

**Language, Territoriality and the Problem of Integration.  
A Case Study of India's Periphery**

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled  
"LANGUAGE, TERRITORIALITY AND THE PROBLEM OF INTEGRATION.  
A CASE STUDY OF INDIA'S PERIPHERY," being submitted by  
Miss Kasturi Basu in partial fulfilment of requirement  
for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in  
this University, is a record of the student's own work,  
carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

It is hereby certified that this work has not been  
presented for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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TO

MY PARENTS

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## PREFACE

Language as a factor of disintegration in a multilingual nation is an accepted fact and has attracted the attention of scholars in the years following the Second World War. Decolonization left behind many multilingual and multiethnic societies which have at different times tried to breakaway from the national mainstream.

The focus of this study is the application of these theories to the Himalayan Montane Region of India and discover to what extent language has influenced disintegrative tendencies. Therefore detailed studies have been made of the habitat of the speakers, their linguistic patterns, socio-economic characteristics and finally how these have become manifest in rebellions and unrest.

The first chapter gives a general introduction of language and its potentialities to generate emotion, often leading to secessionist or inflammable situations. There is also a short literature review.

The second chapter attempts to fix the territorial limits of the study as also give some idea of the terrain and climatic conditions of the study area.

The third chapter attempts to show the social characteristics apart from language which have created a feeling of exclusiveness and hampered identification. It also gives a brief survey of the economic characteristics.

The fourth chapter deals exclusively with the origins of the different languages of this region and the migration and settlement patterns of its speakers.

The fifth chapter deals with strategic considerations. A brief survey has also been made of the present unrests and those of the recent past and an attempt has been made to bring out the linguistic bias.

The conclusion is a brief survey of the earlier chapters and suggestions for some strategies for integration.

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*Kasturi Basu.*  
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CHAPTER - 1  
INTRODUCTION

Certain socio-cultural factors such as religion, race, tribe, language and ethnicity are generally believed to have posed problems for the integration of a country. Of these, language has at various times been a dominant factor. Examples of language riots can be cited from different parts of the world, some of the prominent countries in this list are Belgium, Spain, Canada, Corsica, South Africa and the Celtic speaking areas.<sup>1</sup> In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries linguistic nationalism was a dominant European movement, with language seen as a primary outward sign of a group's identity. Almost every big nation has had to part with some peripheral segments which have broken away from its national life and have mostly been drawn into the national life of some other people with whom they had some linguistic affinity.

All this would make us aware of the potentialities of language to make or break a nation. Needless to say that language conflicts are most likely to occur in multilingual states. The recognition of language as a dividing factor has given it a certain legitimacy and is partly the reason for the continuing language tensions. In India the Linguistic Reorganization of States took place in 1956. Dividing the country on the basis of language gave rise to two forms of tension. ✓ Certain linguistic groups are in a minority in a state where there is a majority linguistic group. This group, feeling deprived or neglected may start an agitation for a separate state. Taking an example from India's north-east, we may cite the example of the Nepalese demand for Gorkhaland. The other form of discontent may lead to sons-of-the-soil movements as was the case with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the Assamese in Assam. Both these

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1 David Crystal, The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language, (Cambridge, 1987), p.4.

movements were results of in-migration being greater than out-migration.

However, a little indepth study will reveal that language difference need not be the only reason for conflict. Couched behind the garb of language, because of its accepted legitimacy and its capacity to generate emotion are usually economic and political considerations. India has been divided into regions on the basis of language. However regional autonomy demands, treatment of the regions as coherent units, politically having a right to reflect the constituents aspirations to manage their internal affairs, while making claims on national resources in competition with other regions. It can be politically understood as a search for an intermediate control system between centre (core) and periphery for competitive advantage in the national arena. The core is represented by the dominant linguistic group who can demand resources and also form the political, ideological administrative bases. Regions farthest away from the cores are the peripheries, characterized by the poorer economic conditions, less development and usually consisting of minority linguistic groups. The regions where the cores come into contact with powerful peripheries are the regions most prone to conflict or the shatter-belt regions.

Before dealing more specifically with India's peripheral areas, it may not be out of place to understand how language and territoriality may form the basis of identity as also conflict.

Language may be defined primarily as a means of oral or written communication between people who are familiar with the

meanings of a particular tongue. Such people as speak the same language, usually have some common socio-cultural characteristics, not often uninfluenced by economic and environmental considerations. These give them a feeling of oneness, which has been variously described as unity, homogeneity or identity and distinguishes them from people speaking a different language or belonging to a different linguistic group. "More than anything else, language shows 'we belong', providing the most natural badge of public and private identity".<sup>2</sup> Nowhere else does the issue of personal linguistic identity become more evident than in relation to the question of ethnicity and nationhood. Questions of ethno-linguistic identity arise more often in relation to the demands and needs of those who are in ethnic minority within a community. Once a group becomes aware of its ethnic identity, it may wish to preserve and strengthen its status, which often takes the form of a desire for political recognition, usually self-government.

Demands such as this made on the national political authority are often treated as anti-national and destructive. The strength of a nation is supposed to vary inversely with the degree of conflict generated by sub-national loyalties.

Language is inextricably linked with the concept of territoriality. Territory is above all, a geographical area of settlement of a given ethnic community with definite boundaries, relief and climate. Natural conditions are important factors which determine certain features of the community. However, language is not spacebound, so we speak of it in terms of 'zones'.

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2 Ibid, p.17.

On the other hand, territory is a concrete geographical concept, it does not necessarily change and is spoken of in terms of 'boundary'. However, physical barriers which restrict communication tend to restrict language as well. There may be certain isolated pockets where certain languages are spoken exclusively, but generally a single territory may have inhabitants speaking different languages and belonging to different linguistic groups. Thus we speak of the 'territory of India' as a single entity, but the 'languages of India' in which is inherent the concepts of pluralism and divisibility.

At times the peripheries of adjoining territorial areas may together form a socio-linguistic core by themselves. This situation is aggravated if the peripheral regions of one territory have a core somewhere nearby and are conscious of it. (The case of Nepalese in Darjeeling may be cited). This is a shatterbelt area.

Economic considerations play a major role in integration. There is a certain dependence between the territory of settlement and the ethnic group's economic life. Availability or scarcity of fertile land, sources of irrigation, mineral power, natural resources, need to be considered. The settlement area is the material basis for economic and other ties which are formed amongst groups of population living there. This provides the spatial unity.<sup>3</sup>

Communication plays an integral part in national society. Communication between core and periphery, territorial mobility,

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3 Boris I. Kluyev, India: National and Language Problem, (New Delhi, 1981) p. 75.

degree of urbanization, role of cities, degree of social mobility, level of literacy etc., are valuable indices for predicting the behaviour of a given area in the national arena and thus require due consideration. Interested parties provide at times the political colouring and organisation thus making the demands appear more legitimate and strong. The quality of the leadership is a major factor in the success or failure of such movements.

Keeping in mind the above factors one may try to analyse the situation prevalent in India's peripheral areas. When referring to the peripheral areas of India, my focus, for the sake of more detailed study will be on the northern and north-eastern areas of the country or more specifically the Himalayan region, especially those regions close to the international border, as people of these areas are likely to possess affinities both socio-cultural and linguistic, with their counterparts inhabiting adjoining areas across the border. A detailed delimitation of the territory under study will be/has been taken up in a later chapter. At present some of the common features of these areas can be mentioned in the light of dis-integrative or anti-national tendencies.

Usually their language differs from that of the majority linguistic group. Right from Kashmir to the areas bordering Burma, this is evident. In Kashmir the state language is Urdu which is closer to the language of Pakistan than the Hindi of the Indian heartland. Ladakhi belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family.<sup>4</sup> A long series of dialects spoken from Tibet in the

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4 Siddheswar Varma, G.A. Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India: A Summary, Vol I (Hoshiarpur, 1972).

north to Burma in the south belong to this family. The other dominant linguistic family is Siamese Chinese, along with the minor non khmer (khassi). The languages belonging to these families are absolutely unintelligible to the speakers of the Indo-Aryan languages. This tends to restrict comprehension and communication which may result in a sense of isolation and non-identification.

Despite the fact that language provides a fundamental unity, it is rarely ever the sole factor for disintegrative tendencies, at least in the Indian context. There are other aggravating causes behind such a tendency.

The terrain being mountainous with the great Karakoram and Himalayan ranges alongwith the accompanying cold tends to *physical* restrict communication. Vast stretches remain barren, snow-covered or forested without proper road or rail links. Landslides are common. Transport facilities, being faulty and not up to the mark restricts movement of goods and men.

The economic factor plays a major role. In most cases it is primitive economy where shifting cultivation or animal rearing are the two major occupations. There is not much surplus produce to send out and if there is, the facilities are lacking. Irrigation facilities and scope for machanization are negligible. The funds available to a state for development are not proportionately distributed and often these outlying peripheral areas are neglected. These regions often complain of neglect and exploitation by the core at their expense. Sometimes, these regions have a sizeable amount of economic potential in the shape of

scenic places of tourist interest, natural resources (oil as in the case of Assam) the benefets of which they logically feel should be distributed in that region but is usually taken by others such as the state or immigrants from other places.

The problem of migrants at times poses a major problem. In the case of Assam, in-migration was greater than out-migration and these migrants hold the cream positions in economy and administration. The protest then takes the form of a sons-of-the-soil agitation (Assam and the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra).

Educational facilities are not adequate resulting at times in a lower literacy level as compared to the core areas. This retards matured reasoning and causes a sense of deprivation and insecurity. It is also easy to agitate with emotional outpourings such people and instigate them into hasty or destructive action.

Directly following from the above we find that in the case of agitations in these peripheral areas, the emphasis is often emotional (language, culture, ethnicity, soil etc.,) which makes for inflammable situations. These are often instigated by the politicians for political benefits.

Coming to the problem of integration, it is seen that the basis of secessionist movement in India are mainly based on language, tribe and religion. Dr. T.K.Oomen classifies these as the primordial collectivities which may give rise to secessionist activities.<sup>5</sup> The epicentres of these conflicts

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5 T.K.Oomen, "Social Movements and Nation State in India: Towards Relegitimization of Cultural Nationalisms", Journal of Social and Economic Studies, Vol 3, no.2 pp 103-29.



are regions situated on international borders or with natural geographical boundaries such as high mountains or seas which provides the regions and the movements which arise in them, the requisite geo-political and geo-strategic advantage. The central authority is often constrained to concede some of the demands. This generates a sense of political importance to the inhabitants of these areas. However, the percentage of population involved in these is very small.

In northern and north east India, the factors like different languages, tribes and religions are all present and have been instrumental in generating tension. Kashmir, Punjab, Darjeeling, Nagaland and Mizoram have all shown secessionist tendencies. Since quite a few of the regions on the Himalayan boundary show such tendencies, these regions deserve special attention.

#### Review of Literature:

Many writers agree to the fact that language is one of the major factors of group identity and is often the basis of secessionist and disintegrative tendencies. Quite a few feel that there are other underlying factors economic, political and social which complicate and aggravate the situation. Writers who have applied the linguistic aspect of secessionist agitations to the case of India have done so with the Hindi heartland in mind,<sup>6</sup> laying stress on the anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu or the case of the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. Some others deal

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6 For example - Ram Gopal, Linguistic Affairs of India, (Bombay, 1966).

also, Gopinath Srivastava, The Language Controversy and the Minorities (Delhi, 1970)

with the consequences of the Linguistic Reorganisation of states in 1956.<sup>7</sup>

Very little work has been done indepth on the northern and north-eastern periphery of India from the point of view of language as a factor in disintegration. Generally reviews are found on single states or tribes their terrain language, cultural habits, economy etc. The peripheral areas have not been treated as a single whole with certain common features. It is perhaps even more difficult to find the similarities and sympathies with those across the border and to treat the whole as an international problem.

Thus due to the inadequacy of literature totally relevant to this topic, attempts have been made to cull material from works that have highlighted other aspects of these regions or viewed it from a different standpoint. Some of the other works consulted have tried to clarify the theoretical aspects of language identity and the conflicts that have arisen due to its combination with other factors and the general hindrances to integration.

One major work the consultation of which is unavoidable for any work related to Indian languages is Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India. Though completed in 1928 these volumes (13 vols) have detailed descriptions of the different

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7 India States Reorganization. Report, New Delhi. 1955

languages and dialects spoken in India and where they are spoken. For this study, Volume I & III have been consulted which deals with the general results and the languages of the north<sup>8</sup> and north east. David Crystal's Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language besides providing information on language and different forms of identity, social, psychological and ethnic, tells of other similar linguistic surveys done in Germany, France, the U.S.A., Wales etc. Crystal gives an account of the different language families and their distribution across the globe.<sup>9</sup>

Jyotirindra Das Gupta in his work titled "Language Conflict and National Development" has tried to separate the complex phenomena of language politics into its constituent elements and relate them to a concrete process of policy formulation and implementation that are relevant to national development.<sup>10</sup> In his book "India: National and Language Problem", Boris I. Kluyev the Soviet Indologist considers the cultural and socio-economic aspects that lead to inflammable situations while reviewing multilingualism in India. Kluyev provides concrete instances of governmental policies such as the Unlawful Activities Act of 1967 which outlawed the Mizo National Front for its secessionist tendencies. From his work we also have an insight into the views of Engels regarding language and nationalism. He draws attention to the fact that Engels calls the language boundary, a natural boundary of nationality.

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8 G.A.Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India (Benares, 1928.)

