

Trends and patterns of migration in Assam: Its Inflows and Outflows

¹Mwikwm Narzary, ²Mridula Devi

¹Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, Assam, India, mike66eco@gmail.com

²Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, Assam, India

Abstract

Migration has been a part of human civilisation. Unbalanced growth of economics and regions creates push and pull factors for migration. The main objective of this paper is to study the inflow and outflow of internal and international migration in Assam. The data from Census 1991, 2001, and 2011 to study the inflow and outflow of migrants in Assam and the reasons for migration. The data from census are computed using the percentage method. Females are more migrant than males in Assam. Intra-district migration is dominant in Assam and as the distance increases the percentage of migrants decreases. Marriage is the main reason for migration in Assam followed by moved with household and work/employment. Migrants from Bihar and West Bengal dominate inter-state migrants and migrants from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan dominate international migrants. West Bengal and the North-eastern states are the top destinations for out-migration from Assam.

Keywords: Migration, Immigration, Population. Assam, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

Migration has been an integral component in the evolution of human societies. Beginning from the nomadic culture of food gathering to the modern movement of people in search of a better way of life, migration has become a universal phenomenon. Modern economies still require human effort in causing sectoral changes. The unparallel growth in the economic sectors and population cause migration. The typology of migration can be classified based on time, volume, direction, causes velocity selectivity, organisation, stability, behavior, etc. The demographic transition from migration both in the place of origin and in the place of destination causes the redistribution of the population across the regions. Migration can be viewed through different prospective like Sociology, geography, economics, anthropology, history politics, etc. Migration is also a development-

fostering process dependent on the socio-economic development of the region that already existed, signifying the high presence of employment opportunity and diversified manpower.(1,2)

The presence of a dual economy causes unbalanced growth. The region and sectors that fail to absorb the growing population push people to migrate and the region with higher sectoral growth. People migrate from agriculture-dominated rural regions where marginal productivity of labour is zero or negative to capitalized urban regions with positive labour productivity and a higher wage structure.(3,4) People find the place to migrate often through their friends and family already working at the place. Thus, one individual moving to a location will soon draw multiple migrants to the destination.(5) The migration follows a pattern that is already existing, this enables the migrant to get introduced to the

place faster than moving entirely to a new destination all by himself.(6)

The study of migration along with the presence of unbalanced growth within the regions creates trends and patterns along which migrants move from regions with lower sectoral growth to the region with higher sectoral growth causing population redistribution. (7,8) Thus, analyzing the trends and patterns of migration is important to understand the demographic and socio-economic factors that cause people to move from one place to another. Among the North-Eastern states of India, Assam has been one of the major hubs for economic activities. It connects the North-Eastern states with the rest of the country and borders Bhutan and Bangladesh. Thus, internal migration and immigration both put pressure on the region's demography. (9) The objective of this paper is to examine the inflow and outflow of migration in Assam including both internal and international migrants.

2. Methodology and data source

The paper uses secondary data from the census of India for 1991, 2001, 2011. Migrants are classified based on Place of Birth (POB) and Place of Last Residence (POLR) which was introduced as an additional question in the census since 1971. If the place of birth of a person is different from the place of enumeration the person is treated as a migrant according to the place of birth statistics and if the place of enumeration of a person is different from the place of last residence then the person is treated as migrant according to the place of last residence statistics. Based on distance migrants are classified as intra-district, inter-district, inter-state, and immigrants or international migrants. Four streams are classified as rural to rural, urban to rural, rural to urban, and urban to urban.

In the 1981 census, questions on reasons for migration were introduced to understand why a person moves from place of origin to place of destination. The reason for migration is grouped into seven categories: employment,

business, education, family moved, marriage, natural calamities, and others. The study is carried using a percentage method for analysis.

Census of India classifies reason of migration into seven categories: employment, business, education, family moved, marriage, natural calamities, and others during 1991 census and 2001 and 2011 census it is classified as work or employment, business, education, marriage, moved after birth, moved with household, and others. In the analysis of this paper natural calamities as the reason for migration are added to other reasons of migration. Since the census of 2001 and 2011 do not include natural calamities as the reason for migration. The Census of India does not provide data on Reasons for migration by country of origin.

3. Trends and pattern of migration in Assam

Migration in Assam has a prolonged history. The Ahoms, Aryan Hindus, Mughals, and the British colonial are some of them. Colonial territories gave a steady growth of migration to the urban pockets which were subject to rapid urbanisation and development in terms of rail and road transport, mining, textile, and other industries. The rapid growth of cities and towns in many parts of Assam attracts a huge inflow of migrants from other regions has increased population growth in the urban areas. (Badgaiyan, 1987; Choudhury et al. 1987). Assam has a huge influx of international migrants from neighboring countries (Chowdhury 2013).

