

Migration to Assam: Its magnitude and consequences

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Abstract: Migration is a process of permanent or semi permanent change in the usual residence of an individual or a group of people from one geographical area to another. Since the beginning of 20th century, migration has been an important factor in the population growth of Assam. Assam with its geographical accessibility and being home to abundant natural resources attracts migrants from all over India as well as world. In the present study, an attempt has been made to understand the nature and dimension of migration in Assam with respect to trend and pattern of migration and spatial distribution of migration. An attempt has also made to analyze the socio-economic consequences of migration.

Keywords: migration, migrants, population, distribution.

1. Introduction:

Assam with its beautiful flora and fauna is situated between 24°31' N and 28° N latitude and 89°51' E and 96° 11' E longitude. It covers an area of about 78,438 square kilometer and provides home to a population of 26.64 million (Census 2001). The density of population has gone from 286 per square kilometer in 1991 to 340 per square kilometer in 2001. This indicates heavy pressure of population on land. Apart from the local people, Assam is also home to a large number of migrants from India as well as other countries around the globe. Total number of migrants in Assam was 5.41 million in 1991 consisting 24.1% of total population (Census of India, 1991). In 2001, this figure stood at 6.79 million consisting 25.8% of total population. The increased migrants include intra-district, inter-district, inter-state and inter nation migrants. The large volume of influx of migrants have modified the population structure of Assam in respect of ethno-religious composition, literacy and education pattern, occupational structure, age-sex composition, economy, work force etc. People, who are unable to fulfill their needs within their geographical milieu and find it rather convenient to emigrate than to fight for a change, basically go for migration. Based on the above background an attempt has been made to understand the nature and pattern of migration in Assam and also to analyze the various socio-economic consequences of migration.

2. Objectives:

The main objectives of the study are-

- To understand the nature and dimension of migration in Assam with respect to trend and pattern of migration and spatial distribution of migration.
- To analyze the various socio-economic consequences of migration.

3. Methodology:

The study is entirely based on secondary data. The data are collected from Census of India and other government publications, covering the period 1991-2001, including various books, survey reports, census reports, newspapers etc. The data so collected have been processed and analyzed with the help of meaningful statistical techniques like simple ratios and percentages.

4. 1. Analysis and Discussion:

Migration is an important and crucial component of population change. The population of Assam had increased considerably in 1991 and 2001. The increase in population of Assam during the inter-censal period stood at 18.92% whereas the increase in migrant population during the same period was 25.61%. Migration into Assam is not a recent phenomenon; it is an age old process since the British colonial period. However, it has occurred on a relatively larger scale in more recent decades particularly after 1971. The following table shows the decadal percentage variation in population of Assam, during 1951-2011.

Table 4.1.1: Decadal percentage variation in population of Assam

Districts	1951-61	1961-1971	1971-91	1991-2001	2001-2011
Dhuburi	43.74	43.26	45.65	22.97	22.40
Bongaigaon	36.27	35.81	38.77	22.09	19.58
Kokrajhar	55.41	54.89	61.96	40.49	5.19
Chirang	40.32	57.37	103.33	-0.08	11.26
Baksa	60.52	66.67	73.65	12.51	11.17
Goalpara	37.10	45.88	54.12	23.03	22.74
Barpeta	33.39	33.91	40.97	19.62	21.40
Nalbari	33.56	31.91	75.78	14.21	11.74
Kamrup(M)	13.30	19.99	20.77	45.91	18.95
Kamrup	45.12	44.48	81.53	14.97	15.67
Darrng	40.94	36.05	89.77	22.18	19.51
Udalguri	54.04	37.85	43.03	10.02	9.76
Sonitpur	41.99	33.17	68.08	18.11	15.67
Lakhimpur	50.46	43.39	56.29	18.30	17.06
Dhemaji	75.21	103.42	107.50	19.45	20.30
Morigaon	37.89	37.51	50.90	21.35	23.39
Nagaon	35.91	38.99	51.26	22.26	22.09
Golaghat	26.04	30.85	58.12	14.27	11.88
Jorhat	24.17	17.47	33.10	14.69	9.21
Sivsagar	23.36	19.47	38.76	15.83	9.37
Dibrugarh	30.64	22.93	37.78	13.68	12.04
Tinsukia	35.92	31.02	47.03	19.51	14.51
Karbi Anlong	79.21	68.28	74.72	22.72	18.39
Dima Hasao	36.95	40.00	98.30	24.72	13.53
Karimganj	22.96	25.13	42.08	21.87	20.74
Hailakandi	27.23	23.61	45.94	20.89	21.44
Cachar	22.60	23.96	47.59	18.89	20.17
Assam	34.98	34.95	53.26	18.92	16.93

