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A Study On Bangladeshi Immigrants And Their Negative Impacts In Assam

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Abstract: The immigration is a problem of worldwide. No country is free from the immigration. As such, Assam is not left as a free state from illegal immigration. Assam is a naturally rich state located in North-Eastern India. The state has been suffered with the large number of immigration from the neighboring countries since the period of British. Since 1971, the huge large number of illegal immigration from Bangladesh influx into the state has flooded the population of Assam. Thus, it has deep negative impacts on the social, political, economic and security of Assam, and become a very much concerned issue of Assam. It is also created a big challenge in the mind of indigenous people in the arena of social, political and economy. Therefore, in this paper an attempt is being made to understand the negative impact of large number of illegal immigration in the society of Assam.

Keywords: Bangladeshi, Illegal, Immigration, Migration, Immigrants, Social, Economy, Politics, Security.

1. INTRODUCTION

Immigration is one of the most serious issues of human society. It has been taking place in all the countries and states since the immemorial times. The term Migration and Immigration are synonymous and most commonly used words. Both the words are related to the movement of the people between and within the countries and states. Immigration is specially refers to people moving into a country. There may be so many different causes of immigration in different countries and states such as social, economic and political factors. They are classified in different forms such like education, employment opportunity, development of means of transportation, social customs, religious, oppression, government policies and political decisions, marriage, fertility of land, marriage, natural resources and environmental crisis, security crisis, etc. For these factors, the people migrated into another country and they try to settle there permanently and temporarily which has a deep impact on social, political, economy and security of a particular country and state.

Assam of North-Eastern India is one of the finest examples of the victim of illegal immigration from different states and countries. Assam has experienced migration at various periods of history. During the British period also, Assam had experienced numerous waves of immigration. The British rule encouraged movement of settlers in Assam for increasing productivity and other reasons. They encouraged jute traders from Bengal looking for lands for the jute production and brought laborers in Assam for the growth of tea industry and railway construction sites from different parts of India like, Bihar, Chotta Nagpur and Banaras. This led to a growing population of non-Assamese speakers in the state during the colonial era.

After the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, many people specially Bengali Hindus from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) fled to Assam to escape violence and persecution. This led to a further increase in population, and many of the new arrivals settled permanently in Assam. In the decades after independence of Bangladesh, there was an increase in illegal migration from Bangladesh into Assam. This was driven by economic factors, as well as political upheaval in Bangladesh. As a result, the population of Bengali-speaking residents in Assam continued to grow and flood. In 1985, the Indian government signed an accord with leaders of the Assam Movement, who had been protesting against illegal immigration in the region. The accord promised to identify and deport illegal immigrants who arrived in Assam after 1971, when Bangladesh became an independent country. Many illegal immigrants were deported and many of them were not identified and settled permanently in Assam.

Despite some efforts to address the issue, still illegal immigration continues and remains a significant challenge in Assam, which has a deep negative impact on social, political, economy and security of Assam. The issue has led to economic, social, and political tensions, and the government must take measures to address the root causes of illegal immigration and ensure that policies are in place to prevent further immigration.

2. OBJECTIVES

Objective of the study is

1. To know the causes of illegal immigration to Assam
2. To find out the negative impacts of illegal immigration in Assam.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper is analytical and descriptive in nature based on secondary sources. It includes books, magazines, journals, research thesis, internet and so on.

4. FACTORS OR CAUSES OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION INTO ASSAM

There are several push and pull factors which lead to the influx of people into Assam. Illegal immigration into Assam, particularly from Bangladesh, is driven by several push factors that compel individuals to leave their homeland in search of better opportunities and living conditions. As the push factors, firstly partition of India and Pakistan was a major cause of influx to Assam from East Bengal. A large number of Hindu populations moved to India leaving everything behind due to fear of political murder, religious persecution and atrocities. Later, during the Bangladesh liberation movement and after the liberation of Bangladesh (1971) a millions of people displaced and moved to Assam to take shelter, many of them settled permanently in Assam. The second factor is economic hardship and unemployment problem in Bangladesh. Widespread poverty in Bangladesh leaves many individuals struggling to meet their basic needs. This economic hardship pushes people to seek better livelihoods in Assam, where economic opportunities, though limited, might be perceived as better than in their home country. High rates of unemployment in Bangladesh also mean that many individuals, especially the youths are unable to find jobs. This lack of employment prospects pushes people to migrate in search of work and income to support their families. Thirdly, environmental factor is also one of the major causes of immigration into Assam. Bangladesh is a prone zone to frequent natural disasters such as floods, cyclones, and riverbank erosion, which displace large numbers of people. These disasters destroy homes, crops, and livelihoods, forcing people to migrate to safer and more stable areas like Assam. Besides, with a high population density, Bangladesh faces significant land scarcity. Overpopulation and limited arable land make it challenging for people to sustain themselves through agriculture, pushing them to seek land and livelihoods elsewhere like Assam. Fourthly, periodic political unrest, violence, and instability in Bangladesh create unsafe living conditions. People migrate to