Assam has been the significant receiver of migrants from others states of the country and abroad. Table 1 gives the sex-wise magnitude of migration in Assam classified based on Place of Birth and Place of the last residence. It is observed that there is not much difference between the two classifications in all the years. In both the classifications, the number of migrants has nearly doubled through the three decades from about 5.3 million in 1991 to over 10 million in 2011 by place of birth and about 5.4 million in 1991 to over 10 million in 2011 by place of last residence. The number of

migrants in Assam has nearly doubled since 1991. It is observed that females are more migrant than males in all the years and both the

classifications. About 60 percent of the total migrants are female in all the years and all the classifications.

Table 1. *Migrants Classified by Place of Birth and Place of Last Residence (1991-2011)*

Census year		Place of Birth		Place of Last Residence	
		Total migrants (000 s)	% of Migrants to Population	Total migrants (000 s)	% of Migrants to Population
1991	Persons	5,310	23.7	5,407	24.1
	Male	2,042	17.5	2,077	17.8
	Female	3,268	30.4	3,329	31.0
2001	Persons	6,628	24.9	6,792	25.5
	Male	2,575	18.7	2,648	19.2
	Female	4,052	31.5	4,144	32.2
2011	Persons	10,393	33.3	10,644	34.1
	Male	3,554	22.3	3,672	23.0
	Female	6,839	44.8	6,972	45.7

Source: Table D-1 and D-2, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

Based on Place of Birth statistics, in Table 2 migrants are classified based on sex and distance i.e., intra-district, inter-district, inter-state, and immigrants. It is observed that short distance migration i.e., intra-district migration dominates all the other distant categories in all the years. Females are seen more dominant moving within the district compared to the male migrants. The percentage of intra-district

migration increased from 56.1 percent in 1991 to 70.2 percent during 2011. Whereas, as distance increases, the percentage of migrants in other categories is observed to be decreasing by nearly 5 percentage points. Females are also observed to be moving less within the districts and across states compared to male migrants. There are also fewer female migrants from other states and from abroad in Assam compared to males. Therefore as distance increases percentage of migrants decreases.

Table 2. *Percentage distribution of Migrants by distance categories based on Place of Birth, 1991, 2001 and 2011 (in %)*

Census year		Intra-district	Inter-district	Interstate	Immigrants
1991	Persons	56.1	27.4	10.1	6.4
	Male	45.2	30.6	15.1	9.1
	Female	62.9	25.4	7.0	4.7
2001	Persons	66.2	23.2	7.8	2.9
	Male	60.4	24.3	11.3	4.0
	Female	69.8	22.4	5.6	2.2
2011	Persons	70.2	23.3	5.4	1.1
	Male	68.6	22.1	7.6	1.6
	Female	71.0	23.9	4.2	0.9

Source: Table D-1, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

Based on the Place of last residence, categories of migration are shown in table-3. The percentage of migrants increased over the years in the intra-district category from 60.9 percent

in 1991 to 74.2 percent in 2011. It is also observed that more percentage female moves within the district compared to males. The percentage of migrants decline across the years from 25.4 percent to 20.1 percent in the inter-district category, from 9 percent to 4.7 percent in the inter-state category, and from 4.7 percent

to 1 percent in the immigrant category. As the distance increases the percentage of migrants decreases in both male and female migrants. Male migrants dominate the female in inter-

district, inter-state and immigrant categories. Similar to the place of birth statistics percentage of migrants decreases as distance increases.

Table 3. *Percentage distribution of Migrants by distance categories based on Place of Last Residence, 1991, 2001 and 2011 (in %)*

Census year		Intra-district	Inter-district	Inter-State	Immigrants
1991	Persons	60.9	25.4	9.0	4.7
	Male	51.5	28.5	13.3	6.6
	Female	66.7	23.4	6.3	3.5
2001	Persons	74.9	17.1	6.0	1.9
	Male	69.9	17.8	8.4	2.6
	Female	77.6	16.5	4.4	1.5
2011	Persons	74.2	20.1	4.7	1.0
	Male	73.5	18.6	6.5	1.4
	Female	74.6	20.8	3.7	0.8

Source: Table D-2, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

Sex-wise Distribution of migrants based on categories and streams for 1991 to 2011 is shown in table-4. It is observed that in all the years rural to rural stream is dominant over the other streams in all the categories. Females dominate the male migrants in the rural to rural stream by over 10 percent across all the years. In the intra-district category, rural to rural streams constitute more than three-fourths of

all the streams. As the distance increases the percentage of rural to rural migration reduces. Whereas other streams are observed to be increasing. As the distance increases. Migrants from a longer distance choose to move to urban regions. Migration to urban constitutes nearly two-fourth of the total migrants. It is observed that short distance migration is prominent in the rural but as distance increases, migrants chose to move to the urban regions. Also urban to rural migration dominant the rural to urban stream across all the years.

