



A SCENERIO OF MIGRATION RISE IN COLONIAL ASSAM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY OF ASSAM.

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ABSTRACT- Migration is a worldwide phenomenon which cannot be controlled, it is a human nature to move from one place to another. Migration is a form of geographical or spatial mobility which involves a change of usual residence of a person between clearly defined geographical units. A person who crosses the boundary of own country is called an out-migrant. Emigration refers to movement out of a particular territory in connection with the international migration (Bhende and Kanitkar, 1998).

At present it is a serious issue of our economy. Before independence British had hired workers from the central and east central part of India to work in the tea gardens. Assam was a high land man ratio state with scarce labour. There is a huge resource of the state and therefore different communities migrated from other states for their livelihood. Despite of this internal migration there is also migration from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. As a result there is a huge pressure of population on our land and also have a serious impact on our economic growth. Historically during the pre Independence period migration had contributed to economic development of the state. But at present where there is a decrease land labour ratio has create adverse impact on our economy and leads to a huge growth of unemployment of the state. The present paper will try to examine the various causes of migration of Assam and also try to explain its impact on the economy of Assam.

(Keywords: *migration, economy, growth*)

1. INTRODUCTION

Migration is not easy to define. It is one of the basic components of population growth. It is also an instrument of cultural diffusion and social integration. which results The United Nations Multilingual Demographic Dictionary defined ***“Migration is a form of geographical mobility or spatial mobility between one geographical unit to another, generally involving a change in residence from to the place of origin or place of departure to the place and of destination or place of arrival. Such migration is called permanent migration and should be distinguished from other form of movement which does not involve a permanent change in residence”.*** Migration is a form of geographical or spatial mobility which involves a change of usual residence of a person between clearly defined geographical units. A person who crosses the boundary of owns country is called an out-migrant. Emigration refers to movement out of a particular territory in connection with the international migration (Bhende and Kanitkar, 1998).

The study of migration occupies an important place in population studies, because, with fertility and mortality, it determines the size and the rate of population growth, as well as its structure and characteristics. Migration is also plays an important role in distribution of population of any country, and determined the growth of the labour force in any area. The study of migration is important not only to demographers but is also of great importance and interest to economist, socio-economist, human geographers, political scientist, policy makers and planners, public administrators and social psychologists.

Economists are interested in the study of migration because it related to business cycles, supply of skilled and unskilled workers, growth of industries and the occupational and employment status of migrants. Planners and policy –makers are concerned with migration because it is associated with the socio-economic development of the country. In India and many other developing countries, one of the side effects of unprecedented population growth as well as industrialization and economic development is a rapid increase in internal migratory movements (A Bhende & T Kanitkar).

Emigration is considered as a response of the people to the existing socio-economic and political conditions of a country. Many people who are unable to fulfill their needs with the environment around them and find it convenient to emigrate rather than fight to change.

At present migration is a serious issue of our economy. Before independence British had haired workers from the central and east central part of India to work in the tea gardens. Assam was a high land man ratio state with scarce labour. There is a huge resource of the state. And therefore different communities migrated from other states for their livelihood. Despite of this internal migration there is also international migration from neighboring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and, Bhutan. As a result there is a huge pressure of population on our land and also have a serious impact on our economic

growth. Historically during the pre-independence period migration had contributed to economic development of the state. But at present where there is a decrease land labour ratio has create adverse impact on our economy and leads to a huge growth of unemployment of the state. The present paper will try to examine the various causes of migration of Assam and also try to explain the impact of it on the economy of Assam.

2. OBJECTIVES- Following are the two main objectives of the paper:

1. The main objective of this paper is to determined the main causes of migration in Assam and
2. To explain the impact of migration on the economy of Assam.