9 Crystal, n. 1.

10 Jyotirindra Das Gupta, Language Conflict and National Development, (California, 1970)

The Soviet Indological literature describes the linguistic map of India in considerable detail, is another information that Kluyev provides.<sup>11</sup>

K.M.Munshi and R.R.Diwakar in their work - "Disintegration - How to Avert It", coined the term 'linguism'. This they feel is a group sentiment based on affinity of language, seeking expression in terms of power politics. He feels that the psychology of unity in this country is being destroyed by linguism. They continue by adding that linguistic chauvinism carries, within it the seed of complete disintegration.<sup>12</sup>

O.P.Sabherwal notes that together with economic demands, a new dimension has been added to tribal awakening by consciousness of their linguistic and political demands. The tribal language often forms the culcrum of the new movement.<sup>13</sup>

In certain parts of the country, there are sub-linguistic movements based on dialectical and cultural and historical differences. Their aim is usually political control. This view is held by M.N.Srinivas.<sup>14</sup>

Boris I.Kluyev has been mentioned earlier. He has also focussed attention on the status of a language included or not included in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution and clarifies with an example of Nepali. The Gurkhas living in Darjeeling demanded the inclusion of Nepali in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. He feels that non-recognition of any language

11 Kluyev, n.3.

12 K.M.Munshi and R.R.Diwakar, Disintegration- How to Avert It, A Symposium - 1965

13 Cited in Kluyev, n.3, p.151.

14 Ibid, pp.162-63

denies it official support. Kluyev also feels that the Reorganization of States on a linguistic basis has had high political and social costs from the point of view of national unity and had unleashed fissiparous tendencies. Linguistic chauvinism unlike casteism is backed by militant groups.

In "Federalism and Linguistic States", N.C.Roy deals with the Indian situation as also those in some other multilingual and multiethnic states.<sup>15</sup>

On the problem of integration, reference may be made to articles contributed by Kripa Shankar - "Impediments to National Integration",<sup>16</sup> S.P.Punalekar - "Ethnic Identities and Integration- An Overview of Indian Experience",<sup>17</sup> Prof. T.K.Oomen - "Social Movements and Nation State in India: Towards Relegitimization of Cultural Nationalisms"<sup>18</sup> and some others.

Brian Houghton Hodgson in the nineteenth century carried out research on the linguistic, religious and physical aspects of terrain of this region in his "Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet", which is still relevant. S.T.Das has worked extensively on the society and economy of tribes of the north eastern regions.<sup>20</sup>

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- 15 N.C.Roy, Federalism and Linguistic States, (Calcutta, 1956.)
- 16 Kripa Shankar, "Impediments to National Integration" Mainstream (Delhi), vol.23, no.30, March 1985, pp.21-22
- 17 S.P.Punalekar "Ethnic Identities and Integration. An Overview of Indian Experience", Mainstream, vol.22, no.34, 21 April 1984, pp.11-15.
- 18 Oomen, n.5, pp.103-29.
- 19 B.H.Hodgson, Essays on the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet, (Varanasi, 1971).
- 20 S.T.Das, Tribal Life of North Eastern India, (New Delhi, 1986).

CHAPTER - 2

DELIMITATION OF THE PERIPHERAL AREAS  
OF INDIA

For an indepth study into the peripheral areas of any country of, it is of prime importance that there is a proper delimitation of the territory. The very term 'peripheral areas' denotes something more than an exact demarcation, because neither the physical aspect of terrain alongwith the flora and fauna, nor the human factor involved exhibit a radical difference in areas separated by a man-made boundary line. The major foci of concern are therefore certain frontier areas on which the superimposed boundary doubtless plays an important role in determining political and strategic issues.<sup>1</sup> The aspect of exact boundary demarcation is important as it is directly related to the relationship of a country with those across its borders. Before one sets out to analyse the exact nature of these relationships at present and its future prospects, taking into account variables such as cultural, social, economic and linguistic patterns, as also political, locational and strategic considerations, it is of importance that one has a clear idea of the territorial limits of the study. The territory being a fixed entity forms the basis of understanding the nature of the variable identities.

As has been mentioned in the preface, this study primarily deals with the Himalayan frontier region of India. The Himalayas run along the entire length of India's northern to north eastern border areas, forming an effective natural boundary. However, there is an inherent problem. Though these mountain ranges provide a broad and effective boundary, yet exact demarcation becomes difficult especially in the snow-bound terrain. The range of

1. The Concepts of frontiers and boundaries must be clearly understood.

territory covered is from Ladakh in the Karakoram Ranges across certain regions in the Great Himalayas through the Siwalik and Terai regions to the Duars and via the north eastern bend of the Himalayas in Arunachal Pradesh to the Barail Range, Patkai, Naga and Lushai Hills which graze the Arakan Arc of Burma. In traversing this areal magnitude, the states brought into the limelight are:- Ladakh in the extreme northern - north eastern part of the country which forms a part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. To the south of Ladakh lie the eastern parts of Himachal Pradesh, the northern and north-eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh, the northern reaches of the state of Bihar, almost the whole of Sikkim excluding the south, the northern districts of the state of West Bengal, which may be said to form the central portion of the boundary. North Western Assam, a major chunk of Arunachal Pradesh, eastern Nagaland, eastern and south-eastern Manipur, eastern, southern and south-western Mizoram, the whole of Tripura excluding its north-eastern parts and southern and western Meghalaya may be said to form the eastern sector. The countries with which India comes into territorial contact in the region mentioned are China (Tibet), in the northern and western sector, Nepal in the central sector, Bhutan, China (Tibet), Burma and Bangladesh in the eastern sector. Apart from the Bangladesh border areas, the others can be classified as Himalayan and mountainous.

Ladakh is bounded on the north-east by mountains which separate it from the Chinese Xinjiang (Sinkiang) region and on the east and south-east by the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China and on the south by the Himalayan districts of Lahul and



Spiti. To the north it is bounded by the Karakoram mountains and Yarkand. Towards the north-west lies Gilgit which now forms a part of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.<sup>2</sup> From the given boundaries of Ladakh, one should not fail to recognize the strategic importance of the region. The latest census data<sup>3</sup> puts the area of Ladakh at 82,665 sq.kms. which includes 37,555 sq.kms. of territory occupied by China in the Leh Division. Ladakh district forms the northernmost part of Jammu and Kashmir state. It is linked with the Kashmir Valley through the Zojila Pass. The physical aspect is characterised by the parallelism of the mountain ranges which stretch south-east and north-west between the rivers Indus and Shyok. The general aspect is one of extreme barrenness and snow, though there are fertile tracts.<sup>4</sup> During a major portion of the year, there is extreme cold.

Ladakh originally formed a part of Tibet. In the fifteenth century it became independent under a line of Tibetan kings, who accepted the Grand Lama (Tibet) as their suzerain.<sup>5</sup>

To the south of Ladakh, on the Indo-Tibetan border, lie Lahul Spiti and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh. The present district of Lahul Spiti is comprised of two distinct geographical entities. Lahul includes the valley of Chandra and Bhaga rivers, upto their junction near Tandi as well as the main Chandra Bhaga valley upto Tirhot Nallah. Spiti includes the

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2 A.S.Chohan, Historical Study of Society and Culture in Dardistan and Ladakh, (New Delhi, 1983), p.15.

3 Census of India 1981, Series 8, Ladakh.

4 Ibid.

5 Chohan, n.2, p.16.

valley of the main Spiti River and the valley of the Pin River. The valleys of Spiti and Lahul remain cut off from each other, by the Himalayan ranges separating them. Only between July and October is passage possible through the Kunzum La situated at a height of 15,000 feet.<sup>6</sup> It is the largest district of Himachal Pradesh, and the three tehsils of Udaipur, Lahul and Spiti have been recorded in the latest census as completely snow-bound.<sup>7</sup> Spiti which is on the eastern sector bordering Tibet has very little greenery. The rugged snow-covered mountains have glaciers rising as high as 20,000 feet. Bara Singri, Gangstang, Sona Pani and Perod are some of the notable glaciers in this region.

It may be noted that the name Lahul is used only by people of Kullu and Indians. The local people and Tibetans call it Garzha. It is believed that in ancient stock Lahul was ruled by the Jos who were<sup>of</sup> Tibetan stock.<sup>8</sup>

The fact that the District Census Handbook<sup>9</sup> states that some of the area falling in Kinnaur district is yet to be mapped, gives an idea of the difficult terrain and climatic conditions of the area. Lying to the south-eastern part of Himachal Pradesh, to its east lies the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Spurs separate Spiti from Tibet. This area is also shown to be completely snow-bound. The Sutlej is the principal river. Its feeders are the Lee, Spiti, Baspa, Tidong, Darbang etc. The lofty summits of Parasala (21,000 ft.) and Purgeol (22,630 ft.) are found here. The villages are encountered at heights between 7,000 ft. and 12,000 ft.

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6 Census of India 1981, Series 7, Lahul and Spiti

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Census of India 1981, Series 7, Kinnaur

The districts of Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Pithorgarh, Pilibhit, Kheri, Bahraich, Gonda, Basti and Gorakhpur of the state of Uttar Pradesh, form significant borders with Tibet and Nepal. The northern boundaries of Uttarkashi, Chamoli and Pithorgarh coincide with a part of the Indian international border with Tibet. Pithorgarh has also an eastern border with Nepal. The other mentioned districts graze Nepal's southwestern border with India. Uttarkashi and Chamoli are separated from Tibet by the snowy ranges of the Himalayas to the north. The Pithorgarh region is generally known as the Kumaon Himalayas.\* There is a variation of altitude from 2,000 ft. to 20,000 ft. There are four major divisions, namely the Siwalik, the Lesser and Middle Himalayas, the inner Himalayas and the thin belt bordering the Tibetan Himalayas and tending south-east. The greater part of this region is under perpetual snow-and generally barren. The major river valleys are those of the Dhaulī, the Ramganga, the Saryu and the Kali.

The major districts of Uttar Pradesh which make up the Indian international border with Nepal are, Pilibhit belonging to the Bareilly division, Kheri and Bahraich of the Faizabad Division. The river Sarada flows into this region from Nepal. The important Indian towns close to the Nepalese border in this region are Purnapur, Mighasan, Manpara, Bahraich, Jorwa, Nautanwa and others. The Dudwa range separates the two countries in this region.

Almora holds an important position in India's relations with Tibet atleast in the field of communication. Though the Indo-Tibetan border is now sealed and easy passage restricted,

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\* Edwin Atkinson, Kumaun Hills (Delhi, 1978).

it may be worth noting that an eastern road winds along the hillside in the direction of the Nepal frontier. The northern road passes through Gananath. The road leads downwards and then along the valley of the Sarayu to Bageswar. The road leads on to the Pindari Glacier under Nanda Kot where Nepal, Tibet and India meet.<sup>10</sup> At khati village Bhotia people are encountered.<sup>11</sup>

Beyond Milam, the double saddled Pass of Untadhura leads to Tibet. There is an easier pass through the Sarma Valley.<sup>12</sup> All these passes before the sealing of the borders provided easy access to Tibet.

Moving further east along the Indo-Nepalese border, the northern districts of Bihar are encountered on the Indian side of the border. With West Champaran in the extreme west, the stretch covers East Champaran, Sitamarhi, Madhubani, Saharsa and Purnea.

Paschim Champaran or Champaran West as it is otherwise known with an area of 5288 sq. kms. is bounded on the north by Nepal. Towards the north lies the Dun.<sup>13</sup> It forms a part of the Terai region comprising Ramnagar, Bagana and Nau-Katiaganj.<sup>14</sup> A large part of this area is composed of bhangar soil. The climate is generally unhealthy. The river Gandak which rises in the Central Mountain Basin of Nepal and known as the Sapt Gandaki is the most important river.

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10 Alexander Macleish, The Frontier Peoples of India (Delhi, 1983), p. 102.

11 Ibid, p.104.

12 Ibid, p.107.

13 Dun, i.e. Old Alluvium.

14 Census of India, 1981, Series 4, Paschim Champaran.

Purba Champaran which lies to the east of the former is also in the Terai region. Many important trade routes from Nepal pass through this district.

Sitamarhi lying on the northern part of Tirhul Division is surrounded by Nepal to the North and East. Topographically it is a part of the Bihar plains and is almost completely levelled. It is drained by the rivers, Baghmata and Lakhandei.

Madhubani lying to the east of Sitamarhi has similar features of small hills and river valleys which render passage not too difficult.

Purnia, forming the north-eastern corner of the state of Bihar has an area of 7493 sq. kms. To its north lies Nepal and to its east, the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. It forms the eastern-most part of the Bihar plains and has three natural divisions, formed by the plains of the Kosi, The Ganga and the small hilly areas lying between the northern regions of the district and Nepal. The Ganga, Mahananda and Kosi are important rivers. The soil is alleivial. This area has had close commercial and social links with Nepal from time immemorial. The two important centres of trade are Biratnagar on the Jogabani side and Bhadarpur on the Galgalia side.<sup>15</sup>

All these districts of Bihar which adjoin Nepal, lie in the Nepalese Terai. The Terai region is primarily composed of swamps and marshes. Though unhealthy and unproductive, the terrain offers no unsurmountable barrier to passage. As the Indo-Nepal border is not sealed, this area may be said to possess till date the closest legal contact with those across the border.

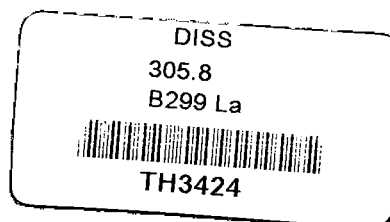
Situated in eastern India, West Bengal is bounded on the north by Bhutan and the state of Sikkim and on the northwest by Nepal. The state may be divided broadly into two physiographic divisions. These are, the Gangetic Plains and the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan area. The latter region is of relevance to this study. Between Nepal and Bhutan and to the south of Sikkim lie the Darjeeling and Kalipong districts with their respective foothills and jungles known as the Terai and Duars. It is important to appreciate the strategic location of this region. It has often been described as a wedge driven in between Nepal and Bhutan to the border of Tibet. The base of the pyramid is on the plains of Bengal, along the foothills eastwards from Nepal and the apex in Sikkim.<sup>16</sup> The river Tista divides the mountainous area. Westward lies the Terai and eastwards the Duars.<sup>17</sup> The districts of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri consist of low land. Once unhealthy and infested with malaria and kala-azar,<sup>18</sup> the area is now drained and cultivated and has some of the finest tea plantations. These regions are heavily forested with conifers.

