

BPSE - 145 DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST INDIA



**DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN
NORTHEAST INDIA**

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Unit 4 Constituent Assembly Debates

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Unit 5 Special Provision for the Northeast

Adapted from Unit 12, BPSC-102

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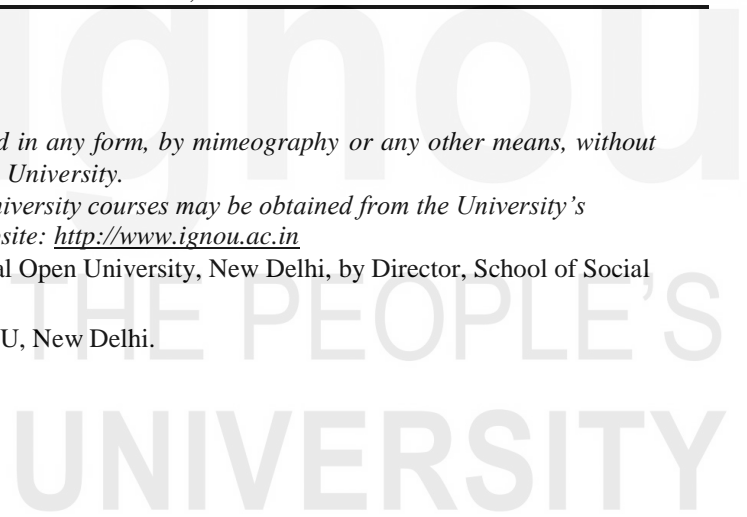
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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Northeast India is an important region in India. It consists of eight states, i.e., Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Sikkim. Due to their geographical location, historical background and ethnic composition, these states stand out among other states of India. This course is about democracy and development in Northeast India. It focuses on some features pertaining to democracy and development in the region. The course has six blocks, which consist of sixteen units. The first block – Introduction, seeks to apprise you of Northeast India as a region. In this block, units 1, 2 and 3 are about the formation of Northeast India as a region, its socio-cultural and ethnic profile, and its economic profile, respectively. Block 2 Constitutional Provisions and Governance has three units. Unit 4 deals with Constituent Assembly Debates pertaining to the issues of Northeast India. Unit 5 is about special provisions in the Indian Constitution about Northeast India. Unit 6 discusses questions relating to regional and district councils. Block 3 is about identity politics in Northeast India. Units 7, 8 and 9 discuss issues relating to migration, refugees and citizenship, autonomy movements; and, ethnicity and politics of recognition, respectively. Block 4 is about party politics and elections. It has one unit which deals with political parties and party systems in Northeast India. Block 5 New Social Movements has five units, 11-14. These deal one by one with movements pertaining to students, women, the environment and human rights. Lastly, block 6 - Development has two units. Unit 15 is about social and human development in Northeast India. Unit 16 deals with economic development in the region.

Each unit has inbuilt *Check Your Progress Exercises*. After having read the units, you can try to answer the questions given in these exercises. At the end of each unit, there are answers to the questions mentioned in the *Check Your Progress Exercises*. You can match your answers with the answers given in the unit. But be careful to write answers in your own words. The course ends with a list of *Suggested Readings*. You are advised to go through them.



BLOCK 1
INTRODUCTION

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BLOCK 1 INTRODUCTION

Northeast India is a crucial region in Indian Union because of its unique geographical and socio-ethnic profile. The shape of Northeast India evolved historically from the colonial period to the reorganization of the Assam state and the formation of the different states. This block aims to acquaint you with the background and process of the emergence of Northeast India as a political and geographical entity in the Indian Union. The block has three units, and unit -1 elaborates upon the various phases in the evolution of the Northeast as a region. It also deals with the specific political and geographical identity of the region. Unit -2 discusses the region's socio-cultural and ethnic profile as various ethnic groups inhabit northeast India, and these social groups have unique cultural features across the different states. Unit -3 deals with the economic profile of the region.



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UNIT 1 MAKING OF THE REGION*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Emergence of Northeast India as a Region
 - 1.2.1 Assam
 - 1.2.2 Meghalaya, Nagaland Mizoram
 - 1.2.3 Manipur and Tripura
 - 1.2.4 Arunachal Pradesh
 - 1.2.5 Sikkim
- 1.3 Let Us Sum UP
- 1.4 References
- 1.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

1.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit introduces you to the formation of Northeast India as a region. After reading the unit, you will be able to:

- Explain how the extant identity of Northeast India evolved from the first half of the nineteenth century;
- Compare various stages in the evolution of Northeast as a region; and,
- Discuss the role of the state in shaping the identity of the region.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The region of Northeast India has eight states – Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Sikkim. The states of this region share international borders with neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Bhutan and Nepal. Seven states, generally known as “seven sisters” - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, are connected to the rest of India through Siliguri, West Bengal, which is known as “chicken neck” (see the map). The extant identity of Northeast India as a region has evolved over the years following the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 between the British and the Burmese. There were attempts to make administrative changes in the region by the British administration at different points of time over the years. In 1874, Assam became a separate

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province under the control of a commission. In 1905, Assam was annexed with East Bengal following Bengal's partition. However, again, in 1912, Assam became a province after the partition of Bengal was annulled. In 1919 Assam was brought under the rule of the Governor according to the Government of India Act 1919. It remained so until 1935 under the Governor's rule according to the Government of India Act 1935. Northeast India has hills and plains areas. It consists of communities and regions which have had differences in language, levels of economic development and educational attainment. The Government India Act 1935 designated some areas as "excluded" and some as "partially excluded". These areas had a majority of the tribal population which had distinct cultural identities. These areas were excluded from the application of legislative powers of the provincial legislature. In these areas, those Acts could be applicable which were notified by the Governor as per his discretion. As you will read in unit 7, the impact of the provisions for "excluded" and "partially excluded" areas have been reflected in special provisions of the Indian Constitution, such as the VI Schedule. After Independence, District Autonomous Councils were created in the Northeast. Indeed, the shape of Northeast India formed during the colonial period largely continued to exist until the 1960s with the formation of Nagaland state and reorganisation of Assam in the 1970s. Even the linguistic reorganisation of states in the 1950s did not impact Assam. In this unit, you will read about the process of the emergence of Northeast India as a region.

