

PEOPLING

If one probes the process of peopling of the region, one can discern eleven major streams and waves of immigration which has built up the present population of north-east India. It is believed that first ever group of people to settle in this region in the pre-historic past is the Mon Khmer speaking Austro-Asiatcs, whose descendents are today identified as the Khasis and Jaintias. They were followed by the Tibeto-Burman language-speaking people of the Sino-Tibetan family of Mongoloids, who immigrated from the north and the east. Most of the tribes of the hills and plains of the region belong to this group. Thirdly, came the Indo-Aryans from the West. They brought with them Vedic culture, Hindu religion and a higher technology of sedentary agriculture. (It is these three groups of people who lived in the region till the beginning of the thirteenth century) From about 1205 A.D. another group of Indo-Aryans, professing Islam, started settling in this region. They came here as soldiers and craftsmen of the invading armies of the Sultans of Delhi and Nowabs of Bengal. Their immigration was in a trickle and occasional. They were followed by the immigration of the Tai-Aom people in 1228 under Seukapha, who established a kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley that lasted till

1826. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there came in 5 small groups of Tai people (Khamti, Khamyang, Aiton, Phake and Turung), who are now found to be living in Arunachal Pradesh and eastern Assam. The Ahoms as also these groups belong to Sino-Siamese branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of the Mongoloids. It is these six groups of people, mentioned above, who lived in north-east India when the Britishers annexed the region in the early nineteenth century. Along with the British there came in, after 1826 A.D., some Bengalis apart from a few who lived in the Barak valley some North-Indians, some Rajasthanis and some Nepalis, who were engaged in the jobs associated with administration, various crafts trade and commerce and law and order in the newly annexed territory. After the annexation of north-east India, the British tea companies started tea plantation in the plains of Assam and brought in, thousands of labourers from Chotanagpur Plateau. (These labourers belong mostly to the Mundari language-speaking group of the Austro-Asiatic ethnolinguistic family.) Their immigration started in the 1850's and continued upto 1940. Their descendents today represent most of the tea garden and ex-tea garden labourers of Assam. (Another significant stream of immigration took place in the nineteenth century with the coming in of many Kuki-Chin, Naga, and Kachin people from upper Myanmar across the international border to Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and the eastern districts of Arunachal Pradesh.) Then again, from about 1880's, there started a migration-stream of the landless Muslim peasants of the then East Bengal (now Bangladesh) who settled in the islands and the immediate flood-plains of the Brahmaputra from Dhubri district to as far east as Lakhimpur district. The last major wave of immigration came to north-east India following the partition of the country in 1947, when thousands of Hindu refugees, having left their hearth and home in East-Pakistan (now Bangladesh), entered and settled in this region. The present population of north-east India is essentially made up of the above eleven streams and waves of migration resulting in a mosaic of socio-cultural patterns. The emerging socio-cultural scene is such that the population of the region can be divided into 357 constitutional communities including 32

schedule castes and 182 schedule tribes. The following table gives a brief picture of the population of the region.

Table : 42

North East-India : Some Demographic Data, 2011

State	Area (km ²)	total Population	Density Persons km ²	Growth of Population 2001-11	Sc % of Total 2001	ST % of Total 2001
Arunachal	83,743	13,82,611	16.51	25.92	0.6	64.2
Assam	78,438	31169272	397.47	16.93	6.9	12.4
Manipur	22327	2721756	121.90	18.65	2.8	34.2
Meghalaya	22427	2964007	132.16	27.82	0.5	85.9
Mizoram	21081	1091014	51.75	22.78	Nil	94.5
Nagaland	16579	1980602	119.46	-0.47	Nil	89.1
Tripura	10486	3671032	340.35	14.75	17.4	31.1
N.E. India	255081	44980294	170.33	17.00	3.0	23.0
All India	3287263	1210193422	368.14	17.64	16.2	8.2

Source : Census of India, Final Population Total, 2011.