Table 4. *Distribution of Migrants by Streams in Each Category based on Place of Last residence 1991,2001 and 2011 (in %)*

Census year		1991			2001			2011		
		Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
Intra-district	R-R	90.2	86.5	91.9	82.1	71.4	86.8	81	71.3	84.8
	R-U	6.2	8.7	5	8	13	5.9	8.2	11.6	6.8
	U-R	1.8	2.2	1.7	2.2	2.6	2	3	3.8	2.7
	U-U	1.8	2.6	1.4	7.7	13.1	5.4	7.8	13.4	5.7
Inter-district	R-R	66.3	60.8	70.5	59.7	51.9	64.9	61.5	50.5	66.6
	R-U	15.9	19.8	13	22.3	28.7	17.9	19.8	28.2	15.9
	U-R	5.2	5.2	5.2	4.2	3.9	4.4	5.3	4.8	5.5
	U-U	12.5	14.2	11.3	13.9	15.5	12.8	13.4	16.4	12
Inter-state	R-R	43.3	40.8	46.7	35.7	33.5	38.4	35.4	30.7	39.8
	R-U	27.5	31.5	22.3	34.9	39.9	28.7	30.3	36.5	24.7
	U-R	7.4	6.9	8	6.5	5.9	7.3	7.6	6.7	8.4
	U-U	21.8	20.9	23	22.9	20.6	25.6	26.6	26	27.1
Immigrants	R	71.1	70.5	71.8	66.4	66.6	66.2	69.8	68.4	71.0
	U	28.9	29.5	28.2	33.6	33.4	33.8	30.2	31.6	29.0

Source: Table D-2, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

Interstate migrants move to both urban and rural regions of Assam. Through the years about 35 to 40 percent of the interstate migrants from rural regions move back to rural areas, and around 7 percent move to rural from the urban regions of other states. Around 31 percent of inter-state migrants coming from the rural regions move to urban areas of the state and around. It is also observed that around 70 percent of immigrants to Assam also choose to move to rural areas across all the years. A larger percentage of migrants move to rural areas of Assam. This can be causing rural areas of Assam to expand towards forest-covered areas, affecting the ecosystem.