Map of Northeast India



The creation of some institutions contributed to identifying a Northeast Region that first accommodated seven states, and later eight, with the addition of Sikkim. According to B.P. Singh (1987: p. 108) after Independence, reorganisation of Assam in the 1970s and establishment of three administrative institutions – North-Eastern Council, and Common High Court and Common Governor (both at that time) provided certain uniqueness to the region. In his opinion, Northeast India as “ the region emerged as a significant administrative concept ---- replacing hitherto unit public imagination, Assam” by two pieces of Indian Parliamentary legislation passed in 1971 – North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act and the North-Eastern Council Act (B.P. Singh quoted in Baruah, 2020: p.26). The establishment of the North-East Council (NEC), aimed to act as an agency for the development, a “regional planning body” of the states which are located in the region of Northeast India. In September 2001, the central government established the Ministry of Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER). It functions as the nodal Department of the Central Government to deal with socio-economic development issues of eight states of Northeast India. (<https://www.india.gov.in/offical-website'-minisrty-development-north>, accessed on July 3, 2021). The NEC was brought under the DoNER after its formation. Sikkim became its member in 2002 (According to The North Eastern Council (Amendment), Act, 2002, and NER have now eight states.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) What was the significance of the North East Council (NEC) and DoNER?

1.2 EMERGENCE OF THE NORTHEAST AS A REGION

Four states of Northeast India emerged from the state of Assam – Nagaland in 1963, Meghalaya in 1972, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in 1987 (they became Union Territories in 1972). Two of them – Manipur and Tripura were princely states during the colonial period. Arunachal Pradesh had existed in the form of an administrative unit known as the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Sikkim was a country prior to joining India as a state in 1975. Let us discuss how the formations of the states of Northeast India occurred.

1.2.1 Assam

As stated earlier, Assam was made a separate province by the colonial authorities in 1874. It was done following the transfer of colonial headquarters from Cherrapunji to Shillong. Until then, the region which became Assam was a part of the Bengal Presidency. The British transferred headquarters from Cherrapunji because it was inconvenient as it recorded the highest rainfall. From 1826 onwards, large parts of Assam came under British rule. In 1826 the Treaty of Yandabo was signed between the British and the Burmese. The treaty was signed in a specific political context. The Burmese were expanding into Ahom territories. Finding it difficult to face the Burmese, the British intervened on the invitation of the Ahom king and defeated the Burmese. It led to the signing of the Yandbo Treaty. From then onwards, different areas were annexed by the colonial rulers. These included: upper Assam (under Purandhar Singha) was annexed in 1832; Matak country was annexed in 1842; Khasi states were annexed following Anglo-Khasi war (1829-33); Garo Hills was annexed in 1873. Following the formation of Assam, different areas – hills and plains were included in the province of Assam. Assam, formed in 1874, consisted of hill areas and plain areas – Bramputra and Barak Vallies. This shape of Assam continued until new states, or Union Territories, were made out of Assam at different points of time: Nagaland in 1963; Meghalaya, Tripura and Manipur (states in 1972); Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (Union Territories in 1972 and states in 1987).

1.2.2 Manipur and Tripura

Manipur shares a border with Nagaland in the north, Assam in the west, southwest with Mizoram, and Myanmar in the south and east. Tripura shares a border with Mizoram and Assam in the Northeast and Bangladesh in the north, south and west. Manipur and Mizoram were native states during the colonial period. Following their accession to Indian Union, they became category C states according to Part C States (Laws) Act of 1950. The central government administered the category C states through Governors or Lt. Governors. Following modification of Part C States (Laws) Act as Union Territories (Laws) Act of 1956, Manipur and Tripura were made Union Territories in 1956. The people in both Manipur and Tripura met the members of SRC during its visit and demanded statehood. Rejecting the demand for statehood as unviable, the SRC suggested the merger of Tripura in the short-run and that of Assam in the long run with the state of Assam. The Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura were made states in 1972 (S.K. Chaube, p. 205).

1.2.3 Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram

The state of Meghalaya was made of the three hill districts of Assam – the Khasi hills, the Jaintia hills and the Garo hills. As you have read above, these hills were captured by the British after the Anglo-Khasi war, and they were placed in Assam as its hill districts following the formation of Assam in 1874. Shillong became the capital of Assam had become the capital of Assam at that time. During the 1960s, there had been a demand for the formation of a hill state out of

the hill districts, mainly in opposition to the language policy of the Assam government, and dissatisfaction with the provisions of the VI Schedule (which in their opinion did not safeguard their interests adequately). The government appointed the Pataskar Commission (1965-66) under the chairmanship of H.V. Pataskar to look into the demand for a hill state. The Commission recommended the formation of a State of Meghalaya within the state of Assam instead of creating a new statehood. The Parliament passed Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) for Act, 1969. It led to the formation of a new state of "Meghalaya" within the state of Assam. This state comprised the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and Garo Hills District as defined in the VI Schedule. An autonomous state was created within Assam – "a state within the state" which existed during 1970-72. In 1972, it was elevated to statehood.

Compared to other parts of the Northeast, Lushai hills (old name of Mizo hills) came under the colonial administration much later, in 1989, within five decades. These became part of Assam (Pachau, Joy L.K. 2014). The Mizo hill district was made a Union Territory, along with Arunachal Pradesh, in 1972. Moreover, in 1987, the Union Territory of Mizoram became a state along with Arunachal Pradesh.

Different Naga-inhabited areas came under the control of the British administration over seven decades. Parts of Naga hills were annexed in 1835 and in 1866; Lotha-inhabited area was annexed in 1875, Ao in 1899, Sena in 1904, Konyak in 1910. Different areas/hills inhabited by Nagas (various tribes) were granted statehood of Nagaland in 1963.

1.2.4 Arunachal Pradesh

The state of Arunachal Pradesh was formed on February 20, 1987. The formation of Arunachal Pradesh can be traced to the process of formation of administrative boundaries that began in the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1914, the British administration created North-East Frontier Tract (NEFT). The tract separated hill areas of the then districts of Darang and Lakhimpur districts of Assam in the light of the Assam Frontier Tract Regulation Act, 1880. In 1954, the Government of India renamed North-East Frontier Tract (NEFT) as the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) existing within the administrative boundary of Assam state (Jayati K. Patnaik, 2019: fn.1). Following the reorganisation of Assam, NEFA was made into a Union Territory on January 20, 1972. The Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh was converted into a state with the same name on February 20, 1987.

