

# Geographical Personality of North-East Region of India

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**Abstract**—*The North Eastern Region is among one of the most strategic locations of India. This region is surrounded by hills and mountains from three sides i.e. east, north and south. This region consists of eight state, seven sisters (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Naga Land, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura), and Sikkim. These eight different administrative states are called as a region because these states presents homogeneous characteristics on several grounds that unites them in a regional unit as well as distinct ethnic and cultural identity separates this region from surrounding and that's why this region represents unique regional identity. Similar climatic conditions, rich biodiversity of flora and fauna, incredible tourist spots, low level of socio-economic development, less connectivity etc. are some of the common characteristics of these states that provide the homogenous identity to this region. The geographical personality of this region plays very important role in providing the uniqueness and homogeneous characteristics. The geographical personality of any region includes topography, climate, natural vegetation, soil, irrigation, drainage, biodiversity etc. Therefore, through present paper detailed geographical analysis of North East region of India is being presented.*

**Keywords:** *Geography, North Eastern Region, Tourism and Development.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The North-East India is one of the major identifiable territorial units of India. This region consists of eight state, seven sisters (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Naga Land, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura), and Sikkim. This region is very important not only because of its strategical location but also because of its cultural and historical uniqueness. The cultural and geographical diversity of this region is the most important resource. The topographical variations of this region are very high which shows huge growth potential for the development and also for tourism. This region is full of beautiful hills and Evergreen Mountain, perennial rivers, variety of soils, huge biodiversity of flora and

fauna, pleasant climate, wealthy cultural heritage, multiplicity of the ethnic groups, variety of languages, colourful festivals, diverse dance forms, religious practices, traditions, rituals, costumes, customs etc. All these factors together give a distinct shape to the identity of this region, which is unique and reflects the picture of unity in diversity. The geographical personality of any region includes topography, climate, natural vegetation, soil, irrigation, drainage, biodiversity and all above mentioned factor are somehow found to be linked geography of the region. Therefore, through present paper detailed geographical analysis of North East region of India is being presented.

## 2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The number of studies have been conducted in the North Eastern region of India exploring different aspects of the society i.e. the economy, biodiversity of the region, tourism, economic activities, the cultural aspects, peace and conflicts, strategically issues etc. But the North East region of India has been remained as one of the most neglected parts of the country as far as geographical analysis is concern. Therefore, this paper is devoted to the geographical examination of the North Eastern region of India.

## 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the geographical personality of North Eastern States of India that includes the location, topographical/ physical features, climatic condition, natural vegetation, drainage system, soil etc.

## 4. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

This research paper is purely based on the secondary source of information. The qualitative, descriptive and analytical methodology has been applied.

## 5. RELEVANCE

The present paper is very relevant in present context because it analyses the geographical personality of the region i.e. physical features, drainage systems and patterns, climate: temperature and rainfall pattern, humidity, weather conditions, seasons, environment, biodiversity i.e. flora and fauna of region. All these geographical conditions provides base for the development of any industry in any region. Therefore, to understand the nature of development in the North Eastern Region, it is essential to study the above geographical phenomena in detail.

## 6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research is purely based on literature available on the present theme. Data use in the research is collected from secondary sources.No primary survey is conducted for collecting empirical data.

## 7. ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS

Arunachal Pradesh is the north eastern part of India; it is bordered by Bhutan on the west, Myanmar on the east, China on the north, and the state of Assam on the south. This state covers 83743 sq. Km area and population is 13.83 lakh (Census of India, 2011). Itanagar is the capital city located in the south of the state.

The state of Assam is located in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas. In the Puranas, Assam was referred to as Kamrup- the land where Kamadeva, the God of Love, was reborn. This state is famous for its Bihu songs and dances, finest silk variety of the world known as paat and muga, state famous for tea plantation and shrine of kamakhya etc. The state of Assam is surrounded by Nagaland and Manipur on the East, by Meghalaya and Mizoram on the south, Bangladesh, Tripura, and West Bengal on the west, and Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the North. Presently it covers 78523 sq. Km area accounts 2.4 per cent of total geographical area of the country. The City of Dispur is the capital of the state.

