

Chapter 5

Meghalaya

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1. Meghalaya: A Profile

Search for a well delineated perspective to understand the politico-economic complexities of India's North East is certainly called for to create awareness of the problems and prospects for expanding sub-regional cooperation. Although substantial ground has now been covered and we have better insight into the problems of the region, however issues involved in political and economic questions are invariably expressed through the channel of movements. All the communities are virtually in ferment. It will not be too much to characterize this as a state of 'culture of movement'. In consequence, there is no objective assessment of the prevailing situation. The native scholars are not liberal enough to talk freely about changes occurring within the socio – political institutions as many a time crucial issue is camouflaged.

On the contrary, the researchers not belonging to the region are under the constant pressure of an imagined threat of attack for their openness. Under the circumstances, the portrayal of the North East is more often mythical than real. Notwithstanding such a critical setting, the present essay aims to provide basic information with regard to the current state of economic, political and social interrelatedness of the state of Meghalaya with the neighbouring states and the country. It attempts also to highlight the initiatives of various sections of society towards the future course of the sub – regional cooperation. The paper concludes with a note on the problems and the prospects of the region for widening an effective path of the sub – regional cooperation. To describe and illustrate these facts I have drawn essentially on secondary source materials.

2. Location and Demographic Scenario

Meghalaya, a small hilly state located in the North Eastern Region of India, came into existence as an autonomous state within the state of Assam on 2 April 1970 comprising the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills districts. But

this experiment of creating an autonomous state within the mother state did not work for long due to the lack of co-operation between the two Governments. Consequently, the Government of India accorded full-fledged statehood to Meghalaya on 21 January 1972 in order to satisfy the persistent demand of the people of the newly created autonomous state.

The boundaries of the state are demarcated by the Goalpara and Kamrup districts of Assam in the north, the south-western part of the district of Goalpara and a part of Rangpur district of Bangladesh in the west, the Mymensingh and Sylhet districts of Bangladesh in the south and the north Cachar and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam in the east. The total geographical area of the State is approximately 22,429 sq. km and consists of primarily steep hills and deep gorges with very limited areas covering valleys and plains land.

Broadly, the state is divided into three regions in terms of its physical features:

- (a) ***The Central Plateau*** includes the Khasi – Jaintia Hills, which is an imposing, plateau with rolling grass lands, hills and river valleys. The Garo Hills forms the western part of the plateau. Its elevation varies between 150M to 1961M above the mean sea level. The highest point of the plateau and that of the entire state is the Shillong Peak whose elevation is about 1961M. It serves as a catchment area for rivers and streams traversing the state. Comparatively, it has the largest area of grassland, which can be profitably utilised for animal husbandry, dairying and horticulture. It is the main centre of potato cultivation and vegetables for supply outside the state.
- (b) ***The border area*** begins where the southern face of the Central Plateau ends. Deep gorges and slopes at the foot of which a narrow strip of plain land runs along the international border with Bangladesh forms the southern region of the state. It is a region of the heaviest rainfall. The world-renowned Cherrapunji and Mawsynram, the wettest places in the world are located in this area. The arecanut plantations and subtropical and tropical fruits like mandarin, lemon, guava, pineapple and banana are grown in plenty in this region.
- (c) Like the border area, the ***submontane region*** also forms a continuation of the Central Plateau till it merges with the plains of Assam. But unlike the

border area, which is generally steep and abrupt in certain places, it slopes gently downward until it merges with the plains of Assam in the north. It is a region of comparatively lower rainfall but has favourable scope both for agriculture and horticulture.

According to the census of 2001, the population of Meghalaya is 23,06,069, which were 17,74,778 in 1991. As against the decadal growth rate of 21.34 percent during 1991 – 2001 at the national level, the population of the State has grown by 29.94 percent during this period. While the density of population is 103 persons per sq. km, the sex ratio stands at 975 females per 1000 males, which is significantly higher than the national average of 933. The rate of literacy has appreciably grown from 49.10 percent in 1991 to 63.31 percent in 2001 which is of course still below the national average of 65.38 percent. There is however some difference in the levels of literary among males and females. While the rate of literacy among males is 66.14 percent, it is only 60.41 percent among females.

The state has at present seven administrative districts, 12 towns and 5629 villages. The detailed districtwise density, sex ratio and rates of literacy have been provided in Table-1.

Table 1
District wise density, sex ratio and rates of literacy in Meghalaya, 2002

State / District	Density (persons)	Sex ratio (Female per 000 Males)	Literacy (percentage)		
			Persons	Males	Females
Meghalaya	103	975	63.31	66.14	60.41
West Garo Hills	139	988	51.03	57.51	44.51
East Garo Hills	95	960	61.70	67.39	55.74
South Garo Hills	54	941	55.82	62.60	48.61
West Khasi Hills	56	972	65.64	67.02	64.21
East Khasi Hills	234	984	76.98	78.12	75.82
Jaintia Hills	77	980	53.00	50.52	55.54
Ri Bhoi	81	941	66.07	69.22	62.67
All India	312	933			

Source: Census of India, 2001, series – 1, Paper 1 of 2001 (Provisional Report).

Out of the total population of 23.06 lakh, 18.53 lakh (80.37%) persons live in the rural areas and 4.52 lakh (19.63%) in urban areas. Although the total urban population of the state has been gradually increasing but practically it is concentrated in the Shillong Urban Agglomeration which was the capital of the undivided state of Assam till 1972. Only Tura and Jowai (Class III), Nongstoin and Williamnagar (Class IV), and Cherrapunji and Baghmara (Class V) have emerged as new urban centres.¹

3. Social Structure

Meghalaya is one of the four tribal majority states of North Eastern Region, others being Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. In India the term 'tribal' is essentially used in administrative sense and officially these communities are called Scheduled Tribes. However, neither does it represent their economic nor cultural levels of development. According to the estimate of the Government of Meghalaya, the total tribal population of the state is approximately 90.4 percent. It is the homeland of three major hill tribal communities: the Khasi, Jaintia and the Garo with their numerous divisions into clans. In fact, the term Khasi is often used in generic sense and includes the Khasi, Jaintia, Bhoi and the War. They are collectively known as the *Hynniewtrep* people and are mainly found in the four districts of east Meghalaya namely, the East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi and the Jaintia Hills districts. The Jaintias are also called Pnars. The Khasis occupying the northern lowlands and the foothills are generally called the Bhoi. Those who live in the southern tracts are termed the War. In the Khasi Hills, the Lyngams inhabit the North-western part of the state. But all of them claim to have descended from the *ki hynniew trep* and are known by the generic name of Khasi-Pnars or simply Khasi. The Garos belonging to the Bodo family of the Tibeto – Burman race live in the Western Meghalaya. They prefer to call themselves as *Achiks* and the land they occupy as *Achik* land. In addition to these ancient communities, there are some smaller tribal communities scattered mainly in the southern and western parts of the state. They are Mikir, Lalung, Hmars, Rabhas, Hajongs, Boro and others.

The account of the social structure of the major communities of the state will not be complete without highlighting the single most important feature of their social structure. All the three major communities of the state – the Khasi, Jaintia and the Garo are matrilineal. They reckon their descent through the female line. Although

'a unilineal principle of matrilineal descent' is followed by all of them, there are local differences in their functional arrangements. The customary systems of inheritance and landownership found among these communities are intimately associated with the institution of matriliney.

Among the Khasi the largest division in society based on the principle of matriliney is in terms of *kur* which can be seen as a near equivalent of a clan. A *kur* is an exogamous unit in which every member is a kin of every other person of the same *kur*. It rests on the belief that they all have descended from a common female ancestry. Accordingly, the clan exogamy is practised and well – defined relationships exist within which marriage is prohibited. Both matrilocal and neolocal rules of residence are in vogue. While a man married to the youngest daughter normally lives in the house of his wife's mother, those married to elder sisters move out to establish separate households or they might continue to live with their husband in the house of their mother. Among the Jaintias a normal residential arrangement till recently has been duolocal under which the husband stays with his own parents but visits his wife at her parent's house. However, this system now is on the wane and matrilocal residence has become common.

The Garos, on the contrary, are divided into five matrilineal clans (*chatchi*) namely, *Areng, Marak, Momin, Sangma and Shira*. Every Garo individual is a member of anyone of these five matrilineal descent groups, each of which is ordinarily exogamous. Cross – cousin marriage is widely prevalent. There is however a great deal of variation with regard to the rules of residence after marriage. While marriage with the heiress is uxorilocal and simultaneously avunculocal since after marriage a man moves to his wife's residence and lives with both his and her maternal uncle. Marriages with women who are not heiresses are neolocal, as the couple usually establishes a separate household.

4. Agrarian Structure and Land Relations

Agriculture is the main stay of the people on which about 75 percent of the total population still depend for their livelihood. The state covers both sub – tropical and temperate climate and therefore both natural vegetation and cultivated crops also ranges from sub – tropical to temperate. Soil is generally acidic in nature, average nitrogen content being medium to high phosphate content generally low and potash medium.

The widely prevalent agricultural practice has been shifting cultivation known as *jhum* in the region but a marked transition from shifting to settled cultivation is observed throughout the state. According to one estimate the minimum area under shifting cultivation at one time or the other has been 2650 sq.km in the state involving around 52,200 families¹. While ecological hazards created by *jhum* cultivation and its economic non – viability provide external pressure to abandon the practice, increasing population pressure, reduction in *jhum* cycle and overall socio – economic transformation have created internal pressure against it. Consequently, the prevailing trend is towards a clear shift from shifting to permanent cultivation.