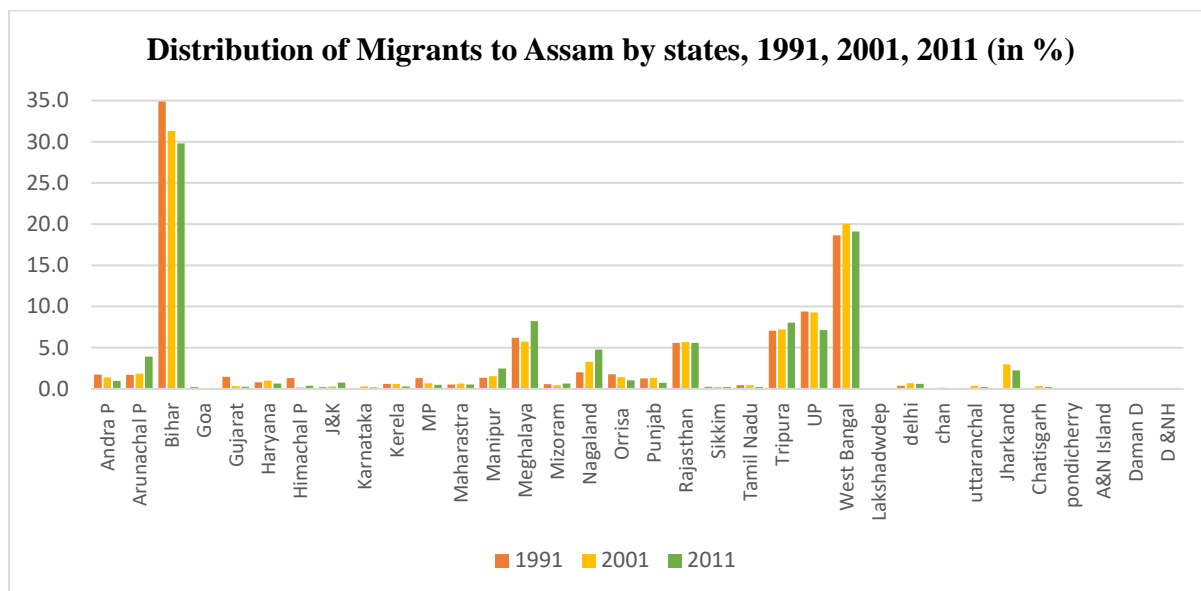
4. Inflow of migrants to Assam

Assam has the potential for sectoral growth both in rural and urban regions. Such potential pulls migrants and immigrants to the state. With the overwhelming volume of migrants Government of Assam conducted the National Register of Citizens to identify non-migrants from the migrants. The following section discusses the inflow of migrants and

immigrants to Assam during 1991, 2001, and 2011 by place of last residence statistics classified by Census of India.

The overall inter-state migration in Assam is about 487 thousand in 1991, and about 407 thousand in 2001, and 495 thousand in 2011. In figure-1 it is observed that Assam has an inflow of migrants from all states and union territories of India. The highest percentage of inter-state migrants in Assam is from is observed from the state of Bihar with about 35 percent in 1991, about 31 percent in 2001, and about 30 percent in 2011. But, the trend of migration from Bihar is observed to be decreasing through the years. Bihar is closely followed by West Bengal with about 19 percent in 1991, about 20 percent in 2001, and about 19 percent in 2011. According to the census, there were about 4.8 million Bengali speaking population in Assam during 1991 which increased to about 9 million in 2011. There was about 1.5 million Bihari population in Assam in 2011. Migrants from Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Tripura, and Uttar Pradesh constitute over 5 percent each. Other states contribute a small percentage to interstate migration in Assam.

Figure 1. *Interstate Inflow of Migrants to Assam by Place of Last residence 1991, 2001, 2011 (in %)*



Source: Table D-2, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

From all the states migration to Assam followed a trend. Immigration has always been an issue in the state of Assam. Some people

move from neighboring countries to Assam legally while others illegally and remain undocumented causing many socio-economic problems in the state (Chowdhury 2013; Khantania 2014; Basumatari 2014). Table 5

shows the distribution of international migration in Assam. The majority of the immigrants came from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan. It is observed that during 1991 and 2001, over 80 percent of the immigrants came from Bangladesh, this percentage reduced to 58.1 percent in 2011. A higher percentage of females migrated from Bangladesh to Assam between 1991 and 2001. Immigrants from Nepal constituted 6.1 percent in 1991 which

increased to 7.9 percent in 2011. Immigrants from Pakistan were around 3 to 4 percent through the years. It is observed that migrants from the rest of the countries around the world contribute to a very small percent of migration in Assam. Immigrants from Bangladesh adds up to the already high magnitude of migrants from West Bengal and the Bengali population in Assam. This cause Assam to have a large number of Bengali-speaking persons.

Table 5. *Distribution of Immigrants to Assam by Place of Last Residence, 1991, 2001, 2011 (in %)*

Census year		Bangladesh	Nepal	Pakistan	Else-Where in Asia	Europe	Africa	America	Oceania
1991	Persons	83.6	6.4	3.7	2.1	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.9
	Male	83.2	7.3	3.8	2.2	1.0	0.8	0.9	0.8
	Female	84.0	5.4	3.6	2.0	1.5	1.4	1.1	1.0
2001	Persons	87.7	8.6	3.0	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
	Male	86.8	9.3	3.0	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
	Female	88.7	7.7	2.9	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
2011	Persons	58.1	7.9	3.4	10.7	0.7	7.8	11.2	0.3
	Male	62.5	8.4	3.9	8.1	0.7	5.8	10.3	0.3
	Female	54.4	7.5	2.9	12.8	0.7	9.4	11.9	0.3

Source: Table D-2, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

Inter-state migrants and immigrants constitute about 14 percent of total migrants in 1991, about 8 percent in 2001, and about 6 percent in 2011. Migrants move to Assam for a specific reason. Table 6 shows the distribution of reasons for migration based on the place of the last residence. It is observed that about 44

percent in 1991, 36 percent in 2001, and 45 percent in 2011 migrate to Assam for marriage. Marriage is the main reason for females to migrate compared to their male counterparts. Moved with household becomes another reason for people to migrate to Assam covering over 15 to 25 percent of migrants. Only about 7 to 10 percent of migrants moved to Assam for work or employment and business.