1.2.5 Sikkim

Sikkim joined Indian Union as its 22nd state in 1975. Its location is not contiguous with the other states in Northeast India, known as "seven sisters" - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya. It is connected with the "seven sisters" through the districts of Cooch Bihar, Jalpaiguri and Siliguri (Darjeeling) West Bengal (See map: p:10). In 2002, Sikkim became the eighth member of the North Eastern Council (NEC),

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adding to the list of seven states which were already its member. With its inclusion in the NEC, Sikkim has become known as one of the states in the Northeast India region. Prior to its merger with the Indian Union in 1975, Sikkim was a country that enjoyed the status of a protectorate of India according to the Indo-Sikkim Treaty, 1950, signed between the Government of India and the monarch of Sikkim. The merger of Sikkim in India was followed by political unrest there. In 1973, opposition parties and leaders launched an agitation demanding political reforms, including abdication by the monarch. In the final sequence of political developments, the monarch held a referendum in Sikkim, then a country, on the question of the abolition of the monarchy. More than 97 per cent of persons voted for the abolition of the monarchy. This resulted in the merger of Sikkim with India as one of its states.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Briefly state the formation of Northeast India.

2) Which states in Northeast India had been Union Territories?

3) Discuss the relationship between Sikkim with Northeast India as a region.

1.3 LET US SUM UP

Northeast has a distinct identity among the regions in India in terms of geographical location, linguistic and ethnic composition, local institutions and economic features. The formation of the extant structure of Northeast India as a region can be traced back to the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826 between the British and Burmese. Since then, several areas in the region have come under the control of the British. In 1874, the British created a new province of Assam consisting of the areas which they had captured. Shillong became the headquarters of the new province. In 1971, Northeast India “emerged a

significant administrative concept” following the passage of two Acts - North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act and North-Eastern Council Act. Until then, Assam was a commonly used term for the region (B.P. Singh 1997). Northeast India has eight states - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Sikkim. Four states, i.e., Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram, were part of Assam state before getting statehood. In 1972 Meghalaya became a state, and Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became Union Territories. Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram got statehood in 1987. Until 1972, Arunachal Pradesh was known as North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Two of these – Tripura and Manipur, existed as princely states during the colonial time. After Independence, they joined the Union of India by signing the Instrument of Accession and were categorised as C category states in 1950. In 1956, they became Union Territories after being replaced as the C category states. Sikkim was a country and protectorate of India according to the Indo-Sikkim Treaty 1950 signed between the Government of India and the Monarch of Sikkim. It got merged with India in 1972 and became a state of India. In 2002, Sikkim became part of the Northeast region when it became a member of the North Eastern Council (NEC). In popular parlance, seven out of eight states of Northeast India - Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, are known as “seven sisters”.

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1.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) North East Council (NEC) was an advisory body created in 1971 to act as a regional planning body for the development states in Northeast India. It was brought under the Ministry of Development of Northeast Region (DoNER), which was created in 2001 by the central government to act as the nodal department of government for the development of Northeast India.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Northeast India as a region evolved from the first half of the 19th century. The signing of the Treaty of Yandabo, 1826, started a process of occupation by the British of different areas in the region. Following the shifting of British headquarters from Cherrapunji to Shillong in 1874, Assam became a separate Province consisting of the territories occupied by the British. Northeast as a concept emerged in 1971. In 1972 Meghalaya state was formed, Tripura and Manipur Union Territories became states, and Union Territories of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were created. In 1987, the Union Territories of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram were changed into states. In 2002, Sikkim joined the North Eastern Council (NEC). These days, there are eight states in Northeast India.
- 2) Manipur and Tripura (between 1956 and 1972) and Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (between 1972 and 1987) were Union Territories.
- 3) Sikkim was a country that became a state of the Indian Union in 1975. It became a member of the North Eastern Council in 2002. It enabled Sikkim to become a constituent of the Northeast India region.

UNIT 2 SOCIO-CULTURAL AND ETHNIC PROFILE OF THE REGION*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Ethnic Groups in Northeast India
 - 2.2.1 Arunachal Pradesh
 - 2.2.2 Assam
 - 2.2.3 Meghalaya
 - 2.2.4 Manipur
 - 2.2.5 Mizoram
 - 2.2.6 Nagaland
 - 2.2.7 Tripura
 - 2.2.8 Sikkim
- 2.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.4 References
- 2.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the socio-cultural and ethnic profiles of different states in Northeast India; and
- Compare the profiles of different states.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Several ethnic groups inhabit every state in Northeast India. These groups are formed based on the social and cultural features of communities. There are three types of ethnic groups in the states of northeast India: indigenous tribes, non-tribal local communities, non-tribal migrants. The region is endowed with natural resources, which are also ingredients of cultural profiles of tribal groups. The ethnic groups follow different religions, speak dialects or languages, and celebrate festivals. Although each state in the Northeast has a substantial population of specific ethnic groups, these groups also exist in the neighbouring

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states. This unit deals with the socio-cultural and ethnic profiles of the states in Northeast India.

2.2 ETHNIC GROUPS IN NORTHEAST INDIA

This section elaborates upon the socio-cultural profiles of the communities in the states of Northeast India.

2.2.1 Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is inhabited by the world's largest variety of ethnic tribal groups and sub-groups. It has 26 major tribes with more than 100 minor tribes. Each tribe speaks their own language or dialect. The languages spoken by the tribes are named after them. The principal tribes of the state are Adis, Nyishi, Apatani, Tagin, Mismi, Khampti, Noite, Wancho, Tangsha, Singpho, Monpa, Aka etc. Crafts such as weaving, pottery, smithy work and basketry symbolize the rich tradition of Arunachal Pradesh. Ethnic tribes such as Khamptis, Monpas, Khambas and Membas have their own script. The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh follow a tradition of collecting folk songs, tales and lore. According to the 2011 census, there are 29.04 % Hindus, 30.26 % Christians and 1.95 % Muslims in Arunachal Pradesh. Those tribal who are categorized as Hindus by the Census are actually followers of their tribal religion. Let us look at the brief profiles of some tribes such as the Adis, Nyshisis, the Khamptis, the Singhpos.

The Adis

The Adis constitute one of the major tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. They inhabit largely the lower part of Lower Dibang Valley district (especially Roing and Dambuk areas), and east, west and Upper Siang districts of the state. Indigenous groups such as Padams, Milangs, Komkars, Minyongs and Pasis call themselves as Adi, meaning hill people. Earlier, the Adis were known as Abors. The Adis are basically dependent on agriculture. Besides, fishing and hunting are also carried out to supplement food. Adi practices animism – worshipping nature, deity, spirit. In order to protect and preserve indigenous beliefs and practices, the Adis revived their ancient religion called Donyi-Polo and launched a movement for its revival in 1968 (Chaudhury 2013). Folk dances are performed as part of important rituals during festivals and other occasions in Adi society.