The major food crops grown in the state are rice, maize and potato. Besides vegetables, all kinds of horticultural crops such as citrus fruits, banana, pineapple, peach, plum etc. are grown in abundance. Among the spice crops ginger, turmeric, cinnamons are grown commonly in different parts of the state. Jute, mesta and cotton are produced mainly in the Garo hills. In addition, many indigenous crops containing aromatic, medicinal and pesticidal properties are found in the state. It is also noted for the presence of various kinds of orchids. Meghalaya has about 300 of the world's orchid species growing in its rich, forestland, gardens and nurseries. These rare specimens include the insect – eating pitcher plant, Wild Citrus and Pigmy Lily. Likewise, analysis of juice volume and citric acid content of these species has indicated that some species contain very high percentage of citric acid and hence opens up potentiality for production of this important chemical. The oil from *tezpatta* (*cinnamomum tannata*) available in Meghalaya in large quantities, contains 70-80 percent eugenol suitable for preparation of perfumery chemicals.

While addressing the issue of agricultural practices in Meghalaya one significant point has to be kept in view. *Jhumming*, (shifting cultivation) is usually considered to be a primitive form of agriculture meant exclusively for subsistence. But a close look at the existing land use pattern suggests entirely a different pattern both from the points of view of technique and organisation of production. Mixed cropping is widespread in *jhumming* involving both food and cash crops. A survey in Meghalaya reveals that even under *jhum* 56.17 percent of the value of output is accounted for non-food crops whereas the corresponding figure for settled cultivation is 64.75 percent. While '*jhum paddy*' is the dominant crop, other crops grown are maize, millet, beans, tapioca, yam, sweet potato, turmeric,

ginger, cotton, tobacco, chilly, sesamum, leafy vegetables etc. The central point needed to be emphasised here is that the *jhum* households engaged in primitive tillage are also closely involved in cultivation of cash crops though the magnitude of their integration with the wider market network may not be as substantial as that of settled cultivation.

It is indispensable to examine the nature of land system and patterns of landownership because it is closely linked with social structure and agrarian practices. The land system in the tribal areas of Meghalaya is usually characterised as the customary land system, which has neither been codified nor a cadastral survey conducted except in small portion in the plains of West Garo Hills district to prepare records of rights on land except in small portion in the plains of West Garo Hills district. It has not only complicated the agrarian question but has also led to serious distortions in the system depriving common people from maintaining control over land. Whatever limited information is available in historical writings and government reports help us to identify the basic nature and operation of agrarian social structure. Based on these facts we find two main classes of land in the Khasi–Jaintia Hills namely, *Ri–Raid* land and *Ri–Kynti* land. While the former is community owned land, the latter refers to the privately–owned land. Besides there are many sub–classes of land under these two broader categories known either by the same name or different names in different areas of the state.

Ri–Raid are lands set apart for the community over which no one has proprietary, heritable and transferable rights except the right to use and occupancy. Nonetheless even usufructuary and occupancy rights revert to the community when a person ceases to use and occupy the landholding consecutively for a period of three years. The heritable and transferable rights over *ri-raid* land accrue when the occupant has made permanent improvements on the land. But even these rights terminate if the person concerned completely abandons the holding over such a period, as the Raid Council deems long enough. The management and control of *ri-raid* land belonging to the community is within the jurisdiction of the concerned community. Such lands are normally located at three levels, namely, village (*ri-raid shnong*), a group of villages (*ri-raid Raid*) and a group of villages and Raid (*ri-raid Hima*). A plot of *ri-raid* is allotted to individuals for constructing a dwelling or for cultivation and for other uses. Customarily, no rent or tax of any kind is charged on land for enjoying usufructuary and occupancy rights.

It is the *ri-raid* land that has faced serious distortions in the wake of fast socio-economic changes taking place in the area. The Government of Meghalaya *Report of the Land Reforms Commission for Khasi Hills* stated in 1974, "A great deal of trouble and confusion has arisen of late from the indiscriminate and unauthorised issue of leases or pattas by village headmen or sirdar of the Raid, or Syiem ... both to Khasis and non-khasis. We call it unauthorised because they have not the sanction of customs not of any duly enacted law". Such an indiscriminate giving out of *pattas* has not only caused loss of land to the real tillers of the soil but has also resulted in innumerable court cases unsettling social order and peace.

Ri-Kynti lands, on the other hand, are lands set apart from the time of the founding of the area for certain clans upon whom were bestowed the proprietary, heritable and transferable rights . They further include any part of *ri raid* lands, which at later stages were bestowed upon person or family or clan for certain yeoman services rendered to the area. The same rights devolve on Khasis on whom such lands are disposed of by the original owners by way of sale and transfer on receipt of full consideration for the same.

Ri-Kynti, considered essentially private lands, includes two broader categories: ancestral and self-acquired. While ancestral lands are customarily under the control of the clan and cannot be brought to the market for sale or purchase, the self-acquired lands are under the complete ownership of persons who have acquired them through their own earnings. There is however no uniformity among various clans so far the nature of management and control of the *ri kynti* of the clan is concerned. It is recognised that each clan has its own system of management or if land has been divided among the branches of the clans, the branches concerned have developed their own ways or if a particular branch has divided its share among the different families, the family concerned has its own system. Nonetheless the basic principle of management and control is almost similar throughout the Khasi Hills under which the control is in the hands of male adults of the clans, uncles and the adult brothers.

As indicated, the Khasi, Jaintia and the Garo being matrilineal communities, the general principle of inheritance prescribes the devolution of property in female lines. Although there are some local differences among these communities, in actual working of this principle such a variation is minor in nature. A brief

description of the rules of inheritance and succession will be in order as their specificities provide glimpse to changes taking place in land relations of the region.

Broadly, property among the Khasi-Pnars is divided into two categories-ancestral and self-acquired. Ancestral property is the property that is received by the present holders from their ancestors. Customarily, individuals cannot alienate it without the consent of family or the clan. Ordinarily, the ancestral property is managed by the eldest maternal uncle or jointly with other members who are his brothers or his sister's sons and grandsons. Self-acquired property, on the contrary, is the personal property of the person who has acquired it by the fruits of his own labour. Its transfer depends entirely on the will of the person concerned. However, the rules of inheritance and the rules pertaining to succession to the property of males and the property of females differ considerably but the dominant pattern of most rules of inheritance amongst the Khasi-Pnars is the preference given directly or indirectly to maternal relations as against paternal relations.

In the Khasi society, it is the youngest daughter or *ka khadduh* who is eligible to inherit the ancestral property. If *ka khadduh* dies without any daughter surviving her, her next elder sister inherits the ancestral property and after her, the youngest daughter of that sister. Sons have no right to it except in rare cases of there not being any female issue in the family. Rules with regard to the disposal of self-acquired property vary among female and male. While the system is simple in case of the former, it is comparatively complicated in the case of the latter. A woman during her lifetime may give her self-acquired property either to her son or daughter but if she dies without giving any indication about its disposal it goes to her youngest daughter. A male may use and distribute his self-acquired property in any manner during his lifetime but if he dies without its disposal certain customary practices are followed for the purpose.

However, the question of heir/heirress has always been a debatable issue among the Khasi. While the customary law of inheritance allows only the youngest daughter to inherit the ancestral property, a doubt has been raised whether a *khadduh* inherits property as an owner or is merely its custodian. The oft referred *Notes on Khasi Law* by Sir Keith Cantlie says that *Ka Khadduh* is the custodian of the family property, not the full heir in the sense known to other systems of law, but a limited heir. To call *ka khadduh* an owner would be an even greater mistake

the *Note* emphasises. Obviously, such a semantic tangle has led to numerous misconceptions and court cases with regard to the nature of ownership of the landed property by the heiress.

Although like the Khasi-Pnars, the family property among the Garo also descends through the mother but its operational patterns vary markedly in different parts of the Garo Hills. The fundamental precept of the Garo social structure is located in the preservation of wealth and property within the motherhood. This basic notion determines the choice of the *nokna* (the heiress) and the *nokrom* (the husband of the heiress). A female owns the entire property and no property can be disposed of by a man without the consent and permission of his wife and after her death his daughters. In a family, one of the daughters is selected by the parents to own her mother's property. The identified daughter becomes heiress known as *nokna*. Generally the youngest daughter is selected as the *nokna*. The latter has to marry a male from her father's clan usually the nearest nephew of the father. A *nokna's* refusal to marry a boy from her parental group will ordinarily exclude her from inheriting the mother's property. However, the *nokna's* right to the property arises only after the death of her mother. In case of self-acquired property of a male, being property acquired after his marriage, the daughter's right is not absolute.

The preceding description of women's right in property among the Garos might give an impression that males here have no place so far the inheritance is concerned. Nevertheless, a close look at the actual operation of the system provides a different account. Studies undertaken by independent researchers suggest that although conventionally the women have proprietary rights in landed property but its control and use are substantially in the hands of men. A man may not inherit but he has right to control his wife's property through his *machong*. In order that this control does not die out on the husband's death, the latter has a right to choose a male member of his clan to represent. Further more, a woman is merely an apparatus through which property is handed down from one generation to another. In several cases the law courts' decisions have also accepted the right to sustain control of the husband over the wife's property. Even the classical commentators on Garo practices like Playfair and Baldwin agree that a Garo husband has full use of his property during the joint lifetime of the spouses.

5. Economy

Agriculture

As indicated earlier, agriculture in the State is still primitive with *jhumming* as the predominant practice in many districts. Although efforts have been made by the Government to wean away *jhumias* from this practice, it continues in certain parts restricting overall productivity of land. Cultivators both of shifting and settled cultivation substantially depend on monsoon, as area under irrigation is virtually negligible. The same pattern is witnessed in the fields of high yielding variety of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides. Though the production of principal crops like rice, maize and wheat reveals increasing trends during the last few years, yet the production of rice which is a staple food of the state is not sufficient to meet the requirement of the state.