3.METHODOLOGY- The present study is mainly based on secondary data taken from the reputed published sources like various books, journals, research articles, conference proceeding and web based resources.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW –

There are several strands of the literature on migration into Assam. There are studies that focus on migration during the British colonial period. In two most notable works on economic history of Assam, Guha (1977 and 1991) focuses on the migration of tea garden workers from the central and east-central parts of India during the British colonial period. Gogoi (2005) examines the role of per capita income, land man ratio, and distance in determining the flow of migration into Assam. In a related work Nath (2005) examines why the investment in modern sector did not have trickle down effects in the traditional sector. He argues that a lack of linkages in labor market, capital market, and commodity market between these two sectors is responsible for the predicament of the traditional sector. The migrant workers contributed their fair shares to the growth of the modern sector.

In a work on Population, Chanda (1998), has discussed about migration as the third basic component of population growth and how it has been an important instrument of cultural diffusion and social integration.

5. CAUSES OF MIGRATION:

A large variety of causes influence a person's decision to migrate. There are two factors of migration –**push factors** and **pull factors**.

Push factors are those that force the people to move out of a territory. Pull factors on the other hand, are those that attract the people to a territory. In any area, both push and pull factors may operates simultaneously. Push factors termed as negative factors. The pull factors have been called as positive factors. In any area, at any time, there are always some positive factors and some negative factors in

operation. Not only that, a factor may be positive factor for one individual and negative factor for another living in the same area. For instance, establishment of a high tech industry at a place may be pull factor for highly skilled people and a negative factor for the illiterate segment of a society in the same area. However for the convenience of understanding, all these factors could be classify into three broad categories of economic, social and demographic factors.

5.1 Economic factors:

Economic factors have recognized as the most important factors of migration. The main economic factors are:

- i. General economic condition of the area.
- ii. Availability of good quality agricultural land,
- iii. Size of agricultural land holdings.
- iv. Rate of growth of employment opportunities.

- i. General economic condition of the area:** The depressed economic conditions in an area certainly generate out-migration tendencies. By contrast, conditions of economic prosperity attract in – migrants through expansion of employment opportunities. Within this general framework, the industrial pull has proved to be more dynamic than the agricultural push, both in industrial and agricultural countries.
- ii. Availability of good quality agricultural land:** The Availability of good quality agricultural land continues to be the most powerful economic factor controlling volume and direction of migration. Thus areas suffering from acute pressure of population upon their resources generate out migration tendencies and those areas where new agricultural lands become available attract in-migrants.
- iii. Size of agricultural land holdings:** The important cause which is closely related to migration is the size of agricultural land holdings. Migration all over the world has been stimulated by the temptation of increasing the size of one's landholdings.
- iv. Rate of growth of employment opportunities:** Another cause of migration is the availability of employment opportunities. The areas experiencing developmental activities are expanding their employment potential. It has proved to be the most powerful economic factor controlling population movement.
- v. Development means of transportation:** the power of development of means of transportation to stimulate emigrational tendencies is most recognized. The development of means of transportation and communication in recent time has stimulated migratory tendencies almost everywhere in the world. In most cases, the expansion of transportation infrastructures has increased the spatial interaction and has accelerated both migration and commuting. Its role in stimulating rural to urban migration is most prominent. With the development of transport infrastructure the rural isolation is broken. The rural society no longer remains isolated.

5.2 Social factors:

The social causes of migration include social custom, religious oppression, socio-economic status, information network, cultural contact, desire for social uplift, availability of housing, healthcare and education facilities, environmental crimes etc.

i) **Social custom:** sometimes social customs can emerge as equally important factors behind human migration. There is a social custom in India that at the time of marriage the girl leaves the place of her parents and starts living with her spouse. This type of migration is not for the desire of economic gains. It is due to the factor of social customs.

ii) **Religious oppression:** Religious oppression has been another social factors causing large scale migration.

iii) **Socio-economic status:** The socio-economic status has been considered an important determinant of population mobility. In Assam, there are evidences to prove that people belonging to lower socio-economic status from neighboring country like Bangladesh are more mobile as they have no landed property to stick to.

iii) **Education:** However, in the contemporary more developed countries, the better educated, more skilled and economically better off people have greater desire to migrate. Perhaps these people have the ability, the training and the access to information and hence are more mobile.

iv) **Information Network:** The availability of information through education, cultural contact, spatial interaction also widens the migration scope. There is no denying fact that information network widens the horizon for job opportunities.

v) **Government policies and political decision:** Government policies and political decisions make the own contribution in giving a specific direction to population movement.

vi) **Environmental crisis:** Environmental crisis like droughts, desertification, earthquake, desertification, industrial accidents at times led to human migration. Such calamities have created perhaps the largest refugees in the world after politically displaced persons.

