The Sixth Schedule to the constitution of India applies to those Hill Areas of North East India which have been constituted into Autonomous districts or Autonomous Regions and endowed with District or Regional Councils as the case may be. For a comprehensive discussion on the working of the Sixth Schedule, it is necessary first of all to dig into its philosophical foundations, that is to say, the facts, circumstances, aims and objectives which accounted for its innovation by the Bardoloi Committee and its subsequent adoption by the Constituent Assembly. Secondly, the actual implementation of the Sixth Schedule beginning with the establishment of the District Councils, organisation of their legislative, executive and judicial wings, exercise of the powers and functions entrusted to them, the extent of the control to which they have been subjected to by the Central and State Governments, etc. should be dealt with in detail. Third, the achievements and failures of the District Councils in terms of the original intentions of the framers of the Constitution, and the aims and objectives set before them should be examined. Finally, it should be seen whether in the light of attainment of statehood by Meghalaya and the formation of Mizoram into a Union Territory, the Sixth Schedule continues to be relevant and necessary. The discussion in the present thesis flows from these major concerns. The methodology adopted is historical, analytical, and critical. In places, the behavioural and sociological approaches are also indicated.
The thesis is divided into 9 chapters. Chapter I gives a profile of North East India with particular emphasis on its physical and demographic characteristics, its rich potentialities for development and rather the poor state of its accomplishment.

Chapter II describes the story of the British occupation and annexation of North East India. The allegation that the British had nothing but imperialist ambitions in annexing North East India was examined and found to be not in agreement with the facts.

Chapter III traces the course of the Constitutional development of the Hill Areas from the beginnings of the British rule till its termination in 1947.

The appointment of the Bardoloi Sub-Committee, the long story of their negotiations with the representatives of the Hill tribes, their painstaking efforts to reconcile the divergent viewpoints presented by different Hill tribes and above all, their attempts to influence the irreconcilable and often intransigent sections of the Hill people to accept a political settlement within the framework of their links with the Governments of India and Assam are dealt with in Chapter IV. A discussion on their recommendations together with the changes and modifications brought on the same by the Drafting Committee and later the Constituent Assembly was also included with a view to presenting an analysis of the thought processes which went into the final shaping of the Sixth Schedule.

Chapter V makes a comparative analysis of elections in the various District Councils, their Presiding Officers and Executive...
Committees over a period of two decades since the first general election held in 1952.

Chapter VI highlights the powers and functions of the District Councils and deals with the question of their adequacy or otherwise.

A discussion on the political parties which played a prominent role in the constitutional development of the Autonomous Hill districts of North East India is made in chapter VII.

Chapter VIII deals with the external relations of the District Councils including the nature and implications of control exercised by the Parliament, judiciary, the state legislature and Executive.

Chapter IX makes a summary of the working of the District Councils and is of the nature of a running commentary stating the important facts, pointing out the defects, offering suggestions for improvement and arriving at certain broad conclusions.

The collection of material for the preparation of the present thesis began in January 1973. Original records were consulted at the Record Office, Shillong and offices of the District Councils. Secondary sources were consulted at the Gauhati University Library and the State and District Libraries, Gauhati. Cases pertaining to the District Councils were consulted at the High Court Library, Gauhati.

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