The Nyishi

Earlier, the Nyishi were known as Dafla. They have their own culture and tradition. Forests and *Mithun*, sacred animal, are an inherent part of their cultural and economic life. *Nyokum Yullo* is a festival celebrated by the Nyishi tribe. They celebrate this festival to worship Goddess *Nyokum* to protect crops from insects and animals and save human beings from misfortune.

The Tai- Khamptis

The Tai-Khamptis inhabit the Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh. They follow *Hinayana* Buddhism. The Tai-Khamptis are the only tribe in the state known to have their own script called "Tai script". Their main occupation is agriculture.

The Khampti dance is also one of the important symbols of the Tai-Khamptis. The Khampti dance is a mixture of both dance and drama. It reflects the rich culture of the Buddhists and other different stories of moral values. Another popular dance form of Khampti is the “Cockfight dance”.

2.2.2 Assam

Assam consists of diverse ethnic communities – tribals, non-tribals, Asamiyas and Bengalis. The tribal groups are plain tribes, hill tribes, and tea tribes. The plain tribes of Assam are Barmans, Bodos (Bodokacharis), Deori, Hojai, Sonowal Kacharis, Lalung, Mech, Miri (Mising), Rabha, Dimasa, Hajong, Singpho, Khamti, Garo. Bodos are the largest among the plain tribes. Bodos is a generic term used for some tribes, who prefer to be known by their individual identity. Bodos claim to be the original inhabitants of Assam. Sonowal Kacharis largely inhabit the districts of Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Lakhimpur and Dhemaji. Misings are other ethnic tribes of Assam that are mostly concentrated in Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Jorhat and Sonitpur. The principal hill tribes of Assam are Karbis and Dimasa, who inhabit the Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts of Assam. Other hill tribes that inhabit Assam are Garos, Hajongs, Hmars, Khasis, Jaintias, Synteng/Pnar/War/Bhoi/Lyngngam, and Kukis. Tea tribes of Assam are also known as Adivasis. They are descendants of indentured labourers who migrated to work in a tea plantation during the colonial period. They migrated largely from Chhotanagpur (contemporary Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh). Most of them belong to Munda, Oraon, Santhal tribes. They are called by the generic name of tea tribes because they work in more than 800 tea gardens. They largely inhabit the districts of Sonitpur, Darang, Nagoan, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Cachar, Hailakandi, Karimganj and Tinsukhia. In Assam, the tea tribes are not Scheduled Tribes because they are not the original inhabitants or indigenous to Assam. But they are classified as OBCs in the central list (Sharma 2018). Asamiyas refers to those inhabitants of Assam who speak Assamese, both Hindus and Muslims. In the 1980s, Assamiyas came to be alluded to as “ethnic Assamese” (Baruah 1999:p. xvii). The largest population of Bengalis inhabits the districts of Barak valley. According to the 2011 census, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists constitute 61.47 %, 34.22 %, 3.74 % and 0.18 per cent of Assam’s population. Besides, Assam has non- tribal descendants of migrants such as Marwaris, Biharis, Punjabi Sikhs, Nepalis and so on. Besides, there is a large number of descendants of Muslim peasants who had migrated to Assam during the colonial period inhabits districts such as Dhubri, Barpeta, Nowgong, Mangaldai, and Nalbari.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

1) Discuss the features of the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

2) Briefly discuss the profile of tribes of Assam.

2.2.3 Meghalaya

There are broadly two kinds of ethnic groups in Meghalaya: the indigenous tribes and non-tribals. There are three main tribes in Meghalaya - the Khasis, the Garos, and Jaintias in Jaintias. Jaintias are also known as Pnars. The Khasis along with the Pnars form a group named Khasi-Pnar. The population of the three tribes of Meghalaya is concentrated in the Khasi hills, Garo hills and Jaintia hills. The other tribals who live in Meghalaya are Hajong, Rabha, Bodo, and others. The non-tribals are descendants of those migrants that came to the area prior to independence or following the partition, besides those who are migrants to the state after independence due to occupation, employment and business purposes. The latter consist of Bengalis, Marwaris, South Indians, Biharis, Nepalis, Sikhs (in Shillong). The non-tribals largely inhabit cities such as Shillong, although they are found in other areas of the state too. The common trait binding all these three tribal communities is its matrilineal system in which the family lineage is taken from the mother's side. All three tribes of Meghalaya follow the matrilineal system. Besides, there are Muslim Khasis too. The traditional Khasi religion is known as Niam. However, most of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garols profess Christianity to which they were converted during the colonial period. Meghalaya is the only matrilineal society in the north-eastern region. In this system, the lineage of the family is traced through the mother of the child. Younger daughter (Khaduh) is the custodian of family property and inheritor of family property. The child bears the title of the mother, and the husband moves to the wife's parental residence after marriage. Women have no political representation in traditional political institutions. Their representation in the legislative assembly or parliament is also negligible.

The Khasis constitute about 50 per cent population of the state. According to the Khasi mythology, the Khasis owe their origin to seven huts or *Hynnewtrep*. According to 2011 Census, Christians, Hindus and Muslims 74.59 %, 11.53 % and 4.40 % respectively form population in Meghalaya.

Festivals also are important symbols of the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya. Different festivals are held at different places in the state of Meghalaya at different periods of the year. A five day long religious festival of the Khasis, *Ka Pembrang*

Nongkrem dance, popularly known as Nongkrem dance, is held annually at a village called Smit, 12 km from Shillong. The festival is celebrated to commemorate the evolution of the traditional Khasi state known as *Hima*. Another festival of the Khasis is held at Shillong during the second week of April. *Behdiengkhlam*, the most important and colourful festival of the Jaintias is celebrated annually at Jowai in Jaintia Hills in the month of July. *Wangla* festival is observed for a week to honour Saljong (Sun-God) by the Garos during October-November.

2.3.4 Manipur

The major ethnic group in Manipur are Meities who live in the plains, while the hills are inhabited by tribes such as Nagas, Kukis and Chins. Meitei Pangals (Meitei –Muslims) are an important component of the population. Apart from these tribes, some other Scheduled Tribes such as - Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chiru, Chothee, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui Kom, Mizo, Lush, Mao, Monsang, etc also inhabit Manipur. People of Manipur speak the Tibeto-Burman language. The Meitei language is the mother tongue of the Meitei people and is the lingua-franca of the state, whereas English is the official language and the language of conducting business. A festival popularly known as *Sangai Festival* is held annually for fifteen days at Palace Ground, Imphal, in which central /state government offices, private entrepreneurs and co-operative societies build their stalls to showcase their products. In that festival, along with other dances “Maibi” dance, the folk dance of Manipur is also performed by the local artists. Leading organizations dealing with handicrafts, wood carving and readymade garments etc., from the adjoining countries like Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh, South Korea, Japan, and even America also participate in this festival. Besides, each ethnic group of Manipur has its own distinct culture and traditions. The culture and traditions are reflected in its dances, music, customary practices. Some of the classical dances of Manipur include *Raas Leela*, *Nupa Pala*, *Pung Cholom*, *Khamba Thoibi* Dance etc. The *Raas Leela* dance is performed in an enclosure in front of the temple throughout the night.

