

Immigration in Assam and Its Impact on Population Growth

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Abstract

North East India is the easternmost region of India representing both geographic and political division of the country. It comprises of eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Assam and Sikkim. Among these eight states excluding Sikkim the other seven are called as seven sisters and Sikkim the only brother. The Present Paper is an attempt to throw light on the issue of immigration which is increasing at an alarming rate in Assam. Immigration is a process of coming to live in a country permanently which is not one's own. The paper examines the various aspects of illegal migration in Assam. Here, in this paper first attempt has been made to define an illegal immigrant in Assam by historically and politically set parameters over a long period of time. This paper also tries to find out the economic reasons behind immigration. The Present Paper shows the trends in population growth and the high population growth that the state has witnessed in the recent years. Immigration can be stated as one among the many causes that are responsible for the population rise. The population rise has led to various criticism of affecting the business positively as well as negatively. The paper also states the reasons that attract or are responsible for such movements and the ill effects of such moves in the Centre. A scenario of illegal immigration is what the authors wants to show through this paper. Since population is reaching heights so the authors hereby open new ideas or doors so that future research is welcomed and remedial measures are suggested for such growth.

Keywords— Immigration, Population, Entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

North Eastern India consists of eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. These states are together called as land of Seven Sisters and one brother. North East Region is a land of natural beauty and scenic views. North Eastern part of India is bordered by Bhutan in the north, Nagaland and Manipur in the East, Meghalaya Tripura Bangladesh and Mizoram in the South and West Bengal via Siliguri Corridor in the West respectively. Here, in this paper attempt has been made to study the impacts of immigration in the state of Assam and the probable attractions towards such immigration. Assam has been experiencing a population of 31,169,272 according to 2011

census. The process of such increase in population is not a new one. During the twentieth century, Assam has experienced one of the highest population growth rates among the Indian states. Between 1901 and 2001 the population of India grew by 331 percent while the population of Assam grew by 710 percent. One of the important factors that can be attributed to such population increase was migration including both immigration and in migration to Assam from various parts of the states and countries due to various social, political and economic issues. The migration of people to Assam from various parts of the country dates back to the colonial period when the British imported workers from Central and Eastern central parts of India to work in tea

plantations during the nineteenth century and these migrated workers contributed significantly to the rise of tea industry in Assam. The industry grew up covering areas of Lakhimpur, Darrang, Cachar districts of Assam but at the cost of increase in the number of migrants coming to work from various parts mostly as labourers. The basic reason for this influx was a thin population of young energetic local Assamese people to work as labourers at that particular period of time and also the difficulty to work under the British rulers because of their misbehaviour towards the labour class. In the later parts the industry had to import labourers from places where population pressure was heavy and work opportunities was scarce.

In the beginning of the 20th century the British Rulers imported people to run their administration smoothly. They brought trained people in various professions and these trained people belonged to the Bengali Hindu Community. These people were migrated for the reason that the Assamese population at that time had no proper training to run the administration in a smooth manner. So, these led to permanent residence of some Bengalis in the Brahmaputra Valley. Moreover, due to availability of land or due to pressure of land there was an influx of both Hindu and Muslims from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). This migration was said to be forced by the push factors which forced the people to move to Assam. Even after independence the partition of the country compelled many people to move to various neighbouring states. But this were under a legal process but there were group of people who entered Assam illegally and this creates a problem in many spheres

So, it is clear that the process of movement of people to Assam was a not a new one. From the distant past there has movement of people to Assam on various grounds. Other migrants namely the Nepali community who migrated to Assam from the sides of Darjeeling migrated with a hope of earning a sustainable livelihood in Assam. They were mainly engaged in dairy farming and livestock and inhabited riverine and hill slopes and in pace became to live permanently because no indigenous people

claimed it. So, there has movement from past. Now this movement can have both positive and negative impacts. For

e.g. when a person with skills and knowledge comes to Assam that certainly it is going to create some positive influences on the people living in the region. But with such problems of high unemployment, population pressure if one comes here in search of work or habitat then it would hinder the employment opportunities of the natives living here. So, a movement can be said a legal and illegal. A legal is one which is reported and illegal is one which may not be reported or registered. Now our task is defined who is an illegal immigrant? Thus, Section 2(1) (b) of the citizenship Act of 1955 defines an illegal immigrant as

