



Migration and its Impact on the Economy of Assam

Dr. Abdus Salam,

Associate professor, Department of Economics,
Bhawanipur Anchalik College, Assam

Abstract

Migration is an enduring theme of human history. Migration is the movement of people from one place to another. It is the process of moving from the use of one operating environment to another operating environment. That is, in most cases, it is thought to be a better one. Thus, human movement is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location. This movement may occur domestically or internationally, and can affect economic structures, population densities, culture and politics. The process of migration is not a newly emerged social problem.

One important fact of study on population is the study of migration arising out of various social, economic or political reasons. For a large country like India, the study of movement of population in different parts of the country helps in understanding the dynamics of the society better. Migration is one of the main causes for rapid growth of population. There is a huge shift of population from migration of population in Assam. Assam is experiencing three different types of migration, i.e., intra-state migration, inter-state migration and inter- country migration.

It is intended here that the topic will provide the real picture of the migration with cause and effect. It is further hoped that this will help in finding some of the problem of migration in Assam which may contribute to create the atmosphere in the socio - economic and political situation.

Keywords: Movement, environment, push, pull, population densities, culture, politics atmosphere, solution etc.

Introduction

Migration is an enduring theme of human history. Migration is the movement of people from one place to another. It is the process of moving from the use of one operating environment to another operating environment. That is, in most cases, it is thought to be a better one. Thus, human movement is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of settling temporarily or permanently in the new location. This movement may occur domestically or internationally, and can affect economic structures, population densities, culture and politics. According to the Demographic Dictionary of United Nations, "Migration is such an event in which people move from one geographical area to another geographical area. When people leaving their place of residence go to live permanently in another area then this is called migration". According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English migrate means migrate-move from one place to go to live or work in another. Webster's New World Dictionary defines migration as a "move from one



place to another, especially to another country”, and migration as “to move from place to place to harvest seasonal crops”.

Migration has a long history. The process of it is not a newly emerged social problem. Different human races from pre-historic times onwards had started moving from their places of origin. In present days people usually migrate either to improve their economic status or to stay at a place where they feel socially and culturally more secure and politically more independent. In Assam history it is designed to explore the process of migration of East Bengal peasants particularly to the Brahmaputra valley of Assam during the colonial rule. The present study attempts to provide a critical but objective analysis of this great historical issue and highlight the far-reaching effects of the migration of the East Bengal peasants on the political and socio-economic life of Assam. In connection to this both the “Push” and “Pull” factors along with social, cultural, political and other issues of migration are examined here.

Methodology

The data used in preparing the topic are the secondary data. The necessary data collected here are from some books, News papers, magazines and Internet. The data collected and analyzed here in asystematic manner.

Objectives

This topic tries to focus

- i)The size of population of Assam.
- ii)The account of immigrants from various regions and countries.
- iii)The causes of immigration in Assam.
- iv)The impact of migration on the economy of Assam.
- v)The problems and measures of migration.

Migration from Bengal to Assam

Immigration from across the border of Assam particularly from Bengal was due to the cause of establishment of the colonial rule. While in Assam Ryotwari settlement prevailed with the exception to Goalpara then Bengal was under zamindary settlement. Under Zamindary system the peasants of Bengal were subject to exploitation and inhuman oppression which resulted in increasing the number of landless peasants and agricultural laborers. When the peasants rose in revolt against the Zamindars then the Zamindars tactfully flushed out large number of peasants into Assam to get rid of these revolts. Moreover, the peasants who migrated from East Bengal to Assam were the victims of natural calamities like flood and famine in their homeland

Another factor of the immigration of East Bengal peasants into Assam was the policy of the Government of Assam. The Government of India in the meantime introduced the “Grow more food complain” during the world war and “it had designed the extension of cultivation in Assam from 52.8 lakhs of acres to 57 lakhs during the year 1943”, on the plea of the Grow More Food Campaign” then the Sadulla Government made an extensive preparation to accelerate land settlement in Kamrup, Nagaon, Darrang with the immigrants and thereby



the Government mixed up the colonization scheme with the India Governments “Grow More Food” campaign policy. The “Grow More Food” campaign policy of the Government of Assam accelerated the movements of East Bengal peasants from their own land to Assam. The speculative nature of some Government servants and other local people help the East Bengal peasants to come to Assam.

