

## **Immigration problem and its impact on Assamese community**

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### **Abstract**

Immigration is a serious problem in Assam. People migrate from one place to another place for many reasons. Immigration is a natural phenomenon. Its impact are very wide spread like economic, social, political, religious, and others. Immigration is like a virus that effects the day to day lives of Assamese community. Immigration causes population explosion, excess pressure on land, environmental degradation, worse effect on labour market, price rise, social and political issues. Large number of illegal migrants from Bangladesh over several decades has been causing the demographic condition of the state. It poses a great threat both to the identity of the Assamese people to a minority in their own state as happened in other parts of North East especially in Tripura and Sikkim. Immigration problem is a great challenges for for indigenious Assamese peoples. There are certain suggestations for betterment of the problem

**Keywords:** phenomenon, immigration, population explosion, demographic, treaty, degradation

### **Introduction**

Immigration is a serious problem in Assam. People migrate from one place to another place for various reasons. Immigration is a natural phenomenon. Its impact is very wide spread in various fields like economic, social, political, religious and various others. Immigration causes population explosion, excess pressure on land, environmental degradation, and worse effect of labor market, price rise and social problems etc.

### **Significance of the study**

Huge numbers of illegal population, from Bangladesh over several decades has been causing the demographic condition of the state. It poses great threat both to the identity of Assamese people to a minority in their own state as happened in Tripura, Sikkim and other parts of North East India. Illegal migrants have been defined in Assam accord as those who infiltrated illegally after 24th December 1971. In Assam, the Assam agitation against illegal migrants had started from 1979 and ended in 1985 led by All Assam Students Union and more than 800 talented students had sacrificed their lives for the sake of the land. They were regarded as 'son of the soil'.

### **Background of the study**

Immigration is a virus. Immigration in Assam has its own history. The fact is that immigration begins much before partition. There must have been movement of people between the neighboring regions of North Bengal and Immigration is like a virus in our Assamese community. Immigration in Assam has the North East for many centuries before the East India Company annexed the region through the Yandaboo Treaty with the Burmese Emperor, in February 1886 and other conquests are followed. Immigration in its modern form however, began with British policy of 1891, to encourage, peasants from East Bengal to cultivate waste land in western Assam to grow more food and earn more land revenue for the state. The British developed the tea industry in Assam. They imported tea

laborers from Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha specially tribe to work in the tea gardens. The Assamese people cultivate one crop per year; they are not interested in working as labor neither in tea garden nor in increasing or expanding land cultivation to meet the additional requirement of food for the large population employed in the tea gardens. Therefore, the British government favoured the Bengali Muslim peasants from Bangladesh to move into lower Assam for cultivating the 'waste lands'. This is the clear example of illegal migration and there is a continuous movement between illegal and indigenious Assamese people. The Bengali Muslims were hard working cultivators who occupied the vacant waste lands and put that area under cultivation. They made a significant contribution to the agricultural economy of Assam.

Still Immigration continues to be treated as political issues because of threat to people's land and identity and political parties exploit it for their own objectives. The opposition rightly accuses the ruling party of using immigrants as vote bank. Neither government took any major steps against the immigration problem.

### **Objectives of study**

#### **The main objectives of the study are**

- To explore the socio-economic condition of Assamese community after immigration from Bangladesh.
- To explain the demographic structure of Assam after immigration
- To study the impact of Assamese culture, language and political scenario upon Assamese community.