Sikkim, the smallest constituent state of India, covers an area of 7208 sq. kms. in the eastern Himalayan mountains. It is bordered by Nepal to the west, by Bhutan to the east and by the Tibetan Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China to the north and north-east. Its only link with India is via the

16 Macleish, n.10, pp.134-35

17 Duars - an area stretching under the mountains of Bhutan

18 Kala Azar - Leishmansis.



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northern reaches of the state of West Bengal. It is thus worthwhile to note its strategic location. Sikkim has great extremes of altitude, from 700 ft. to 28,169 ft.<sup>19</sup> above sea level. Sikkim is separated from adjoining regions by precipitous mountain walls on three sides. The Singalila Range separates Sikkim from Nepal in the west, while the Dongkya Range forms the border with China to the north and north-east. Along the north-eastern border, the Chumbi valley of Tibet separates Sikkim from Bhutan. This Tibetan enclave makes the location of Sikkim strategically important.

Sikkim is small, stretching about seventy miles from north to south and forty miles from east to west. Its horse-shoe shaped mountains offer no sizeable flat area. About two-thirds of the territory comprises of perpetually snow-covered mountains that act as snow-fields for various glaciers. Kanchenjunga, Tent (24,165 ft.), Kakree (24,075 ft.) and Panhunri (23,395 ft.) are important peaks. Within the mountains that lie to the east and west of Sikkim, are deep valleys formed by the river Tista which originates in the north-east from the Lemu glacier above Lachen Gompha near the Chinese frontier. The river descends rapidly (by 15,700 ft.) to Rongphu. The Rangit, Rongni Chu, Talung, Ragpo and Lachen, all snow-fed torrents, join it. Numerous landslides occur due to copious rainfall.<sup>20</sup>

The terrain makes communication difficult, yet, the main trade routes between India and China and Tibet passed through

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19 Kanchenjunga.

20 For details see The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol.21, Macropedia (15th Edn.) (Chicago, 1987)

with the outer ranges of the Mikir Hills reaching an elevation of 1500 ft. Higher elevations are reached in the central portion of Korbi Anglong, east of the river Kopili.

From Dabaka in Nowgong district in the south-west, the northern ranges extend to Bokakhat in the Sibsagar district which lies to the north-east of the state and reaches an elevation of about 2000 ft. The major peaks are Basundhari (2540 ft.), Raisang (2420 ft.), Mehekongthu (2095 ft.) and Kud Parbat (2055 ft.). The southern ranges, also called rengma attain an average elevation of 3000 ft. The main peaks are Chenghehishon (4460 ft.) and Khunbaman Parbat (4300 ft.).

Between the western frontier of Bhutan and the Brahmaputra river is what has been described as an almost unknown territory stretching about 200 miles of wild mountainous country. This stretch of frontier comprise of the Balipara and Sadiya Frontier Tracts, fronts a region of Tibet, inhabited by warlike tribes about whom not much is known.<sup>25</sup> This land is intersected with deep valleys, through which rivers rush down into the Assam Valley. The Sadiya tracts are even more remote. The valley was explored by the British in 1913.<sup>26</sup>

Arunachal Pradesh, meaning 'Land of the Rising Sun' is a sparsely populated mountainous area, in India's extreme north-east. Formerly North East Frontier Agency, it became a Union Territory on January 20, 1972 and recently a full fledged state. It stretches from the Brahmaputra plain northwards to the main Assam

25 Macleish, n.10, p.123

26 Ibid



Himalayas and eastwards to an irregular line passing through lofty peaks known as the 'hump' during the second world war.<sup>27</sup> It has international boundaries with Bhutan, Tibet, China and Burma. Of the nine districts, the five outlying ones are West Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit and Tirap. West Kameng adjoins Bhutan, Tirap district lies to the south of the Burmese border. The area is intersected by rivers. A part of Arunachal Pradesh was occupied by China during the Sino-Indian war of 1962. This emphasizes its strategic location. Apart from Ladakh, this is the only other region where China comes into direct contact with India and the Tibetan Autonomous Region does not act like a buffer.

The state of Nagaland, occupies a region of forested hills and mountains, between Burma and the Brahmaputra valley of upper Assam. Burma lies to the east of Nagaland.

Except for a few square miles of plains, the entire state is covered with hill ranges that form part of the Himalayan system. The Naga Hills rise abruptly from the Brahmaputra plains in the north to low hills of about 2000 ft., which increase in height to about 6000 ft., towards the east with isolated peaks reaching 10,000 ft., or more. The hills merge with the Patkoi Range which separates Nagaland from Burma and reaches 12,552 ft., (Mt. Saramati) on the border.

The south-eastern part comprising Tuensang and Mon districts and the south-eastern part of Kohima district are drained by the tributaries of the Chindwin river of Burma. The headstreams of the Barak flow the south-west hills which are clothed with dense forests, scrub and grassland. The surveyed forest area is 7,12,000 acres.

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27 Britannica, n.20, p.123.

To the south of Nagaland lies the state of Manipur. It has an international boundary with Burma on its southern and eastern parts. Manipur is largely isolated from the rest of the country and has been periodically subjected to invasions from the east.

Manipur is composed of two major physical divisions. These are the Manipur Valley and a large surrounding tract of mountainous country. The valley extends from north to south. The dominant feature is Lake Logtak, the source of the Manipur River which flows southwards through the valley into Burma. In Burma it joins the Myittha River which is a tributary of the Irrawaddy.

The hill ranges have a general north-south trend with connecting spurs and ridges running west to east. The ranges include, the Naga Hills to the north, the Manipur Hills along the eastern Burmese border and the Mizo and Chin Hills to the south. The average elevation is 5000 - 6000 feet. The elevation is greater towards the north. In the west, the mountains are broken by the valley of the Burma, known as Barak in Manipur which flows south-west to join river Meghna of Bangladesh.

Mizoram, is bounded by Burma on its eastern and southern sides, Bangladesh and Tripura touch its western borders while Manipur and Assam form its northern boundary. Its boundary with Burma extends over 300 miles and that with Bangladesh about 200 miles.<sup>28</sup> This area has been variously known as Lushai Hills district, Mizo Hills district till it became the Union Territory of Mizoram in 1972 and has at present been granted statehood.

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28 Ibid, p.131

The region is of great strategic importance. It runs lengthwise from north to south. Geologically the Mizo Hills form a part of the Arakan Arc. The height varies from 300 - 5000 ft., with some ridges attaining a height of 7000 ft. There is a north-south route from Silchar through Aizawl to Palitwa in the Arakan Arc of Burma.<sup>29</sup>

Tripura is bordered on all sides except the east by Bangladesh. Its link with India is through Mizoram. The state has five major physiographic divisions. These are the Dharamnagar, Kailasahar, Kamalpur and Khowai valleys to the North and the southern plain of Agartala. Dharamnagar to the extreme east is bordered on the east by the low ranges of the Jamrai Tlang, which rise to 3000 ft., on the west is the Sakhan Tlang which has elevations upto 2500 ft. This region is drained by the Deo and Juri rivers. West of the Sakhan Tlang is the Kailasahar Valley, which runs the full length of the state. It has a much dissected and forested southern half and is drained by the river Manu. The northern half is marshy. Kamalpur valley lying between Langtarai and Althamura Ranges is drained by the north flowing Dhalai River. The south is forested, the north has marshy rice fields. West of the Althamura Range lies the Khowai Valley and is drained by the river Khowai. It is bordered on the west by the Deotamura Range. The southern part is more open with extensive plains.

Meghalaya was earlier included in the state of Assam. It attained statehood in 1972. It comprises of the Garo Hills District and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills occupying a mountain

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plateau of great scenic beauty. It is bounded on the south and southwest by Bangladesh and on other sides by the state of Assam.

Geologically Meghalaya is a continuation of the Deccan plateau.<sup>30</sup> From west to east, the Garo Hills rise abruptly from the Brahmaputra valley to about 1000 ft. and merge with the Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills. These are two adjacent highland systems that form a single massif consisting of a series of eastward tending ridges with tablelands between. There are steep slopes to the south. This area forms the watershed of many rivers. The state is full of forests and forms one of the wettest regions of the world.

Taking into account all the regions of India which go to make up the northern, north-eastern borders/frontiers of the country, certain similarities are perceived. The borders made by the Tripura and Meghalaya with Bangladesh do not as such form the Himalayan borderland which is the focus of this study. These areas have been included as from social, economic strategic and cultural considerations they exhibit certain kindred problems and affinities.

The terrain is rugged throughout, which makes communication difficult. Towards the northern part comprising the mountainous regions of Ladakh, Lahul and Spiti, Kinnaur and the Kumaon region, the mountains are snow clad for the greater part of the year.<sup>31</sup> Ladakh is linked to the Kashmir Valley through the Zojila Pass and Lahul and Spiti remain cut off from each other due to snow for over eight months in a year. The census records

30 Ibid, p.130.

31 Census of India 1981, n.3.

define these areas to be completely non-synchronous (snow-bound).<sup>32</sup> Darjeeling and Sikkim regions in the eastern sector have similar topography. It may be noted here that quite a few passes which are the chief means of communication in these regions, also connect India with the adjacent foreign country. Though after the Sino-Indian war of 1962 the border with Tibet was sealed, yet, social and cultural ties do not end abruptly with the sealing of borders. The border in fact is only an imaginary demarcation of territory or terrain that is in essence similar on both sides of this differentiating line. The men inhabiting these areas, carry on with the traditional influences mostly from Tibet which prove to be a dominant factor in their lives. It may be noted that the Ladakhis are of Tibeto-Burman origin, Ladakh having been a part of the Tibetan kingdom at one time.<sup>33</sup> In Spiti, the people speak a Tibeto-Burman language. These influences will be dealt with in later chapters.

The Terai regions stretching east of the Kumaon region through the Indo-Nepalese border areas into West Bengal provide a different homogeneous geographical entity. The rugged mountains give way to smaller hills and marshes. There is geographical continuity in cultural aspects, language and life styles. Quite a few trading posts as has been mentioned earlier flourish on both sides of the border with Nepal, as there has been no sealing of borders. Communications is easier in this region as compared to other areas covered in this study.

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32 Census of India 1981, n.6.

33 Chohan, n.2, p.16.

Moving further east, one encounters the Duars region between Nepal and Bhutan. To the south of Sikkim lies the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Darjeeling and Kalimpong with their respective foothills are known as Terai and Duars. The eastern Duars are generally demarcated as the area stretching under the mountains of Bhutan. The Duars has a mixed population of Tibetans, Nepalese and Bhutanese.<sup>34</sup> The Balipara and Sadiya tracts should be noted for their remoteness.

In the extreme north-eastern part of the country, the altitude varies from 100 ft. - 7000 ft. This part is of great geographical significance. Apart from the fact that during the Indo-China war, China had actually occupied Indian territory in this region in Arunachal Pradesh,<sup>35</sup> it is necessary to understand its location in relation to the world map. No other part of India is so vulnerable to so many outside powers as is the north east. The area is surrounded by four foreign countries, Bhutan, China (Tibet), Burma and Bangladesh, skirting about 4225 kms., of Indian territory in length. The break up of this boundary length is roughly, Assam-Bhutan (500 kms.), Arunachal Pradesh-China (1175kms.), Arunachal Pradesh-Burma (475 kms.), Mizoram - Bangladesh (275 kms.), Tripura -Bangladesh (625 kms.) and Meghalaya-Bangladesh (400 kms.).<sup>36</sup> As there are no very high mountains and the region is dissected by numerous river valleys which have their origins in the mountains of the neighbouring countries. This provides comparatively easy access to an aggressive foreign power.

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34 Macleish, n.10, p.135.

35 Alan J. Day, ed. Border and Territorial Disputes (United Kingdom, 1982).

36 S.T.Das, Tribal Life of North Eastern India (Delhi, 1986), p.12.

Relations with the neighbouring countries being neither too stable nor very dependable, these vast stretches of frontier areas inhabited by people of different origin<sup>37</sup> must be carefully administered especially with the experience of insurgencies and unrest which have been regular features of this region. These have been to a large extent helped by the favourable terrain conditions for the insurgents. Effective control and patrolling being difficult, they provide convenient hideouts for rebels and insurgents. This is especially true of the Arakan Hills region of Burma and the Chittagong Hill tracts of Bangladesh which have provided hideouts for the Naga and Mizo rebels respectively.<sup>38</sup> Often the adjoining foreign country lends tacit support to these insurgents.

The division induced by the Britishers between plainsmen and highlanders on the basis of territory by introduction of the Inner Line Regulations ostensibly to protect hill people from any interference in their way of life, developed into an impenetrable barrier between hillsmen and others of the region. These were further tightened by the Bengal Frontier Regulations of 1873.<sup>40</sup> The division of the Hill districts into Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas by provisions of the constitution of 1935 was yet another political device by which assimilation of hillsmen and plainsmen was hampered. Tribes were kept isolated by following a 'museum' policy.<sup>41</sup> The Coupland Plan was formulated

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37 G.A.Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, (Benaras, 1928).

38 B.Rahamatullah, "Insurgency in North East India", Political Science Review (Jaipur), Apr.-Sep. 1982 p.215, 217.

Also Das, n.36, p.13.

39 Ibid, p.14.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

to create a buffer comprising of the Excluded and Excluded areas to which a slice of northern Burma was to be attached. However, the British Parliament did not approve of this policy.

The separatist tendencies generated as a consequence of such attempted division, resulted in the dismemberment of the region (Assam) into five distinct entities.<sup>42</sup> These fragmented units experienced rebellions and insurgencies demanding sovereignty. Cases of such unrest may be cited from Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and other places. Ladakh in the extreme north has very recently demanded union territory status and in Darjeeling district of West Bengal the demand for a separate state leading to unrest and violence could only be checked by granting an autonomous Gorkha Hill Council to the Nepalese population in that region.