2.2.5 Mizoram

Mizo is a generic term for the tribes and lives Mizoram/Mizo hills. There are five major tribes Lushei, Ralte, Hmar, Paite, Pawis (formerly known as Lais) - and 11 minor tribes. Broadly various tribes which were referred to as “Kuki-Chin-Lushai” during the colonial period who are spread across states of Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur, Assam as well as Bangladesh, and Burma. According to Pachuau (2018: p. 11), the Mizo identity is a “situational identity”. The groups which consider themselves Mizos in Mizoram, such as Hmars and Paites, may not consider themselves to be Mizos elsewhere. The Maras (formerly Lakhers) and Pawis also want to be called Mizos. Chins from Myanmar consider themselves to Mizos. Mizos in Mizoram also accept the Chins of Myanmar as Mizos. In this context, the Mizoram Chief Minister extended help in 2021 to the Chin migrants/refugees from Myanmar as Mizo fellow tribals. The latter consider Aizawl as their cultural capital – their *Zawlkhawpui*.

In terms of ethnicity and language, Mizos are characterized as “Tibeto-Burman”. *Duhlian* language is the *lingua franca* of Mizos is an official language along with English. Death rituals and Christianity form important ingredients of the Mizo culture. Death defines the identity of person as Mizo or not: a Mizo is allowed to be buried in their burial place, and non-Mizo is not. It also applies to a person who was born Mizo but ceased to be so due some reason or the other (Pachauu 2018). Bamboo cultivation, though related to the economy, is also an important part of Mizo food culture. Bamboo is a food supplement for Mizos. The flowering of bamboos which is called *Mautam* occurs every fifty years. It leads to a rise in the number of rodents after they consume the seeds from the flowers. A large number of rodents devour bamboo crops, resulting in food shortages, and finally, famine in the late 1950s (Sajal Nag 2008).

The famine led to the Mizo insurgency during the 1960s-1980s that ended with the signing of the Assam Accord in 1986. According to the 2011 census, 87.16 % of Mizos are Christians, 2.75 % of the inhabitants are Hindus, and 1.35 % are Muslims. There are some followers of Buddhism, especially the Chakmas. Along with New Year’s Day and Christmas Day, they also celebrate some other festivals. Popular dances of Mizoram include –the *Cheraw* (Bamboo dance), *Khuallam*, *Solakia* and *Chheih Lam* which symbolize the Mizo culture. The Mizo code of ethics focuses on “*Tlawmngaihna*,”. It means that it is the obligation of all members of society to be hospitable, kind, unselfish and helpful to others.

2.2.6 Nagaland

There are 16 main tribes in the state – Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Chiru, Khiemnungam, Konyak, Lotha, Makware, Phom, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Tikhir, Yimchugre, and Zeliang. Though each of these has its distinct identity, they are known by generic terms Naga. According to the 2011 census, Christians form 87.9 %, Hindus form 8.7 % and Muslims form 2.5 % of the population in Nagaland. Several languages are spoken in Nagaland. They belong to the Tibeto-Burman group of languages. According to the 2011 census, the major languages spoken in Nagaland are Konyak, Ao, Lotha, Angami, Chokri, Sangtam, Bengali, Zeme, Yimchunge, Chang, Khiamniungan, Rengma, Phom. Folk songs and dances are essential ingredients of the traditional Naga culture. The state of Nagaland is famous for celebrating different festivals. One such festival is the “Hornbill Festival”. The Government of Nagaland launched it in December 2000 with the aim of encouraging inter-tribal interaction and also promoting the cultural heritage of the state.

2.2.7 Tripura

Tripura generally has two types of ethnic groups: tribals (indigenous people) and non-tribals. The tribals form around 19 main tribes along with several sub-tribes. The major tribes of Tripura include Tripuri, Reang, Chakma, Halam, Garo, Lusei and Darlong. According to the 2011 census, 83.40 %, 8.60% and 4.35% population of Tripura are Hindus, Muslims and Christians, respectively. The indigenous communities form around 30 per cent of the population of Tripura.

Bengalis form the largest ethnic group in Tripura. The larger share of Bengalis in Tripura resulted from the migration of Bengali speaking people after partition. Bengali culture and tribal traditional practices coexist to constitute “Tripuri Culture”. Bengali is the most spoken language due to the predominance of Bengali people in the state. Kokborok language is spoken by the majority of the tribal communities. Music and dances are an integral part of Tripura’s tribal communities. Each tribal community has its own songs and dances.

2.2.8 Sikkim

There are three major ethnic groups in Sikkim: Nepalis, Bhutias, and Lepchas are the three major languages spoken in Sikkim. The Lepchas were the original inhabitants of Sikkim; The Bhutias migrated from Bhutan in the seventeenth century, and Nepalese started migrating into Sikkim in the nineteenth century. The movement of the Bhutias began in the region from Tibet in the 14th century, when the kingdom of Sikkim was established in 1642. As you have read in Unit 1, Sikkim became part of the Indian Union in 1975, and earlier, it had existed as the protectorate of India. From the later nineteenth century, as the Sikkim monarchy was a British protectorate, Sikkim ethnic composition changed. Due to the migration of Nepalese into Sikkim encouraged by the colonial authorities, the Nepalese had become the single largest ethnic group in Sikkim, reducing the population of other ethnic groups.

All the three major ethnic groups, the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese of Sikkim, have their own languages. Besides, several dialects are prevalent among the different Nepali castes like Gurung, Rai, Tamang Mukhia, Newer, Manger, Sherpa etc. However, Nepali is the lingua franca of the state because the majority of the population belongs to the Nepali community. The official languages of the state are English, Nepali, Sikkimese (Bhutia) and Lepcha. Buddhism and Hinduism are two main religions followed in Sikkim. Most of the Lepchas and Bhutias are Buddhists. The majority of Nepalese are Hindus. There are more than seventy monasteries in Sikkim. Folk dances, customs and traditions of different ethnic tribes and caste constitute cultural markers of Sikkim. *Pang Lhabsol* is one of the festivals celebrated by Bhutia communities. Through this festival, they offer gratitude to Mount Kanchendzonga. Mount Kanchendzonga is considered as a protector of the state.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of the unit.