Source: Economic Survey, 2012-13

From the above table it can be summarized that the overall percentage of decadal variation in Assam shows an increase of 16.99 % during 1901-11 which further increase to 19.93 % during 1941-51. Further, the decadal variation in Assam shows an increase of 34.98 %, 34.95%, 53.26%, 18.92%, and 17.07% during 1951-61, 1961-71, 1971-91, 1991-2001, and 2001-2011 respectively.

Spatial Variation of migrants from abroad and other states of India-

The volumes of migrants are unevenly distributed in different parts of Assam as per the prevailing factor of migration. The distribution of migrants are not homogenous throughout the state rather it is mainly concentrated in the plain regions than in the hilly regions. The following table shows the spatial distribution of migrants from outside India during 1991-2001.

Table 4.1.2: Spatial distribution of migrants from outside India, 1991-2001

Sl. No	Districts	1991				2001			
		Total migrants	% of total migrant	% of male migrants	% of female migrants	Total migrants	% of total migrants	% of male migrants	% of female migrants
1	Dhubri	14,292	1.07	1.08	1.06	7,687	0.47	0.47	0.47
2	Kokrajhar	13,314	1.66	1.80	1.51	8,666	0.93	0.97	0.89
3	Bongaigaon	22,765	2.82	3.01	2.61	12,653	1.40	1.46	1.32

4	Goalpara	12,311	1.84	1.96	1.72	7,860	0.95	0.95	0.96
5	Barpeta	21,450	1.55	1.55	1.54	8,991	0.55	0.55	0.54
6	Nalbari	9,860	0.97	1.02	0.91	5,577	0.49	0.51	0.46
7	Kamrup	27,852	1.39	1.45	1.33	16,169	0.64	0.68	0.60
8	Darrang	19,927	1.53	1.65	1.40	9,766	0.65	0.67	0.62
9	Sonitpur	18,120	1.27	1.35	1.19	10,628	0.63	0.66	0.60
10	Lakhimpur	6,070	0.81	0.88	0.73	2,968	0.33	0.36	0.30
11	Dhemaji	7,133	1.49	1.66	1.30	3,044	0.53	0.58	0.48
12	Morigaon	7,780	1.22	1.31	1.11	4,009	0.52	0.55	0.48
13	Nagaon	48,481	2.56	2.72	2.39	26,131	1.13	1.17	1.09
14	Golaghat	2,803	0.34	0.37	0.31	1,726	0.18	0.19	0.17
15	Jorhat	2,392	0.27	0.32	0.23	1,414	0.14	0.16	0.12
16	Sibsagar	1,960	0.21	0.25	0.18	1,171	0.11	0.12	0.10
17	Dibrugarh	6,790	0.65	0.71	0.58	3,522	0.30	0.33	0.26
18	Tinsukia	11,880	1.23	1.34	1.11	7,934	0.69	0.73	0.64
19	Karbi Anglong	10,400	1.57	1.73	1.39	6,629	0.82	0.92	0.70
20	N.C.Hills	2,010	1.33	1.70	0.90	1,198	0.64	0.78	0.49
21	Karimganj	29,428	3.56	3.59	3.53	16,154	1.61	1.64	1.58
22	Hailakandi	6,326	1.41	1.40	1.41	3,187	0.59	0.56	0.61
23	Cachar	36,211	2.98	2.95	3.01	23,474	1.63	1.68	1.57
	Assam	3,39,555	1.51	1.59	1.43	190,558	0.71	0.74	0.68

Source: Calculated from Census of India, Migration tables by place of birth 1991-2001

In respect of immigration from other states of India is found to be highest in the district of Tinsukia(5.45 per cent and 4.43 per cent) for both the considered year while it is followed by the districts like Karbi Anglong(4.74 per cent and 3.53 per cent), Kamrup (4.68 per cent and 4.30 per cent), N.C.Hills (4.04 per cent and 2.92 per cent) and Dibrugarh (3.93 per cent and 2.92 per cent) etc.

