



Religious Traditions and Cultural Confluence in India's North-East

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Abstract

India's North-East region is home to at least two hundred ethnic communities with a rich cultural heritage. The cultural landscape presents a picture of diverse Indo-Mongoloid groups of people known as Kiratas in Sanskrit literature, who are settled in different habitats and ecological settings. The region has been a 'melting pot' of multi-cultural groups from mainland India and South-East Asia through various periods of its history. Among the clan-based societies, the life-style of the people largely conform to belief in spirits and ancestors. Brahmanical ideology made a deep impact on the history and culture of the people, particularly in the valleys of Assam and Manipur. The process of acculturation of the tribal and non-tribal is also the result of interaction with the tenets of Islam, Buddhism and Christianity. This study seeks to explore the myriad religious traditions of North-East India and the resultant vibrant cultural confluence from a historical perspective. It will gain insights into the ways in which the people have accommodated the new belief systems within the larger framework of their traditional religion-cultural practices.

Keywords: - Acculturation, Culture, North-East India, Religious traditions

Introduction

Religion is present in every society, and since the beginning of time, scientists have been intrigued, perplexed, and perplexed by it as a part of human behavior. Scholars have struggled to define religion since its manifestations, and purposes in human civilizations are so diverse. Religion was viewed as a social institution or a specific socio-cultural system at times, and equated with the sacred at other periods, meaning anything that evoked fear, reverence, awe, or trust. Religare, which means "to bind together," and religere, which means "to rehearse, to execute painstakingly," are the Latin roots of the term "religion," which implies both ritual, and communal identity (Yinger, 1957). The "recognition on the part of man of some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny" is what The Oxford English Dictionary defines as religion (Habib, 2007: xi). In the Indian context, there is no specific Sanskrit term for religion; instead, dharma refers to established rule, usage, and proper behavior. Since all religions are ultimately immune to the scrutiny of reason, the term "religion" can refer to a variety of things, including rituals, belief systems, kinships, magical cults, shaman, and priestly activities, ceremonial calendars, or mental states known as "the religious experience." The relative significance of each of these varies depending on whether one approaches the topic from the viewpoint of sociology, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, history, etc.

The identification of religious constructions with religious experience itself is a prevalent misunderstanding in the study of religion. In religious affirmations, there are two distinct aspects: religious experience as projection, and religious experience as observed actuality. There are conclusions about the function of religion that are not immediately apparent when ceremonies, and rituals are observed. Religious understanding is said to depend on the identity of the performer or participants, their relationships, the nature of their activities, the values embodied in myths, and rites, and the occasions on which rites are performed, and myths are told. In general, there are two methods for studying religion (Abercrombe et al., 1988): First, in accordance with the classic sociologist Emile Durkheim's writings from the 20th century (Durkheim, 1965), religion is described in terms of its social roles: "religion is a system of beliefs, and rituals with reference to the sacred which binds people

together into social groups." He emphasizes that religion as an institution is connected to "sacred things," "beliefs," practices, and a social organization in order to comprehend the general structure, and operation of belief systems. Second, in the tradition of theologian P. Tillich (Tillich, 1956), and philosopher M. Weber (Weber, 1930), religion is defined as any collection of logical responses to existential questions, such as birth, illness, or death, that give the world purpose.

Cultural Landscape of North-East India

According to (Bhagabati, 2002), the cultural landscape of North-East India¹ depicts a variety of Indo-Mongoloid groups of people, referred to as Kiratas in Sanskrit literature, who are rooted in various biological settings, and habitats throughout the region. The North-East of India inexorably created a connection with South-East Asia, which is crucial to comprehending its cultural past. Religious traditions in the area show that "tribal" ² cults are common, coexisting with "non-tribal" institutionalized religions like Buddhism of both Hinayana, and Mahayana sects, Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. Additionally, there is a little Sikh community, mostly in Assam. Nine major tribal groups live in the plain districts of Assam, whereas fourteen live in the two hill districts (Sarmah Thakur, 2007: 36, 43, 49, 63). The ethnic groups of Assam are divided into two groups according to their geographic location, which differs from other Indian Union states: the tribes of the plains, and the tribes of the hill areas. The former maintained their isolation until the arrival of the British, whereas the latter had encountered other non-tribal people at various points in time.