Another feature of topography of practically the whole Himalayan region including the north eastern parts of India, are the dense forests below the snow line. The most areas there is also a dense undergrowth. Wild animals are found in the Kumaon, Tarai and Duars regions. A major portion of the country's area under forests is found in this region. The South West Monsoon winds striking against the Himalayas bring heavy rains to the slopes and foot hills.

Many of the major rivers have their origins in the snow bound mountains of Tibet.<sup>43</sup> Some rivers flow from Nepal on to the

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42 Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram & Meghalaya.

43 Indus, Brahmaputra, Sutley.



Bihar plains, while others like the Iurma and Brahmaputra flow into Bangladesh. The south eastern parts of Kohima district is drained by tributaries of the Chindwin river of Burma. The Manipur river draining the Manipur valley flow into Burma. The river valleys have proved to be cradle of civilisation from the beginnings of settled life. It is also seen that they have proved to be the routes of migrants. The people of Burman origin who have migrate into India have done mostly through these routes and settled in the river valleys.<sup>44</sup> Thus the importance of these river valleys should not be overlooked.

A survey of the border and frontier regions included in this study will show how the terrain and climate conditions make effective demarcation of boundaries and border sealing extremely difficult. Compounded with this problem are the socio-cultural, linguistic, economic and strategic factors which further complicate effective integration with the majority population of the country.

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44 Migrations dealt with in Chapters 3 and 4.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIO-ECONOMIC

CHARACTERISTICS

The socio-cultural and economic aspects of the region under study will be dealt with, focussing attention on them as factors or features leading to integration or disintegration. As the topic basically deals with the 'problem of integration' the likely causes of disintegration gain ascendancy over those of integration. Often the cause may not be so pronounced but just one of difference from the mainstream.

The montane region in general, in this case, nurtures a civilization different from that found in the plains. The basic difference must once again be attributed to ethnic origin which manifests itself in tradition, social customs, language etc. While language is an expression of even the minutest difference in habits or as a result of separation, other social aspects undergo gradual change so as to obliterate unsurmountable barriers. The economic aspect is more intimately related to the environment. The mountainous region with its forested tracts and high altitude necessitate the optimum use of available resources often just for survival. Communication links are inadequate and in turn hinder industrialisation and power generation, so important for development. Since co-existence entails making best use of available resources, conflicts may arise in the process and method of its distribution.

From the sociological point of view, the majority of the population inhabiting in this region are of Tibetan-Burman extraction. They belong to the Indo-Mongoloid stock. The majority of the Indians on the other hand, belong to the Indo-Aryan stock. This difference is manifest in physical features, dress, speech and habits. These in themselves pose a problem for homogeneity especi-

ally in developing on backward economies where social differences often play major rôles. The largest number of followers of Buddhism in India are found in this region. Many Hindus are found in this region, though a large number use Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects. In Lad<sup>a</sup>kh, Sikkim, Bhutan and adjoining areas, Lamaistic Buddhism is practised on a large scale.

The population is mostly formed into tribes following tribal customs and practising tribal occupation. Often the administrative set up is also tribal.<sup>1</sup> In this region is found a preponderance of scheduled tribe population. It may be worthwhile examining in some detail these tribal practices and the nature of distribution of the inhabitants of these areas.

Ladakh is inhabited by four races. These are the Champas, the Ladakhis, the Baltis and Dards. Of these, the first three belong to the Tibetan race. The Champas lead a nomadic life on the upland valleys. The Ladakhis were Tibetans who settled on side valleys of the Indus. The Baltis are Ladakhis later converted to Islam.<sup>2</sup> Young men often become Lamas. However, though the religion of Ladakhis and Champas are the same, young Champa men do not become Lamas.<sup>3</sup> The Khambas came and went with summer. They were from Kham far east of Lhasa.<sup>4</sup> Thus the Ladakhis maintained their links with Tibet.

1. Kebang system in Arunachal Pradesh.

2. A.S.Chohan, Historical Study of Society and Culture in Dardistan and Ladakh (New Delhi, 1983), p.65.

3. Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh (Srinagar 1974) p.540.

4. Chohan, n.2, p.70.

A distinguishing feature in the unbridled power enjoyed by women, as also, the practice of polyandry. When a woman married she became wife to all the brothers. This possibly checked the increase in population. Property was inherited by the eldest son after marriage who became responsible for looking after others in the household. This practice checked the fragmentation of property.<sup>5</sup> Both these practices are contrary to the Indian tradition of polygamy and division of property among brothers.

Lamaism, is the form of Buddhism prevalent in Ladakh. It is a combination of the Mahayana and Tantrism, with traces of Bon.<sup>6</sup> Besides Sakya Thuba (Buddha), Jamya (Manjushri), Chanrazik (Avalokiteshwara), Maitreya, Padma Pani and Vajra Pani are worshipped. Religion is a dominant feature in their lives. Many become monks and nuns, and accept the Dalai Lama as their Head, who is a deputy of the Buddha. Religion as it is practiced in Ladakh is quite different from that in other parts of the country. With the Islamisation of Kashmir, the people of Ladakh started depending more on Lhasa for guidance.<sup>7</sup>

Coming to Lahul Spiti, we find that the locals and Tibetans call it Garzha. It is believed that in ancient times, this region was ruled by the Jos who were of Tibetan origin. Between the sixth and nineteenth centuries A.D., it was the battle ground between King of Kullu, Chamba, Ladakh and Tibet. The cultural impact from central Asian domination is evident even today.<sup>8</sup> Hutchinson

5. Neve Ernest, Beyond the Pir Panjal (Delhi, 1912), p.176.

6. Ancient religion of Tibet.

7. For details see Chohan n.2., pp.115-23.

8. Census of India 1981, series 7, Lahul and Spiti.

and Vogel say that Linguistic research indicates the people of Lahul to be of Munda stock who borrowed words from Tibetan.<sup>9</sup> The Spitians are of purely Tibetan stock and not many traces of Hindu or Aryan blood is found. Lahula physical features show admixture of Mongol and Aryan traits. The existance of a free society in Spiti has resulted in a large bastard population. The entire population of Lahul and Spiti is tribal. The three major tribes are Swanglas and Lahulas in the Lahul division and Bhots or Bodos in the Spiti division. The Lahulas are overwhelmingly Buddhist.<sup>10</sup>

Anthropological consideration shows the Kinnauris to be Aryan stock,<sup>11</sup> but one cannot fail to notice the Mongoloid features. Though the bulk of the population is Hindu, they actually practice Buddhism. As there are few Brahmans, the guidance is rendered by the Lamas. They follow pure Lamaism.<sup>12</sup>

Through the entire Indo-Neplese border areas features of difference and amalgamation must be sought across the border, in Nepal itself as the area included in Indian territory fails to provide adequate examples of disharmony. This is because the Indo-Nepal border does not have very high mountains which may act as barriers to communication.

In Nepal Buddhism and Hinduism flourish together. The land of Buddha's birth, Buddhism was followed in Nepal from the fifth century B.C. In 1769, the Gurkhas<sup>13</sup> overran the region and introduced an Aryan element into the country. Two-thirds of the population is Buddhist. Hinduism too has been greatly infl-

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Census of India 1981, Series 7, Kinnaur.

12. Ibid, p.9.

13. They claim themselves to be discendants of the Rajputs.

uenced by Buddhism, and in effect four-fifth of the population is Buddhist, or influenceed by Buddhism.<sup>14</sup> Tantra Yoga is practised in Nepal where it is regarded as a separate entity.<sup>15</sup>

In Nepal, there are races of diverse origin. The chief ones are the Khas, Newars, Kiratis, Magars, Lim<sup>b</sup>us, Tharus and Brahmins. The Bhotias inhabit the northern valleys towards Tibet. They are Tibetans on the west towards Kumanon, are found the Gurungs, Magars, Khas, Thakurs and Gorkhalis. These tribes are mostly of Hindy origin. The Kiratis, Limbus and Lepchas are of Tibetan origin and encountered in eastern districts. The Newars, Gurkhas and Murmis of Tibetan origin occupy the central parts. The Aoulias and small savage tribes are encountered in the forest.<sup>16</sup> A large number of Nepalese are settled near the Sikkim-Nepal border and Darjeeling areas. Many workers from Nepal are found in the tea gardens of Assam.

Further east, Sikkim is encountered. Here the people are mostly Buddhist and Hindus. A few Chiristain and Muslims are also met. Sikkim's cultural life is related to Tibetan religions and aesthetic traditions, it also retains a pre-Buddhist flavour. Bhutanese Lamaistic Buddhismis also practised.

It is believed that the Naong, Chang and Mon were the aboriginal inhabitants of Sikkim. The Lepcha entered possibly from the east from Assam and Upper Burma and assimilated these tribes.<sup>17</sup> Lepchas speak a Tibeto Burman language and have accepted Buddhism of the Mahayana form. Bon, the pre-Buddhistic Sikkimese religion has also influenced it. Other indigenous tribes are the

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14. Alexander Macleish, The Frontier Peoples of India, (Delhi, 1983) p.122.

15. Manik Lal Bajracharya, A Catalogue on Nepal, (Kathmandu, 1973), p.6.

16. Ibid, p.123

17. J. Claude White, Sikkim and Bhutan, (New Delhi, 1984)

Magars and Tsong. The Bhutia migrated into Sikkim from Kham. They belong to the <sup>18</sup> Nyiing-ma-pa sect. They intermarried with the Lepcha. Between the mid eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, tribes entered from northern and eastern Nepal. The major group was the Newars, a Tibeto-Burman people. They were followed by Tamang, Rai and Sherpa, all of Tibetan origin.

Before moving on to the north eastern states mention must be made of Bhutan. The original inhabitants were the Lepchas who were subjugated by the Tibetans. Lamaistic Buddhism came to be followed once Tibetan colonies were established. Spirits are also worshipped.

The population may be divided into two major groups, those living <sup>to</sup> the west and those to the east of Pele-La. Those living to the west are mostly of Tibetan origin and akin to the Bhotias of Sikkim. Their religion is Buddhism and language, a dialect of Tibetan. The easterners are allied to people of the Assam valley and to those living on hills to the east beyond Bhutan. The remaining inhabitants are the Paharis and inhabit the foothills extending along Indo-Bhutanese border.<sup>19</sup> Despite centuries of living together, ethnic groups retain their distinguishing characteristics and think of themselves in terms of their irrespective tribes or ethnic origins.

Towards the north-eastern regions of the country, the tribal situation is of major consequence. The tribes of the north-east may be classified under two broad categories. These are inhabitants of the hills occupying areas in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram,

18. A Liberal Buddhist Sect.

19. White, n.17, p1.



and Nagaland as also the hilly districts of Assam, Manipur and Tripura and inhabitants of the valley areas of Assam, especially the Brhmaputra valley. The geographical habitat greatly influences cultural habits. The situation can be clearly understood when it is perceived that Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram have 79.01%, 80.49%, 88.70% and 94.25% respectively of scheduled tribe population to total population of the state.<sup>20</sup>

In Assam, the Bodos and Kacharis lived by hunting and fishing and spoke Tibeto-Burmese languages. People of Indo-European stock migrated to this place and became important. The Kacharis continued their hold in the Barak valley till the eighteenth century and the king was a fictitious Kshatriya lineage.<sup>21</sup> Immigrants from East Bengal overwhelmed them. In Assam the majority of the population live in the plains. The Boro Kacharis or the Bodos form an important section of the population and are considered to be the earliest settlers. They spread over the Brhmaputra valley, north Bengal and Bangladesh and constitute an important group of Indo-Mongoloid people. Their greatest concentration is in the districts of Golapara, Kamrup, Nowgong and Darang. People inhabiting the Garo hills in Meghalaya show distinct affinities. South of the Garo Hills up to northern Mymensingh (Bangladesh) the Hajong tribe shows Bodo origin. The Dimasas and Meches of Dimapur and borders of North Cachar Hills also boast of Bodo origin. Considering the language affinities of Kacharis with Garos as also Dhimal Koch, Chutiya and Rabha a possible ethnological relationship may exist between them. The Ahoms, a Shan tribe came to Assam in the thirteenth century and became powerful in the fifteenth century.

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20. S.T.Das, Tribal Life of North Eastern India, (Delhi, 1986) p. 21

21. S.T.Das, Life Style Indian Tribes, Locational Practise, (Delhi 1987), p. 7

Hinduism is followed by the majority of the population. There is a tendency to indentify tribal deities with Hindu Gods and Goddesses through a process of syncretism. According to Dr. S. Chatterjee,<sup>22</sup> the Bodos at one time had formed a solid block of Mongoloid people spread out over the whole of north Bihar, north Bengal, east Bengal, and the Brahmaputra valley with extentions in Cachar Hills, Garo Hills and Tripura Hills. 'Kirata' was the name given by the Aryans to the Mongoloid people. According to Endle the Bodos were in the earlier days the dominant race of Assam.<sup>23</sup>

In the wake of this knowledge, it may not be difficult to understand the recent Bodo uprising for separation from the dominant Indo-Aryan element in the Assam valley. This is a clear example of ethnic differences tending towards fragmentation and disintegration of the country.

In Arunachal Pradesh the major tribes are Monpa, Mishmi, Abor, Miri, Dafla and Aka.<sup>24</sup> The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are seeking a larger identity for themselves outside the confines of their tribe names. Re te, inaccessible habitations have enabled the maintainance of their remote indentities. They are generally poor. The 1971 Census records 110 tribes in Arunachal Pradesh. The list may be more exhaustive. The identity of the tribes in Arunachal Pradesh is in a fluid condition. A definite list is lacking. The tribes themselves are yet to decide with what identity they are to emerge. The different tribes live in exclusive villages with traditional territory. Their pattern of living is

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22. Cited in Ibid, p.76

23. Cited in Ibid, p.77

24. The New Encyclopaedia Britanica; vol 21, Macropaedia, p.123.

closely related to the customs and habits that they follow.