Table 2
Land use pattern in Meghalaya, 1999-2000

(‘000 hectares)

	Area	% of Reporting Area
Forest	938	41.86
Land not available for Cultivation	238	10.62
Other uncultivated land excluding follows	603	26.91
Fallow land	222	9.91
Net sown area	240	10.71
Gross Cropped area	266	
Area under food grains	136	51.24
Area under non-food grains	130	48.76

Source: CMIE.

Rice production² of 1,09,353 metric tonnes in 1970-71 increased to 1,32,582 metric tonnes in 1980-81 but dipped down to 1,12,503 in 1995-96. But the production began to increase later and in 2000-2001. It went up to 1,79,042 metric tonnes. However, the most significant change is seen in case of potato, which is one of the important cash crops in the state. Its production rose from 71,231 metric tonnes in 1970-71 to 1,44,292 metric tonnes in 2000-01. It is important to note that although the state imports considerable amount to food grains from other states to meet its needs, it also produces ample amount of quality cash crops like ginger, turmeric, areca nut, and banana, which have good markets outside. The production of ginger, turmeric and areca nut in 2000-01 was to the tune of 44,900, 8,565 and 13,715 metric tonnes respectively in the state. There is huge demand for these items not only in other neighbouring states but also in other countries. It is of interest that the higher cucumin content of turmeric variety grown in Jaintia Hill district is higher by one percent than that of the variety grown in South India. Similarly, Meghalaya can become the primary source of cinnamon also.

The situation with regard to livestock and poultry is also showing a favourable trend. The supply of milk, meat and eggs has considerably increased during the last decade and so is the case with fish production. A record production of the latter was attained in 2000-01 with 6,179 metric tonnes which included both fish gathered from rivers, lakes, tanks, ponds and also subsistence fishing caught by non-professionals.

A brief reference to the forest scenario will be appropriate here to have a better understanding of the agricultural potential of the state. Nature has bestowed upon Meghalaya a vast area of forests, which is between 36 to 42 percent of the total reported area of the state. Many tree species are found in these forests as also indigenous medicinal plants, which grow wild. Though as a result of reckless destruction of forest for commercial purposes this natural wealth is being robbed of its rich possession but the availability of large forest product call for urgent attention to improve the situation. The increased out-turn of products like industrial wood, fuel wood, bamboo, broomstick and *tezpatta* has the potential to transform the rural economy.

Industry

Meghalaya is an example of an industrially poor region in an industrially backward economy. It is undeveloped in terms of almost all criteria applied for identifying industrially backward states such as per capita income from industry and mining, workers engaged in registered units, per capita consumption of electricity, length of surfaced road, railway mileage and so forth. The number of registered manufacturing units in the state stood merely at 31 in 2001 which in fact was less than half of the number that existed in 1998. Even the pattern of its distribution makes fun of industrialisation in the state. Out of 31 units, 27 are located in the East Khasi Hills and Ri-Bhoi districts alone, two each in Jaintia Hills and East Garo Hills and none in the districts of West Khasi Hills, West Garo Hills and South Garo Hills. However, under the un-registered manufacturing sector the situation is reported to be relatively better which includes all those industrial units engaged in manufacturing, processing, repairs and maintenance services not covered under the Factories Act 1948. The small-scale industries based resources are main components of this sector. According to the data furnished by the Director of Industries, Meghalaya the performance of small-scale units has been encouraging with 21,416 workers engaged in 3,803 such units in 2000-01. Given the ethnic context of the state, numerous handicrafts products based entirely on local raw materials have capacity to build their own marketing space both within and outside the country. The *Local Advisory Committee of the Industrial Finance Corporation of India* recognised this potential long back and advised in these terms:

“The North-Eastern Region of India by and large, offers considerable scope for the development of resource-based industries, particularly the agro and forest-based industries, power generation etc... there is also scope for mineral-based industries, chemical and allied industries as also engineering industries. Likewise, there is ample scope for development of tea plantations and processing, rubber plantations, horticulture, growing and processing of fruits, vegetables, aromatic and medicinal plants etc. in the Region... The handicrafts and village-artisan industries need also to be encouraged as these have both employment as well as export potential”.³

A glimpse of the kind of industry mentioned above obviously depicts a gloomy picture. It is virtually a case of de-industrialisation. The number of industrial units

instead of increasing has sharply declined over the last few years. It appears that the problem of industrial backwardness is not on the agenda of the state.

Mines

Meghalaya is endowed with great mineral wealth but its exploitation for development has been minimal. Small cottage-type coal mining is widely prevalent in different areas extending from Jaintia Hills, East and West Khasi Hills in the East ending in East Garo Hills in the West. The coal reserve in the state is estimated to be about 640 million tonnes but its production has been increasing at a snail's pace because mining is being carried on in an unscientific manner. Unlike other regions of the country coal mines in the state are entirely under the private ownership. The process of coal extraction here is so careless and indiscriminate that instead of giving suitable benefits it is creating serious problems for environment. Nonetheless coal from the state is the most important item of export both to other states of the country as well as to the neighbouring country.

Limestone is another major mineral item found in close proximity to coal. The total estimated reserve of limestone in the state is in the region of 5000 million tonnes. The cement grade limestone is used primarily in the cement plant of the region commissioned in 1966 at Cherrapunji. Limestone is also being exploited at Komorrah for the Chhatak cement plant of Bangladesh. Besides cement grade limestone, other good quality limestone deposits occur in Siju, Shella-Bholaganj and Lumshang-Nongkhlieh belts of the state. The production of limestone in 2001-2002 was 585 thousand tonnes.

Sillimanite is another important mineral, which was being produced in the Sonapahar area but now its production and exploitation has been stopped. The Geological Survey of India's reconnaissance has revealed promising Kyanite deposits and fire clay in Garo Hills. Uranium has recently been located in the Southern part of West Khasi Hills and the state has appeared on the uranium map of the country. However, the work on this project has not made headway as a result of the people's protest against it.

Power and Energy

The scope for generating hydel power is abundant due to the topography of the area in the state. The Khasi Hills region possesses a favourable condition for this purpose that led to the commissioning of the first hydel power project of the North Eastern Region in Shillong during the early part of the twentieth century. Although the Shillong Hydro Electricity Company stopped functioning in 1980s due to the aging of the machines, several new projects started operation subsequently. The Umtrew hydel project in the Khasi Hills and the Tura Diesel project in the Garo Hills were installed in 1957 which expanded electricity in uncovered areas of the state.

However, the Umiam Hydel project installed by harnessing mainly the Great Umiam Khwan river at a reservoir known as Umiam Lake has emerged as the foremost hydel project of the region. From the initial installed capacity of only 36.00 Mega Watts, it has now a total installed capacity of 17,400 MW. It provides power not only to the entire state but also sales electricity to other North Eastern states. The Meghalaya State Electricity Board has also executed the Nangal Bibra thermal project in the coal belt area of the eastern part of the Garo Hills with an installed capacity of 8.00 Mega Watts. Another major project is expected to be installed in the Myntdu river in Jaintia Hills.

Substantial progress has been made in the domain of rural electrification and currently 47 percent of villages covering 56.16 percent of rural population have been electrified.

Road and Communication

Meghalaya, a land-locked state with no railway lines and water transport system, depends entirely on roads for transportation of men and a small inland materials. Although the difficult hilly terrain coupled with topographical barriers has always been a serious hindrance in construction and expansion of all weather roads, the state can boast of having good connecting roads to the different parts of the region and outside. The earliest known road from Jaintiapur, (now in Bangladesh) the then capital of Jaintia Kingdom to Nartiang of Jaintia Hills, another road connecting Guwahati to Surma Valley via Nongkhlaw and Mawphlang in the Khasi Hills and the road linking Tura in the Garo Hills with Harigaon and then with Assam are part of history of the region. The British completed the current

Guwahati-Shillong road in 1877. Similarly, the present Shillong-Dawki-Tamabil road extending upto Sylhet in Bangladesh was completed during the pre-independence days but continues till date as one of the most important roads in the state.

The state has a total road length of 7,598 km as recorded in 2001-02 of which surfaced length was 3,523 km with the road density of 33.88 km per 100 sq.km. There are two National Highways passing through the state – one from the north to south via Guwahati to Shillong and extending up to the border of Bangladesh and terminates at Dawki in India and Tamahil in Bangladesh, and the other from Shillong to Silchar via Jowai with an east to west orientation. The second highway extends from Silchar in Assam to Aizawl in Mizoram and to Agartala in Tripura. Another major regional roads in Meghalaya are Paikon-Bajendobe-Tura-Dabe-Baghmara road and Mendipathar-Phulbari-Tura road in the Garo Hills. Two other roads – Shillong-Jowai-Garampani road and the Shillong-Nongstoin-Tura road have also become major routes within the state.

Table 3
Road Network in Meghalaya

	(Km)
National Highways	464
State Highways	988
Surfaced highways	891
District Roads	5194
Block Roads	604

Source: CMIE; Information pertains to years 1996-97.

Of late, Meghalaya has seen a phenomenal growth in the telecom network. There were 78 telephone exchanges with 53,560 working connections till 2002. In order to increase the accessibility in the rural areas more than 86 Subscriber Trunk Dialing (STD) Public Call Offices have been provided in different parts of the state. Besides these facilities, Internet connectivity, Wireless in Local Loop

(WLL), Webfone and Centrex services are also available bringing the new technology to the all district Headquarters.

