadership. Agriculture, the main livelihood, has limitations in this topographically rugged and undulating land. Its natural beauty, snow capped mountains, virgin forests, unique wild life and the life style of the people lend themselves to tourism. Similarly, its snow-fed perennial rivers are ideal not just for adventure games and sports, but also a rich source of hydro electricity, the “domestic” energy from which huge revenue may come and improve per capita income as well. Instead of looking westward to the Indian plains to develop agriculture, Arunachal should join Bhutan, Tibet, Myanmar, Nagaland to explore the possibility of mountain-related style of resource appropriation and development. In this way, Arunachal could contribute immensely to a novel way of environment-related development for such mountain regions.

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- 1 One Maund (old Indian name for weight) = 40 kg
2 A seer is the equivalent of 930 grams.