Table 4.1.3: Spatial distribution of migrants from other states of India, 1991- 2001

Sl. No.	Districts	1991				2001			
		Total migrants	% of total migrants	% of male migrants	% of female migrants	Total migrants	% of total migrants	% of male migrants	% of female migrants
1	Dhubri	1,634,589	1.83	0.68	2.04	21,993	1.34	0.68	2.04
2	Kokrajhar	930,404	2.44	1.49	2.40	17,971	1.93	1.49	2.40

3	Bongaigaon	906,315	2.66	2.15	2.35	20,369	2.25	2.15	2.35
4	Goalpara	822,306	1.26	1.12	1.03	8,811	1.07	1.11	1.03
5	Barpeta	1,642,420	0.63	0.39	0.40	6,512	0.40	0.39	0.40
6	Nalbari	1,138,184	1.01	0.62	0.50	6,425	0.56	0.62	0.50
7	Kamrup	2,515,030	4.68	4.90	3.64	108,217	4.30	4.90	3.64
8	Darrang	1,503,943	2.00	1.32	1.10	18,243	1.21	1.32	1.10
9	Sonitpur	1,677,874	2.87	2.23	1.92	34,877	2.08	2.23	1.92
10	Lakhimpur	889,325	1.51	1.82	1.07	12,943	1.45	1.82	1.07
11	Dhemaji	569,468	2.15	1.99	1.31	9,454	1.66	1.99	1.31
12	Morigaon	775,874	0.93	0.63	0.48	4,350	0.56	0.63	0.48
13	Nagaon	2,315,387	1.60	1.22	1.00	25,791	1.11	1.22	1.00
14	Golaghat	945,781	2.24	2.42	1.68	19,540	2.07	2.42	1.68
15	Jorhat	1,009,197	2.12	2.80	1.82	23,546	2.33	2.80	1.82
16	Sibsagar	1,052,802	1.88	2.54	1.35	20,737	1.97	2.54	1.35
17	Dibrugarh	1,172,056	3.93	3.30	2.51	34,225	2.92	3.30	2.51
18	Tinsukia	1,150,146	5.45	5.18	3.61	50,983	4.43	5.18	3.61
19	Karbi Anglong	812,320	4.74	4.04	2.99	28,713	3.53	4.04	2.99
20	N.C.Hills	186,189	4.04	3.53	2.22	5,434	2.92	3.53	2.22
21	Karimganj	1,003,678	1.77	0.89	1.61	12,462	1.24	0.89	1.61
22	Hailakandi	542,978	1.37	0.92	0.99	5,186	0.95	0.92	0.99
23	Cachar	1,442,141	1.59	1.32	1.33	19,142	1.33	1.32	1.33
	Assam	26,638,407	2.39	2.10	1.76	515,924	1.94	2.10	1.76

Source: Calculated from Census of India, Migration tables by place of birth 1991- 2001

4.2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION

Crisis of Identity: The influx of immigrants created a crisis of identity among the indigenous Assamese people. Their cultural survival will be in jeopardy, their political control will be weakened and their employment opportunities will be undermined by such illegal migration.

Environmental degradation: Large areas of forest land were encroached upon by the immigrants for settlement and cultivation. The state experienced declining percent of land area under forest from 39% in 1951-52 to about 30% now.

Difficult to identify the illegal migrants: Due to the similar language spoken by illegal migrants from Bangladesh and the indigenous Bengali speaking Muslim of Assam, it becomes difficult to identify and deport the illegal migration from Assam soil.

Increase financial burden: Immigration has increased pressure on the part of state government, as the government has to increase the expenditure on education and health facilities to the immigrants.

Displacing native workers: There is a fear particularly during a recession that immigrants take jobs which would otherwise be taken by local people; in particular place and circumstances there can be competition and conflict.

Decreases wage level with the increase of population: Illegal immigrants in every year have been adding a good number of people in Assam. It is one of the main reasons of population explosion. Due to this there is a possibility of decreasing wage level.

5. Conclusion: The foregoing discussion reveals the clear exposition of migration pattern in Assam. It is also revealed that the decadal growth of population in Assam has increase at faster rate as compare with India's population growth rate. The prevalence of international migration from neighbouring countries leads to the unusual population growth in the boarder districts of Assam, contributing share in total population growth of the region. It is thus essential on the part of the authorities concerned to take up appropriate measures to stop the influx of huge infiltration in the region and to short out the boarder issue with the neighbouring countries.

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