Tourism

Meghalaya is traditionally known as the ‘Scotland of the East’ but also characterised as the ‘land of abundant wonders’ because of its enchanting natural beauty. It has attracted people from different parts of the country and abroad. Accordingly, tourism has now emerged as an industry and both the Government and the local people of various tourist destinations have become conscious of its economic benefits.

The data concerning tourist arrivals in Meghalaya during the last four years included in Table-2 amply suggest the increasing worth of tourism in the region.

Table 4
Tourist arrivals in Meghalaya

Year	Domestic	Foreign	Total
2000	1,69,929	2327	1,72,256
2001	1,75,697	2390	1,81,087
2002	2,68,529	3191	2,71,720
2003	3,71,953	6304	3,78,257

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Government of Meghalaya.

6. Meghalaya and the Sixth Schedule

One of the major challenges India faced as a nation state on the eve of independence was the integration of widely diversified regions harmonising the aspirations and yearnings of the people. The issue was particularly demanding in the erstwhile ‘excluded’ and ‘partially excluded’ areas of North Eastern Region of the country predominantly inhabited by hill tribes. Over and above, the problem was compounded due to the ethnic, linguistic and religious distinctiveness of these communities. Accordingly, framers of the Indian Constitution recognised the necessity of a separate political and administrative structure for the hill areas of the region. While appreciating this need they were guided broadly by the

following considerations:(a) the exigency of preserving the culture and tradition of the tribal people;(b) the need to provide autonomy in socio-economic and political affairs; and(c) the necessity to prevent their exploitation by the more advanced people of the plains.

It is against this background that the Sixth Schedule was inserted in the Constitution of India to provide the legal framework for the protection of the tribal people of the North Eastern hills. This provided for the establishment of the Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) in some hill districts of the erstwhile composite state of Assam. In pursuance of this policy, autonomous district councils were constituted for the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and the Garo Hills District in addition to some other districts of the region in 1952. The Khasi-Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council was subsequently bifurcated on 1 December 1964 when a new council called the Jowai District Council, which was later renamed as the Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council was created for administrative expediency. Thus three ADCs have been functioning in the state of Meghalaya for almost five decades.

The Autonomous District Councils are essentially states in miniature with all three wings of governance, namely, legislature, executive and judiciary. Out of the total of thirty members in each of the district councils twenty-nine members are elected on the basis of adult suffrage and one member is nominated by the Governor of Meghalaya. The term of the council is five years and the elections are ordinarily held in time. It is administered by an Executive Council headed by the Chief Executive Member and two other Executive members.

The District Councils have wide-ranging powers to make laws in respect of subjects like land regulation, management of forest, matters relating to village or town administration, appointment of Chiefs and Headmen, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, management of primary education, dispensaries, markets, road and waterways, regulation of trading by non-tribals and money lending and so on. Besides, they have the powers to assess and collect land revenue, impose taxes on professions, trades and employment, vehicles, animals etc. In addition to these sources of income the Councils receive financial assistance from the Government of India under the Award of the Finance Commission through the Government of Meghalaya. The latter has also been extending grant-in-aid to them from time to time under the state plan to enable them to take up rural development programmes in areas like approach roads, bridges, foot paths,

drinking wells. Village markets etc. The funds available each year is divided among the three Autonomous District Councils of Khasi Hills, Garo Hills and Jaintia Hills in the ratio of 9:8:3. The financial position of these ADCs can easily be gauged from the fact that the approved outlay in respect of all those district councils for the Tenth Five Year Plan is Rs. 2500.00 lakhs and for the Annual Plan 2003-2004 is Rs. 500.00 lakhs.

A separate civil service exists for the council under their full administrative control. The recruitment, superintendence and disciplinary control of the services rest solely with the District Councils. The sixth schedule further provides an independent three-tier judiciary with powers to undertake cases of both civil and criminal nature. The three tier courts have been established at the village, elaka (cluster of villages) and district levels for faster redress of disputes based on customary laws and practices as well as codified laws.

It is obvious from the foregoing consideration that the sixth schedule has provided a comprehensive mechanism for self-governance in the tribal dominated state helping the people to safeguard their customs and practices and preserving their distinct culture and identity.

However, in course of time the ADCs have experienced numerous difficulties not only in their day-to-day functioning but have also failed to inject dynamism for social change. The absence of adequate financial resources and administrative expertise has proved to be the stumbling blocks in the effective functioning of these councils. They have not been able to undertake welfare and developmental programmes. As mentioned, these councils receive financial support from the state government and such practice has made them entirely dependent on the government. This has led to strained relationship between the two authorities. Consequently, the authorities of the District Councils have been demanding that the fund earmarked by the Government of India should be directly sent to the Councils and not routed through the state government. However, this demand has not met any favourable consideration either by the central or the state government.

Furthermore, the formation of Meghalaya as a full-fledged state has led to the emergence of a Legislative Assembly where out of 60 seats, 56 are reserved for members of scheduled tribes making it almost a tribal council. In fact the present Legislative Assembly has all but one tribal member. In view of this, at the time of

the formation of a separate state, a new Sub-paragraph 12A was inserted in Paragraph 12 of the Sixth Schedule whereby the law made by the legislature of the state on any subject prevails over the law made by the District Council. The state government has thus acquired an over-riding authority over the District Council. This has resulted in a certain amount of diffidence on the part of the ADCs in Meghalaya and has significantly influenced their working. It has been suggested that paragraph 12A to 'all intents and purposes remains a gun behind the door of Councils legislation.' The state government may refuse to advise the Governor to give his assent to any council bill which may likely to come into conflict with the law of the state government. It is primarily because of such a strained relationship between the state government and the ADCs in the domain of legislation that there has been a persistent demand for the amendment of paragraph 12A of the Sixth Schedule.

Contextually, another significant turn of event has been the placement of the traditional institutions of chiefs such as Syiem, Sirdar, Daloi and Nokma under the purview of the ADCs. The powers pertaining to the appointment and succession to these offices have been vested with the council virtually driving the former under the control of the latter. According to the Paragraph 3(g) of the sixth schedule, the District Council has been given the power to make laws on the appointment and succession of Chiefs. By virtue of this power the United-Khasi and Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council passed the United Khasi-Jaintia Hill Autonomous District (Appointment and Succession of Chiefs and Headman) Act, 1959. The Act has laid down the procedure for the election or nomination of Chiefs and their suspension and removal from the office. In this manner the District Council has thoroughly reduced the position of the Syiem and other traditional Chiefs to that of the position of the employee of the Council. Under the condition, the District Councils and the traditional institutions continue to be at odds over power sharing and existence under the sixth schedule.

Of late, the umbrella organisation of the traditional Khasi states, the *Federation of Khasi States* have been making various representations to both the State and Union governments to highlight their marginalisation over the decades. The Khasi states are demanding that special provisions should be made in the Constitution of India to recognise, restore and empower these traditional political institutions as guardians of local customs, usages and practices. At the same time it is much in evidence that despite having a highly democratic structure the District Councils have not been successful in meeting the aspirations of the people and their

performance in the developmental affairs has been equally cheerless. It has caused a sense of despair among the people in general if not of mistrust about the motive of the district council as to their continuance as the custodians of the tradition and custom of the society at large. Thus the confusion between the traditional institutions and the district council is required to be resolved at the earliest to make both of them accountable to the people and develop them as an effective instruments of social change.

7. Traditional Institutions of Governance

A reference to the system of traditional institutions of governance among the major communities of the state is needed because today they may appear archaic but in practice continue to function with the support of communities to the advantage of the latter and social control. A proper understanding of their structure and function also assumes significance for an attempt is being made by the authority of these institutions for their constitutional recognition in order to harmonise them into the modern system of governance. All the three major communities of the state the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos continue to have their own traditional forms of governance which have withstood the test of time.

The evolution of the traditional political institutions among the Khasis is essentially linked with their migration and settlement in different parts of the Khasi Hills. It is based on the age-old tradition and usages. All the four crucial components of governance-rules of succession to different offices, management affairs by *durbars* (councils), administration of justice and politico-religious observances exists till date.

The primary unit of traditional organisation has been the village (*ka shnong*) which ordinarily consists of one or two clans. The administration of village is conducted by an assembly of all adult males (*durbar shnong*) under the direction of the village Headman called *Rangbah Shnong*. Besides looking after the welfare of the villagers, the *Durbar Shnong* supervises customary practices and enforces discipline among its members. At the middle level is the *Raid* (commune) a unit comprising a group of villages, managed and controlled by the *Durbar Raid* (commune council) and headed by the *Sirdar Raid* (Head of the Commune Council). This unit is supposed to manage the internal affairs within its jurisdiction and settle boundary disputes between villages. The highest level of

these institutions is that of *Ka Hima* (the State) headed by a central authority known by different names in different parts of the Khasi Hills. These heads are called *Syiem*, or *Lyngdoh* or *Sirdar* or *Wahadadars*. According to the various historical accounts there are altogether twenty-five such states, the largest among them being Khyrim, Myllem, Nongkhlaw, Cherra and Nongstoin. The fifteen of these states are headed by the *Syiem*, five by the *Sirdars*, four by the *Lyngdoh* and only one by the *Wahadadar*. Of course, the office of the *Syiem* is widely known and it actually represents the core feature of the Khasi traditional political institutions.