Manipur is a land locked isolated, hilly state having unique geographical identity. This rectangular shaped state is located in the eastern part of North East region. It covers an area of 22327 sq. Km. It is drained by two main rivers: Imphal and Barak River and Loktak lake is the biggest fresh water lake of this whole region.



Meghalaya, literally it is the Abode of the Clouds, is the home state of the wettest place called Cherrapunjee and Mawsynram. This hilly state is also known as the "the Scotland of the East". Meghalay with geographical area of 22429 sq. Km., is the third largest state in the North East. The Khasis, Jaintias and Garos are the major ethnic groups are the original inhabitants of the state. Shillong is the beautiful capital city located at the height of 1496 metres above from sea level.

Mizoram, is again a hilly state, located in the south of this region. It shares its international boundaries with Myanmar in the south and east and with Bangladesh in the west. And Tripura surrounds it from west and Assam and Manipur surrounds from north. This state covers 21087 sq. Km. Area and population of the state is 10.91 lakh (Census of India, 2011). The Aizawl is the capital of the state. This is one of the most peaceful state among all states in this region.

Nagaland is surrounded by Myanmar and Arunachal Pradesh in the east, by Manipur in the south, and Assam in the north and west. The geographical area covered by this state is 16579 sq. Km. with huge geographical variations. Nagaland also known as "Land of festivals" for its celebration of festivals and dances goes throughout the year. Kohima is the capital of the state.

Sikkim is a small state surrounded by mountains. It is bounded by China (Tibet) in the north, Bengal in the south, Bhutan in the east and Darjeeling district of West Bengal to the south. Sikkim was originally known as 'Nye-mae-el' or 'heaven'. It is divided into four districts and covers total 7096 sq. Km. geographical area and Gangtok is the capital city.

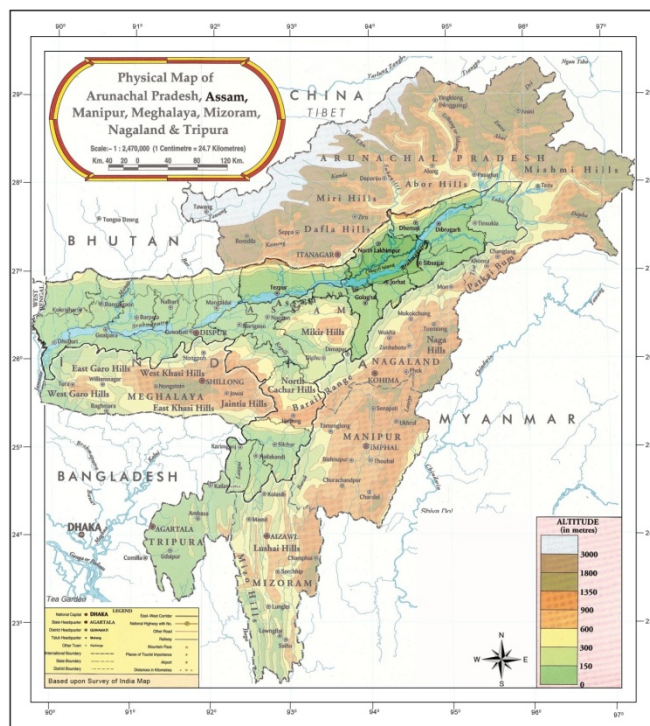
Tripura is located in the extreme south-west corner of this region. It is surrounded by Assam and Mizoram on the north-east and by Bangladesh in the north, west and south. The total geographical area under this state is 10486 sq. Km. and population is 36.74 lakh (Census of India, 2011).

## 8. LOCATION

The North-Eastern region of India is located in the south of the Himalayas between 22° north 29°5' north latitude and 89°46' east to 97°25' east longitude. The North Eastern region of India, occupy 262179 square kilometres area, consists of eight states Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. It accounts 7.9 per cent of total geographical area of the country. This region comprises the International boundary with Bhutan, China, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The Bhutan is located in between Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. This region shares international border with China in north and north-east. This region also shares its border with Bangladesh and Myanmar in the south and south-east. In the western side of the North East region, it is connected to Main land of India through narrow passage of land, which is sometime called as "Chicken's Neck" or Siliguri Neck.