- (a) A Person without valid passport or travel documents
- (b) A Person with valid passport or documents but stays at a particular place beyond the permitted time.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Guha (1977 and 1991) focuses on migration of tea garden workers from central and east central parts of India during the British Period. He delves into the creation of a modern sector that was mainly based on tea plantation industry with investment from Britain and import of indentured labourers into a labour scarce economy.

Chandrasekhar and Sharma, (2014) in their paper throws light on the issue of migration for education and employment. According to him, the movement of the age group seeking employment migrates to better states like Delhi, Bangalore etc. for better job opportunities and the other states that are not that developed lacks behind. They in their joint paper discusses about the brain drain.

Hiranya K. Nath & Suresh Kr. Nath (2006) in their joint paper discusses about the aspects of migration to Assam. They in their paper tried to discuss about the aspect of immigration particularly illegal immigration from specifically Bangladesh to Assam. They narrates the possible causes that led the people of Bangladesh to move to Assam. This Paper

reveals that the economic motives and particularly the land pressure in Bangladesh forces these people to migrate. Bangladesh being poor in natural resources forces people to move to work and earn a livelihood here. The paper also throws light on the ill effects of such movement in Assam in all sides creating population pressure and detrimental environmental effects.

Dibya Jyoti Kalita (2015) in his paper discusses about the third component of population change i.e. Migration. He in his paper discusses about the decadal growth rates and the increase in the population as a result of both interstate and international migration. Here attempt has been made to study which religion among all others migrates at a faster pace than others and also the socio economic, ethnic composition of the state due to these influxes of the people.

A study done by Olney (2013) suggests that an incoming of less-skilled immigrants often lead to an increase in the entrepreneurial ventures mostly in the industries that needs less skilled workers. However, he was unable to find out whether that affects existing employees or not.

OBJECTIVE

The first and very primary objective of this paper is to see whether immigration has resulted in any population increase in Assam.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

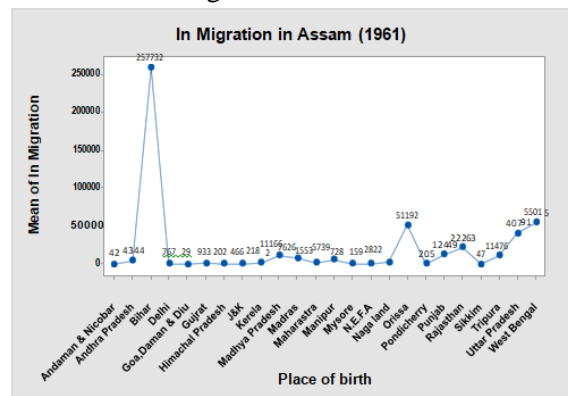
The study is based entirely on Secondary Data. Secondary data is collected from various census reports, statistical handbooks, published scholarly works and various research articles. Here various census reports have been plotted in Excel Data Sheet and with the help of lines and bar diagrams the trend of in migration and Immigration has been shown.

ANALYSIS

Since, the study is based on the immigration status from various parts of the country to Assam so census data for immigration is analysed. Immigration is nothing but movement of persons for any reasons be it personal or professional. Census of India is solely responsible for

computation of this surveys. But the illegal movement which takes place from various states to countries or regions cannot be rightly be said. So, an attempt is taken to see the status of movement from various parts to the region popularly known as immigration and its trend with the help of migration data collected from the Census.