Conventionally, a *Syiem* is appointed from a pre-ordained royal clan called the *Syiem* clan and heirship to the office of the *Syiem* is in all cases traced through the female offspring. It has been evinced that the office of the *Syiem* “arose out of an impulse for amalgamating identical pursuits, interests and necessities of the clan residents and villages. It was instituted on the spirit of reciprocity along with a consolidation of their intimate relations, which had grown among the different sections of people who made up their units.”⁴ These days, a *Syiem* is either elected directly or indirectly from the *Syiem* clan. While in a state like Langrin all adult males of the state have the right to vote in the election of a *Syiem*, in states like Khyrim, Myllem and Sohra, the *Syiem* is elected by an Electoral College comprising the representatives of the founding clans of the state concerned. All adult males of their respective clans in turn elect the latter. In fact, there is no uniformity in the mode of selection/election of heads of the different states. As a result, the traditional Khasi polity has been variously characterised as being a ‘limited monarchy’, ‘democracy’, ‘oligarchy’ or ‘principalities’. All these have been enveloped in the gamut of patriarchy existing within the matrilineal social structure.

In his classical monograph on *The Khasis* Major P.R.T. Gurdon stated.

In most states the Siem is the religious as well as the secular head, e.g. in the Cherra State, where the Siem is also lyngdoh. In Khyrim State the Siem has sacerdotal duties to perform at different religious ceremonies, especially at the time of the annual Nongkrem dance ... the Siem in matters judicial acts as a judge, the whole body of the durbar being the jury. In the olden days the Siem marched to war at the head of his army⁵.

The *Syiem* as a head of the state has traditionally performed numerous functions for the welfare of the people living within the territorial limit of the state. A *Syiem* is always assisted by the *Durbar*, the composition of which of course varies from the state to state. Ordinarily, the *Syiem* has the prerogative to preside over the *Durbar* consisting of members of the priestly clan, village headman and the *Basans*. The *Basans* have a special place in the administrative structure of the state and Gurdon called *Basans* as 'Superintendents of village marts'. Some other functionaries of the *Durbar* are *Lyngskor*, *Myntries* and *Dolois*. Most of them come from the aristocratic clans known locally as *Bakhraws*. As rights and duties of these functionaries are not clearly defined, their role and status in the administrative hierarchy of the state is not adequately made out.

Like the Khasis, the Jaintias also had three tier systems of traditional administration and governance with the *Syiem* at the top who occupied the highest position in the hierarchy of administration. The *Dolois* were placed at the middle level with the authority to run the administration followed by the village Headman (the *Waheh Chnong*) at the lowest rung of the hierarchy. The British abolished the office of the *Syiem* in 1835 but the offices of the *Doloi*, *Pator* and the Village Headman were retained to run the administration of the hill section of the Jaintia Kingdom. Each *Daloi* was assigned a definite area called *Elaka*, which was administered according to the popular will and approach by the members of the *Elaka Durbar*. The *Dalois* perform certain administrative, executive, judicial and religious functions within their respective jurisdiction.

In the Garo Hills, the institution of the *Nokma* and the village council have been the two traditional agencies of governance. Although there are four kinds of *Nokma*, the *Gamni Nokma*, the *Gana Nokma*, the *Kamal Nokma* and the *A'King Nokma*, only the last one was entrusted with certain powers and authority to govern. The *A'King Nokma* occupies a high position in the Garo society as the head of the clan and as the custodian of the *A'King land*. He plays a leading role as the central figure in village activities and represents the village in outside activities. However, the power and function of the *Nokmas* were substantially reduced during British rule when the British introduced an office of *Laskar*. Ten to twelve *A'King Nokmas* were put under the control of each *Laskar* who wielded powers in matters of police, civil and criminal justice and revenue administration within the assigned area.

The traditional political institutions briefly reviewed above evolved out of the situation when these communities lived in relative isolation but in course of time far reaching changes were brought both into their structure and function. These institutions came under the direct control of the British after 1829 when the tribal regions were annexed by the colonial rule. The same arrangements continued till the Independence. Subsequently, these regions were integrated to the Indian Union through the Instruments of Accession signed by the Heads of Khasi States in 1948. Although the tribal leaders demanded autonomy to preserve their political identity but the Indian Constitution did not provide any special provisions to safeguard these institutions. In lieu of this, they were merged with the state of Assam. However, new constitutional provisions were made in the form of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India for the administration of tribal areas in the then state of Assam which provided for autonomous district and regional councils for certain hill districts. Thus in 1952, five Autonomous District Councils were created for Khasi – Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Lushai (Mizo) Hills, Mikir (now Karbi Anglong) and North Cachar Hills. The powers and functions of the traditional institutions in Meghalaya were not only curtailed with the formation of the Autonomous District Councils but they were also completely marginalized under the pressure of the modern constitutional arrangement.

Simultaneous existence of the traditional and modern institutions of governance and administration has undoubtedly created a complicated situation today. To seek constitutional recognition of the traditional leaders a powerful pressure group has emerged in the state, which demands not merely statutory recognition, but also direct funding by the Government of India to enable them to implement the developmental projects. The lobby claims that the traditional political institutions are essentially democratic in nature and the people are actively involved in their functioning. It is further maintained that these institutions are 'non-political' in the sense that the party politics is not allowed in their activities and therefore they will be able to overcome partisan interference. On the other hand, those who have serious reservations about the role and capacity of the traditional institutions assert that these institutions are neither democratic in structure nor representative in character. They cannot be harmonised with the democratic ideology and values of the modern day society. These institutions are particularly unfair to women who are denied entry into the councils and cannot aspire for positions of leadership. Their voice is not heard and they cannot participate as equals in these institutions.

Moreover, the operation of the Autonomous District Councils has widened the gulf between the statutorily recognised institution and the traditional Khasi states (*himas*). While the former has the delegated authority and allotted funds, the latter is bereft of such privileges. Such a dual administrative structure not only causes hardships to the people but also obstructs the implementation of development projects. For example the multiplicity of toll gates on the National Highways in the state set up by the District Councils, the *Syiems* of various *himas* and the state and central governments leads to clashes between the lorry drivers and toll-gate employees. Recurring controversies on trading licenses in urban centres is another visible result of administrative duality. The absence of accountability and transparency in the management of both the traditional as well as the constitutional establishments has created strong vested interests leading to arrested growth of the state as a whole.

8. Identity Politics

Identity stands for the symbolic use of certain elements of culture by a social collectivity to differentiate itself from others. Ordinarily, it involves claims to higher status as a group in relation to other groups. In the early stages, primordial markers of identity such as race, language, region, religion and so forth are consolidated and in course of time it is transformed into an instrument to seek political and economic advantages. Identity formation and its consolidation is thus a historical process the character of which is determined by time and space. Our aim here is to briefly consider the nature of issues involved in the identity politics in the region of our concern.

Historically, the North Eastern Region of India has remained physically isolated and psychologically insulated primarily because of the geographical and topographical location. Nonetheless the colonial policy of the British was no less responsible for keeping the region free from the winds of change blowing in other parts of the country. While some areas were either 'excluded' or 'partially excluded' from the purview of the prevailing administrative controls allowing the people to sustain their customary control over landmass, a tacit attempt was simultaneously made to utilise natural resources by establishing links with the system operating outside the region. The annexation of the hill regions of North East to the British Indian Territory during the nineteenth century amply facilitated these links. The introduction of cash crops, the extension of market links, entry of

government officials, traders and moneylenders to the region created a condition under which a good number of people from outside were able to take hold of land through the process of alienation and transfer.

Although the entire North East came under the overall control of the colonial authority, no strong linkages were established with the outside market. The absence of diversity in economic activities restricted the fusion of tribal economy with the currents of development elsewhere in the country. The regional economy thus remained out of the orbit of the capitalist path and the people in general and tribal in particular continued to lead a life of relative independence, the poverty and starvation notwithstanding. The dominant mode of agricultural production in tribal areas characterised by shifting cultivation further inhibited the transformation of the internal dynamics of the social setting. The strong ties of kinship, the community control of land and the associated social relationships provided a solid base for sustaining ethnic identity among the hill tribal people. The community ownership of land being the basis of collective appropriation regulated the historical context where breaking of peasantry into classes was not feasible. The relative absence of differentiation within the community was the foundation on which social cohesion and group identity survived making ideas of community sentiment and self-help functional to the community. It is primarily because of this structural setting that majority of the tribal in this region could preserve substantial control over their land, protect their languages and keep alive their politico-administrative institutions unlike numerous tribal communities elsewhere in the country.

We contend that some amount of historical sequence is witnessed in ethnic issues being raised today in different parts of the region. There is an element of continuity in the tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces. It is rooted in the nature of socio-political development unfolding in the region.

It has already been indicated that the areas forming part of the state of Meghalaya today were kept outside the purview of colonial administrative controls in accordance with the British Government's policy of least interference. The Government recognised the native rulers who were allowed to function in consonance with their customs and practices except some modifications in administrative arrangements here and there. The abolition of Syiem's position in Jaintia Hills in 1835 was one such step undertaken by the Government. Thus no

visible change took place in the political and administrative domains till the first half of the twentieth century.

However, one cannot escape the perceptible transformation that started taking place in the social life of the hills. Evangelisation by the Christian Missionaries and the introduction of modern elementary education by them were two major sources of change that also saw the beginning of political consciousness among the people. Although the goal of early missionaries was essentially proselytization, their attempt to bring education to the people led not only to the expansion of useful knowledge but also the development of vernacular languages. It is a captivating fact of the Khasi social history that the spread of Christianity also acted as the catalyst even for those who remained outside its fold. The origin and growth of the *Seng Khasi* movement during the closing part of the nineteenth century was one such solidarity movement that brought far reaching changes in the religious and moral thinking of the people.