- 1) Which tribes in Northeast India have a matrilineal system, and what are its features?

- 2) Mention the major ethnic groups of Sikkim.

2.3 LET US SUM UP

Northeast India is the most diverse region of the country. There are broadly three kinds of ethnic groups in the region: indigenous ethnic groups or tribes; non-tribals who have been residing in the region for several years, and descendents of migrants who came to the region from the nineteenth century. Each of the groups has its distinct social and cultural profile reflected in language, dance, way of worship and festivals, etc. Although every state in the Northeast has several ethnic groups, some of these groups are larger in size and politically more active than other groups. Arunachal Pradesh is ethnically most diverse state in India with ethnic groups having specific cultural symbols. In Assam, among such groups are included the non-tribals such as Assamese speaking Asamiya and Bengali speaking Bengalis, and descents of migrants speaking their languages or dialects; and, tribals such Bodos in the plains, and Karbis and Dimasa Cacharis in the hills of the state. They speak their own languages which are different from Assamese and Bengalis. Three principal tribes of Meghalaya – the Khasis, Garos and Jaintias can be distinguished by existence of matrilineal system among them. Nagaland consists of several tribes which are known by generic term Naga. Among their festivals “hornbill” is remarkable. The principal ethnic groups in Manipur are Meities and Nagas. The former live in the valley. The latter live in the hills. Three principal ethnic groups in Sikkim – Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese represent the social and cultural profile of the state. Tripura’s socio-cultural and ethnic profile is represented by several tribals who speak the Kokborok language and Bengalis who speak the Bengali language.

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2.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

EXERCISES

Check Your Exercise 1

- 1) Adis, who were known as Abors, are one of the major ethnic groups of Arunachal Pradesh. Adis means hill people. Indigenous tribes such as Padams, Milangs, Komkars, Minyongs and Pasis consider themselves as Adis. Their principal economic activities include tilling land, fishing and hunting. They practice animism. In 1968, they started a movement known as "Donyi Ploism" for the protection and preservation of their culture.
- 2) There are broadly three types of tribes in Assam: the plain area tribes, the hill tribes and tea tribes. The plain tribes such as Barmans, Boro (Borokacharis), Deori, Hojai, Sonowal Kacharis, Lalung, Mech, Mrit (Miching), Rabha, Dimasa, Hajong, Singpho, Khamti, Garo inhabit plain

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areas of Assam. Bodos constitute the largest tribe in the plain areas of Assam. They claim to be the original inhabitants of Assam. It is a generic term used for some tribes. Karbis and Dimasa Cacharis inhabit the hills of Assam in Karbi Anglong and Dimasa Hasao district. Munda, Oraon, Santhal tribes Tea tribes are descendents of tea plantation workers who had migrated to Assam from other states of India such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, West Bengal during the colonial period.

Check Your Exercise 2

1. Matrilineal system is followed by three tribes of Meghalaya – the Khasis, Garos and Jaintias. In this system, the lineage of a family is traced through the mother of the child. Youngest daughter is the inheritor and custodian of family property. Child adopts the name of the mother's clan. After marriage, the husband moves to wife's parental residence.
2. There are three main ethnic groups in Sikkim: the Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese. Nepalese are the largest group among them.



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UNIT 3 ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE REGION*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Land and Plantation
- 3.3 Extraction Economy
- 3.4 Dominance of Tertiary Sector
- 3.5 Emergence of Social Classes
- 3.6 Challenges
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 References
- 3.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the basic features of economies in Northeast India;
- Underline the significance of land, plantation and mineral resources in the region; and
- Discuss the major challenges which these economies face.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Economic profiles of the states of Northeast India impact the politics and development of the region. Their geographic location and topography shape them. The eight states of Northeast India have two types of terrains – plains and hills. The land, service sector, traditional industry, natural resources (forest, mineral, petrol, coal, limestone, etc.), and tourism are important sectors of the economy of the region. Among these land, the land has a special significance. According to Amalendu Guha (1977), all other inputs into Assam were brought from outside except land. This unit deals with the economic profile of Northeast India with reference to different sectors of the economy such as land, plantation, minerals, tertiary sector, challenges, and migration.

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3.2 LAND AND PLANTATION

The land is the source of agriculture, plantation, and natural resources. The nature of cultivation inland is different in plains and hills regions. The proportion of plain areas in Assam is more significant than those in other northeast states. In the hill areas, *jhum* (slash and burn) cultivation has been the traditional mode of cultivation. Moreover, *jhum* cultivation would continue circularly. The main crops cultivated in Northeast India are jute, fruits, tea, pulses, coconut, potato, areca nut, rice, wheat, maize, oilseeds, sugarcane, ginger, *mesta*, spices, pineapples, banana, papayas.

There is no individual ownership of agricultural land in the hill areas of the Northeast. It lies with the community. However, in plain areas of the region, both inhabited by the tribals and non-tribals, there are individually transferable and inheritable rights inland like in other parts of India. In the tribal areas, allotment of land for the purpose of cultivation to an individual is made by the village community through the *gaon buda*/village head. He works on behalf of the community, and the land is allotted according to the traditional custom. Violation of the procedure by the individual allottee can lead to his dispossession of the land.

The relationship between land and migrant peasants has been an important issue in the political economy of Northeast India, especially Assam. Based on the literature, the following pattern emerges about the relationship between land and peasants. The migration of peasants from East Bengal into Assam had been an important feature of the land-based economy of the state. The migration of peasants from the East began in 1891 with the encouragement of the British to cultivate “wastelands” in Assam. The main purpose of encouraging migration was to raise food production and revenue. The “wastelands” were those types of land that forest and other common property resources (CPR) the British called wastelands under the colonial individual ownership. Such forest land, which was termed “wastelands” as a means of sustenance of the Bodos and Rabha tribes of Assam. Till the 1930s, the land was in abundance in Assam. But the situation changed from that time. The growth of the plantation economy from the first half of the nineteenth century affected food production adversely in the province. There was a food deficit in the region. This necessitated an increase in food production in the province. In such a situation, cultivation in the land was carried out by the migrants from neighbouring districts in East Bengal. The migration of peasants from East Bengal to Assam happened for two reasons: First, the impoverishment of farmers due to the nature of the land system, which was a permanent land settlement.