Assam to escape the uncertainties and seek a more stable environment. Discrimination and persecution based on ethnicity or religion can force individuals to flee their home country. In some cases, minority groups face threats and violence, pushing them to migrate to regions where they hope to find safety and tolerance. Fifthly, rapid population growth in Bangladesh exacerbates pressure on resources and services. As the population increases, competition for jobs, land, and basic services becomes intense, pushing people to migrate to regions like Assam where they perceive opportunities for a better life. These factors are often interconnected and compound each other. For instance, environmental degradation can worsen economic conditions, and political instability can exacerbate social tensions, leading to a multifaceted push that compels individuals to migrate into Assam.

There are several pull factors also. Pull factors are those aspects or conditions that attract individuals to migrate to a particular area. In the context of Assam, several pull factors contribute to the influx of illegal immigrants, particularly from neighboring Bangladesh. One of the most important pull factors of illegal immigration into Assam is the open border around Indian border. The illegal immigrant comes and settles illegally in Assam because of the lack and improper boundary fence and border control. Secondly, there are several economic opportunities in Assam. Assam with its various industries such as tea plantations, construction, and agriculture, offers numerous job opportunities for laborers. Migrants are often attracted by the prospect of earning a livelihood and sending remittances back home. Besides, compared to their home country-Bangladesh, many immigrants find better wage prospects in Assam, even for unskilled labor. This economic incentive is a strong pull factor. Thirdly, Assam has available fertile agricultural land, which is attractive for migrants looking to engage in farming. This is particularly appealing for those coming from regions with scarce or degraded land. The demand for labor in agricultural activities, especially during planting and harvesting seasons, provides opportunities for employment. Fourthly, political and social instability of Bangladesh is also a pull factor of immigration of Bangladeshi into Assam. Compared to the political instability or unrest in their home regions, Assam offers a relatively more stable and secure environment. This stability is a significant pull factor for those seeking safety and better living conditions. The perceived or actual tolerance and acceptance of migrants in certain areas of Assam can encourage more people to migrate into the state. Better access to services and amenities is also a key pull factor of influx into Assam. Better access to education and healthcare services in Assam compared to the migrants' home regions can be a motivating factor. Families migrate to ensure their children receive better educational opportunities and healthcare. The availability of basic amenities in Assam such as clean water, electricity, and infrastructure also attract migrants seeking to improve their quality of life. Besides, unclear or lenient legal frameworks regarding immigration and residency can encourage migrants to take the risk of entering and staying in Assam. The presence of established migrant communities in Assam also provides social support and reduces the risks associated with migration. Migrants often move to areas where they have relatives or acquaintances who can help them settle and find work. These pull factors often interact with each other, creating a strong overall attraction for migrants. For instance, economic opportunities coupled with social networks and a stable environment can significantly enhance the pull towards Assam.

Overall, the causes of immigration in Assam are complex and multifaceted, and there is no single solution to the issue. The government must take a comprehensive approach to address the factors driving immigration.

5. NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IN ASSAM

Bangladeshi immigrants in Assam presents significant negative social, political, economic, and security impacts on the state. Here are some of the areas in which illegal immigration affects these sectors:

5.1. Social Impact

Bangladeshi immigrant has led to social tension in the state. Local communities feel that they are being marginalized by the influx of individuals who do not share their customs, beliefs, or traditions. This leads to increased hostility towards immigrants and the breakdown of social cohesion in the community. The social impacts of illegal immigration in Assam are significant and are felt at various levels in the society. The population of Assam increases due to illegal immigration from the foreign countries specially from Bangladesh. The increase in population caused by illegal immigration puts pressure on social services in Assam such as healthcare, education, and housing. This strain leads to insufficient access to these services by the local population, leading to feelings of anger, resentment and disappointment. It also assimilates differently into the indigenous local culture, which leads to cultural divides and social unrest between immigrants and the indigenous local population. It is seen a cause of ethnic tensions between the local population and the immigrants, leading to several clashes and social unrest in Assam. Example: Bodo-Muslim clashes (2008 & 2012). It is creating the language barriers between illegal immigrants and the local population leads to communication difficulties, which further exacerbate social tensions in Assam. It also leads to face social exclusion from the local population due to their legal status, leading to feelings of isolation and ostracism. Besides these, it has a deep impact on the moral concern of the people of Assam. The societal values and moral standards of illegal immigrants are different from those of the local population, leading to social conflicts and misunderstandings in Assam. Therefore, we can say that illegal immigration is a social issue that has significant impacts on the society of Assam. The government and local authorities need to address these social impacts in a proactive and constructive manner to ensure that the issue is adequately resolved, mitigating any negative effects on both immigrants and the local community.