The social structure of ethnic communities is based on clans, and lineages, which in turn serve as the foundation for the many phases of the evolution of religious, and philosophical ideas. Matrilineal in nature, the Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia of Meghalaya trace their ancestry, and inheritance through the female line, although the mother's brother holds the reins of power. In Assam, the Tiwa (previously known as the Lalungs) are undergoing a transition from matrilineal to patrilineal. With males deriving their ancestry from the father, and daughters from the mother, the Dimasas-Kacharis of Assam exhibit a distinctive kind of dual female, and male derivation. The remaining villages in the area are all patrilocal, and patrilineal. Although most communities observe monogamy, polygyny is also common. Polyandrous groupings are a few. In this context, the population can be broadly divided into three groups (Datta 1994: 12): societies that are more or less fully Sanskritized, tribal communities that are not influenced by institutionalized religions, and tribal communities that are at different stages of acculturation ³ as a result of contact with institutionalized religions.

In the distant past, "many of the ethnic groups referred to as non-tribal today had tribal elements," according to (S.K. Chatterjee, 1974). The Plains Tribes in Assam, specifically the Boro Kacharis of Kamrup, Goal Para, and Darrang districts, the Lalungs of Nagaon, the Sonowal Kacharis of Upper Assam, and the Barman's of Cachar district, have been going through the acculturation process. The Assamese-Hindu civilization has also become so similar to that of the Koch Rajbongshis, Rabhas, and Tiwas that it is difficult to identify them as "tribal." The Plains districts of Upper Assam are home to non-scheduled Buddhist ethnic groups including the Tai Khamtis, Tai Phake, and Tai Aiton, as well as hill tribes like the Karbis, Dimasas Rengma Nagas, and others who continue to practice their traditional religion, and lifestyle.

Belief Systems, and Worldview

The fundamental ideas that people have about the nature of the universe, and the role of man in it are expressed in some form by sacred stories or myths⁴ found in every known civilization. Even though the exact nature, and attributes of the ultimate creator may vary from one belief system to another, the world is created by the supreme creator, who is frequently a sky god who is all-powerful, and wise. According to (Gwinn, 1988: 368–370), such tales are prevalent in numerous cultures around the world, including those of Africa, the Ainu of Northern Japan, Central Australia, and many more. North-East Indian religious traditions are incredibly rich in cosmic myths, which have long played a major role in the people's beliefs, and customs. Some titles for the Supreme God include Pha-lu-ching (Tai-Ahom's), Ra-Gang (Kabuis), Bangla Raja (Dimasa), and Tataru Rabuga (Garros). Many tribes, including the Deuris, and Dimasas, in Arunachal Pradesh, and Assam, have the belief that the globe originated from a primordial ocean. Along with the cosmic egg, crab, and fish, the sun, and moon are also credited with creating the world. Pathian (creator), Puvana (father), Khuanu (mother), and Vanchungnula (daughter), Khuvang (guardian spirit), Vanhrika (god of science), and several Lasis (creator of wild animals) are the members of the Mizo pantheon. Cosmogonic stories are incredibly abundant in North-East Indian religious traditions, and they have long played a significant role in the people's beliefs, and customs. There are other titles for the Supreme God, including Ra-Gang (Kabuis), Pha-lu-ching (Tai-Ahom's), Bangla Raja (Dimasa), and Tataru Rabuga (Garros). Many tribes in Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, including the Deuris, and Dimasas, have the belief that the globe originated from a primordial ocean. The sun, moon, cosmic egg, crab, and fish are also credited with creating the world. The creator Pathian, the father Puvana, the mother Khuanu, and the daughter Vanchungnula, the guardian spirit Khuvang, the god of science Vanhrika, and other Lasis (creators of wild animals) make up the Mizo pantheon. The first Naga (Naka), Kachari (Ramsa), Khasi (Chomang), Assamese

(Aham), and of course a Karbi were all created from an egg left by a legendary bird (woplakpi), according to a Karbi Creation Myth (Datta, 1994: 16). Thus, the myth ties together the beginnings of different ethnic groups, reflecting their perception of ancient times, and the development of the relevant tribes. For the Taraon-Mishmis the first human boy got from the tusk of his elephant father, his wife and also many soldiers from whom came the Assamese, the Akas, the Daflas, the Miris and the Mikirs (Elwin, 1958: 133-134)