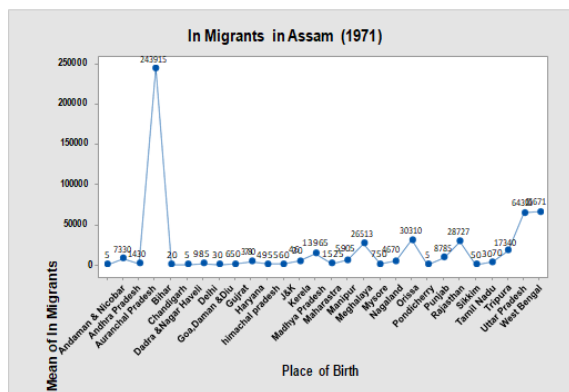
Here various data sheets containing in migration of the various states to Assam taken from the Census of India are plotted and accordingly a trend line has been showing the concentration of the various in migrants in Assam.



Source: Census of India 1961, Migration Table

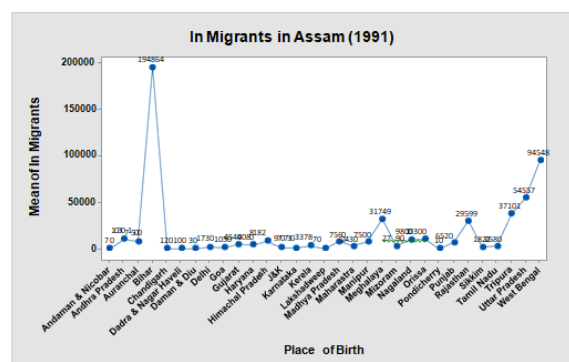
The above figure is the pictorial representation of the data plotted taken from Census of India surveys. The mean values of migration are taken on Y-axis and the place of birth is taken on X-axis respectively. The graph reveals the various concentration of people to Assam from different regions. When we clearly see the graph, we can find the highest concentration

of people from Bihar coming to Assam. A total of nearly 257772 people migrated from Bihar to Assam in the year 1961. The next is followed by West Bengal with a number of 55015. Orissa and Uttar Pradesh comes after west Bengal and Bihar. The migrants from West Bengal showed an increasing trend and the number increased from 1961 to 1991.



Source: Census of India 1971, Migration Table.

The above graph showed that in 1971 also the highest concentration of people was from Bihar like that in 1961. When compared to 1961 the proportion of people or in migrants from Bihar showed a declining trend compared to 1971. Bihar was again followed by West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. When we compare both the years 1961 and 1971 then immigration was from the same countries in both the years.

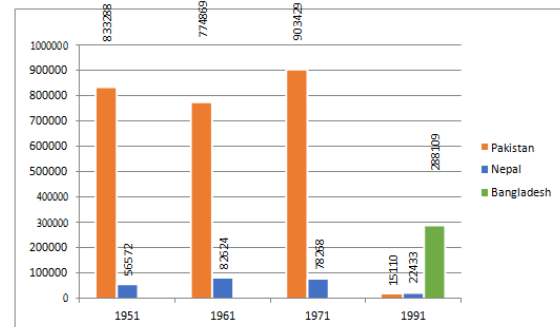


Source: Census of India, 1991 Migration Table

In 1991 also Bihar holds the first in the movement of in migration followed by West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Tripura. So, here we can conclude that over the years there was massive movement of people from Bihar, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh and Tripura in all the years taken for the study. This in migration may result in increase in the population which would have multiple effects on the state. Increase in population has both positive and negative effects. Population pressure can reduce employment opportunities, create environmental impacts and change the overall dynamics. However, if the increase in the population due to in migration is an educated and responsible

population then it acts as a catalyst in the development process. Overall, an increase is what can be seen from the discussed analysis.

Immigration from the countries



Source: Census of India

The bar diagram reflects the total number of immigrants from various parts of the country. For our analysis we have taken data for four consecutive years i.e., 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1991 respectively. The years are plotted in the horizontal axis and the number of migrants on the vertical axis with due consideration to make our analysis simple. Initially in our analysis only Pakistan and Nepal have been taken prior to the available data. Since data for only this particular was available. As already stated in the introduction part that the concept of immigration is not a new one it has its origin years back when several push and pull factors were responsible for people to migrate in search of new avenues. So, these data depicts that the number of people migrating from Pakistan which covers East Pakistan now popularly known as Bangladesh is showing an increasing trend from 1951 to 1961 also in 1971. This means that migrants are entering continuously. Comparing 1951, 1961 there is influx of people. But in the year 1991 it has shown some declining trend due to massive movements against these movement of people. The case is reported only for legal migration. But the illegal migration or movement of persons is not reported so it is termed as illegal. However, the data for 2001 is not taken here in this analysis but statistics reveal that this also shows an increasing trend rather than a decreasing trend. Hence, it can be rightly be said that immigration from countries is also showing an increasing trend.