5.3 Demographic Factors:

There are certain characteristics of a population which may influence the decision to migrate. For example, age of a person is very important factor influencing his decision making process. Young women adult have greater desire to move. Elderly persons avoid taking any risks. Children are not in a position to move independently of their family. No wonder, the proportion of migrants is high among young working age group.

5.4 Causes of Migration into Assam:

- i) Before independence British had hired workers from the central and east central part of India to work in the tea gardens. The growth of tea industries after 1855 and due to the shortage of local labour, the industry recruited migrants in large numbers of labourers, Ghasipur, Chota Nagpur and Bihar. In 1901 the total number of tea garden labourers was 6, 54,000, which represented one-tenth of the total population. Assam was a high land man ratio state with scarce labour. There is a huge resource of the state. These workers had contributed significantly to the growth of the tea industries in Assam.
- ii) In the beginning of colonial period there was a flow of educated Bengali Hindu migrants to work for the colonial power and also they contributed to the economic growth of the state.
- iii) Immigration of the Muslim peasant from present day Bangladesh in the first few decades of 20th century into Assam was clearly linked with the growth of the jute industries. With the expansion of jute trade, the expansion of its cultivation also became an immediate necessity. As the area of jute cultivation in Bangladesh could no longer be extended, it was thought well to grow the same in the soil of Assam. Hence immigration of expert jute cultivators into Assam. With their superior techniques of cultivation, these East Bangalese peasants taught Assam how to grow jute moong (a kind of pulses) and several other crops. For example, the acreage under jute in the Brahmaputra valley increased as a result of this great population movement from little less than 30 thousand acres in 1905-06 to more than 106 thousand acres 1919-20.
- iv) During the early of 20th century a small group of Marwari traders moved into the state due to business purposes (from Rajasthan)
- v) It is now established that most of the armed insurgent groups in Assam like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the Kamtapur Liberation organization (KLO), and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) had established camps in Bangladesh and Myanmar border. The ability to function with impunity within Bangladesh was not only due to help from within Bangladesh but also because of facilitation by a network of illegal front within Assam to the ULFA. Logistical information about the areas in Bangladesh is also provided by this network in lieu of money given to them, which in turn compromises the security of Assam.

6. Migration and its impact on the economy of Assam:

There are both beneficial and harmful effects of migration on the economy of Assam.

6.1 Positive impact:

- i) Supplying cheap labour:** It is well known that a number of countries initially welcomed migrants in order to meet labour shortages. In the 1960 s Western Europe imported over twelve million migrants from North Africa, Yugoslavia, Greece, Southern Italy and Turkey to cope with labour shortage that resulted from a combination of high economic growth, a low fertility rate in the 1930s, and a high mortality rate during world war. Immigration effect the supply of labour. The immigrants have contributed to the rise of agricultural productivity and by supplying cheap labour in the informal labour market which benefited the both consumers and producers. The immigrants do not seem to compete with the native workers who are generally educated and seek employment in the formal labor market. Bangladeshi and other migrants from the manual workforce in Assam ; rickshaw pullers, house construction workers , house painters, gardeners, field workers, road construction workers, vegetables vendors etc. women immigration mostly work as maids. Significantly, these migrants are willing to work hard which local Assamese labourer are unwilling to do.
- ii) Increase in agricultural productivity:** Agriculture is the major basis of village economy which is now replacing with remittance from the emigrants. Most of the migrant people basically engage in Agriculture sector. They are more efficient and hard working which helps increases the agricultural productivity.
- iii) Introduction of new commercial crops.** Immigration of the Muslim peasant from present day Bangladesh in the first few decades of 20th century into Assam was clearly linked with the growth of the jute industries. With the expansion of jute trade, the expansion of its cultivation also became an immediate necessity. As the area of jute cultivation in Bangle could no longer be extended, it was thought well to grow the same in the soil of Assam. Hence, immigration of expert jute cultivators into Assam. With their superior techniques of cultivation, these East Bangle peasants taught Assam how to grow jute, moong (a kind of pulses) and several other crops.