The people of Arunachal Pradesh are mostly animists. Though in the state, there are a large number of Hindus especially among the Noctes, 67.5% of total number of Buddhists in India belong to tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, especially among the Monpa group of tribes.<sup>25</sup>

In Manipur more than 50% of the people are Hindus. Most inhabitants are found in the plains region. Yet, Manipur has a long tribal belt where people follow traditional religions. They represent about 7% of the total population of the state. The highest distribution is found in Manipur West followed by Manipur East. These hill tribes are divided into numerous hill clans. There is a predominance of Nagas towards the north and Kukis towards the south. Though the majority of Manipuris are Hindus, they speak Meithei and other Tibeto Burman dialects. Women enjoy considerable social status.

The Nagas are the most singular race of Nagaland. They are of Mongoloid origin. There are numerous clans but have common characteristics. The major clans are the Angami, Sema, Regma, Ao, Lhotas etc. and those of Cahar and Manipur. As an ethnic group they lack cohesion. There are more than 15 major tribes and sub-tribes. They differ in physique, dialect and customs. They are continuously forming new affiliations. Some examples are the Chakhesangs, including Chakru, Kheza, Sangtams and Rengmas. The Zeliangs comprising Zemis, Liangmais etc. The Angamis, Chakhesangs, Zeliangs Rengmas and Kukis are southern tribes in Kohima and Phek districts.

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25. Das, n.21, p.28

The Konyaks occupy Tuensang and Mon district in the east. The upper Konyaks are found in the North-east, on the west are the Aos, Lhotas and Semas. This fragmentation in Naga Society has proved even a drawback to their own cause. Most of the Naga insurgecneis have failed due to this.

About 50% of the Nagas are Christ ians. In the tradional Naga religion, special status is accorded to the Sun and the Moon. Nature is an important force.

The practise of having Morungs<sup>26</sup> is still prevalent. There is also hereditary chieftainships and councils of elders. Women enjoy a high position. All these factors point out differences with practises of mainland India in general.

Mizoram, derives its name from Mi-zo meaning Hill man, but inhabitants of hills are not Mizos. It refers to certain tribes in the hills of Manipur, Tripura, Cachar and the Chin Hills of Burma, who are akin to them in language, customs and modes of living.

The Mizos are racially Mongolian, relating to their period prior to their migration to the present habitat is not know with certanity. It is widely believed that they belong to the Chin Hills of Burma. They were forced<sup>to</sup> migrate by stronger clans in Burma. Between 1750 A.D. and 1850 A.D., they establish themsleves in what is now Mizoram, subjuggting and asimilating<sup>s</sup> the aboriginal element. They drove out the Hrangkhols, Biates and Thadons to the north.<sup>27</sup>

'Mizo' is a generic term, which includes several sub-tribes. Prominent among these are the Lusei, Raite H mar Pawi. Each sub-

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26. Dormitoriesfor unmarried men.

27. S.T.Das, n.21, pp.198-99.

tribe has a different dialect but with close affinity. The Lakhers who occupy the southern part have an altogether different dialect.

Before being converted to Christianity, the Mizos were animists. They believe in Good and evil spirits. Their supreme spirit was Pathian.<sup>28</sup>

In the Mizo system of inheritance, the younger son acquires property, in his absence property goes to the nearest male relations. Men and women work <sup>e</sup>qually.

The Garo Hills region of Meghalaya is inhabited by the Garos, a people of Tibeto-Burman origin and akin to the Caharis of Assam. The Khasis inhabiting the Khasi hills form and island of Mon-Khmer people of the <sup>U</sup>Astro-Asiatic branch.

There have been migrations from Bangladesh. The population of Meghalaya is a mix of Christians, Hindus and those who practise animistic forms of Hinduism. Both the Garos and Khasis follow a matriarchal lineage. Marriages are exogamous.

In Tripura more than 40% of the population belong to <sup>e</sup>Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes. Most of the inhabitants of this state are Hindus, though a prominent Muslim element is also encountered due to migrations from Bangladesh. In general, the people are close in customs and habits to those of Bangladesh.

Thus it is seen from the given accounts of the tribes and people who inhabit the frontier regions of India, that they differ in many aspects from the dominant population of India. Some of the points may be noted. Nowhere else in the country can be found people of Indo-Mongoloid stock speaking Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects.

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28. Ibid, p.200

The Indian people are of Aryan stock speaking languages with a Sanskritic root which again traces its origin to the Indo-European family of languages. The Dravidian languages spoken in south India are also categorically different from the Tibeto-Burman languages.

Traced to this, may be explained the difference in customs, habits and practices. Coming to religion, it is seen that only in this part of the contry does Buddhism have a strong foothold. Lamaistic Buddhism greatly influences the lives of the people in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Bhutan. About 67.5% of the Buddhist in India are found in Arunachal Pradesh. Practices of Tantrism and Bon are met with Buddhism. The Dalai Lama is considered the supreme head. This clearly shows Tibetan influence. Animism too is practised on a large scale. Though some the people have accepted Hinduism or Christianity, they have not changed their languages and dialects. Thus we may say that language is a more concrete manifestation of the origin and characteristic of a group than religion. Christianity here has a stronger foothold than in other parts of the country except perhaps Kerala and Goa. Whereas in the latter regions Christianity took root as a result of imperialistic activity in the north eastern parts it was chiefly due to missionary activity. This was facilitated by the absence of a regular religion and the relative isolation from the mainstream. Even among st the followers of Hinduism, life is more tribe or clan based as opposed to the caste based Hinduism practised in other parts of India.

The difference in physical features also at once brings forth the concept of difference. Leaving out concepts of equality and inequality is related to physical difference, it nevertheless

taken out of the region. This is especially true of the north eastern part of the country, marked in the plains and valley regions of Assam and Manipur. Though unable to take advantage of the situation it has nevertheless caused resentment among the local people who feel duped and exploited.

As with the rest of the country, the people are concentrated in the rural areas, and agriculture forms the backbone of the economy. Thus any development is dependent on agricultural development. The difference is that in these regions practice of 'Jhuming' or 'slash and burn methods' of agriculture are still carried on. This method causes untold damage to the land and at the same time provides practically no surplus. The problems of shifting cultivation are intimately linked with the rapid growth of population especially in the ~~xxxxx~~ hill areas. Recurrent famines even during British rule indicate the low fertility of the soil which is further decreased by shifting cultivation, as it often induces soil erosion. With the growth of population, plots become smaller and the fallow period shorter, lessening time for regeneration.

Apart from Ladakh and the border regions of Himachal Pradesh (Lahul, Spiti and Kinnaur), where wheat has the pre eminent position among crops the entire region from Nepal to the eastern part of the country has the largest cultivated area under rice. Rice is grown extensively in the plains of Assam and Manipur. Terrace cultivation is carried on by the Apa Tanis in Arunachal Pradesh, the Aos of Nagaland, and the Jaintias of Meghalaya .<sup>29</sup>

The agricultural produce is low and backward. It is often cut off from development from the national mainstream. There is in general low yield per hectare. Lack of research base, dearth of qualified technical personnel, inadequate irrigational facilities, lack of mechanisation and power and the low consumption of fertilisers have been responsible for this backwardness in agriculture. This also is used chiefly for the potato crop. The double copped area is negligible. The soil is generally acidic in nature, with a PH range between 4 and 5.5. The low availability of phosphorous which gets fixed results in a low response to fertilizers. The heavy rainfall and humid conditions make it conducive for proliferation of pests and diseases, as also problems for grain storage.

To enhance economic growth from agriculture certain methods may be suggested such as reclaiming land for settled cultivation, planting perennial crops. The climate of the region is conducive for growing a great variety of fruits. This aspect should be exploited to the full. Often fruits grown in these areas get wasted due to lack of facility for storage and transportation. In the north east, cash crops like ginger, cotton, hill jute can provide a steady source of cash income.

Especially in the case of Assam, tea deserves special mention. Assam produces 51% of the total tea produced in the country, which is one of India's major exports and an important foreign exchange earner, yet the returns from this industry hardly reach the region so that further investment may be made.



In Ladakh, earlier the Kashmir Darbar had proprietary rights over all land, and the cultivators were merely occupancy tenants. Almost all Ladakhis were engaged in agriculture. The use of manure was very small as poverty prevented the procurement of an adequate quantity. This resulted in poor quality crops. Due to the extreme cold and snow, the question of double cropping does not arise.

This shows the stagnant nature of agricultural economy of the region. To foster fast economic growth, the focus must shift elsewhere. The obvious answer would inevitably be rapid industrialisation. Before moving on to analyse the industrial potential of the region, two other occupations need to be mentioned. These are forestry and animal husbandry. In Ladakh the important trees are willow and poplar which are used for canework, fuel etc. Lahul-Spiti and Kinnaur have valuable timber reserves. Assam before fragmentation had 39% of its area under forests. Timber, bamboo, lac and firewood are the important forest products. Manipur is covered with dense forests of bamboo, teak, oak, magnolia and the luzon pine. Teak and bamboo are commercially exploited.<sup>30</sup> Meghalaya has pines, sal, bamboo, oaks, birches and magnolias. Nagaland has mahogany and bamboo. Sikkim too has luxuriant forests.

Though the entire region is heavily forested with commercially exploitable trees, often they are destroyed for Jhum and firewood. However, forestry supports the handicrafts and canework industries.

Animal husbandry is carried on only as a supplement to agriculture. Many type of wild life like tigers, rhinos, leopards, elephants etc. are found in the region. Ladakh could prove a good breeding ground for Zanskari horses. In the north-east pigs,

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30. Chohan, n.2.

yak, mithun<sup>31</sup> are common domestic animals. The Mithun is used for barter or for paying the bride price. The importance of traditional economy in the lives of the hill dwellers may be noted from this practice.

Despite existence of raw materials and minerals, which are important for setting up any industry, industrialization has been negligible in this region. After Independence, the Government of India to ensure rapid industrial development and for purposes of industrial assistance, declared the whole of north eastern India as a 'Backward Region'. Yet, no remarkable progress has taken place in comparison with the rest of the country. The few industries that have come up are dependent on local raw material and set up in the small sector. A notable feature of the entire region is the predominance of small scale and household industries. The focus is on the development of crafts like weaving, sericulture, wooden handicrafts, development of crafts like weaving, sericulture, wooden handicrafts, canework etc. The other notable small sector industries are a fertilizer plant at Namrup, jute mill at Silaghat, sugar mill at Dergaon, paper mill at Jogighopa. All these are in Assam. Manufacturing industry in Manipur is limited to cottage industries. An industrial complex is coming up in Imphal. Meghalaya has no heavy industries. There is a cement industry, a plywood and beverages plant in the small sector. Nagaland too is devoid of manufacturing industries. Sikkim's main exports are oranges, apples etc. A dairy industry has been set up by the National Dairy Development Corporation. In Ladakh wool cleaning, basketwork

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31. A type of cow.

Phosphorite and apatite have been found in the Garo-Khasi -Jaintia hills and Sung Valley in Meghalaya. These can be used in the fertilizer industry. Fuller's earth found in Kamrup in Assam can be used by the fertilizer industry.

Iron ore deposits apart from their occurrences in Sikkim have been found in Nagaland. Minor occurrences of gold from upper Assam and Subansiri river beds as also Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya. Other minerals like fire clay, China clay, feldspar, Kaolin, quartz, mica and bauxite are also found.

The question now arises as to why despite these valuable reserves of resources, the region has not made any great progress on the industries front. Whatever little the British did in the fields of tea plantation, oil extraction and mineral exploitation was done to further their own interests.

The chief factor responsible for lag in industrial development is the relative isolation of the region. The rugged terrain and adverse climate, frequent floods worsen the situation. Related factors such as lack of capital, labour scarcity, non existence of entrepreneurship and infrastructural facilities like transportation, storage etc. have been detrimental to industrial growth. The hydel power potential has hardly been developed. Suitable credit institutions have not, come up. An important factor is social diversity. Thus we see that apart from the raw materials, practically all other requirements for industrial development are non-existent.

The money economy introduced after independence in place of barter has been slow to take off. The local money lenders have benefited. Often those who invest in this region are merchants and traders who have their base elsewhere. The profits

does go out of the region. Even the tea, plywood, oil industries have their headquarters outside the state.<sup>32</sup>

The dualistic nature of the population ethnically tribals and non tribals and geographically hillsmen and plainsmen had made economic and social integration very difficult. The North Eastern Council set up in 1972 by an Act of Parliament is an advisory body to formulate unified and coordinated regional plans for balanced development in the area. However, it is seen that whatever development has taken place is to a large extent lopsided.

Financial inducement has often proved counter productive. The system of education has on one hand destroyed tribal institutions and on the other, failed to introduce new skills and technology. While improvements may be made in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, etc. giant strides need to be made to establish manufacturing industries. The transport network must be strengthened, power supply storage and marketing facilities developed. The primary objective must be the removal of poverty. Industrialization will lessen pressure on land as also speed up economic growth.

In the North East, literacy rates are high. Sikkim and Meghalaya boast of having a one-third literate population. Yet, development is minimal. This may be attributed to an education system which is not need based. Urbanization is also minimal in the region. Often the only urban centre is the state capital. Others may be only trading centres.

Despite many picturesque places tourism has not developed to any great extent. Some of these places are close to the international and for reasons of security must be kept out of bounds for reasons of security must be kept out of bounds for tourists. Thus considering the socio-economic factors, it is seen that this region is different from other parts of the country. Difference in physical features have an effect of distancing. No practical efforts have been taken to foster understanding between the hillsmen and plainmen. The process of change has begun, but it is still in the initial stages.