The Northeast's belief systems are centred on reverence for ancestors, fertility cult, and nature worship. On Me-dam-me-phi, the "Tai-Ahom's" worship their ancestor, and the thans are the places where they are appeased. Throughout the year, the Meiteis practice Apokpa Khurumba, or ancestor worship, at the family, sub-clan, and clan levels. Every Daikho division in the former Dimasa kingdom had an ancestral deity that lived there, and ought to be worshipped for the benefit of the local populace. For the Karbis the deity called Hemphu must be invoked at the start of all religious ceremonies. Certain deities, such as Manasa (the serpent goddess), Sitala (the pox goddess), Subhasani, and Dharma, are worshipped to heal illnesses, and promote well-being. Bak, Jakh, Chamon, Pret, and Bura-dangaria are among the ghosts, and spirits that are warded off by rites, and rituals. Two deities, Donyi (Sun), and Polo (Moon), are greatly revered among the Tani tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, which include the Adis, Nyishis, Apatanis, and a few others. This is primarily because of their fearsome characteristics. Despite its lack of organization, Donyi-Poloism is currently recognized as a potent cult, and presented as a formal religion with a distinct ideology, set of rites, etc. Although ancestor, and nature worship are common among the Nagas, they do not practice ceremonial worship of the gods.

Since every community has a unique understanding of the nature of the soul or souls, the doctrine of karma, the Supreme Deity, and various gods and spirits, including ancestor spirits, and village tutelary deities, the religious beliefs of tribal cults are complex, and should not be simply categorized as animism. Soul, according to the Mao Nagas, is "the minute replica of the individual." The Thadou Kukis, and many other Naga tribes also hold this view. The primary method of exorcism, and propitiation for the Paities, who believe in both good, and evil spirits, is blood sacrifice. Like the majority of tribes, the Koms, Thadous, and Vaipheis believe in ancestors who are both feared, and revered, as well as ghosts, and other natural forces. Known by a variety of names, including lyngdoh (Khasi), kamal (Garo), maiba and maibi (Meitei), loro and changmaji (Tiwa), deori and deodhani (Bodo), and deuri (Rabha), achai (Tripuri), sadawt, and bamlpu (Mizo), mun, and bonthing (Lepcha), and phedangma (Limbu), priests, and priestesses who perform rites, and rituals enjoy significant prestige, and privilege in traditional societies. They uphold the custom, and guarantee the preservation of the native culture by performing the ceremonies. The majority of tribal people do not worship the gods in idol form, and bamboo representations are frequently used in Tripuran ceremonies such as Garia-puja, Mimita, Ker-puja, and Nakccha Matak. Outside the house, the siju cactus symbolizes Bathou, a well-known Bodo household deity. The Tai-Ahoms are not a people who worship images either, with the exception of two religiously significant idols, Dhum, and Sheng, which were owned exclusively by the ruling family of the Ahom. Despite Manipur's designation as a state religion in the 18th century CE, the Meiteis, who dwell in the Manipur valley, are an ancestor worshipping society, and their traditional religion, Sanamahism, still has a particular place in the hearts of the people.

Social interactions: Rituals and Ritual Specialists

A key component of religious practices that can be seen with the naked eye are rituals, which are programmed behaviors made up of prescribed actions carried out on a regular basis, and/or repeatedly. The dualistic trust in good, and evil forces is infused into the customs, and beliefs of traditional communities. In order to promote the happiness, and serenity of the individual, and the community, the rites, and ceremonies are meant to protect against any misfortune, and ensure or enhance the cooperation of the ancestors. The numerous community festivals held throughout the year serve to bring the ancestors to life, and enhance familial bonds within the community. The ancestor cult simply serves to reinforce the strong group identities that exist in a tribal setting. Community rituals provide a means of remembering, and honoring the departed who have no surviving family members to whom the function can be performed, such as by providing food. Domestic rites serve the somewhat simple purpose of satisfying needs, while clans, and sub-clans engage in public rites for the community's overall security at a larger scale.

Due to the fact that most of the communities in the area depend on agriculture, harvest-related festivals, rites, and rituals are essential to their faith. Many Assamese communities have incorporated the Magh Bihu into their cultural life, making it a great example (Sharma, 1990: 305). Many agricultural rites are performed in connection with Mamita, Chenglai-puja, and Maikatal Chamami by the Tipras (Tripuris), Rheangs, and Hrangkhols, who are the majority of the Indo-Mongoloid family's Bodo group. Regular agricultural rites are carried out during particular seasons of the year, accompanied by food, local rice beer, songs, dance, and celebration (Derrett, 2003: 321). Festivals, ceremonies, and rituals associated to the harvest are central to the faith of the majority of the communities in the region since they rely on agriculture. An excellent example is the Magh Bihu, which has been a part of the cultural life of many Assamese communities (Sharma, 1990: 305). The Tipras