Reverting to the issue of identity it may be noted that the *Jaintia Durbar* formed in 1900 was the first socio-cultural organisation in the region with some kind of political reasonably. However, in the absence of any detailed authentic account of its activities nothing definite can be said save the fact that it was an attempt to mobilise the like-minded elites for accomplishing unity among the people. In this context, the installation of the *Khasi National Durbar* in the twenties of the last century was a significant development in the politics of the region. It consisted of selected groups of people mainly *Syiems* and the educated gentry with Rev. J.J.M. Nichols Roy as its founder secretary. It worked towards the codification of the Khasi customary laws but could not succeed in its attempt because of opposition from some sections of the people. As the organisation had assumed the aristocratic character, it mainly represented the interests of the Chiefs of the Khasi States on different forums. Nonetheless the *Durbar* was successful in arousing general awareness about people's problems and predicaments.

Another forum that facilitated the growth of political consciousness among the Khasi-Pnars was the establishment of the *Khasi State Federation* which submitted a memorandum to the Governor General for recognition at the Chamber of Princes and the Indian Legislature. The *Federation* was not a people's organisation but a forum of the leading Chieftains and persisted with the demands for statutory sanction to be placed directly under the Viceroy through the Political Agent as in the case of other Indian Princely States. Almost during the same time

the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission, popularly called Simon Commission, provided another occasion to furbish the political activity in the hills. While the leaders of some of the Khasi States continued to raise the issue of their recognition, another group emerged which challenged the claims of the Khasi National Durbar to represent all the Khasis including those of the Khasi States. It was at this stage that the issues of protection of customary and traditional rights of the people over land and '*the development of people along their own lines through a process of evolution native to their tribal culture in matters economic, social and political*' were vociferously raised by this influential group⁶(emphasis added).

A similar process of cultural change was in action in the Garo Hill region of Meghalaya. With the advent of the Christianity with the arrival of the American Baptist Mission in 1866, the Garos also experienced substantial social transformation. The missionaries started schools, medical centres and developed the Garo dialect into a written language first in Bangla script and then in Roman script. They achieved extensive evangelisation and almost 75 percent of the Garos came under the Christian fold. Of course, the people following the traditional Garo faith called *sonsarek* are still found mainly in rural areas of the Garo land. These exogenous sources became a powerful instrument to arouse political awareness among the people which was reflected in the participation of Garos in the politics of the region in large numbers. The development of Tura, as an important urban centre, now the headquarters of the West Garo Hills district, brought more and more Garos to the town. Its importance was asserted on the eve of independence when the Garos organised themselves under the banner of the *Garo National Council* in 1946 and participated in the Hill State movement that emerged later.

The formation of Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution in 1952 and the commencement of a movement for the formation of Hill State comprising various hilly regions were two major developments which reinforced the identity politics in the North East. As most of the hill districts and localities formed parts of the state of Assam, the politics, administration, trade and commerce had predominance of the plainsmen causing slow and steady resentment amongst the hill people. This led to a wave of revivalism among the various communities after 1960s. The leaders of the Khasi and Garo hills were active in the *All Party Hill Leaders Conference* (APHLC), which emerged as a powerful regional political party representing the interests of tribals of different

hill regions. It demanded a separate Hill State to retain the tribal identity of the hill people. However, the Naga and Mizo subsequently drifted away from this party to demand their own states but the Khasi-Pnars and the Garos continued to dominate the party placing emphasis on the question of identity to escape the dominance of the Assamese political leadership. This stage of political mobilisation came to an end with the formation of Meghalaya as a full-fledged state and the tribal leadership extended its full control over politics and administration of the region.

It is pertinent to point out here that in a democratic polity in a multi ethnic setting, the aspirations and ambitions of people do not culminate merely with the fulfilment of certain immediate demands. In the context of rising expectations, peoples' claims continue to surface now and then. The recent upsurge in the different sub- regions of North Eastern India amply illustrates the burden of this argument. The problems of tribal - non-tribal conflicts, direct secessionist demands based on assertion of ethnic identity, the demands of further reorganisation of states are all involved in the nature of continuing underdevelopment of the region. The persisting dominance of non-tribals in trade and commerce, preponderance of non-tribals in modern occupations and professions and the ongoing influx of people from Nepal and Bangladesh survive to be the crucial issues occasionally assuming the form of communal tension and conflict. The demand for the deportation of foreign nationals is also being frequently applied even to those who have come to this area from other parts of the country.

We wish to emphasise that disparity in the socio-economic development results in political fragmentation. Emerging regional elites and a newly formed middle class tend to utilise the existing conflict potential for a greater share in power. Under the situation, dividing rather than compromising elements become the primary instrument of struggle to achieve the goal. Identity is politically articulated for redemption of real or perceived grievances. Such demands are forcefully voiced particularly under the condition of centralising drives of the Indian national political leadership and the increasing interventionist role of the Central Government.

9. Economics and Politics, Centre-State Relations

Meghalaya emerged as a full-fledged state within the Union of India as a result of intense political struggle almost two decades after the independence. The initial struggle for a separate 'hill state' incorporating different hill districts and regions of the state of Assam was eventually reduced into the demand for smaller states based essentially on the idea of ethnic homeland. The Nagas, Mizos, Khasi-Pnars, Garos and even the tribal groups of today's Arunachal Pradesh achieved statehood owing to such engagements. Although the dream of a composite hill state predominantly inhabited by the diverse tribal groups fell apart due to ethnic rivalry the subsequent turn of events in the domain of development strategy and political programme at the national level gave rise to the idea of a North East. The idea of a North East caught the imagination of the regional political leadership regardless of ethnic diversity and differences in historical experience. It was reinforced because of the geo-political situation and demographic composition of the region. Under the circumstances, different states of the region have appeared as the natural partners in the growing economic and political relationships.

The relationship between the Centre and the states has of late been interpreted in terms of core-periphery approach. By drawing attention to the conflicting interest of different regions and groups within the periphery and their relations with the centre the advocates of the approach show the tension between the two in terms of an imbalance due to a differential location of economic, political and cultural power. Contextually, the North East India is considered a periphery of the Indian state since there exists a core identified as a dominant national group comprising the Hindi-speaking states of north and central India. The latter is acknowledged as the single block of states with Hindu-Hindi as a major concern giving an impression that the area constitutes the 'mainstream' and represents the 'heartland' of India. The mutual mistrust between the North East and the Centre arising out of the unevenness of development in various regions is cited as a case in point. It is argued that India is characterised by a powerful culturally distinct core, which exercises monopolistic control over commerce, trade, credit and political life. The people in peripheral areas are just left with the option either of joining the core or of languishing under the pressure of their own predicaments. Under such conditions, peripheral nationalist movements emerge, particularly when the extent of economic inequality between core and periphery increases and communications between the two are intensified.

It is required to be noted that the nature of developmental strategy in tribal areas of North East after independence shows a hiatus between the proclaimed policy and adopted programmes of development undertaken in the region. While both the central and regional planning authorities have acknowledged the specificity of the North Eastern situation, they have failed to adopt a suitable alternative strategy, which could develop the region without disturbing its ecological balance and the identity of the people.

The primary aim of developmental policy has been to use the natural resources of the region in response to the needs of the growing national economy. Consequently, the exploitation of resources such as coal, limestone, timber, tea, oil and hydroelectric power has increased manifold but the benefits emanating out of these activities have not brought any significant transformation of the production structure. The region remains primarily a supplier of raw materials and importer of manufactured consumer goods. What we have been trying to argue is that despite being rich in natural resources, the North Eastern Region remains one of the most industrially backward regions in the country. The forces generated by the adopted development strategy have completely subordinated the interests of the indigenous people and further restricted the local control our resources and gains. It has led to a shift from the “relative independence” to “complete dependence” without even passing through the phase of ‘interdependence’.

The increasing dependence on the central political and planning authorities is evident from the region's glaring dependence on the central fund. The central assistance to the Special Category States (North Eastern states are included under it) ordinarily comes through the centrally sponsored schemes and central sector schemes. In addition to this, the North Eastern Council, a Government of India agency has emerged as an important regional planning authority which takes up major programmes of development involving more than one states of the region. The Government of India has recently come forward with a fund called “Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources” which provides grants for projects identified by the various State governments and agencies.

The extent of transfer of resources from the central exchequer to Meghalaya can be gauged from a simple fact of the proposed scheme of financing of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) and the Annual Plan 2004-05. Out of the aggregate resources of Rs. 3009 crores required for the Tenth Plan, Rs. 2,323.15 and Rs. 685.85 crores will come from Central assistance and States' own resources

respectively. Similarly, the proposed outlay for the Annual Plan 2004-05 is Rs. 625.00 crores while the resources estimated at the official level meeting is Rs. 528.80 crores (states' own resources Rs. 38.13 crore and Central assistance Rs. 490.67 crores). Again the shortfall of Rs. 96.20 crores is expected to be met by way of increased central assistance. A similar pattern was witnessed during the earlier plans. In other words, surplus generated through the exploitation of natural resources of the region are undoubtedly moving out to the relatively developed states, the former is more than compensated through the central assistance which comes from different central ministries and agencies. It is this situation which nullifies the internal-colonial thesis mentioned earlier.

Nonetheless, the structure of centre-state relationships obviously reflects a tendency of centralising drives of national political leadership and growing interventionist role of the central government. Such a trend is further buttressed by the financial power and authority which rests with the Government of India. It has restricted the freedom of states to choose partners for their trade and commerce particularly in the region which is located on the international border. Trade relations with neighbouring countries are further inhibited by tariff and para-tariff duties regulated by the Central government posing formidable market access barriers. These issues have been taken up for discussion in the sections that follow.