CHAPTER 4

LINGUISTIC PATTERNS

As has been observed in the case of terrain and social habits, the language of these Himalayan border areas are distinct and different from those spoken in the plains of India. The major languages of the sub-continent have an Indo-European origin and belong to the Indo-Aryan sub-family.<sup>1</sup> The question of language is very closely related to ethnicity and migration. It is not possible to say for certain as to who were the original inhabitants of the country, nor can we pinpoint the time when these border and frontier regions came to be inhabited. Comparative philology and the study of ethnic and racial factors makes it clear that the people of these areas speak languages belonging chiefly to the Tibet<sup>o</sup>-Burman sub-family which is a branch of the Tibet<sup>o</sup>-Chinese family.<sup>2</sup>

Various attempts have been made since the nineteenth century to classify these languages. Some of the more prominent scholars who had undertaken such study are Brian Houghton Hodgson later Logan (Burma and Assam) also Mason, Cushing, Forbes and philologists like Max Muller, Fredrich Muller and Terrin de Laconperie. Particularly relevent to the Indian context are the works of Professor Kunn of Munich, Conrady of Leipzig and Laufer and Bradley in America.<sup>3</sup> However most of these studies relate to specific philological interest and not to ramifications and consequences of their distinctiveness from the main languages spoken in the country.

To get a clear idea of the international or extra-territorial nature of these languages, it is necessary to have some knowledge

1 David Crystal, The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of language, (New York, 1987).

2 G.A.Grieserson, Lingustic Survey of India, vol. 1. (Varanasi, 1928) p. 41

3 Cited in Ibid.

of their origin as also the manner in which they have spread throughout the region. Successive hordes of migrants have moved in different directions from the same original home. However these people have retained to some degree the character of their original tongue. Thus developed a web of interconnected languages and dialects. With the help of comparative philology which takes into account language change and language continuity by studying the changes in phonetics, grammar, vocabulary and shades of meaning, the roots and links can be traced. This can also give an idea of the influences that have had some bearing on a particular language. In this work however, the study will be limited to origins and spread of the languages especially of the Tibeto-Burman languages which have relevance in the Indian context.

Except perhaps Austric, no other family of languages is spoken over such a wide area in the eastern part of the world from Central Asia to Southern Burma and from Baltistan to Beijing as Tibeto-Chinese. The number of speakers also far exceed those of the Austric and Indo-European families<sup>4</sup>

Tradition and comparative philology point to north west China, between the upper courses of the Hwang Ho and Yang Tse Kiang as the original home of the Tibeto-Chinese race<sup>5</sup>. Burma and Assam have been populated by successive waves of Tibeto-Chinese invaders, each advancing towards the mouths of the various streams, namely

<sup>4</sup>Crystal, n.1.

<sup>5</sup> E.F.Kuhn, *Über Herkunft und Sprache der Transgangetischen Völker*, vol. 1 part 1, p 488.



remains a stronghold of ancient Mon Khmer speech?<sup>7</sup> Mon Khmer belongs to the Austric family.

Some others of the Tibeto-Burman horde halted at the head of the Assam Valley, turned south and populated the Naga hills region and started the confused group of tribes whose speech is called the Naga group. Some entered the eastern Naga country directly, while others entered the western Naga country from the south via Manipur and traces of this northern movement are visible even today. Some others remained near the upper waters of the Irrawaddy and Chindwin where Kachin is now spoken.<sup>8</sup> Traces of earlier movements are found in the dialects of servile tribes in the so called 'Lui' languages of Manipur and in stray dialects such as Kadu, Szi, Lashi, Maingtha, Phon or Maru which are found scattered over northern Burma.<sup>8</sup> The original settlers of Manipur must have been the Manipuris whose language Meithei show not only agreement with that spoken at present at its original home in what is now Kachin country, but also with those of other emigrants from that tract. Another swarm settled in the upper basins of the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy, gradually advanced dividing the Mon Khmers before them. Before the language had substantial time to change from that of the home areas, groups of people speaking these languages turned westwards to settle in the Chin Hills south of Manipur. With the pressure of population, they moved northwards, leaving colonies in Lushai land (Mizoram), Cachar (Assam) and in Manipur and the Naga Hills. Their descendants speak many different languages closely connected and classed with Meithei as the Kuki Chin group. Another group entered Yunnan. Their descendants the Lolos are found here and in the stray

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

However their power declined. They were defeated by the Burmese and later conquered by the British. The Ahoms became totally Hinduised and adopted Indo-Aryan languages and customs. Their own language died apart from the priests. It may be noted that Ahom is an old form of Shan and is of great importance for understanding the mutual relationship of Tai languages. Ahom left its mark upon Assamese literature.

Some of the Ahoms settled high up on the Irrawaddy in Khamti land were invited by their kinsmen to settle in eastern Assam. They developed a slightly varying dialect of Shan. Since then small numbers of Shan tribes migrated into Assam at different periods and are known as Pakhials, Tai-rongs Noras and Aitons. The Aitons still speak Burmese Shan and use the alphabet.<sup>11</sup>

The Tibeto-Burman people split into two branches. This brought a corresponding split in languages. The two main branches are the Tibeto-Himalayan and the Assam Burmese or Lohitic. A third group, the north Assam branch comprised of speakers whose ancestors appear to have migrated independently and at different times from the original home of the Tibeto-Burman race.

A mutual relationship exists between the languages of this sub-family. The most northern of the Tibeto-Himalayan group is Tibetan and most southern of Assam Burmese group is Burmese. Between these lie the Tibeto-Burman languages. The two extremes are connected along two distinct linguistic chains. The eastern chain comprises of the Kachin and Lolo forms of speech which connect Tibetan directly to Burmese. The western chain is subdivided into eastern and western limbs. The eastern limb comprises of dialects of North Assam Branch of the Naga hills

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11. Ibid, p.51.

Bodo and Kuki-Chin groups where it meets the western limb. The latter begins with dialects of Tibetan which have crossed the Himalayan watershed and have occupied the southern face of the Himalayan range. These also lead to Bodo and Kuki-Chin. The combined limb leads to Burmese.

The Tibeto Himalayan branch can be further sub-divided into three groups. The first group is the Tibetan group. All languages of this group are known by the general Indian name of Bhotia. The prominent representative of this is the Bhotia of Tibet or Tibetan proper. Various forms of Bhotia or dialects of Tibetan are spoken in Baltistan and Ladakh. Some of these dialects have crossed the Himalayas into the northern parts of Lahul and Spiti, Kinnaur, Garhwal, Kumaon, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. Though the number of speakers may not be of great consequence, the Tibetan language has left its marks in the fields of philosophy and literature. Lamaistic Buddhism of Tibet is prevalent in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and parts of Sikkim and Bhutan. In Ladakh and parts of Himachal Pradesh the medium of communication is the Tibetan language.

The standard form of the language is that spoken in central Tibet, in the provinces of U and Tsang. In India and its border areas, there are two important groups of dialects, an eastern and western. The eastern group includes Lhoke, the language of Bhutan, Da Njong-Ka-form of Tibetan spoken in Sikkim, Shapa<sup>r</sup> and Kagate spoken in Nepal, and minor dialects encountered in Kumaon and Garhwal. In Ladakh and Baltistan, languages of the western group are spoken. Balti is more or less obsolete due to the conversion of the population to Islam and the influence of

In the pronominalised group, the influence of Munda is very apparent. The pronominalised group can again be divided into eastern and western group. The eastern group languages are spoken mostly in eastern Nepal and neighbouring areas. Hodgson called them the 'Kiranti' dialects. Some speakers are also found in Darjeeling. The languages belonging to this group are Dhimal, Thami, Limbu, Yakha, Khambu, Rai, Chepang, Kamda etc.

The languages of the western pronominalised group are all spoken in India and possess considerable Munda influence. The most important languages in Kinnauri or Kanawari spoken in Kinnaur and Kanashi and isolatedly in Kulu. To the northwest of Kinnauri speaking areas, Manchari, Chambu, Lahuli, Bunan and Rangloi are spoken.<sup>13</sup> Other languages of this group has speakers residing a long way to the east, in the mountain ranges north of Kumaon.

East of Towang and Bhutan, extending from Towang upto and beyond the extreme corner of Assam, the hills north of the Brahmaputra are occupied by hill tribes namely the Akas, Angkas or Hrusso; the Daflas, the Abor Miris and Mishmis Akas dwell in the hills north of Darrang, east of them the Daflas and further east the Miris. On both sides of the River Dihang, are encountered the Abors. The Miris and Abors speak the same language, which is akin to Dafla. The Mishmis inhabit the hills north of Sadiya and speak three different dialects. Their language has affinities with those spoken by Abors and Miris. All these languages and dialects belong to the North Assam Branch. They are intermediate

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13. Census of India 1981 Series Lahul and Spiti also Census of India 1981 Series Kinnaur.

between the Tibeto Himalayan and Assam. Burmese branches and generally a haphazard collection. The territory is a backwater over which various batches of Tibeto-Burman immigrants have left a record of their speech.

The Assam-Burmese Branch is divided into major groups—the Bodo, the Naga, the Kachin, the Kuki-Chin, the Burma, the Lolo Moso and the Sak or Lui. Languages belonging to Kachin, Kuki-Chin Sak and Burma groups, finds only a small group of speakers in India, the majority belonging to Burma.

The languages of the Bodo and the Naga groups are more closely connected with the Tibeto-Himalayan languages. The Kuki-Chin and Burma groups exhibit more independence. Kachin is related to Kuki-Chin and Lolo-Moso to Burmese.

The group of tribes known as Bodo or Bara, forms the most important section of the non-Aryan Tribes of Assam.<sup>14</sup> Linguistic evidence shows that at one time they extended over the whole region of erstwhile Assam (included Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Assam), west of Manipur and Naga Hills, except Khasi and Jaintia Hills.<sup>15</sup> To the north of the Khasi Hills, they occupied most of the Brahmaputra valley and to the west, the Garo Hills region. To the south, they spread over the plains of Cachar and Tripura. On the east, their influence was visible in the area bounded by Manipur and wild tribes of the Naga Hills. Between the Naga and Khasi Hills, an important tribe settled in the North Cachar Hills.

14. The Bodo stir partly related to language.

15. Mon Khmer of the Austro-Asiatic family is spoken in this region.

A branch of this group peopled the whole of North Bengal.

With the passage of time, these Bodo tribes suffered reverses, and in 1228, the Ahoms of the Tai group occupied the Brahmaputra valley. In the east too, their power declined and some survived only in the mountain tracts.

From the south, the Kukis settled in the Lushai and Chin Hills pushed forward, occupied parts of Manipur, Cachar plains, north Cachar Hills; Here even today the population is an admixture of Bodo and Kuki.

From the Aryan culture came from the West totally alien influences. This cultural invasion brought a new language and different ideas. This influence spread to Dhaka, Sylhet and Cachar. This separated the Bodos of the Garo Hills from their kinsmen in the present state of Tripura and in the valley of the Brahmaputra. As a consequence, the Bodo languages started dying out from these regions.

The Koches are represented by the Kacharis who form a sizeable population of Nowgong, Kamrup, Goalpara, Coch Behar(Bengal) and the neighbouring country. Towards the east of the region, they called themselves as 'Bara', often mispronounced as Bodo, thus giving the name to the whole group of languages of which their tongue is only a number!<sup>16</sup>

Connected to the Kachari is Lalung, spoken in and around Nowgong. It forms the links between Kachari and Demasa which is spoken in the hill region of north Cachar.

Garo had its original home in the Garo Hills region of Meghalaya, but their speakers spread to the plain and even crossed the Brahmaputra and settled in Cooch Behar and Jalpaigniri districts of Bengal. It has a number of dialects. The Atong dialect

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16. Udayan Mishra "Bodo Stir; Complex Issues, Unattainable Demands" Economic and Political Weekly, vol.24, no. 22, 27 May, pp.1146-49.

is spoken in the Somesvari valley south-east of the Garo Hills and in the north-east of Mymensingh. Rabha which is closely connected to Garo, is spoken in Goalpara, but slowly dying out. The Rabhas at one time constituted the fighting class of the Bodos.

Tripura which had its home in what was earlier the hill state of Tipera (now Tripura) and the adjoining portion of the chittagong Hill Tracts (now in Bangladesh) is nother important language of the Bodo group. Its speakers were met also in Dhaka Sylhet and Cachar. The language exhibits Bodo group characteristics as also affinities with Dimasa and Kachari. However the region which spoke this language are today found to be strong holds of Bengalis.<sup>17</sup>

Though numerically, the number of speakers belonging to the Naga group are less than half as compared with the speakers of the Bodo group of languages, the number of languages belonging to the Naga group is more than four times as many. A clear indication of the division of language and their relation to ethnic division is perceived from the fact that Naga insurgencies have not been successful chiefly because of their numerous subdivisions.<sup>18</sup> Towards the east of Assam valley proper, the general level of tract rapidly rises up to the Patkoi Hills and beyond, including south of Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts, the whole of Naga Hills and north of the state of manipur. The mountain ranges of this region run north and south

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17. Bengali language has Indo Aryan root.

18. S.T.Das, Tribal Life of North East India (New Delhi, 1987)p.4.

and are connected to the Himalayas through the Patkoi Hills and those beyond it through Manipur and Mizoram to terminate at Cape Negrais. In this region between north Cachar and the Patkoi Hills the Naga languages are mainly spoken. Between the Bodo and Naga are intermediate sub-groups which have similarities with both but are closer to the Naga group.

The Naga languages have three sub-groups, western, central and eastern. Of the western sub-group, the most important is Angami. This again has two dialects:- Tengima and Chakroma. The Sema and Rengma tribes have their own languages. Of the central sub-group the most important are Ao and Lhota. The minor languages are Tengsa, Thukumi and Yachumi. Two dialects, Chungli and Mongsen are spoken north east of Nagaland. Lhota is spoken south of Ao, around the centre of the same state. Tengsa, Thukumi and Yachumi are spoken by tribes beyond Dikhu which is outside Indian territory.<sup>19</sup> The languages of the eastern sub-group are spoken by all other Naga tribes east of Ao country and bounded by the Patkoi Hills on the south. The languages of the eastern Naga sub-group are important as they form a series of transition languages bridging the gap between other Naga tongues and Kachin which lies to their east and south.