(Tripuris), Rheangs, and Hrangkhols, who make up the Indo-Mongoloid family's Bodo group, practice numerous agricultural rites in connection with Mamita, Chenglai-puja, and Maikatal Chamami. Seasonal celebrations, local rice beer, cuisine, dancing, music, and celebrations accompany the regular agricultural rites (Derrett, 2003: 321). Musicians have a special role as the keepers of their folk tradition. The Bihu dance of the Morans is accompanied by slow rhythmic drum beats, and slow melodious songs. Indigenous instruments such as the dhol, and pepa provide the musical accompaniment. The Angami tribes in Nagaland celebrate Sekrenyi festival with rituals of well-cleaning, cock sacrifice, feasting, and singing aimed at driving away all the ills, and misfortunes of the community. Inter-village visits are also exchanged. In Sikkim, the Chaam dance, and archery competitions form part of the merry-making festivities of the post-harvest Losoong festival. It is a time for exchange of gifts, and settlement of dispute.

Animal sacrifice is frequently a significant component of feasts, which are the outward expression of religion in all cultures. Cultural, and religious views have a significant impact on this entire process, which includes choosing edible food, preparing, cooking, and consuming. So, food can be considered a "key cultural expression", and one symbolic function of cultural identity. The Ao tribe of Nagaland observes the Sangpangtu rite, which involves lighting a large fire, and having all the men, and women sit around it wearing their finest clothing. They eat foods like hog, and beef as well as the best rice beer that the women have made. Clan members, and society at large are brought together, signifying community integration.

Religion and Acculturation

Many religious traditions, including Tantricism, Saktism, Saivism, Vaisnavism, and the Vajrayana variety of Buddhism, were prevalent in Assam during its early years (Laisram, 2019). Prior to Ahom, the predominant religion in Assam was Hinduism. Saivism became deeply ingrained in people's thoughts. The 'Kamarupa rulers' royal support of the deity may have contributed to Saivism's rise to popularity. According to the traditional story, the kings traced their ancestry to Visnu through Naraka, demonstrating the early relationship of Vaisnavism with Kamarupa (Sharma, 1978: 50; Neog, 1998: 3). The Kalika-Purana describes five Visnu-sacred locations in Kamarupa. The Yogini-Tantra, a 16th-century CE literature written in Kamarupa, lists nine pithas, or sacred areas, in Kamarupa, including a Visnupitha. In contrast to the mainstream religions of Saivism, and Vaisnavism, Brahma did not achieve the rank of a presiding deity. Surya, and Ganesa were especially well-liked by the sub-cults, and Kamarupa saw the respect accorded to other deities including Ganesa, Karttikeya, Indra, Agni, Kuvera, Manasa, Lakshmi, and Saraswati. In a temple, a multitude of deities may be worshipped rather than just one. The three Hindu⁵ cults of Vaisnavism, Saivism, and Saktism are represented by a picture collection of archaeological remnants located in Sri Suryapahar, and Cole Park in Tezpur, among other places. It should be mentioned that a large number of early Assamese rulers were followers of Siva, Devi, and Visnu and were also impacted by Tantric Buddhism.

With its well-known shrine in Kamakhya, Saktism holds a significant position in Assamese religious history. However, Saktism never gained the same prominence as Saivism or Vaisnavism, and this could be because the Assamese monarchs did not grant it any sponsorship. Only in the eighteenth century CE did King Rudra Singha adopt Saktism. But this is not to undermine the place of the Devi in the history of religion in Assam. In fact, the goddess pervaded every household, and its worship was in the main personal, and esoteric having also influenced both Saivism, and Vaisnavism alike. In particular, Buddhism, Saivism, and Saktism have been influenced by tantricism, and Kamakhya has emerged as a major hub for Tantric sacrifices, mysticism, and magic in Assam.