The number of East Bengal migrants increased day by day in the district of the Brahmaputra Valley. In 1921 the East Bengali settlers had moved up the Brahmaputra valley and formed 14% of the population of Nowgaon district. It is recorded in one of the Government publications that, “Next to Goalpara, Nowgong become the favourite district of these invaders immigrants who by 1921 were much more in Nowgong than any other district of Assam except Goalpara. There the number increased rapidly from 4000 in 1911 to 58,000 and 1,20,000 in 1921 and 1951 respectively. The main current of this immigrants was from the Mymensing district, immigrants from which stood at 1000 in 1911 and subsequently increased to 52,000 and 1,08,000 in 1921 and 1931 respectively”.

Though initially the number of peasants from East Bengal came to Assam was small in number later on it became large. The total number of such kind of migrants (only from Mymensing district) in 1921 was nearly 3,00,000 which rose to 5,00,000 in 1941. There were 16,96,978 Muslim peasants against 32,22,377 Hindus in the Brahmaputra valley in 1941. Definitely the large-scale immigration made an impact on the economic and demographic pattern of Assam.

Inflow of Foreigners into Assam

The high rate of increase in the size of population of Assam is due to the cause of large-scale migration of population into Assam from the neighboring countries. Assam has been experiencing a high rate of growth of population since 1901 and more particularly since 1951. In Assam the size of population has increased considerably from 33 lakhs in 1901 to 224 lakhs in 1991 showing a growth of over 579 percent during the last 90-year period, whereas India as a whole experienced a growth of population by 255 percent. The growth rate of population in Assam was all along high since 1921 i.e., around 20 percent and became very high since 1961 i.e., around 35 percent as compared to that of around 24% for all India. The estimated decadal migration as percentage of total population in Assam were 9%, 6%, 11% and 7% during 1911-21, 1941-51, 1951-61, and 1961-71 respectively and that of total estimated number of migrants were 0.4 million, 0.5 million, 1.2 million and 1.0 million during the respective decades.

The study of Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD) revealed that the size of migration of people to Assam between 1951 and 1991 was 28,75,492 and of this, the size of the illegal foreign migrants to the state, during the period was 12,98,754. The study again revealed that during the same period, the estimated number of total foreign migrants who entered the state was 19,83,755 and out of which 6,85,001 were the legal migrants as they reported their place of birth.



After the partition of the country, there was a huge influx of Hindu refugees from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to adjoining states like Assam, Tripura, West Bengal etc. They gradually settled down in different areas of the state which were close to urban centres as well as in rural areas where they have some relations or linguistic affinity. The influx of Muslim farm settlers from East Bengal become slow for a short period but the same flow again began to rise in the past 1951 period and they started to settle in Government waste land, forest land, grazing land and low-lying char areas. Besides, a good number of Nepali people started to flow into the state from Nepal and they started to settle in the hilly slope areas for dairy farming which were not in the knowledge of local people or administration.

After 1947, huge number of people from other states of India has also started to settle in Assam and other North Eastern states and engaged themselves in various trade, business, industry, profession etc. Actually, it is very difficult to estimate the exact number of such migrated people from other states of the country. Again, it has been estimated that since 1951 to 1971 nearly 25 to 30 lakhs people have migrated to Assam from outside the state. Moreover, in the post 1971 period, another 10 to 15 lakh of people is estimated to have entered into Assam from outside the state. It can be guessed that about 75% of these migrants came from the neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal.