5.2. Political Impact

In political sphere, Illegal Bangladeshi immigration leads to political danger and possible political instability in Assam. Issues surrounding immigration becomes a contentious political issue, leading to the rise of extremist groups and the erosion of democracy. As such illegal immigration in Assam has significant political impacts on the state of Assam. The indigenous people of Assam claim that the large population of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in Assam has resulted in the erosion or loss of their political power, leading to issues of under-representation. The national, regional and local political parties prefer to protect them in order to gain their support, causing them to overlook the challenges faced by the local population of Assam. The presence of large populations of illegal immigrants leads to the inadequate representation of indigenous people of Assam in democratic processes such as voting, leading to the under-representation of the interests of Assamese people. Some of the illegal immigrants have connections to terrorist organizations, which result in increased crime, violence, and political unrest in the state. Besides these, the issue of illegal immigration in Assam is also a cause of cross-border disputes with neighboring countries, leading to political tensions and conflicts. For example: India-Bangladesh border dispute, India-Pakistan dispute, etc.

Illegal immigration is a complicated political issue in Assam that has significant political impacts. The government needs to find a balance between the interests of the local population and the rights of illegal immigrants while ensuring that political processes remain free and fair.

5.3. Economic Impact

Bangladeshi immigrants working in the informal economy compete with local workers in low-paying jobs. This affects the wages of local workers of Assam, reduce job opportunities, and lead to an increase in the number of people living in poverty. In addition, the economic impact of illegal immigration can strain social services, including healthcare and education, which are already underfunded and lacking. Illegal immigration in Assam has a significant economic impact on the region. They create labour market disruption in Assam. The illegal immigrants have displaced the local labor market, leading to wage depression and reduced employment opportunities in Assam. This creates economic instability and insecurity in the region. Increasing huge number of population due to the immigration also create a 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 immigration creates the food shortage of the state. Immigration not only disturbing the demographic structure of Assam but also eating up resources, employment opportunities, health, literacy and other facilities of the state. Many illegal immigrants engage in informal economic activities, such as street vending, resulting in the loss of tax revenue and reduced economic growth of Assam. They are not eligible for government welfare programs, schemes and facilities; however, they still access to healthcare services, public education and all, which puts an additional burden on the welfare system of Assam. Many of them do not pay taxes or contribute to the formal economy of the state, leading to reduced tax revenues and a higher cost to the government to provide essential public services. They also put a significant infrastructure and service burden on the state, leading to overcrowding, inadequate housing, and limited access to clean water and sanitation.

Bangladeshi immigrants have a significant economic impact on the state of Assam. The Government needs to focus on finding a way to balance the economic prospects of illegal immigrants and the welfare of the local population, while efficiently regulating and managing the informal economy. This can be achieved by improving the process of legalization and developing policies that can regulate immigration, and provide a pathway for their integration in the formal economy.

5.4. Security Impact

Bangladeshi immigrants create a security threat in the region. With the help of them the terrorist organizations can exploit the porous borders to traffic weapons and operatives across borders. They are like a potential gateway for terrorists to enter into the state. Terrorist groups exploit the porous borders to infiltrate the region, which posing a risk to both national and regional security. They have a destabilizing effect on the economy of Assam. In some cases, illegal immigrants become involved in the black market, such as drug or human trafficking, which disrupts the economic and social fabric of the state. With no legal protection, illegal immigrants are vulnerable to human trafficking. The trafficking of individuals for labor, sexual exploitation, or other crimes contributes to the destabilization of the state. They contribute to a rise in crime rates in Assam. Studies indicate that areas with higher numbers of illegal immigrants tend to have higher crime rates. They also place a significant strain on the public services in Assam. This leads to overcrowding of hospitals and schools, and other facilities, which impact the overall well-being of the community.

Therefore, the government needs to develop policies and measures to mitigate the impacts of illegal immigration in Assam. These measures could include improved border security, legal immigration pathways, screening procedures for immigrants at the point of entry, and implementation of laws that deter illegal immigrants.

6. CONCLUSION

At the end, Assam has been suffered a lot due to the negative impact of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in the state since long decades. Therefore, the Government of Assam must take action to address the impact of illegal immigration on these four fronts (Social, Political, Economy and Security). Measures could include increased border security, regularizing the status of non-criminal illegal immigrants in the region, improving social services to support both immigrants and local communities, and addressing the root causes of migration, including poverty and conflict in neighboring countries. Doing so would help to create a more stable and secure environment for all individuals in the state.

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