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Migration in Assam 1991-2001: its effect on the state resources

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Abstract

Migration study in the state of Assam (India) has always integrated economic growth to its core. Migration can result because of the outburst of population growth in search of better standard of living. On the other hand migration can help in building up economic growth on one hand and also affect the natural resources in the state. Huge rate of interstate and international migrants from neighbouring states and countries has pushed up the rate of migration in Assam causing imbalance in population distribution. Studies have shown that huge rate of migration has always triggered state resources like forest resources, man-land ratio, natural resources etc. The paper uses secondary data from census of India of 1991 and 2001 and the reports from the directorate of economics and statistics government of Assam. This paper initially studies the impact on population growth through migration and its effect on man-land ratio. It also studies the impact of migration in forest resources. The results from the study show that large rate of interstate and international migration in Assam has positive impact on population growth causing population explosion and reducing man-land ratio causing huge deforestation for residence which cause wildlife displacements and imbalance ecosystem.

Keywords: Migration, Assam, Census, Deforestation, Man-land ratio.

1. Introduction: Migration in recent times involves the movement of people for reason dating back to centuries ago. Modern migration is closely related to factors such as political, economic, personal, social, religious, etc. Migration also forms an important component of demographic transition both in the place of origin and in the place of destination, where it helps the redistribution of the population across the regions; it also affects the landscape land use, economic and social activities. The study on migration can vary with regard to the field from which migration is looked upon. Sociology, geography, economics, anthropology, history and politics all of them views migration from a different perspective. The multi-disciplinary study also projects different cause and consequences of migration with all having equally important to why migration takes place.

Migration is a highly selective process. Migration in a certain region has a prolonged history of evolution from colonial and feudal structures. The unequal development ensued

in the post independent times left underdeveloped blocks within regions which resulted in never-ending outmigration. The continued regime of semi-feudal structures with overlapping caste and class relations evolved an obnoxious system of exploitation, such as the Santali migrants working in a tea plantation in Assam. The employment generated in the tea estates and other works were expected to bring about development in the state. (Badgaiyan, 1987); (Choudhury et al., 1987). Basumatari (2014) analyzed the pattern of migration in Assam based on POB data from 1991 and 2001 census and found that within the state districts with better development and economic system attracted a number of migrants. Migration gave rise to problems like the decline in man-land ratio, shortage of food, settlement problems etc.

Assam is bordering to Bangladesh and Bhutan as its international boundaries having that it also had to bear great impact to population rise due to immigration from its neighboring countries. Chowdhury (2013) clearly points out that Assam is affected by immigration from Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal, on its population growth. Khantania (2014) also clearly points out that Bangladesh and Nepal external immigration into the states affects the state Natural resources viz. Forest.

Nath et al. (2012) analyzing the census from 1971 to 2001 categorized the migrants based on language and religion and it was observed that Bengali speaking and Muslim population are high during 1971-2001 then other lingual and religious groups. They also observed that the growth of Muslim population in Bangladesh is lower than the growth of Muslim population in Assam. It was estimated that there were around 534819 illegal immigrants in Assam in 1991-2001.

2. Objectives of the study:

The Objectives of the study are:

1. To study the impact on population growth through migration and its effect on man-land ratio.
2. To study the impact of migration in forest resources.

3. Methodology: This study is based on secondary data. Census of India is the main source of data for this study. The relevant data has been collected from the Census rounds of 1991 and 2001. And the reports from the directorate of economics and statics government of Assam are also used. A regression model has also been fitted to analysis the impact of migration in Assam.

4. Limitation of the Study: Since the recent Census 2011 data on migration is not yet available the study is purely based on past data.

5. Analysis:

5.1 Migration in Assam: According to Census, Assam has 5.3 million migrants which constitute 23.6 percent of the total population during 1991. Respectively there are 6.6 million migrants constituting 24.9 percent of the total population in 2001. These migration patterns include migrants coming from other states of India (internal migration viz. intra-

district, inter-district and inter-state) and also from the neighbouring countries (international migration)(Basumatari, 2014).