Impact of Migration on the Economy of Assam

Migration is one of the main causes for rapid growth of population. There is a huge shift of population from migration of population in Assam. Assam is experiencing three different types of migration, i.e., intra-state migration, inter-state migration and inter-country migration. There is a huge extent of intra-state migration of population in Assam from rural to urban areas of the state in search of better employment opportunities and better social services related to education, health etc. This type of intra-state migration does not increase the size of population but it simply changes the rural-urban composition of the population structure of the state. Assam is experiencing the inter-state migration where people from different states of the country are migrating to Assam on various socio-economic grounds. Due to the cause of growing industrialization and expansion of trade and commerce in the urban and semi-urban areas of Assam, a huge number of populations has migrated to the urban areas of the state from other states of India. This type of migration is essential in the initial stages of development of region as it provides capital, efficient manpower etc. Assam is facing the inter-country migration or immigration of population from the neighbouring countries. There is a huge number of immigrations of population from the neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, East Pakistan, Nepal etc. which causes a high rate of growth of population in Assam.

Moreover, inflow of East Bengal peasants and the settlement of land with them made an impact on the economy as well as the agriculture of Assam particularly of the Brahmaputra valley. As a result of settlement of the wasteland the cultivable land increased which contributed to the agricultural products. It is recorded in Government document that only in Darrang district “the area under food crops has increased by 38.5% that under oil seeds by 38% and under jute by 39%”.



Generally, migration of population from foreign countries is more harmful than migration taking place within a country. It is correct to say that migration of population from one country to another is due to the cause of unfavourable economic conditions of the people residing in the country. In general, the people from Bangladesh and Nepal are migrating to Assam due to the cause of adverse economic conditions prevailing in their countries. A huge number of people from Bangladesh, suffering from devastating floods and cyclones, are migrating to Assam for better living, creating a huge problem for the state. Such type of migration usually creates an impact on the economy as well as the agriculture of Assam.

The pressure of population in Assam is too high. Moreover, the inflow of population from neighbouring countries makes another pressure of population in Assam. Under this situation the increase of population in Assam at a quicker pace has created serious impact on the economy. The unexpected growth rate of population in Assam especially due to the cause of immigration has been creating the problem of low per capita income, poverty, food, unemployment, social, capital formation, inequality etc, which are directly and indirectly related with economic problem. Moreover, the continuous flow of immigrants into Assam put heavy pressure on land which led to decline in output per worker and enhanced the problem of disguised unemployment in this sector. Hence it leads to irreparable loss to the economy of Assam.

It is obvious that before independence the inflow of labour into Assam was not the major problem in Assam. There was no sufficient labour in Assam to utilize the land and resources of Assam for its development. But after independence there exist sufficient labour in Assam. That is why the inflow of labour from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and some others has become a burden. They create some problems and are in a position to retard the economic development of the state.

Conclusion

The movement of population, usually called human migration, is one of the important parts of history of social science. Human migration has wider economic, social, demographic, political and ecological implications. In practice, it is seen that there are some factors which tend to move people between nations as well as between places within the national boundaries or borders. For a large country like India, the study of movement of population in different parts of the country helps in understanding the dynamics of the society better. There is also a huge shift of population from migration of population in Assam. An increase in density of population due to the cause of immigration of a particular place brings more pressure on resources. The new migrated peoples may enhance the capacity of exploit resources potential more scientifically of the place where they arrive. The most important factor that led the people to move from one place to another is the economy of their home-land and of the place to where they migrate. The ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors in this regard are usually considered as provoking factors which mainly motivate persons for migration and certainly it occurs as a search for opportunity to improve one’s lot in life elsewhere.



It is clear from our discussion that migration can provide both positive and negative impact in a region or a country. It is to be noted that we should find out the causes and trend of immigration into Assam and to take the necessary steps to tackle the problems created by the immigrants to Safe the state creating a favourable atmosphere in the socio-economic and political situation.

References:

1. Dhar P.K. (2005)The Economy of Assam.
2. Dr. Baruah Sagar (2011) Migration from East Bengal to Assam.
3. Jhingan M.L., Bhatt. B.K., Desai.J.N. (2005) Demography.
4. <http://www.friendsofbjp.orgcontent/immigration-problem-assam-backgrounder>.
5. Newspaper - “The Assam Tribune “.