Immigration and Business growth:

Immigration often has led to increase in business dynamics as there are cheap Labour present in the state which are tapped by the entrepreneurs for their industries or factories. They are always used as an effective means of labour as they are job seekers and are more adaptable to the work. A study done by Azoulay et al. (2021) in the United States showed how immigrants become better entrepreneurs because of high adaptability and acceptability. There is no model that we can suggest to measure the relation of immigrants and them leading to entrepreneurship but this can be fulfilled in the future studies.

Mahajan (2019) has used a variety of census data to find out that immigrants actually boost the number of establishments in an area. He further describes the immigrants do increase the entry of small firms into the market while also prevent the exit of existing larger firms.

Studies have found that positive growth of businesses can be seen through immigration in an area. This is an effect which is driven by reduction in the business closures which needs more manpower but may not be appropriately on business creation and by the less skilled immigrants. On the other hand, High skilled immigration boosts employment growth in an area.

Reasons for Migration

There can be various reasons as to why people or groups of people migrate. Generally speaking, there can be two factors called as pull or push factors. Pull factors can be some attraction to earn more, to save more, to increase the standard of living and so on. However, push factors can be natural or man-made forces that change or force them to move on for secure reasons. Some of the reasons which can describe as why people migrate is explained below.

- (a) **Economic Reasons:** The very first reason for the movement can be termed as economic reasons. Since Assam is a land with a plenty of natural resources so many people migrate to this place to earn a better livelihood and safe means of production. Many people migrate to

work as labourers since the population pressure is such high that it can't afford to provide work.

- (b) **Political Reasons:** Secondly, due to some political reasons also people migrate. Many people may migrate due to some unavoidable consequences they may have faced in their country. War, conflict, controversies create an environment of pessimism and people migrate to escape from such consequences. Moreover, vote bank politics and both state and national political parties encourage the infiltration of people in Assam.
- (c) **Natural Reasons:** Natural calamities like floods, famines, droughts etc. force people to migrate people from their origin to a place which is safe from all such. There are evidences of many people migrating to Assam for such natural reasons. This is the last reason although there are many other reasons of movement.

CONCLUSION

The movement of people to Assam has both positive and negative effects. Among the beneficial effects the immigrants have contributed to the rise of agricultural productivity by introducing better techniques, crop diversity, and multiple cropping. Moreover, the supply of cheap labourers may benefit the producers who may employ them in work. But the negative effects of such migration are so strong that it outweighs the positive effects. The question is near to ok about the migrants who are formally employed but most of the people who come to work are labourers who come to work without or a less formal education. Such labourer creates a pressure on land where the law of inheritance is already followed. The people have small shares of land and when such movement in form of people comes than it creates pressure on the land and many natives become landless. Moreover, the people with low or no education comes and there are rarely aware of family planning and ill effects of population growth. So, this is results in population explosion. This person normally resides in riverine areas and such areas have witnessed large scale environmental degradation. These people are already poor so they move to other

places so they don't even contribute to any revenue to the government. So, they are a burden on the state which the state is bearing.

The government must therefore look at this movement of persons so that it may not prove as detrimental to the economy. Therefore necessary steps must be taken before it comes late. One step that the government can follow is completion of the fencing of the Indian Bangladesh Border and also uses technology that may detect cross border migrants. Second step which the government can follow is that All Indian National should have multipurpose identity cards so that no duplicate cards can be issued to illegal migrants. Thirdly effective measures for birth and death registration can be undertaken. Lastly, free movement of people without passport and visa must be checked and stopped.

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