Table 6. *Distribution of Reasons of migration in Assam, 1991, 2001, 2011 (in %)*

Census Year	Work/Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after Birth	Moved with Household	others
1991	6.6	3.5	1.8	44.0	0.0	24.6	19.5
2001	5.6	2.8	0.7	36.5	1.0	15.1	38.3
2011	5.4	1.9	0.6	45.1	1.1	16.4	29.5

Source: Table D-3, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

5. Outflow of migrants from Assam

“Migration is a highly selective process”(10). It depends entirely on the personal decision-making of the migrant. migration has a high dependence on choices, feelings, and perception of the individual, which can be

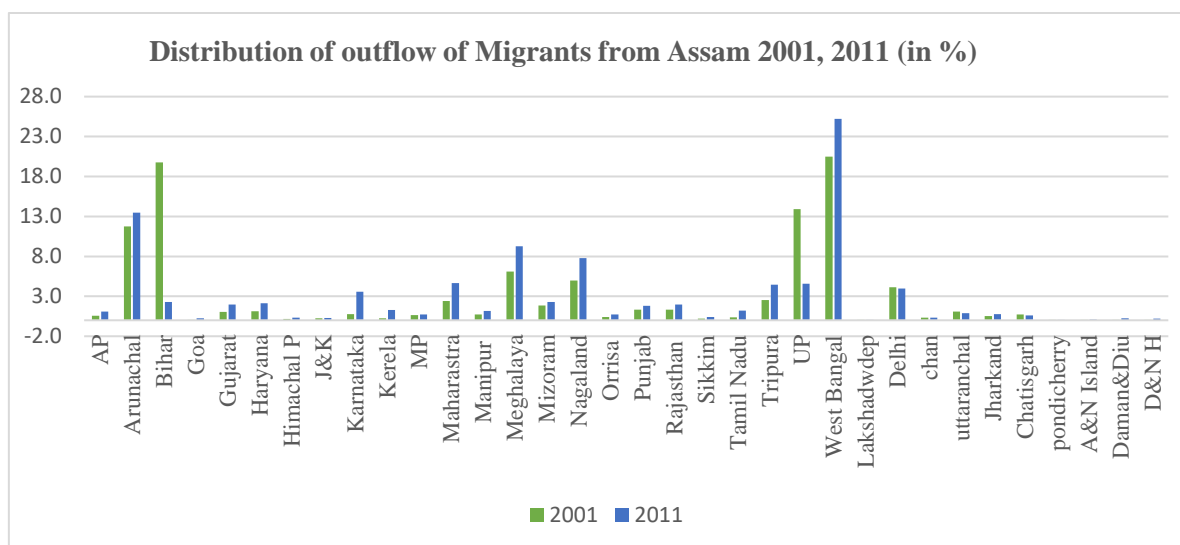
internal or external with the involvement of social and psychological variables (Bogue 1977). When the sectors of the region cannot absorb the growing magnitude of both population and migrants, there is an outflow of migrants to other regions.

Census 2001 and 2011 recorded little over half million out-migrants from the state of Assam. Out-migrants constitute 2.6 percent and 2.1 percent of Assam population during 2001 and

2011 respectively. The distribution of out-migrants from Assam is given in table Figure-3. It is observed that about 20 percent each out-migrated to West Bengal and Bihar during 2001. The out-migration to Bihar and Uttar Pradesh declined to about 2.3 percent and 4.6

percent respectively in 2011 but out-migration to West Bengal increased to 25.2 percent in 2011. Out-migration to other North-Eastern states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura was also seen to have an increasing trend over the years.

Figure 2. Interstate outflow of migrants from Assam by place of last residence 2001, 2011 (in %)



Source: Table D-2, Census of India, 2001, 2011

Push and pull factors that cause in-migration and out-migration of Assam helps to understand the scale of migration. Table-7 gives the distribution of reasons for out-migration from Assam. Moved with household, marriage, and work/employment are the most significant reasons for out-migration from Assam. It is observed that 35.2 percent in 1991,

24 percent in 2001, and 27.1 percent moved out of Assam with household. Out-migration for marriage is observed to be fluctuating from 22.7 percent in 1991, 36.7 percent in 2001, and 25.4 percent in 2011. The trend of out-migration for work/employment increased from 16.3 percent in 1991 to 24.4 percent in 2011. Lesser percentage out-migrated for business, education and moved after birth.