To the east and south lies the Kachin country. The main language of this area is Kachin or Singhpo. It forms a link between Naga and Tibetan languages on one side and Burmese on the other. It also <sup>a</sup>leds through Meithei of Manipur from Naga and Tibetan to the Kuki Chin group.

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19. The international character should be noted



Another connecting chain between Naga and Kuki is the Naga-Kuki languages sub-group which corresponds to Naga-Bodo sub group as leading from Naga into Bodo. The most important language in this category is Mikir, spoken in the Mikir Hills in Assam. Various dialect forms are encountered in south Kamrup, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, North Cachar and the Naga Hills.

Other Naga Kuki languages are spoken in the state of Manipur, where Kuki-Chin tribes entered as a backwash from the south. Here they encountered Naga tribes who had already settled in this region. Thus there was a mixture of Naga and Kuki languages. In the Hills of north Manipur, adjoining Angami country, Naga languages are concentrated. Mao Naga may be heard here.

The Kwoirengs occupy the area around the Barial Range which forms a northwest boundary. Immediately to the south, lies the area inhabited by the Kabui Nagas whose speech belongs to the Naga-Bodo sub-group but is intermediate between Naga-Bodo and Naga-Kuki. The Kwoirengs traded with the Angamis and frontier districts of Burma.<sup>20</sup>

The Tangkhuls occupy the north-eastern parts of the state. They speak a number of languages and have their headquarters at Ukhrul. Maring is spoken by a Naga tribe inhabiting a few villages in the Hiron Range which separates Manipur from Upper Burma. A small group of speakers is found in Manipur valley also. Maring is an example of a Naga-Kuki language which closely approaches the Kuki-Chim group.<sup>21</sup>

The speakers of the Kachin group are found mostly in Burma and inhabit a tract which includes the upper waters of Chindwin and Irrawaddy which lies to the east of India in Burma.

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20. Grierson, n.2, p.70.

21. Ibid.

They spread to the south, into the northern Shan states with isolated Kachin villages in the southern Shan states even beyond the Salween. Some of these colonists entered India. Philology and tradition point to the headwaters of the Irrawaddy as their original home. The languages of the eastern sub-group of the Naga group show distinct affinity with those of the Kuki-Chin group. It is perceived in its resemblance to Meithei. Kachin, without being a transition language forms a connecting link between Tibetan on one hand Naga, Meithei and Burmese on the others.

The Kuki-Chin languages are spoken over an extensive territory, from Naga Hills, east Sylhet and Cachar in the north to Sandoway district of Burma in the south, from the river Myittha in the east to the Bay of Bengal in the west. This region is entirely hilly. It is also spoken in the Manipur valley and small pockets in the Cachar plains and Sylhet. The name Kuki Chin basically denotes a geographical area and does not belong to any tribe. Thus it may not be possible to find conventional similarities within languages of this group.

The tribal languages fall into two main sub-groups, the Meithei and the Chin. It is likely that people speaking languages of this group, migrated from the north or northeast into the Manipur valley. While another group moved south and occupied the Lushai Hills (Mizoram) and Chin Hills (Burma) region. In the south the language developed rapidly due to interaction with Burmese. Meithei, the language of Manipur developed slowly and underwent much change. Modern Meithei shows more ancient traces of phonetic development and agrees closely with Burmese and Tibetan than Kuki-Chin proper. It shows points of common origin with the Naga languages especially Kachin thus providing a connecting link.

The chin languages according to Grierson,<sup>22</sup> include some forty distinct languages. These may be further subdivided into northern Chin, central Chin, Old Kuki and southern Chin sub groups.

Central Chin comprises about sixteen languages spoken by tribes living in Manipur, Cachar, Tripura Hills and Sylhet, who migrated from, their original home within the last three centuries. The migration to the north was due to pressure exerted by the Lushais (Mizos).

Hrangkhoh, Hallam and Langrong belong to the Old Kuki sub-group. Languages of this sub-group are spoken in the hill region of Tripura, north Cachar and Sylhet. Some speakers are also found in Manipur.

The northern Chin sub group includes Thado<sup>23</sup> Sokte, Ralte, Siyin and Paite. The Thados were driven by the Sokte into southern Manipur from the Chin Hills. The Sokte tribe is found in the northern part of the Chin Hills, the Siyins in the hills immediately to the east. The Raltes are found in the western parts of Mizoram.

The central Chin languages are Sunkhla, Lai, Lushai or Dulien, Banjogi and Pankhu. They are all connected with the northern sub group but have a greater affinity with old Kuki. Lais belong to Burma, Lakher is a dialect spoken in Mizoram. The Lushais, now the prevailing race of Mizoram obtained final possession of this area about 1850, pushing the Thados to Cachar. Banjogi and Pankhu are spoken in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

22. Ibid, p.76.

23. Thados are also known as New Kukis.

The languages of the southern Chin sub-group mostly belong to Burma. The Kheyang, Sho and the Khami or Kumi inhabit both sides of the Arakan Yoma, while some others are found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Khamis are found in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and along the river Koladyne in the Arakan. The other languages are confined to Burma.

For a study of the languages spoken in this region, linguistic survey carried out by Greerson and some records of the 1961 census data provide important source material. Grierson has clearly shown the interlink character of the languages.

A quick glance through the languages spoken over the entire region show how the languages of Tibeto-Burman origin hold sway here.

In Ladakh Tibetan is spoken widely and known as Bhotia.<sup>24</sup> In this Spiti valley only Tibetan is spoken. In Lahul, Bunan is spoken in the Bhaga Valley, Tinain in the Chandra Valley, and Manchat in the Chandra Bhaga valley. It has certain affinities with the Munda language. The vocabulary shows influence of Tibetan.<sup>25</sup> According to the journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, of July 1910, Kinnauri originates from the Tibeto-Burman family.<sup>26</sup> The important dialects are Lower Kinnauri, spoken towards the west of Kinnaur and north of the Sutlaj. Chhitkhuli spoken in the Baspa valley and Theborskad towards the east.<sup>27</sup>

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24. Handbook of Jammu and Kashmir State (1947) p.13 cited in A.S.Chohan, Historical Study of Society and Culture in Dardistan and Ladakh, (New Delhi, 1983).p.74.

26. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society July 1910.

25. Census of India 1981, Series 7, Lahul and Spiti.

27. Census of India 1981, Series 7, Kinnaur.

According to the 1981 census, there are sixteen tribes in Nagaland, each having a local language or mother tongue.

Nagamese, which is a combination of Hindi, Bengali, Assamese and Nepali is widely understood apart from English.<sup>33</sup> Khasi is spoken in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya. The other languages are Garo, Pnar-Synteng, Nepali, Jaintia, Hajong as also Assamese, Bengali and Hindi. In Mizoram the Kuki-Chin languages are spoken. In Tripura more than half the population speak Bengali. Tripuri and Manipuri are also spoken.

The predominance of languages of Tibeto-Burman origin in this region is clearly evident. As Tibeto-Burman languages are unintelligible to Indo-Aryan speakers, the language divide becomes very prominent. Emotional integration and social interaction suffers. This tends to give the people a separate identity. To remove this barrier, a standard language can be envisaged. However it is not practicable in the Indian context as was seen in the language unrest in South India and Assam in the 1960s. Thus the cleavage remains, often threatening to become even wider.

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33. K.T.Vishwanath, "Linguistic Profile of Nagaland", Man in India, vol. 66, no.3, Sept.1986, pp.249-54.

This chapter attempts to analyse strategic and political issues not uninfluenced by social factors that have led to unrest in this region. It is also the politicization or political manifestation of socio-economic factors that have caused disruptive and secessionist tendencies in this region. Attempts shall be made also to show how the neighbouring country has tendered help to foster these tendencies due to linguistic kinship with the rebels. In attempting this study the whole region has to be studied as a part of a greater geographic whole, with power relations playing an important role due to the indeterminate nature of boundaries in this region.

The mountane region of north-east India has not often been studied from the point of view that it forms an integral part of the entire region of highlands from Southern China to Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. This region has an amorphous nature. It is topographically a south-easterly extension of the Tibetan and West Sichuan Ranges. This region in itself can become a potentially important strategic region.

While geographical factors like terrain, climate and vegetation do not necessarily determine the course of war, they do influence it to a great extent. If terrain is easily defensible, there are enough resources and communication is good, tactical use may be made of the terrain. However it is not the factors of topography that are important the population is also important along with its cultural differences and resources.

The place of minorities in warfare may be noted from the point of view of their having an intimate knowledge of the terrain, as well as manpower reserves. During the second world war

The mountain based ethnicities which are an important feature of the geo-strategic map of the region bears an influence on the strategic environment out of proportions to the number of highlanders who are at a macro-level described as demographic and political minorities. In Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram Hill regions the density of population is much below the national average. Yet examples of unrest on a major scale have been reported from Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. Arunachal Pradesh holds an important strategic position in view of the territories claimed by China in this region during the war of 1962,<sup>3</sup> though it has a very low population density.

The general pattern of ill feeling between lowlander and highlander is often based on mutual ignorance due to unintelligibility. The existense of insurgencies and resistance against central rule (mainly in terms of smuggling, misuse of environment) made by authorities against highlanders shows the cleavage between the two, (usually a lowland centre) and lack of understanding. However in an assesment of highland, lowland dichotomy, emphasis must be given to differences in economic levels, cultural and technological advances that exist between them. The position is further complicated by boundary disputes.

An interest in a confederation of mountain nation states stretching from Assam to Thailand was reported to have been expressed by Nagas, Ahoms, Shans and other groups of the region.<sup>4</sup> A.Z.Phizo, the Naga leader to led the resistance against Indian rule had called for military cooperation between the insurgents

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3 See map given in Alan J. Day, Border and Territorial Disputes, (United Kingdom, 1987) p.252.

4 Robert D. Crane, The Role of Ethnic Rationalism in the Modernization and Stabilization of the Third World. (Hudson Institute, Discussion Paper, 13 Dec.1967).

of Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura and Mizoram as well as Shans and other hill groups. He held views on the reorganization of the hill people.<sup>5</sup>

In modern states, mountain peoples are minorities, but in the mountainous frontier tracts they form a formidable group. This is more so due to the absence of definite boundaries in the rugged terrain. They have an altogether separate lifestyle from the plainsmen as far as agricultural production, economic interests and cultural habits. When the concepts of neglect, exploitation and lack of political representation creep in, the antagonism deepens.

An example of the existence of a single ethnic group on both sides of the boundary may be had from India-Burma. The Indo-Burmese boundary runs through rugged terrain. The boundary itself is imprecise. In the Naga Hills area, "a nominal administrative delimitation was believed to run through the hills and with the independence of both India and Burma, this line has become an international boundary."<sup>6</sup> Schweinfurth adds that about 5,00,000 Nagas live on the Indian side about 1,00,000 in Burmese territory.

Boundary lines more than their representation on maps, become effective in the context of prevailing political and security conditions in the regions through which they traverse.

5 Gordon P. Means, "Cease Fire Politics in Nagaland", Asian Survey. Oct. - Nov. 1971, p.1025 and Footnote.

6 Ulrich Schweinfurth, "The Problem of Nagaland" in Charles Fisher ed. Essays in Political Geography, (London, 1968) p.171.



India stuck to farthest British claims made by the Macmohan Line. Boundaries as symbols of rallying points for nationalistic sentiments have often proved important. The 'sacred soil' feature was put to good use in Arunachal Pradesh in 1962.

The concepts of core, periphery, ethnicity and territoriality have a close relationship. Core and periphery can be understood as social and geographical entities. Location at the centre is often associated with ethnicity. The location of the numerically and politically dominant groups in the state is related to topography, namely alluvial soil. The extensive uplands and watershed of core valleys make peripheries. The ethnic separation on a territorial basis within a new state poses problems with the idea of national integration, as national boundaries often have encapsulate groups with highly diverse sentiments. These sentiments roughly correspond with territorial differentiations giving nation building the spatial aspect. "Contemporary international and national requirements preclude the continuation of historically indeterminate borders and seem to call into question ..... amorphous ethnic and group alliances that were elements of traditional control over peripheral areas".<sup>10</sup> This is equally applicable to tribes along the Indo-Burmese border. New political leadership is faced with a dilemma as they cannot allow inhabitants of national territory to have extra-national or alien allegiances. The lack of correspondence between claimed boundaries and ethnic

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<sup>10</sup> David I. Steinberg, "Constitutional and Political Bases of the Minority Insurrections: Burma" in Lim Joo Jock and Vani S. ed. Armed Separation in South East Asia, (Singapore, 1984).

lends added purpost to the various ethnic components to scramble for political, social and economic rewards that the new state has to offer. In this scramble the ethnic groups in possession of the resource bases such as fertile soil supporting a dense population, producing agricultural surplus to maintain people engaged in other persuits as also having a favourable geographical terrain facilitating military defence and transportation routes<sup>12</sup> have a decided advantage and form the core areas. But the ensuing resistance by those incorporated<sup>13</sup> leads to perennial instability.<sup>14</sup>

The feature of differentiation between core and peripheral domain in the modern context is often occurrence of conflict between the two. The peripheral power domains would usually stretch from fringe of core domains boundary limits of the State. The characteristic level of incomplete control by the centre is very approximately inversely proportional to distance from the centre. Factors like modern communication, terrain, effect of local resistance, foreign intervention etc., may alter the situation. Though remote, these areas are potentially significant economically and geopolitically because of untapped mineral wealth, hydro-electric potential, forestry resources and chiefly because they are strategically important elements in relations between neighbouring states.

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12 Karl W. Deutsch "The Growth of Nations: Some Recurrent Patterns of Political and Social Integration", World Politics 1952-53, pp.168-95.