The Permanent settlement impoverished the peasants in East Bengal, which forced them to migrate to Assam (Fernandes 2020). Another reason was political. The Muslim League government in the 1930s, headed by Saidullah, encouraged migration from Bengal. Although the migration was encouraged apparently under the Saidullah government’s “grow more food” policy of Saidullah government, its main purpose was to increase of Saidullah/Muslim league among the peasants.

In the 1940s, the demographic structure of Assam changed, with a number of migrant peasants becoming more than that of the local peasants. In reaction, Congress leader Gopinath Bardolai introduced Line System. It demarcated land occupied by the migrant peasants to prevent them from occupying land beyond the land system (Fernandes 2021; Guha 1977; Nag 1990).

The plantation economy is also related to the question of land in Northeast India. The closure of tea trade with China foreclosed the avenues of availability of tea for England. The British looked for alternative sources of tea. And it was available inland in Assam (plain and hill areas which were occupied over a period of time). The British planters invested money to capture land for tea plantations in Assam. The agents of British trading houses in Calcutta worked on behalf of their counterparts in London. Plantation economy introduced monetisation of Assam's economy. It led to improvement in means of cultivation in agriculture. Indeed, the bullock card was introduced for the first time. The British encouraged tea plantation workers from other parts of India, Bihar, UP and Rajasthan to work in the tea plantation, as they encouraged the peasants from East Bengal to cultivate land in Assam. Although two economies – plantation and agriculture were dependent on land, the link between them remained tenuous and minimal. Changes in the land-related economy did not bring drastic changes within the society (Guha 1977).

3.3 EXTRACTION ECONOMY

Apart from agriculture and plantation, land in Northeast India is also a source for extraction of natural resources – forest products such as timber, petroleum, coal. Although attempts to extract natural resources in the states have been made since the 1950s, it was since the 1990s that attempts became more persistent. The Extraction economy in Northeast India was boosted after the introduction of New Economic Policies, which were extended into the Northeast in the 1990s. During this period, the central government, some state-level politicians, contractors, and local business people attempted to extract coal, sandstones, lime, and uranium. It harmed biodiversity, environmental protection, and health hazards. However, the extraction of coal was banned by National Green Tribunal (NGT). Plant to set up Uranium plant at Domiasiat village in the West Khasi Hills District was stalled due to the protest. The death of some miners in the rat-wholes in Jaiantia Hills and attack on some social activists by supporters of the miners show the implications of the extraction economy on the social life in the region (Karlsson 2011).

In Nagaland, the exploitation of minerals did not exist in Nagaland until the 1990s (Fernandes 2020: p.275). The introduction of the New Economic Policies resulted in the acquisition of land to extract natural resources. Extension of reforms in the extraction economy made the availability of land necessary for the extraction of minerals, mining, etc. In Meghalaya, not less 500, 000 acres of land was needed for mining in the states during 1947-2000; around 585.92 acres of land was used for mining purposes in Meghalaya. The areas affected by territorial disputes, e.g. Merapani border region involving Nagaland-Assam territorial

dispute, are mineral-rich: they can be a revenue source for both states. In Tripura, the land is acquired for natural gas exploration. It did not have mining until the beginning of the reform period. In Manipur also exploration is a recent development (Fernandes 2020: p. 275-276).

3.4 DOMINANCE OF TERTIARY SECTOR

There is limited scope for the development of agriculture and industry due to topography in the region. In such a situation, the development of the service sector is more viable in the Northeast (Ashok Pankaj, et.al. 2021). The service sector, known as the tertiary sector - banking, insurance, transport, communication, public administration and other services such as health, education, sanitation, etc, dominate the economy in the Northeast. Indeed, the tertiary sector has grown faster in the Northeast than other sectors. The study of Hanjbam's (2009) of Manipur shows that in 2009, the tertiary sector constituted more than 50 per cent of the state's NSDP (Net State Domestic Product). Indeed, this study categorises Manipur's economy as "tertiarised" economy. In comparison to the tertiary, the primary sector - agriculture, forestry, logging, mining, quarry contributed less than the tertiary sector to individual the state's NSDP (Hanjbam 2009). The secondary sector has seen low investment in Northeast India. Several units in the secondary sector in states in Assam, Nagaland, Manipur were declared sick since the 1990s (Fernandes 2021, Hanjbam 2009).

In comparison to two components of the secondary sectors, manufacturing and construction, in Manipur, the construction sector leads the secondary sector in Manipur. Different states in the Northeast have traditional industries. However, these units usually remain sick. They do not have sufficient capital. Several units have been closed down. In Manipur, LMSI (Large and Medium Industries) are virtually non-existent (Hanjbam, 2009: pp. 124, 127). The study of Anamika Das and Dipak K. Mishra (2021) shows that in the Saulkuchi silk cluster in Assam, both OAEs (Own Account Enterprises) or the self-owned enterprises exist along with large enterprises. The workers in such enterprises live in poor working and living conditions. There is no scope of capitalist expansion in such enterprises. Even the capitalist class in Assam, the *Marwaris* limit their economic activities to trade and mercantile operations.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i) Use the space below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

1) Discuss the significance of the tertiary sector in the economy of Northeast India.

2) Explain the role of the extraction economy in Northeast India.

3.5 EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL CLASSES

Different communities in the Northeast had their traditional hierarchy intertwined in social and economic relations. Traditional social and economic relations have been impacted since the British period. Migration from East Bengal and other parts of the country, which continues into the contemporary times, expansion of educational and other institutions, demographic changes within the communities, and the state policies in the post-Independence period, including the attention of the economic reforms of the 1990s have resulted in the rise of new social classes in Northeast India. The impact of these factors has not been equal in all states and communities, nor have they seen the even level of rising of new social classes. The social classes are not exclusively social or economic groups. Their economic and social characteristics are embedded. These classes can be identified as entrepreneurs/businesspersons/traders, middle classes (salaried classes), youth, elite (who have education, economic assets, political power), peasants, etc. The growth of these classes began during the colonial period with the encouragement of the colonial authorities to carry out various economic activities, and it continued in the contemporary period. The growth of new social classes (especially the middle classes, such as teachers, lawyers, government employees) took place more in the cities than in the villages. Since urbanisation is not a dominant feature in the region, the more articulate classes (middle classes etc.) are concentrated in the cities. Some of them play a leading role in economic, political and community affairs. As you will read in the units of block 5, these social classes address various concerns of their respective communities and organise social movements.