Table 7. Distribution of Reasons of out-migration in Assam, 1991, 2001, 2011 (in %)

	Work/employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after birth	Moved with household	Others
1991	16.3	4.9	2.5	22.7	0.0	35.2	18.4
2001	16.2	2.5	1.5	36.5	1.2	24.0	18.0
2011	24.4	3.2	2.3	25.4	1.9	27.1	15.6

Source: Table D-3, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

6. Net migration in Assam

The difference between the in-migration and out-migration gives the net migrants. Net migration is useful to see if Assam is gaining or losing migrants. Table-8 gives the net

migration in Assam. Positive net migration is observed only during 1991. There is a gain of migrants of over 379 thousand in the state during 1991. During 2001 and 2011 net migration being -199 thousand and -87 thousand, a larger number of people out-migrated Assam. This is because a large number of migrants stated moved with family, work/employment, and marriage as the reason

for moving out of Assam as shown in table-7. Better transport connectivity and information since the 2000 cause the number of outmigrants doubled in 2001. Negative net migration provides information that a larger number of Assamese populations depend on work and employment from other states.

Table 8. *Net Migration in Assam by Place of Last residence 1991, 2001, 2011 (in 000s)*

Census Year	In-migrants	Out-migrants	Net-migrants
1991	733	353	379
2001	509	708	-199
2011	571	659	-87

Source: Table D-2, Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011

7. Summary and conclusion

Migration forms an important component of demographic transition both in the place of origin and in the place of destination. It redistributes population compositions across regions. Modern migration impacts political, economic, personal, social, religious, etc. of the place of origin and the place of destination. The push and pull factors at the place of origin and the place of destination cause a person to migrate.

The present study uses Migration data from the Census of India 1991, 2001, and 2011 for the state of Assam. Migrants are classified based on place of birth and place of last residence. It is further divided into distance and streams. In both the classification the percentage of migrants has doubled between 1991 and 2011. The percentage of female migrants is larger than the male counterpart. More than 50 percent of the migrants are intra-district and females dominate the males in both the place of birth and the place of last residence.

The non-economic reasons such as marriage is predominant among the females in the shorter distance categories because females move to their husband's home after the marriage. And since most of the marriage happens within the same community, females mainly migrate for shorter distances the rural and rural streams.

This increases the magnitude of short-distance female migration. Around 80 percent of the population in Assam was dependent on agriculture during 1991 and around 70 percent during 2011 which is highly seasonal. To get employed people had to move from the rural to urban in other districts. These increased the percentage of inter-district migrants in Assam.

As distance increases, the percentage of migrants decreases, and also the percentage of females decreases lower than the males. Interstate and intra-district migrants mainly migrated for marriage, moved with household and work/employment because urban regions in Assam had could host higher sectoral changes compared to their rural counterparts. An inverse relation is observed between the percentage of migrants and the distance of migration because a larger percentage of migrants choose to migrate within the district or within the state, rather than out-migrating to other states. A higher percentage of immigrants also choose to migrate in the rural regions because about 80 percent of the immigrants came from third world countries where agriculture is the main source of livelihood. Therefore, immigrants choose to reside in the rural regions of the state because Assam has wide potential for agriculture.

The highest share of inter-state migrants came from Bihar and West Bengal. And the highest share of immigrants came from Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan than anywhere else in the world. The inflow of migrants of West Bengal and Bangladesh and a huge presence of Bengali Speaking population in Assam is the reason for the huge rise in Bengali speaking population in Assam. The short distance between Assam and West Bengal becomes a plus point for migrants to move between the two states.

West-Bengal and Bihar was the destination that people choose to migrate from Assam in 2001. During 2011 West Bengal and other North-Eastern states like Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Tripura were to destinations for out-migration from Assam. West Bengal being the neighbour state to Assam, a large amount of population from Assam move out to West Bengal. The large

Bengali population in Assam may have family connections in West Bengal which causes huge inflow and outflow of migration from West Bengal this may also cause marriage between the Bengali population and the Assamese population.

Moved with household, marriage, and work/employment are the main reasons for immigration and outmigration from Assam. Non-economic reasons like marriage dominate the economic reasons like work and employment. Assam had positive net migration in 1991, but during 2001 and 2001 the net migration is negative. This is because the percentage of migrants stating economic reasons for out-migration i.e., work and employment are increasing through the years. With larger cities and greater sectoral growth in other states, this can attract migrants from states like Assam. Therefore, a large number of people out migrated from Assam between 2001 and 2011.

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