Sankaradeva (1449–1568) established the Bhakti tradition in Assam, North-East India, while the Meiteis in the Manipur valley made Vaisnavism the official religion in the 18th century CE. Despite the connections between the many Vaisnavite traditions in eastern India, certain of their characteristics differ from those of other schools of Vaisnavism that are more well-known throughout the country. Regarding the Madhura Bhakti, or the feminine element of devotion, Sankaradeva's Vaisnavism, known as Eka-sarana-naam dharma, was distinct from that of the yyyrest of the nation. Neither Visnu's Shakti (energy manifested in a female form) nor the Radha-Krishna sect are recognized. This is in stark contrast to neighboring Magdnpur, where Radha is given a prominent role, and is nearly always portmoyed with her lover, Krisna. With its patriarchal philosophy, the Brahmanical religion also altered gender relations, which affected women in ways specific to the sociocultural context in which they lived. Neo-Vaishnavism⁶, which was founded on caste concepts, and worship of the Devi (sakti), ran opposed to the essence of traditional Brahmanical faith in Assam. Eventually, the writers of the Vaisnava Bhakti cult the saints, and gurus whose songs, and biographies became scriptures for their followers took up the spiritual authority that had been largely lost by the brahmanas. In the namghars, or congregational halls, where the guru-asana, which houses the sacred writings, is the object of veneration, idol worship is abandoned.

There are different degrees of acculturation, and assimilation among the tribal people. The Meiteis in the Manipur valley, and the Sanskritized Assamese in the Brahmaputra valley have been the primary agents in the

synthesis process. In addition to Brahmanical deities of pan-Indian origin, a variety of non-Brahmanic gods, and goddesses are still revered. Pujas are performed by both tribal, and non-tribal people to satisfy the Bura Dangaria, Jal Devata, Jal Kunwari, Bira, and Pisa. In addition to practicing Saktism, the Pati Rabhas revere the Hindu pantheon's gods, including Brahma, Visnu, and Maheswara. Despite the influence of Vaisnavism on the people of Assam, and Manipur, Saktism specifically Saivism remains prevalent in many forms. Bathou-Brai, and Mouthansri (Bodos), Gira-Girasa (Deuris), Nongpokningthou-Panthoibi (Meiteis), Pha-Mahadeo, and his consort are some of the names that Siva-Parvati are known by. In Assam, there are numerous Bura-Buri shrines. With the exception of the Vaisnava converts, the Tiwas are Saktas, and worship a variety of Hindu deities, including Mahadeo, Ganesh, Lakhimi, Kalika, Kamakhya, and others, despite their practice of ancestor worship. The Dimasas identify as Hindus, despite the fact that their religion places a strong emphasis on their ancestral deities. The Agni (fire) ceremony is practiced by both Bathou, and Vedic Brahma Dharma adherents among the Bodos. Early on in its history, Brahmanical influence also affected the Tripuran royal dynasties. Even though the vast majority of people in Tripura are Hindu, the Nath cult, and Buddhism are still practiced there. At one point in their history, the Sakti worship had also affected the Jaintias of Meghalaya.

One of the main causes of the spread of the Brahmanical faith in Assam, Tripura, and Manipur has been the involvement of the royal families. The twentieth Ahom monarch to formally convert to Hinduism was King Jayadhwaj Singha. Despite their veneration of Phura-tara (the Bodhisattva, and his female counterpart Tara), the Ahom emperors made Lengdon, as Indra, their primary deity. After becoming a follower of Krishna in the 18th century CE, King Garibniwaz proclaimed Vaisnavism to be the official religion of Manipur. The Hindu, and tribal beliefs were blended in the Kamadeva-puja performed by the royal family of the former Tripura kingdom. A collection of myths has also emerged as a result of affiliation with the Hindu pantheon, namely with epic, and Puranic figures. Thus, the Kacharis trace their ancestry to Ghatotkacha, who was born of the coupling of Bhima, the second Pandava, and Hidamba, a local demon princess, the Rajbongshis attribute their current status, and habitat to Parashurama's persecution of the Kshatriyas. Ahom rulers link their ancestry to Indra, Meitei kings to Arjuna, and Koch kings to Siva. Assam, and Manipur's attempts at Sanskritization even went so far as to rename Kangleipak as Manipur, and Pragjyotisa as Kamarupa. A prime example of the blending of Brahmanical, and Sanamahism (the traditional religion of the Meitei) is Manipur. The festivals such as Holi (Yaosang), Ratha Yatra, Jhoolan Yatra, Janmashtami, Radhastami, and Durga Puja, and even Dhop, and Manoharsai singing of Bengali Kirtana, have been practically reborn in 'Manipuri Vaisnavism'.