Migrants are classified into four broad categories based on distance. Intra-district migrant is one who is born outside the place of enumeration but in the same district, inter-district migrant is one who is born outside the place enumeration but in the same state/ union territory, inter-state migrant is a person who is born outside the state/ union territory other than the state of enumeration but in the same country and international migrant is a who is person born outside the country other than the country of enumeration.

Four streams are identified from the place of origin and place of destination of the migrants. They are rural to rural, urban to rural, rural to urban and urban to urban. The data on streams of migration is not available at the district level in 2001 census.

Table-1 : Distribution of Migrants by Streams in Each Category in Assam, from Census of 1991 and 2001 (POLR)

1991	R-R		U-R		R-U		U-U	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Intra-district	86.8	92.2	9.3	5	2	1.6	1.9	1.1
Inter-district	63	71.9	19.7	12.6	4.9	5.2	12.4	10.3
Inter-state	25	49	30.7	22.5	6.4	8.1	17.9	20.4
2001								
Intra-district	87.9	92.4	1.9	1.6	8.4	4.8	1.7	1.2
Inter-district	79.7	68.8	5.1	5.5	14.2	11.3	15.9	14.3
Inter-state	35.9	35.7	30.1	5.9	36.2	30.1	22.1	27

From the data of table 1 it is observed that in Assam about two-third of the male migrants and three-fourth of female migrants fall under rural to rural stream of the intra-district category. In the inter-district category both the male and female in the rural to rural stream account for about three-fourths of the total migrants followed by urban to rural stream and rural to urban stream. And in the inter-state category almost 50 percent of the migrants are from rural to rural stream and migrants accounting nearly to 50 percent in both male and female are seen to be moving towards the rural region either from rural or urban in both sexes..

5.2 Net Migration: Table D-15 of 1991 and D-11 of 2001 on Place of birth statistics of census show how many people born in another district in-migrate to a particular district and how many people born in the district move out of the district. The difference between the in-migration and out-migration from the same district gives the net migrants of the district. A positive net migration value to a district mean the district is gaining and a negative value presents a losing district.

5.3 From Table-2 it is observed that Assam has 10 losing districts and 13 gaining districts in 1991 and correspondingly 11 and 12 districts in 2001. No particular geographical location

is noticed in terms of the losing districts. But it is clear that almost all the losing districts in 1991 remain the losing districts in 2001 including Darrang and Marigaon which also started losing in 2001.

Table 2 : Net Migration: Gaining and Losing Districts during 1991 and 2001

Losing Districts	Gaining Districts
1991	
Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Nagaon, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Cachar, Karimganj,	Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Kamrup, Darrang, Marigaon, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills, Hailakandi
2001	
Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Darrang, Marigaon, Nagaon, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Cachar, Karimganj	Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Kamrup, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Golaghat, Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills, Hailakandi

The districts with lower economic growth push people to move to another district on the other hand pull factors increases the prospect of internal migration within the state. Districts of Assam are not equally developed so the pattern of internal migration is not uniform. It is observed that developed districts attract more migrants from other districts. Districts like Kamrup, Dibrugarh with constant urbanization have a huge gain of migrants, whereas other districts with lesser economic growth do not show such pattern. (Basumatari, 2014)

5.3 International Migration in Assam: According to place of birth statistics a persons is international migrant if he /she is born in a country other than the country of enumeration. Assam has a great magnitude of International migration from its neighbouring countries (Chowdhry, 2013). It was clear from studies that among immigrants constitute the maximum among all the other countries constituting 86.14 percent in 2001 followed by Nepal and Pakistan with 9.39 percent and 3.72 percent respectively (Basumatari, 2014). The international migration has caused population growth to increase higher than the estimated natural increase (Nath, Nath, & Bhattacharya, 2012). Such massive immigration of refugee to the state is due to easy accessibility to the border and they finally settle down in unused lands and later take over the forest as they increase in number (Khantania, 2014).