## 9. PHYSIOGRAPHY

Geographically the North Eastern region of India can be divided into three divisions i.e. Shillong Plateau, North Eastern Hills and Brahmaputra valley. The general physiography of the North East region of India is mostly Hilly and therefore quite rugged and general elevation of the hills decreases from north to south. The Hills and ridges are situated on the periphery of the North-East region elevating from 500 metres to 3000 metres. And in the central part there is a plain of Brahmaputra River or also called as Assam Plain through which the main river of this region that is "Brahmaputra" flows from north east to south west direction. The Shillong Plateau is situated in the state of Meghalaya.



If talking about the regional divisions of India then it is clear that the Himalayan ranges from Tista to Brahmaputra River covering distance of 750 km are called as Assam Himalayas. This part is less elevated as compared to the Nepal Himalayas. The southern slopes of this Himalayas are very steep while the northern slopes are gentle. Under the classification of physiographic divisions of India, Prof. R. L. Singh's categorised this region as Eastern Himalaya (Darjeeling-Bhutan-Assam Himalaya and *Purvanchal*).

## 10. HILLS

Hills are the most prominent geographical feature of North Eastern region of India because around 70 per cent of total area of this region is covered by hills. Eastern ranges of Himalayan Mountains are spread in this region and collectively called as *Purvanchal* as they are located in the eastern part of India. The extension of these hills are from Arunachal Pradesh in the north to Mizoram in the south and forms India's border with Myanmar. The major hills are describe in detail in the proceeding paragraphs.

*Patkai Bum*: this hill is situated in the northern part of North-east region and forms the International Boundary between Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar. This range elevates from 2000 m to 3000 m and made up of strong sandstone. Saramati is the highest peak of

Patkai Bum with an elevation of 3826 m from mean sea level.

*Naga Hills:* towards the south of Patkai Bum. Patkai Bum and Naga hills both together form the watershed between India and Myanmar. *Kohima Hills:* the Kohima hills, represents very rough topography, are made up of sandstone and slate. Manipur Hills: this range runs south of Naga Hills. The elevation of Manipur hills is generally less than 2500 m. These hills also form the boundary between Manipur and Myanmar. Barail Range: This range separates Naga Hills from Manipur Hills and towards south it bends to south-west and then west into Jaintia, Khasi and Garo Hills.

*Mizo Hills:* Mizo Hills (earlier called as Lushai Hills) are situated to the south of Manipur Hills. The elevation of these hills is less than 1500 metres. The Peak Blue Mountain is the highest point situated in the south of Mizo hills with the height of 2157 metres.

### 11. VALLEY AND PLAINS

The Plain in the North East India are mainly made up of separate land masses. The Assam plains include plains of Barak and Brahmaputra valley. The Brahmaputra valley stretched around 750 kilometres from Lakhimpur in north to Dhubri district of Assam. The rich alluvial silt is deposited along the bank of Brahmaputra in the Assam called as Brahmaputra plain. The Barak plain is spread in the district of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi of south Assam. In the south there is Tripura Plain, which is an extension of Ganga-Brahmaputra plain. The small tract of plain is situated in Manipur called as Manipur Plain.

**Plateau:** The Plateau region consists of Shillong Plateau and Karbi Plateau. The Meghalaya or Shillong plateau comprises the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills. The Karbi Plateau comprises the Karbi and Rengma hills. The erosional work of headstreams of Kopili and Dhansiri River has separated the Karbi plateau from Meghalaya plateau. This plateau is an extension of the Deccan Plateau and formed by hard crystalline massif rocks. It is thought that the downwarp created the Malda-rangpur gap which was filled up by the alluvial deposits of the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. The plateau is high in the middle rises up to 1961 m and lowers toward west and east.