Numerous variations of the Ramayana can be found throughout North-East India, and these rich folk versions highlight yet another aspect of the region's cultural exchange between tribal, and non-tribal people. Even after encountering Brahmanical doctrine, the tribes incorporated elements of Ramakatha into their folktales; some even came to associate with anti-heroes like Ravana. Sankaradeva translated the Uttara-kanda of the Ramayana into Assamese after Madhava Kandali introduced the Assamese translation of Valmiki's Ramayana to Assam. Raghunath Mahanta was well-known for his epic summation in prose. A complete edition of the Karbi Ramayana is also available. The Meiteis (Manipur), Khamptis (Arunachal Pradesh), and Mizos (Mizoram) all have different versions of the epic in North-East India. The epic has been recreated by the Bodo-Kacharis, the Dimasa-Kacharis, and the Lalungs, resulting in updated versions that incorporate regional customs. The Assamese Tai-Ramayana is a condensed form of Ramakein, or the Ramayana as it is known in Thailand. Assamese Mech tribal people attribute the Hindu-Muslim battle to their interpretation of the Ramakatha, which states that Lakshmana consumed beef, converted to Islam, and had two kids, Hasan and Hussian, who were slain by Luv, and Kush. Rama appears as a Bodhisattva to punish Ravana, according to the Tai Khamtis, a Buddhist tribe of the Mahayana monastic order who originated in Myanmar, and eventually settled in Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh. The Khasis, and Jaintias of Meghalaya love this Tarao-mishmi story about Arunachal Pradesh, which includes "echoes from the Ramayana." Rama is portrayed in this narrative as a tribal hero.

Christianity has made considerable impact on the Garos, Khasis, Nagas, and Mizos. The Kabuis were among the few tribes who did not embrace Christianity, and they reacted also to the coming of Brahmanical faith. Assam came in contact with the Muslims in the early part of the 13th century CE, and in the mid 17th century CE Azan Fakir on arrival to Assam is said to have commented on the "difficulty in stabilizing Islam which had already deviated from its main principles, and practices". The local Muslims, particularly of Upper Assam took part in the singing of kirtana songs, had their own gosains (spiritual preceptors), satras (Vaisnava monastery), and resident bhakats (sattra monks). There are many socio-cultural traditions that are similar between the Assamese Muslims, and Assamese Hindus viz; kinship terms, bianam (songs sung by Hindu females during marriage), post-mortuary rites etc. In Manipur, the Meitei-Pangans have also adopted local customs, and traditions. Several facets of culture can be examined from a dynamic perspective, including social control, economics, belief, morality, and knowledge systems, as well as forms of artistic, and creative expression (Malinowski, 1944: 150).

Conclusion

The northeastern part of India, which is home to at least two hundred ethnic communities with a diverse range of cultural traditions, is anthropologist's dream come true. People's lifestyles in clan-based civilizations were mostly focused on their belief in magic, spirits, and ancestor worship. But the culture of many groups in the area, especially in the Assamese, and Manipur valleys, was profoundly influenced by Brahmanical doctrine. Interaction with the Christian, Buddhist, and Islamic principles also led to the acculturation of both tribal, and non-tribal people. Another force for development was the impact of British colonial control, which introduced a market economy and modern education to the area. In addition to having an impact on local economics, globalization also causes social change, and threatens traditional cultures that are based on religious belief systems. This is directly related to an ethnic group's growing awareness, and their efforts to experience the "collective memory" (Halbwachs, 1992: 51) of their common history. Although there are undoubtedly significant differences in the area, several characteristics are shared by the groups that are currently undergoing various stages of cultural change because they are primarily tribal cultures. A thriving cultural convergence of numerous ethnic groupings that have interacted throughout history to shape the people's cultural identity is best represented by the northeast region of India.

Notes

1. The eight states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, and Sikkim make up North-East India. China, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal are the five neighboring countries that encircle the area. With the exception of Sikkim, all of the states have a similar past because the area was governed by the British from 1826 to 1891 CE.
2. A person who belongs to any community listed in the Scheduled Tribes of India list (Clause 1 of Articles 342) is referred to as a "tribe" in this context.
3. Acculturation is the process by which a dominant group systematically alters a society's culture. When members of each society come into direct touch with one another, cultures begin to blend.
4. Myths are traditional stories that portray events as the actions of gods, heroes, or superhuman creatures; they are a collection of folklore that embodies a group or tradition's moral compass, and worldview.
5. In this study, the term "Hindu" is used generally to describe individuals who adhere to the principles of the Brahmanical faith.
6. The four main components of Neo-Vaisnavism are the following: naam (pronouncing several names of Visnu), the brotherhood of bhakats (devotees), guru (the religious teacher, the satradhikar), and God.

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