10. Traditional Trade

It is a curious fact of history that certain areas of a political territory experience far reaching changes in their locational character as a result of political events on which inhabitants of the area have no control. The shifting boundaries of nation states in contemporary era have persistently been changing the nature and feature of such areas. The region that formed the core/centre is converted into a border and the border is transformed into a hinterland. Besides others, the North Eastern India is the most suitable example of such changes. The bifurcation of the country into two independent sovereign states in 1947 inaugurated a fully transformed international border with unnatural divisions of land, and community. Not only administrative districts, sub-divisions and *thanas* (police stations) were divided into separate parts placing them under the control of India and Pakistan but even the organic character of communities was demolished by keeping some villages in one country while pushing others into the newly created state. This process of

course, has been operating in history for quite sometime. We have Nagas and Mizos spread over India and Myanmar, Khasis and Garos in India and Bangladesh. Such a boundary shifting takes place not only between two countries but also within a country if it is large in size and federal in character. The reorganisation of provinces into smaller states in India after independence has repeatedly changed boundaries of these states altering not only their political set up but also economic fortunes.

Historically, all the units of North Eastern India have had age-old relation among themselves and with neighbouring countries in the areas of trade, commerce, and investment etcetera. The details of trades available in various historical and ethnographic accounts clearly suggest their diversity and pervasive network. We shall presently recount mainly traditional trade relations of the areas forming parts of present day Meghalaya with the neighbouring states and countries. B.C. Allen in his *Gazetteer of the Khasi & Jaintia Hill District* published a century back, gives an account of trades in these words:

The Khasis are keen traders and considerable proportion of the population earn their living by travelling round to the markets held at different places in the district... The principal exports from the district are lime, potatoes, oranges, betel-nut, pan, and bay leaves...The imports are rice and other food grains, dried fish, salt, tobacco... and hand woven cotton and silk cloths from the plains (p.92).

In fact, the Khasis used to visit the marts (popularly called *hats*) of the southern parts in present day Bangladesh and that of Assam in the north. They used to go up to the central part of the Nowgong areas. The traditional markets for trade on the Assam side were also Burdwar, Rani and Sonapura. One British writer observed in 1838 that the Khasi merchant Kings used to take up their residence in the villages near the frontier of Sylhet to take full advantage of trade with the plains.⁷ The principal hats in the plains of Sylhet to which the Khasis and Syntengs resorted to for trade were Pandua. Pandua, at the foot of the Khasi Hills was fast growing into a market in the eighteenth century and even the officials of the East India Company considered it as an 'object worth the attention.'⁸

We come across several references of the most important industry, the smelting of iron ore and the forging of iron implements from it which was found in the Khasi Hills since long. P.R.T. Gurdon mentions in his monograph on the Khasis:

“Colonel Lister, writing in 1853, estimated that 20,000 maunds of iron were exported from the hills in the shape of hoes to the Assam Valley, and in lumps of pig iron to the Surma Valley, where it was used by boat-builders for clamps. Now a day the smelting of iron is carried on in very few places. There are still smelting-houses at Nongkrem and Nongsprung... there are many forges where rough iron brought from the plains is melted down and forged into bill-hooks and hoes⁹ (p.8).

However, it has to be noted that the bulk of the trade was carried on by barter, as the Khasi Chiefs did not mint coins. The use of currency as a medium of exchange on a limited scale was witnessed on the Sylhet frontier where *cowri* was used as currency.

Western Meghalaya, pronominally inhabited by the Garos, has also a long history of traditional trade. The economy of the Garo Hills was not a closed one at least since the time some written accounts of their relationships with the neighbouring plains are available. Like other areas of the region, the residents of the Garo Hills used to carry on their trades through haats (marts) which were held at different places in the foods hills and plains. According to one account there were as many as 24 haats, 14 on the Goalpara (Assam) border and 10 on the border of Mymensingh (Bangladesh) to which they went for exchanging their products with those of the plains.¹⁰ The principal articles of export were timber, chillies, lac and cotton. In bad seasons a certain quantity of rice was imported into the hills from the district of Mymensingh. Other articles of import were salt, dried fish, livestock and brass ear rings.¹¹ In 1873, about 14,000 maunds of cotton were brought down to different frontier haats and exported to Bengal. About 1436 maunds of lac were exchanged in 1874 at Damra, Jeera and Neebari haats alone.¹²

A sketch of the traditional trade in the Khasi and Garo Hills provided above clearly suggests that the economy of the area was not completely closed. Although the topographical features of the hills undoubtedly restricted the growth of wide-ranging trades and commerce, the volume of trade was definitely in commensurate with the scale of the economy of these hills.

However, the partition of India in 1947 changed the nature and landscape of the border and the age-old traditional trade ties between the North East and East Bengal then called East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were snapped. Its immediate impact stretched out to different parts of North East and West Bengal but the region of present day Meghalaya had specially a bad time. The advent of a new international border in the midst of their own area of operation brought agony and distress for which the people were not ready. It altered the production structure and marketing pattern leading not only to decline in trade but also substantial reduction in production. The production of agricultural and horticultural items like potato, orange, pineapple and other perishable goods became loss-making endeavour. The costs of bringing the articles to market for local needs and export became exorbitantly high. Further more, the persistent conflicts between India and Pakistan made the situation more troublesome and problematic obstructing regional cooperation.

11. Contemporary Border Trade

The partition of the country undoubtedly disrupted the age-old trade and communication within the state of Meghalaya. It abruptly stopped the free open trade with the districts of Sylhet and Mymensingh which became part of Bangladesh. In fact, the length of the international boundary with Bangladesh is about 423 km. Naturally, in order to ameliorate the condition of the people in the border areas and to rejuvenate the once prosperous economy special steps have been undertaken. Several old roads have been made functional to revive border trade. The land borders with Bangladesh are not only more accessible but also cost effective from the point of view of international trade. The importance and efficacy of the land-routes have been recognised both by the Central and State governments. Several of the land border points have been converted into Land Custom Stations along the international borders between Meghalaya and Bangladesh. These Stations are not only used for trade but also act as custom check posts. According to the information provided by the office of the Commissioner of Customs, Shillong, currently 17 Land Customs Stations (LCS) have been used for export and import purposes in the North Eastern Region. Out of these 17, as many as 8 LCSs are located in Meghalaya, 4 each in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills and the Garo Hills.

Nonetheless it may be noted here that the nature and extent of border trade cannot be properly ascertained for want of authentic data either from official or non-official sources. The problem is essentially rooted in ways through which trades are carried on in different parts of the region. The trade between the North Eastern Region and the neighbouring countries is broadly divided into two types-official and unofficial. While the trading activities through the official channels are recorded at different points, the unofficial trade is more often designated as illegal trade or simply trans-border smuggling. In view of this, it is convenient to ascertain the nature of commodity structure of export and import and the volume of official trade being presently carried on in the state. A brief reference to the unofficial trade will however be made later.

There is another dimension to this problem. Although the land custom stations located in Meghalaya are mainly used for the export of raw materials and locally produced perishable items, it is difficult to estimate how much of these commodities are exclusively produced within the state and then being exported to Bangladesh. Despite the difficult tasks involved in making a realistic assessment about Meghalaya's share in export trade of the country in general and North East in particular, we provide data of export in Table 5 which has passed through the Land Custom Stations located in Meghalaya during the last five years.

Table 5
Export of Mineral Product to Bangladesh
through LCSs Located in Meghalaya

(Metric Tonnes)

	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Coal	5,44,738.0	6,41,301.3	8,05,986.8	8,85,316.2	9,671.8
Lime Stone	2,50,018.2	2,30,342.6	1,38,007.3	2,34,253.7	2,56,358.0
Stone Boulder	2,903.1 & 7940 CFT	15091.2 & 5,69821 CFT	8587 & 35,860 CFT	2111.0	16637.0

Source: Computed by the author based on data supplied by the Office of the Commissioner of Customs, Shillong.

The present data reveals that items exported to Bangladesh from Meghalaya are mainly those which are available in the hills of the state. However, contrary to the general impression, the volume of export of horticultural produce appears to be very limited. People living in border areas have been traditionally cultivating crops such as oranges, bananas, betel nuts, betel-leaves, tezpatta and selling them in border hats. The system was almost institutionalised but as a result of numerous barriers and formalities imposed by the Governments on both sides of the border, these cultivators have their horticultural crops but are deprived of smooth traditional markets. Under the condition, a sizeable section of these cultivators are using unofficial channels to export their products.

Meghalaya thus primarily exports mineral and horticultural products to Bangladesh which constitute almost 90 percent of the total exports from North Eastern Region of the country. Coal and limestone, two major mineral products are found in southern belt of Meghalaya and conveniently exported through the land custom stations located at Dawki, Borsora, Mahendragang, Ghasuapara, Dalu, Bhaghamara and Mankachar along Meghalaya-Bangladesh border. In fact there exists a complementarity between the resource base of the hills of Meghalaya and the nearby plains of Bangladesh. A cement factory at Chhatak in Bangladesh, for instance, fully depends on Meghalaya for limestone. Likewise, the tea gardens, jute mills and brick-manufacturing units in Bangladesh largely depend on coal mined in Meghalaya¹³.

In addition to the official trade the volume of unofficial trade is equally substantial between Meghalaya and Bangladesh. Although no systematic and authentic data on the direction and composition of such trade are available, its situation has been depicted in these works:

‘It is learnt that the volume of illegal exports of coal, limestone and agro-forest based products will be 4 to 5 times higher than the volume of official exports from Meghalaya to Bangladesh’¹⁴.