### 12. CLIMATE

The North East region of India is located between 22° north and 29.5° north and the tropic of Cancer passes

through Tripura and Mizoram (the southern part of the region). Therefore, primarily this region falls in tropical climate zone. But this region also falls in the zone of Monsoon of south and south-east Asia. So the climate of this region is Tropical Monsoon climate.

**Temperature:** In the Assam valley and plains the annual mean temperature is 23°C<sup>4</sup>. January is the coldest month in winter with recorded lowest temperature 5.5°C and summer is warm and moist in plain with recorded highest Temperature 37°C<sup>5</sup>.

**Rainfall:** This Hilly region receives the greatest rainfall in the country. The rainy season starts from March and it lasts till middle of October. The Mean Annual rainfall varies significantly in the region ranges from 3000 millimetres in Khasi and Jaintia hills to significantly low 1400 millimetres in the rain shadow area of Nagaon district of Assam. Cherrapunji in Meghalaya is one of the wettest place in the world recorded average annual rainfall for 40 years (1973-2012) was 11859.4 mm.

### 13. NATURAL VEGETATION

The humid climate of this region makes it rich in natural vegetation. The area under forest cover is found very high among all the states of this region. These forests are very useful and provide the soft wood for plywood and match manufacture, hard wood for construction, bamboo and grass for paper and pulp. The number of forest products are collected from these forests i.e. gum, lac, thatch, cane, medicine, vegetables, fruits, honey and many animals also. The demand of these products is huge not only in national markets but also in International markets.

### 14. DRAINAGE SYSTEM

The major part of North East region of India is drained by two major rivers one is Brahmaputra and second is Barak River, and fall into the Bay of Bengal. Brahmaputra Drainage Basin: The Brahmaputra is the principal river of this region drains around 70 per cent of total area of this region. The total drainage basin area of Brahmaputra is 928000 square km, out of which 165000 square km falls in North East region of India. The Tsangpo is the head stream of the Brahmaputra in Tibet and the three headstreams Dihang, Dibang and Lohit meet in Sadiya sub-division of Tinsukia district, from here this confluence river takes prominent form and called as Brahmaputra. After originating from Manasarowar lake it flows for 1700 km and enters Arunachal Pradesh near

Tuting. In the northern part it is known as Siang and in the south it is named as Dihang. It flows for 200 km in mountain region of Arunachal Pradesh and finally reaches Pasighat at the southern foothill of the Himalayas and turns towards south-east and enters in Assam. In Assam the Dihang meets with the Dibang and Lohit coming from the north east and east respectively and takes the name Brahmaputra and begins to flow towards the south west. In Assam around 109 tributaries meet with Brahmaputra. Along with its two dozen tributaries coming from both side north and south, the Brahmaputra River drains total 651334 square kilometres area out of which 178000 sq. Km. (around 27 per cent). The Barak Basin: The small eastern part of this region is drained by Chindwin River, a tributary of Irrawaddy river, falls into the Gulf of Martaban ( a part of Andaman Sea). The southern part of this region falls in Mizoram is drained by Kaladan River, which directly falls in the Bay of Bengal.

#### 15. SOIL:

The Alluvial soil is spread mainly in plains of Brahmaputra and Barak river valley in Assam, in the plains of Manipur and Tripura. The Red soil is found over the hills at lower altitudes. The laterite soil is found at medium altitudes over the hills and Mountain soil is found at higher altitude over the mountains.

#### 16. CONCLUSION

The above geographical analysis of the North East region of India reveals that this region is unique in many aspects i.e. geographical diversity in this region is very high. The diversity in the relief, terrain, topography, and other geomorphic feature makes this region rich in number of natural resources. These natural resources include the availability of huge amount of water resources, variety of forest resources, pleasant climate and pure and pollution free environment, availability of

amazing variety of bio-diversity of flora and fauna. All these natural resources reveal that this region has the huge potential to growth. But the demand of the hour is to provide the socially peaceful environment and cultural harmony to extract these resources and the benefits of these resources should be distributed among the inhabitants of this region only. It should be remembered while exploiting the natural resources, that the sensitive equilibrium that exists in the eco-system of this region should not be misbalanced or imbalanced.

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