Class differentials among tribals have emerged across states in Northeast India. Although the land is not private property in the hills of Northeast India, studies on Arunachal Pradesh show individualisation (individual ownership of land) of land ownership. Shifting cultivation is giving way to settled cultivation in valley and slop areas. Vandana Upadhyay's study on the transformation of land rights in Arunachal Pradesh shows that a class of "moneyed and the powerful" persons has emerged in Arunachal Pradesh. The persons belonging to this class have

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occupied large plots of community land for horticulture, tea rubber plantations. They lend money to poorer tribals and keep land registration records as collateral. Inability to repay the loan on time results in the transfer of land from the borrower. This has resulted in differentiation within the tribal peasantry, resulting in landlessness and smaller and marginal farmers. Differential access to government support systems also contributed to differentiation with a tribal community in Arunachal Pradesh. This new class formation among tribals in Arunachal Pradesh is happening along with the commercialisation of agriculture. It has occurred due to collaboration between market forces and the government (Upadhyay 2020).

Andreas Kulke's book *Class Formation, Social Inequality and the Nagas in Northeast India* (2019) that contrary to general perceptions, the tribal society is "class less", the Nagas in Nagaland have the formation of classes. This class formation is visible in income disparities. An urbanisation without creating employment has taken place. A class of so-called "educated unemployed" has emerged among the Nagas of Nagaland. This has happened along with the emergence of "neo-patrimonial culture" in Nagaland. In Meghalaya, also a class of entrepreneurs – miners, real estates businesses, has emerged. This class involves in expropriating natural resources such as coal. It causes environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources. A nexus has emerged between the entrepreneurial class and political class. Depletion of natural resources has resulted in opposition of civil society organisations and individuals in the state. In response to the petition of civil society organisations, NGT banned coal mining in Jaintia hills. However, despite the ban, illegal mining continues unabated. In 2018, some social activists were violently attacked when they opposed illegal coal mining. In the same year, some miners were trapped in the coal mines in Jaintia Hills: their bodies could not be retrieved. However, mining still continues unabated despite the ban and protests.

3.6 THE CHALLENGES

Economies in the Northeast face challenges, i.e., poverty, unemployment, backwardness, anxiety, and social unrest. Northeast India also lacks adequate development of infrastructure. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur have a higher hand count of poverty ratio than the national average. Rural poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. The principal reason for the increase in the poverty ratio in Arunachal Pradesh is the increase in rural poverty. However, there has been some decline in poverty within the states of Northeast India in the first two decades of liberalisation. But the decline has not been equal across the states (Joydeep Baruah 2021). There is a lack of employment opportunities in the Northeast. The traditional sector does not provide employment. As mentioned earlier, several units have become sick. Kalyan Das (2021) weighted periodic labour force survey data with the census data from 2011 to show the youth unemployment rate in the states of Northeast India. The youth unemployment rates in 56 per cent in Nagaland, 35 per cent in Manipur, 26.8 per cent in Mizoram, 27 per cent in Assam, and 26 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh. These

youth unemployment rates are against the all India average rate of 17.8 per cent. Food deficiency is a common feature in the states on Northeast India. There is a high level of dependence of the people on Public Distribution System (PDS) for meeting the food requirement (Pankaj, et al. (eds.), 2021: pp.29).

Lack of transport and infrastructure has been a perennial problem in Northeast India. As you will read in unit 16, initiatives have been made through the Look East and Act East policies. It has happened following the introduction of New Economic Policy in the Northeast. Infrastructure – transport, hospitals and academic institutions (after schooling in the local areas) are not well developed in the region. Even infrastructure development suggested by Look East Policy (LEP) focuses on urban areas. Priority of infrastructure development according to LEP is on trade among the nations, not on internal conditions within the region. Villages generally lack basic facilities. Studies reveal that people have to track long distances to avail themselves of health and educational facilities. Educational needs and health emergencies have to shift to Guwahati, Shillong or outside NER (Kekhrieseno alluded to in Fernandes, 2020: pp. 277).

Studies suggest that lack of unemployment opportunities and poverty in the Northeast has boosted the outmigration of people from the Northeast to other parts of India. As you will read in Unit 7, the migration of people into Northeast India has been going on since the nineteenth century. Until the 1990s, migration was primarily a one-sided phenomenon: from other regions into Northeast India. Migration from the Northeast to other regions was insignificant earlier. However, since the 1990s, there has been a growing trend of migration from the states of Northeast India to other regions of the country, especially into Delhi, Gurugram, Mumbai, Bangaluru and other cities. Families of the migrants back home financially depend on the remittances sent by the migrants to other states. They mostly work in the hospitality industry, spas, restaurants, salons, beauty parlours, etc. Maximum migration to other regions of India takes place from Manipur (Kikon and Karlsson 2019; Mc Duie-Ra 2012).

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i) Use the space below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with the model answers given at the end of this unit.

1) Discuss the rise of new social classes in Northeast India.

- 2) Identify the challenges before the economies in the Northeast India.

3.7 LET US SUM

The land, service sector, traditional industries and natural resources and tourism are important sectors of the economies of Northeast India. Ownership of land in tribal areas of the region lies with the communities. The tribal peasants practice *Jhum* cultivation. The land is the source of agriculture, plantation and natural resources. The land question in the Northeast is linked with migration. The migration started during the colonial period, and it continues in the contemporary period. One reason for migration into the region was to cultivate the land and engage in plantation activities. Tertiary economy – banking, insurance, transport, communication, public administration and other services such as health, education, and sanitation is the dominant sector of the economies in Northeast India. Over the years, some social groups such as salaried middle class and entrepreneurs have emerged in the region. The economies of the states face challenges such as poverty, unemployment, lack of infrastructure, etc. Lack of opportunities in the Northeast forces outmigration from the region to other parts of the country.

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3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Compared to the primary and secondary sectors, the tertiary sector occupies a dominant position in the economy of Northeast India.
- 2) Extraction of natural resources – forests, minerals, coal, petrol, etc. The extraction of natural resources got a boost following the introduction of economic reforms. Entrepreneurs, politicians and government carry extraction of natural resources. Extraction of natural resources is opposed by the civil society organisations in the region.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Different social classes such as entrepreneurs/businesspersons/traders, middle classes (salaried classes), youth, elite (who have education, economic assets, political power), peasants, etc., have emerged in Northeast India. These classes in the region began to grow the colonial authorities to carry out various economic activities, and they continue in the contemporary period.
- 2) The challenges in the economies in the Northeast include poverty, unemployment, food deficit, and lack of opportunities leading to migration from the Northeast to other parts of the country.