13 forming peripheral area inhabitants.

14 see Cynthia H. Enloe, Ethnic Conflict and Political Development, (Boston, 1973).

The British treated united Assam as a province of Bengal. The Bengalis were employed by the British in most administrative and special posts in Assam. The average Assamese who was placid and easy going, the consequences of fertile soil and a friendly climate and were not as such enterprising. The Bengalis generally more educated and claiming a superior language and culture looked down upon them. Bengali was the official language for many years in Assam. Many Bengalis from over-populated Bengal settled in Assam. Yet, despite many years of residence, they never got assimilated and remained exclusive. Bengali labour from Bangladesh took the unoccupied lands.

A situation arose when the Assamese were threatened with the prospect of being swamped by the non-Assamese migrants.<sup>19</sup> The Assam Agitation was basically an attempt to reassert their claims to the land by the Assamese led by the All Assam Students Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad. The underlying cause was no doubt economic like the Shivsena agitation in Maharashtra this may also be termed as a 'sons-of-the soil' movement. With the agitation to deport illegal immigrants, the Assamese are trying to protect their own culture and identity.

The agitations in Assam cannot be called 'secessionist' in nature. Yet, it was no doubt 'disintegrative'. The central power failed to have an effective control over the area and numerous people were killed and public assets of great value destroyed.

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19. Sanjib Baruah, Immigration, Ethnic conflict and Political Turmoil; Assam, 1979-1985. Asian Survey vol.26, no.11 November 1986, pp.1184-1206.

The Revolutionary Government of Manipur was formed by the educated, revolutionary youths with help from tribal leaders. Help was provided by Pakistan in fostering this Meitei nationalism.<sup>22</sup> After 1975 the extremist group with Maoist orientation came to the forefront and China became a source of help. N. Biseshwar was a Lhasa trained leader.<sup>23</sup> It is actively associated with the pro-Muivah and Isace Sawu gangs of Nagaland. The Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PRE PAK), and its armed wing, the Red Army are all involved in terrorist activities.

Though the general division in Manipur is between hills and plains, insurgency is an urban phenomenon with educated youth taking the lead. The factors or causes of this are political neglect, economic exploitation, unemployment etc. However Meitei nationalism has focused on cultural identity of the Meitei against influx of immigrants. The intense search for identity led to atomization of the social fabric of Manipur as the strongest motivating factor for nationalism.

The objective of the PLA was for building a body for liberating Manipur in collaboration with other revolutionary groups in the region and upper Burma.<sup>24</sup> It also sought foreign help.

Thus we see how once again language and culture have been used to foster disintegrative tendencies. Once again foreign aid has been sought and received.

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22. Gangumei Kabui, "Insurgency in Manipur valley" in B.L. Abbi (ed) Northeast Regions: Problems and Prospects of Development Chandigarh, 1984, pp.233-239.

23. Ibid

In Nagaland, the movement for secession was launched by Z.A. Phizo in 1956, and asked people to fight against Indian domination. He established a parallel underground government in Tuensang, called Naga People's Republic Federation, Later, the Hongkhim Government.<sup>25</sup> Phizo after a series of battles with Indian security forces fled to England.

In 1974 T.H. Muivah<sup>26</sup> and Isace Sawu<sup>27</sup> led gangs of Naga youth for guerilla training in Yunnan province in China.<sup>28</sup> An accord was signed on November 11, 1975. The movement took a different turn when S.S. Khaplang, a Hemi-Naga of Burmese Origin reiterated support to Muivah and Sawu groups. His base was northern Burma.

The pro-Beijing Muivah and Sawu groups resumed insurgency in Nagaland and Tirap division of Arunachal Pradesh after China trained rebels joined them in the jungles of Burma in 1978.<sup>29</sup> The National Socialist-Council of Nagaland was formed. Its aid was to form a state comprising all continuous Naga areas with Beijing ideology. They believe in armed struggle. Yet, the faction ridden and ethnically fragmented nature of Naga struggle has hindered its success. However, from the point of view of disintegrative tendencies this still remains a major problem. Guerilla training

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25. See for details B.R. Manekar, "On the Slippery Slope in Nagaland", Bombay, 1967 pp.38-45

26. Once General Secretary of Mags National Council.

27. Foreign Minister of Naga Federal Government.

28. Shows Chinese involvement.

29. See for details- B. Rahamatullah,<sup>n.21,</sup> p.215

is being imparted to Naga youth.<sup>30</sup> When all this will snowball to go out of control is of major concern.

The Mizo-National-Front led by Laldenga gave a call for a Sovereign Mizoram in 1965. Since then underground hostiles have stepped up military operations against Indian security force in the region. The MNF created tension between Mizos and non-Mizos and the Mizos started identifying themselves as non-Indians.

The MNF memoranda submitted to Lal Bahadur Shastri on October 30, 1965 read, "During the fifty years of close contact and association with India, the only aspiration and political cry is the creation of Mizoram, a free and sovereign state to govern herself, to work out her own destiny and to formulate her own foreign policy".<sup>31</sup>

The MNF headquarters are in the Arakan Hills across the Indo-Burma Border. This shows the tacit support of Burma. The Chittagong Hill tracts of Bangladesh provide an easy hideout for Mizo rebels, which cannot rule out Bangladesh's involvement in the affair.

Tripura remained free from insurgency and unrest till 1980, when there occurred a carnage between tribals and Bengalis on the grounds that the native tribes were being deprived of cultural and economic privileges by the settlers. The movement is

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30. The Times of India (New Delhi), 22 September, 1980.

31. See for details B.B. Goswami, "Mizo unrest: A study in politicization of culture" (Jaipur: 1979), pp.150-55. also B.K. Roy Burman, "Crisis of identity among Mizos", Mainstream, 14 July, 1984, pp.27-32.

basically anti-Bengali. The Amar Bangla organization is formed by Bengalis. Again the concepts of language and ethnic origin become the focal point around which the whole issue revolves. The Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (TUJS) leads the movement.<sup>32</sup>

More recent in the demand for Gorkhaland by the Nepalese population in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. The Gorkha National Liberation Front demanded a separate identity as they felt alienated from the Bengali speaking West-Bengal. The profits accruing from tourism and tea etc. in the hill areas went to West Bengal and this section felt exploited. As a protest they launched themselves on the path of violence. In the demand for Gorkhaland and inclusion of the Nepali language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, we do not know what role exactly was played by Nepal. once again, is encountered the foreign element, the Nepalese, who have links with a foreign country. It was not a secessionist movement, but no doubt disintegrative. The cause of language was once again upheld.

The Bodo stir in Assam like the one in Darjeeling is not a secessionist one. The main political demand of the Bodos is the creation of a separate fullfledged state of 'Bodoland' for the plains tribes of Assam. This movement led by All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) Upendranath Brahma group has taken a violent turn with strikes, arson and acts of terrorism. The Central Government realises that conceding to the Bodo demands would encourage other tribal communities to start similar agitations. The violence is

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32. See for details Malabika Das Gupta, "Tribal Unrest in Tripura- An alternative view". Economic and Political Weekly, vol.20, no.1, 5 January, 1985, pp.38-40.

chiefly directed against immigrant Muslim settlers in these areas. Other tribal groups in these areas do not desire to accept Bodo hegemony. In 1980, a memorandum had been submitted for a 'Mishing Bodoland'. The Mishings were unwilling towards this and thus 'Bodoland' came to the fore.

In the 92-point charter of demands which the ABSU submitted to the Assam Government in March 1987, as many as 27 demands relate to Bodo language. Thus we see how once again language has claimed a primary position in a disintegrative agitation. There are such demands an introduction of the Bodo language in the Roman script in West Bengal, and broadcasting of Bodo programmes over AIR Siliguri.

The Bodos are concentrated in the district of Goalpara, Lakhimpur, Kamrup and Darrang and chiefly Kokrajhar. Yet, even in these regions they do not form a majority.

In the Bodo ethnic revival like that of the Assam movement, land and language have once again proved the rallying points of the movement. This is what is exactly language, territoriality and the problem of integration.<sup>33</sup>

The unrest that had been let loose right from the 1960s is still continuing. The roles of language and territory are the factors effecting demands in all the cases. The inhabitants speaking the same or more or less similar language in a region

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33. For details on the Bodo Movement see. Udayon Mishra, "Bodo stir: Complex Issues, Unattainable Demands" - Economic and Political Weekly, vol.24, no.21, 27 May, 1989. pp.1146-49



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters attempt to establish the fact that the Himalayan periphery of India is the abode of people who belong to a different ethnic origin<sup>1</sup> than that of the majority of Indians.<sup>2</sup> By virtue of this, there is a difference in language, culture and in this case religion may be added to the list. The languages and dialects are derivations of Tibeto-Burman which is a branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. Alongwith the speakers of these languages their culture too traversed the Himalayan ranges and spread roots on Indian soil. This migration occurred so many years back, that today the languages and culture of these people have become an inalienable part of the culture of India. Most of the people practise Buddhism. Lamaism is important in Ladakh, along the Himachal border, in Sikkim and Bhutan. Lamaism at once establishes the link with Tibet. Bhots are actually Tibetans and their language Bhotia has much in common with Tibetan proper. Distinct though these people are, they are no doubt Indians. Yet, it is seen that many of them do not consider themselves as part of India and desire to secede from the country. This is especially true of the Nagas and Mizos. This brings to the fore, the problem of integration.

Since so many years of living together has not created a proper atmosphere for integration if not homogeneity, one must examine the factors that have stood in the way and how they may be removed. Since the topic deals with language, it may be worthwhile to examine how it has affected integration.

Ethnic origin is a feature of the distant past, but language is the everyday manifestation of a common bond between a group of

- 
1. Mongoloid
  2. Indo Aryan

development and judicious exploitation of resources is another important factor towards integration.

Funds for these regions is not always lacking. However, often there is a failure to link up resource mobilization and developmental investment policies with the structural specificities of the region. This is a major drawback. There are numerous fast flowing rivers. Yet very few hydro-electric projects have been developed.

As the states in this region, especially the northeast are very small, a strategy for inter-dependent regional development is to be adopted for optimum utilization of resources. There can be interstate and intercountry collaborative efforts in water and environmental management including flood control, soil conservation and power generation. Adoption of norms and criteria of development programmes to the management experiences, consumption habits and decision making process in the region.

Educated youth may be induced into the local level planning. Experienced and knowledgeable bureaucrats would go a long way in helping the coordinated implementation of developmental projects. Moreover it is necessary to understand and anticipate tension points in time which could otherwise lead to uncontrollable situations. Technical persons should be included in the planning process.

The press has an important role to play in the process of integration. Instead of indulging in sensationalism which is often done when it relates to this region it can be more forthright and treat the region a part of the country with its particular problems and characteristics which in any case should not hinder

effective integration. The mass media can play a vital role in projecting the brighter aspects of socio-cultural life of the region.

Like Voluntary organisations the Ramakrishna Mission and Vivekananda Kendra in Arunachal and the Gandhi Peace Foundation in Nagaland have rendered yeoman service to the region. Organisations like the National Cadet Corps and Bharat Scouts and Guides may give special attention to extending their programmes to the region. This will be very effective as at a very young age, children will be introduced to mainstream India and the feelings of difference will disappear.

As throughout the country, need based education has been neglected in this region. On one hand is encountered educated unemployed youth (who often take a leading role in the unrests) and on the other, the lack of skilled manpower. Thus, though the region especially the north-east has a higher literacy rate in comparison to the Indian average, effective education has been neglected. Corrective measures may be taken by opening more engineering and medical colleges as also other institutions imparting professional education.

A factor which may have greatly hindered the process of integration, is the presence of the army in the region. Instead of sealing the borders effectively the army at most times is involved in counter-insurgency operations and quelling violent unrests, or helping out during natural calamities. If the Civil government can effectively anticipate the problems in time and defuse the situation the army may be less handicapped in their

primary objective of border sealing. The presence of the army (which signifies force) among them causes emotional alienation.

Perhaps one of the major factors which has gone towards hindering integration of this region even at this late hour is the pronounced lack of proper communications. Facilities for the movement of men and goods from the region is sorrowfully inadequate. The northern sector remains cut off by snow during the winter months. Even when movement is possible due to favourable climatic conditions, there are not enough roads. The whole north-eastern region is linked by a (20 feet wide) narrow<sup>1</sup> corridor! In these circumstances friendly relations with Bangladesh are a must. At the same time, facilities for cheap and adequate air transport should be developed.

It has been seen that integration of this region remains somewhat dependent on the neighbouring countries. Tibet which is effectively today a part of China has many miles of common boundary with India. If Chinese strategic interests are hindered this whole region may be threatened. It has been earlier mentioned how China has possibly helped the discontented element in the region and indirectly helped spread trouble. Burma has proved a <sup>good hideout</sup> rebels as has Bangladesh for the Mizos. The Central Government should create an atmosphere where the neighbouring countries will not be tempted to take advantage of their social and cultural links with the rebels and cause disintegrative tendencies. For this a far-sighted foreign policy is required.

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1. Siliguri Corridor

Thus we see that in trying to effectively integrate this region with the rest of the country, careful and far-sighted planning is required as also anticipating situations which may in future lead to unrest. It should be a case of understanding before-hand a likely situation and taking steps in that direction.

The governmental policy towards this region has been one of trying to preserve the distinctive characteristics of the inhabitants. A fear of rebellion while trying to integrate these people into the mainstream has made the government wary. While trying to preserve culture is a worthwhile practice, yet trying to make it exclusive leads to problems. Thus, instead of highlighting socio-cultural differences, developmental projects must be started which make this region and the rest of the country mutually interdependent. Financial assistance should not be given as compensation, but for productive utilization.

As the question of foreign intervention in these regions looms large, an effective foreign policy is of prime importance.

Thus, it may be said that attention needs to be focussed on this region with a view to ironing out major social and economic differences so that linguistic and cultural identity do not hinder effective integration.

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