6.2 Negative impact:

Migration not only disturbing the demographic structure of Assam but also eating up resources, employment opportunities, health, literacy and other facilities of the state.

- i) **Pressure on land:** The immigrants have put tremendous pressure on land and create the problems of shortage of land which have direct adverse effects on the economy of Assam. The land-man ratio of the state has decreasing day by day. Heavy pressures of population on land fragmented the land holdings and create the shortage of cultivated land.
- ii) **Creating socio-political problem:** Migration in Assam creating certain serious socio-economic problem in the state. 43 out of 126 assembly constituencies in Assam have strong presence of migrants that has disturb the political scenario of the state (Pathania 2003). It is important to note that most Bangladeshi migrant from the manual workforce for the poorer sections of Bangladeshi society in Assam motivating them to taking risk for coming illegally to the state and to make a living. The flip side to this is that these illegal migrant manage to procure Indian citizenship by producing documents bought in black market. Subsequently these sections of the people are very poorer. This illegal migrant create some social problems like smuggling, docaties, black marketing, robbery, etc. Moreover, infiltrators are engaged in smuggling of sugar, drug, gold, etc. for example, cattle lifting has been a common phenomenon in the border area.
- iii) **Environmental problems:** Immigration creates certain environmental problem like deforestation, noise pollution, water pollution and many others. Forests are the major natural resources of the state. The migrants have settled down permanently, encroached land and they are now enjoying the right of national citizens. The 85% of total encroached forest land in Assam was found to be in the hand of the Bangladeshi migrants. Destruction of forest lead to erosion of land and it continue increase the flood problem of the state. Every year new places are affected by flood in the state. Despite this it also create the noise pollution and water pollution of the state.
- iv) **Unemployment problem:** Bangladeshi and other migrants from the manual workforce in Assam; rickshaw pullers, house construction workers , house painters, gardeners, field workers, road construction workers, vegetables vendors etc. women immigration mostly work as maids. Significantly, these migrants are willing to work hard which local Assamese labourer are unwilling to do. In this way they capture the stats labour market and as a result there is a huge unemployment among the local people of Assam. One fourth of state population still lives under the poverty line. Accelerated immigration from across the border will make obstacle to state government effort to reduce poverty.

- v) **Creating shortage of resources:** Huge pressure of population due to migration shortage of land, natural resources and other resources of the state. The eating population is increasing day by day. On the other hand agricultural land become fragmented which leads to the decline of agricultural productivity as a result shortage of food. Therefore migration creates the food shortage of the state. Migration not only disturbing the demographic structure of Assam but also eating up resources, employment opportunities, health, literacy and other facilities of the state. In Assam some Bangladeshi migrants have obtained Indian citizenship by producing false documents. This makes them eligible for benefits under the national employment schemes and other developmental schemes in India resulting in the drain of available national and local resources in the country (Suryanarayanan, 2010). The immigrants hardly contribute to the government revenue while the government spends a substantial amount to maintain this significantly large fraction of the population

7. CONCLUSION

Migration has both positive and negative impacts and thus, migration is a boon as well as a curse to the society in which it occurs. However it is a phenomenon which cannot be prevented. Migration is also beneficial for development and there is no reason for raising voice against it. But the urgent problems arising from it can be solved to a great extent through proper initiative taken by the government and other civil society agencies and also through a suitable policy package.

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