

isolated over the hills and medium and large over the plains. There are, however, certain pockets in Nagaland and Mizoram where villages are large.

A study of the rural settlements of north-east India reveals that they vary in form and pattern from place to place. The salient factors influencing the rural settlement pattern of north-east India are the following : (i) Physiography of the village site, (ii) alignment of the river flowing near the village, (iii) alignment of the road or railway running near the village, (iv) density of population of the area in which the village is situated, (v) socio-cultural factors like caste, religion, etc., (vi) availability of perennial source of water in the hills, etc.

Based on the layout of the villages, the rural settlement pattern of the region can be divided into the following categories :

1 Linear Pattern : The pattern of settlement in which the homesteads are laid out one after another in one or two parallel rows is known as linear. Such a pattern may be effected by various physical and socio-economic factors. Of the physical factors that give rise to such a settlement, the juncture of hill and plain is one. In other words, villages located at the foothills tend to be linear, because the residential houses are built at the immediate end of the slope on the plain. So a string of houses is found to laid out in a linear fashion. Similarly, a strip of elongated higher ground amidst a lowlying plain may support a linear village. Such a pattern is found on the levees of medium-sized rivers. Sometimes again the villages by the side of large rivers may be linear, if the villagers use the rivers as their thoroughfare. The riverine Mishing villages of Majuli and Lkhimpur, Dhemaji and Sibsagar districts of Assam are, therefore, often of linear pattern. In the hills of north-east India the layout of a village on a narrow and elongated ridge also tends to be linear. The most important socio-economic factor that effects linear settlement is a road or a railway line. After a road has been constructed the villagers construct their houses by the side of the road for easy access and thus a linear settlement comes up. Such linear villages are very commonly seen in the plains of north-east India by the side of the roads, especially in the relatively less populated

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

North-east India is essentially a region of subsistence agriculture and hence its population is by and large rural. It is mentioned earlier that only 18.17 percent of the population of the region live in 405 small and medium-sized towns. The remaining 81.83 percent live in villages. The number of villages statewise (2011) are as follows : Arunachal- 55,89, Assam-26,395, Manipur-2,588, Meghalaya-6339, Mizoram-880, Nagaland, 1428 and Tripura-875. Because of physiographic reasons, most of the villages of north-east India are small. In fact, about $\frac{4}{5}$ of the total number of villages have a population less than 500 in each. It is found that the villages tend to be small and

districts of Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Tinsukia, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sonitpur.

2. Rectangular Pattern : In this type of settlement the homesteads of a village are so arranged that overall pattern of the village appears to be rectangular. Such settlements are seen in the thickly populated areas of the plains of the Brahmaputra, the Barak and Manipur Basin. It is found that a village with a rectangular pattern needs lesser amount of land than a linear pattern to support residential provision to equal number of people. That is why the plains of the region with dense population like Karimganj, Cachar, Nagaon, Nalbari and Dhubri of Assam, Imphal (East and West), Thoubal and Bishnupur districts of Manipur and West Tripura district of Tripura often have rectangular pattern of settlement. Apart from a high density of agricultural population, the presence of occasional high grounds in the flood-prone areas also effect rectangular settlement. Sometimes such a settlement may grow up at the crossroads with linear settlement growing up initially along the roads and the vacant plot behind the adjacent rows of houses having been occupied by other houses subsequently.

3. Isolated Pattern : In the hills and foothill plains of north-east India one comes across habitations with only one, two or a few homesteads. Such a settlement grows up near a perennial source of water surrounded by forested or desolate areas lacking means of transport and communications. The isolated settlement grows up in the hills, mountain slopes and foothills where land is given to shifting cultivation or where the land is infertile leading to limited agricultural production and lack of surplus generation. Such settlements are often devoid of civic amenities, roads and power connection. In the upper parts of the districts of Arunachal Pradesh, especially in Upper Subansiri, Upper Siang, Dibang Valley and the north-eastern part of Lohit district isolated settlements are common. Such settlements are also found in Chandel and Tamenglong district of Manipur, Chhimaipui district of Mizoram and North Cachar Hills district of Assam.

4. Amorphous Settlement : In the flood-plains and the riverine islands of the middle and lower Brahmaputra Valley, there are settlements of the immigrants from the then east Bengal (now Bangladesh). Their homesteads are often situated in low-lying areas amidst the crop fields. Sometimes their settlements are also found on the relatively higher river levees. When they settle in low-lying areas amidst crop-fields, one can find clusters, each of which is made of only a few houses surrounded by banana or such other common orchard trees. Each cluster is separated by a small or large crop field from another cluster. When their settlement is on a levee, it tends to be linear due to topographic reasons. However, their density of population is high and the linear and scattered settlements together present an amorphous pattern.

5. Estate Settlement : The tea gardens of Assam and Tripura which number more than 800, support more than half-a-million labourers and the members of supervisory and managerial staff. A standard tea garden contains a large tea processing plant, an office, a warehouse, a primary school, a dispensary, bungalows for the managerial staff, residential quarters for the supervisory and office staff and rows of huts for the labourers, all included in the spacious tea estate. Such a compact and regulated arrangement of homesteads has given rise to a pattern, which is different from others stated above. These may be called as the estate settlement or 'latifundium settlement'.

The above description of the rural settlement patterns of north-east India is based on the arrangement of homesteads in individual villages. But the settlement pattern can also be geographically considered on the basis of distribution of villages in relation to one another. In the plains of the lower Brahmaputra Valley and lower Barak Valley of Assam, Manipur Basin and West Tripura district, the villages are so close to one another that they seem to grow into a mass of villages joined together by roads and foot-paths. Such an overall pattern may be called as agglomerated or clustered pattern.

In the hills and low-lying areas of the upper Brahmaputra and upper Barak Valley one can find **scattered** pattern of settlement. In the low-lying flood-plain parts of the lower Brahmaputra Valley, the geographical pattern of settlement tends to be **amorphous**. In the hills again the villages seem to grow up around a nucleus like a service centre or an administrative centre giving rise to **nucleated pattern** of settlement, leaving the rest of the territory to extremely isolated and scattered pattern. In Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Manipur hills, the nucleated pattern is commonly traced.