The *modus operandi* of informal border trade has been described thus:

Traders on either side of the border cross over almost freely for carrying out trading activities. Since the population in the border areas is ethno-culturally more or less homogenous on either side of the border, it is easy for anyone to carry out trading activities... there

is practically no physical barrier... in the form of border fencing or the border roads or even strict vigilance by security forces etc. Thus traders from Bangladesh often cross over to India to buy commodities. They usually pay in Indian currency, which can be acquired at a small commission from the border agent... The goods are transported by road as well as by country boats or even by porters on foot¹⁵.

12. Prospect for Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation

Meghalaya and Bangladesh

A profile of the state of Meghalaya has been provided in the foregoing sections showing its centrality in the North Eastern Region of India. Apparently, the geographic and economic ties which have traditionally existed between the North East and neighbouring countries make them natural partners in the sub-regional economic cooperation in the context of eastern South Asia. An attempt is made now to present an overview of the potentials as well as the problems involved in augmenting regional economic cooperation.

However, new moves for strengthening the multi-sectoral sub-regional links for economic cooperation in eastern South Asia have to take into account not only micro-realities of individual units of the sub-region but also the macro-issues such as challenges of globalisation. The fundamental challenge of globalisation and accompanying liberalization of the economy in the developing countries is to adjust rules and institutions for stronger democratic governance to preserve the advantages of global market. While modifying these institutions the country has to provide enough space for human and community resources. It is imperative to ensure that globalisation works for the people not for a *status group* because despite the attendant risks and challenges not a single country/region would be able to stop the advance of globalisation.

This issue is particularly crucial in the context of North-East India because the question of breaking up the relative isolation of the regional economy and its integration into the South Asian economy has consistently been debated within the framework of prevailing identity politics in the region. The call for preservation of ethnic identity has assumed the character of all-pervading political movements. Accordingly, opening up of the economy for economic cooperation

with the neighbouring countries and regions is also examined in these terms. The multilateral economic cooperation project may not thrive unless ethnic issues are managed to harmonise with risks and uncertainties involved in opening up the economy. An incisive statement that follows is instructive to appreciate the points:

If globalisation is to succeed, the ethnic factors of the region are to be managed in such a manner that they do not have any adverse impacts on it and *vice-versa*. All this requires a very tender and careful handling of ethnic factors by the agencies of globalisation. Any mindless programme of globalisation that is insensitive to the ethnic factors and dismisses politics of the unorganised domain as an avoidable aberration may ultimately turn out to be counter-productive¹⁶.

13. Potential of Sub-Regional Cooperation

The earlier discussion on the traditional and contemporary trade links of Meghalaya with neighbouring states and countries obviously suggests that the physical and cultural proximity, shared history and tradition, and common economic problems and predicaments provide a logical setting for enhanced economic cooperation. Most of the states and countries of the region formed an integrated economy earlier but the historicity of the situation engendered break in polity smashing organic unity of these regions. Now they are facing predicaments of unnatural borders and frequent commotion along the border. Nonetheless the growing realization of the need revive and strengthen closer cooperation among these countries has created an ambience for greater complementarity among these economies. The closer economic collaboration is bound to benefit all the countries for which attention needs to be given for more balanced trade flows based on location advantages involved.

The specific area of cooperation may include trade and investment, transport and communication, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, human resource development and people to people contact. Besides there is an urgent need to explore the possibility of expansion into the areas of culture, education, protection of biodiversity and traditional knowledge, biotechnology and natural disaster management.

Meghalaya is bound on the south as well as the west by Bangladesh with an international boundary of about 423 km. The economy of the border areas was substantially dependent on free open trade with the districts of Sylhet and Mymensingh. The horticultural crops such as arranges, satkora, banana, betelnuts, betel leaves, black pepper, tezpatta used to be extensive exported which was badly affected after partition of the country. In order to ameliorate the suffering of the people in the Border Areas and to rejuvenate the once prosperous economy, special schemes have been taken up in these areas in addition to the normal State Plan schemes of the Government of Meghalaya. The scheme called Border Area Development Programme (BADP) receives grants from the Planning Commission under Special Central Assistance (SCA). The SCA for the BADP forms a part of the State Plan Resources and the schemes implemented under this programme are also treated as State Plan Schemes. The expenditure increased on the scheme was about Rs. 4178 lakhs during the Ninth Five Year Plan and the approved outlay for the Tenth Plan is Rs. 4470 Lakhs.

The various integrated schemes taken up under this programme are based on criteria like distance from the international boundary with Bangladesh (approximately 10 km. at the crow flies distance), degree of economic backwardness and dependence upon the traditional trade relations with Bangladesh. Some of these schemes include rural electrification, micro-hydel projects, ropeways projects, construction of link roads and market stalls, horticultural plantations (oranges, banana, arecanut, coconut and cashew), individual schemes under fishery, handloom and sericulture and so on. The Annual Plan 2004-05 proposes to take up extensive programmes for construction of new roads linking the border areas with the nearest state National Highways.

These initiatives have changed the scenario on the international borders. These schemes are primarily implemented through the Border Areas Department of the Government of Meghalaya, which provides sustainability to the programme. The successes achieved under the BADP have motivated the Government to undertake similar schemes for the people inhabiting the areas bordering Assam. The state is actively considering to introduce a new scheme to be known as the "Village Development in areas bordering with Assam" to cover those area inside Meghalaya falling a radial distance within a crow-fly of 2 km. from the inter-state border with Assam. The nature and type of schemes to be identified and implemented under it may cater to the basic infrastructure needs of the villages to facilitate letter movement of people, goods and survives.

These schemes are essentially the result of increasing recognition of strategic advantages like geographical proximity and regional economic complementarity in building regional cooperation. The scope of augmentation in economic cooperation in a developing economy is basically dependent on a balanced intra-regional economic development. The growing regional development has created a favourable locale in North East India for expansion of trading activities with neighbouring areas.

Another initiative to facilitate export to Bangladesh has been the strengthening of the Land Custom Station (LCS). Seven LC Stations are currently functioning on different border points which are mainly used for exporting mineral products like coal, lime stone and stone boulder. These stations are located of Dawki, Borsora, Mahendraganj, Ghosuapara, Dalu, Bhaghmara and Mankachar.

Table 6
Export of Coal to Bangladesh through the
Land Customs Stations located in Meghalaya

LCS	YEAR (Metric Tonnes)				
	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004
Dawki	222426.4	304061.7	420622.4	494966.5	478056.0
Borsora	166804.7	169211.8	233758.2	242577.5	372466.65
Mahendraganj	61290.4	41261.0	17133.0	23515.0	23743.5
Ghasuapara	92597.9	122577.1	129386.2	109012.4	78059.6
Dalu	1007.5	4089.7	5087.0	14548.8	13927.1
Bhaghmara	611.1	100.0	—	250.0	350.0
Mankachar	—	—	—	446.0	565.0
	5,44,738.0	6,41,301.3	8,05,986.8	8,85,316.2	9,67,167.8

Source: Office of the Commissioner of Customs, Shillong.

Dawki is the oldest and largest LCS in the entire North Eastern Region and is open for all traffic. It functions as the most popular access to Bangladesh through the Dawki (India)–Tamabil (Bangladesh) route. Although these land custom

stations are regularly used for export and import they lack infrastructural facilities. There is no proper storage facility for exporters at these stations. The freight movement is also affected due to weak transport infrastructure in the region. Since there is no bilateral motor vehicle agreement between India and Bangladesh, the transporters not only face hardships on the border but also resort to illegal means to facilitate their movement.

¹ *Task Force on Shifting Cultivation, Ministry of Agriculture, 1983*

² All details with regard to production figures and other financial materials are from various state and central government reports.

³ Quoted in Anil Kumar Sharma, 'Financing of small-scale Industries' (in North East) *Yojana* 16-31 August 1982 p. 48

⁴ See L.S. Gassah, "Traditional Self-Governing Institutions among the Hill Population Groups of Meghalaya", in A. Goswami (ed.), *Traditional Self-Governing Institutions among the Hill Tribes of North East India*, Akansh Publishing House, New Delhi, 2002.

⁵ P.R.T.Gurdon, *The Khasi*, Cosmo Publications, 1975, Reprint.

⁶ See J.N.Chowdhury, *The Khasi Canvas*, pp.344-45.

⁷ A.B.Lish, *Calcutta Christian Observer*, Vol III, 1838, pp. 133-134 (quoted in P.N.Dutta, *Impact of the West on Khasis and Jaintias: A Survey of Political, Economic and Social Change*, Cosmo Publication New Delhi, 1982, p.14

⁸ F.Hamilton, *An account of Assam*, p.30.

⁹ P.R.T.Gurdon, *The Khasi*, Cosmo Publications, 1975, Reprint.

¹⁰ See P.C.Kar, *The Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982, p.212.

¹¹ B.C.Allen, *Gazetteers of the Khasi & Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills, Lushai Hills; Part II Garo Hills District* Shillong, 1905, p.44 (Reprinted in 1980-Gian Publications, Delhi).

¹² *Foreign Department Political Proceedings*, November 1875: Nos. 88-91 quoted in P.C.Kar, *op. cit.*, p.213.

¹³ See for details, Gurudas Das & R.K.Purkayastha (eds.) *Border Trade: North-East India and Neighbouring Countries*, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, 2000, p.34.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.40.

¹⁵ Srinath Barua "Certain Observations on Informal Border Trade with Neighbouring Countries and Economic Prospects of the North Eastern Region" in Gurudas Das & R.K. Purkayastha (eds.) *Ibid.* p.58

¹⁶ Samir Kumar Das, "On the Politics of globalisation : Managing Ethnicity in North-Eastern India," in Gurudas Das & R.K. Purkayastha (eds.) *Liberalisation and India's North East*, Commonwealth Publishers, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 209-210.