Table 3 : International Migration into Assam 1991-2001 (POB)

	INDIA		ASSAM	
	1991	2001	1991	2001
Total migrants	6,941,056	6,166,930	339,555	190,558
Bangladesh	4,041,511 (58.2%)	3,742,883 (60.7%)	288,109 (84.8%)	164,144 (86.1%)
Nepal	478,694 (6.8%)	640,862 (10.3%)	22,433 (6.6%)	17,896 (9.4%)
Pakistan	1,774,764	1,305,707	15,110	7,097

	(25.5%)	(21.1%)	(4.4%)	(3.7%)
Others	646,087	477,478	13,903	1,421
	(9.3%)	(7.8%)	(4.1%)	(0.7%)

Data from Table-3 show that 6.4 percent and 2.9 percent of migrants are International migration in 1991 and 2001 respectively. In both 1991 and 2001 fourth-fifths of the International migrants reported Bangladesh as their place of birth. Around 10 percent of the total international migrants constitutes from Nepal and Pakistan in both the census. There has been a huge influx of Bengali and Muslim migration into the state, which presented that the growth of Muslim population in Assam, was larger than the growth of Muslim population in Bangladesh (Nath, et al., 2012).

5.4 Impact on population Growth: A basic multiple regression model, showing the relationship between total population of Assam and intra-state, interstate and international migration is constructed. The structure of the model is

Regression Model: $Y = A_0 + A_1X_1 + A_2X_2 + A_3X_3$

Hypothesis: Intra-state, interstate, international migration does not affect the population of Assam

Where,

Y= Total Population

X₁= Intrastate Migration

X₂= Interstate Migration

X₃=International Migration

Table-4: Regression Results			
	B	T	Sig
Constant	158723.72	1.732	0.95
Intra-state	3.687	6.453**	0.000
Inter-state	-3.521	-1.151	0.264
International	15.871	2.138*	0.46

**At 0.01 level of Significance

* At 0.05 level of Significance

In the model the total population is the dependent variable and independent variables are Intrastate Migration, Interstate Migration and International Migration. Form the Model, the R value is estimated to be .936, showing a high correlation between migration in to Assam and the population of Assam. The R² value is estimated to be .874 which reveals that 87 percent of variation in population is due to migration. The F value is also found to be significant, which imply that independent variables effectively predict the dependent variable. Finally, the t-value is found to be significant, which imply that the null hypothesis stating that intra-state, inter-state, international migration does not affect the population of

Assam is false. Hence we can reject our null hypothesis and can state that population in Assam is affected by the intra-state, inter-state and international migration. Also, intra-state migration and international migration affects population in Assam, but not the inter-state migrants.

The impact of population growth through migration will have a direct impact on the man-land ratio of the state. Migration in Assam has given a rise to problems like the decline in man-land ratio, shortage of food, settlement problems etc. Basumatari (2014) Migrants into Assam have affected the domestic resources to a large extent. Migration often occurs into less populated areas which are rich in natural resources like forest and wildlife. Migrants often end up clearing the forest for a residence in the destination leading to commercialization of forest resources, a threat to the environment. Khantania (2014) found that there is a relationship between migration pattern and deforestation in North-east India and concluded that there has been a large scale of deforestation due to migration in the North-east region.

Table-5: Forest area in Assam and rate of deforestation				
T₁	T₂	A₁(area in Ha)	A₂(area in Ha)	Net rate of deforestation
1991	1994	6190	5062	11.82
1994	1998	5062	3720	13.45
1998	2002	3720	1929	17.19

Source: Department of Forest (Government of Assam)

Table-5 shows the effect of migration in the forest areas of Assam. During 1991 to 1994 there was a reduction on 1,128 Ha, during 1994-1998 about 1,342 Ha and during 1998-2002 about 1,791 Ha reductions in the forest area of Assam. From these we can say that the rate of reduction in the forest resources of Assam has increased in every period. The reduction in the forest area of Assam may be mainly because of rapid population growth. This has caused a huge decline in the man-land ratio. The population explosion in certain areas has forced the people to move to the reserved forest areas which have caused the reduction in forest covered areas of Assam.

6. Conclusions: International migration in Assam has also constituted a great number to migrants in the state. Immigration in Assam is most commonly seen from the neighbouring countries. Bangladesh outnumbers all the other countries when it comes to migration to Assam. As Bangladesh shares its international border with Assam migration into the Assam does not become a long distance migration and it may not be expensive. It is observed in studies that migration from Bangladesh is mostly illegal and is not documented. Migration in the state has a positive correlation with the rapid growth of population in the state; this has caused in the reduction on man-land ratio and has caused serious impact on forest resources of Assam.

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