### **Methodology of the study**

This study is mainly based on the secondary data from various published reports. Analysis has also been drawn from various text books, articles, journals and related websites

### **The main causes of immigration problem in Assam.**

- Population- population is the main reason for

immigration problem in Assam. Population is increasing very fast as a result of immigration. Assam's population is now 3, 11, 69, 272 as per census report 2011. There are about 10.7 million Muslims in the state of Assam, forming over 34% population of the state. The highest growth rate recorded is Dhubri district about 24.40% closely followed by Morigaon 23.395 and Goalpara is 22.74%. The lowest growth rate recorded in Kokrajhar district. Out of the total districts eight districts are registered as highest in quantity. The total population of Assam in 2001 was 2,66,55,528 but according to latest report the total number of population at present is 3,11,69,272 which grows at a population by 45,13,744 persons. While the male population rose to 1, 59, 54,927 scoring a growth of 15.81% the women population stood at 1, 52, and 14,345 with growth of 18.14%.

- Pressure on Land—The Muslims migrants have posted is multidimensional. They have entered Assam as landless cultivators. Most of them are very poor and illiterate. They do not have any land for their shelter. But they usurped lands, often under political patronage everywhere in Assam right from the fallow government land to reserve forests to even agricultural land belonging to indigenous people in more remote areas. The traditional common property resources of the indigenous communities have been encroached in this process. This is one important source of tribal immigrant's conflict in contemporary Assam. Besides the huge demographic strength the Muslims migrants are today are in a position to dominate the entire political scenario of Assam.
- Price rise – Price rise is one of the important problems of immigration in Assam. Due to huge illegal migrants, the population increases rapidly but the agricultural products are not increasingly at the same ratio. As results, the price of agricultural products and other commodities are increasingly day by day in Assam.
- Environmental Degradation - Increase of huge population growth is the root causes of environmental degradation in Assam. Increasing of slam area in and around the city and production of huge wastes has a large scale contribution in environmental degradation.
- Effects of Labor Market and Economy- In major cities of Assam, the labor market is almost captured by Muslims immigrants. The Muslims immigrant are provided service at very low cost than the local labor and as a results the local laborer are deprived from earning their livelihood from house hold work to agricultural fields also. Consequently, the existing of former home laborers has to leave their job or to work at lower wage rate.
- Social Problem- The immigrants have some particular religious and linguistic characteristics which differ from the indigenous social structure. Many poor immigrants are involved in anti- social and criminal activities due to struggle for their existence. Which directly or indirectly affects society? The social fear is that the Assamese way of life will get subverted and affected once the migrant dominate the state. A strong impact is also envisioned in the spheres of language and religion. Assam, being a Hindu majority state, fears that it will become Muslims dominated state due to influx of illegal migrants. This is also become a strong

resentment between Assamese Muslims, who have made Assam their home for centuries.

### Recommendations for Improvement

- Awareness should be promoted about illegal migration into Assam being not only a threat to the identity of Assamese people but what is more, being a grave threat to our national security.
- Border fencing in Assam should be completed on a war footing. Observation towers and lighting should be provided on the same scale as in Punjab.
- Electronic and printing media should play very vital role regarding the immigration problem in Assam.
- All country boats, playing in the river near the border should be registered and their registration numbers marked on them.
- Vacant Chars in the river should be handed over to the Forest Department and trees planted on them.
- Effective arrangement should be made for registration of births and deaths.
- Multi-purpose photo identity cards should be provided to all our nationals. Districts bordering Bangladesh should be accorded high priority.

### Conclusion

We may now conclude that immigration problem is a serious problem for the indigenous citizens of Assam. The central as well as Assam government has already taken several measures to check the illegal migrants in Assam. The Assam accord was signed between the central government under the prime minister ship of Rajiv Gandhi and the delegates of All Assam Students Union led by PK Mahanta on 15th August 1985. According to this accord, those who came back to Assam before 24<sup>th</sup> March 1971 they were treated as citizens of Assam. The National Register of Citizenship (NRC) is register of all Indian Citizens whose creation is mandated by the 2003 amendment of the Citizenship Act, 1955. Its purpose is to identify all the legal citizens of India, so that the illegal migrants can be identified and deported. The government of India plan to implement in rest of India with in 2021. The Supreme Court directing and monitoring the NRC process in 2013 and the final report was published on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019, contained 33 million names out of its population leaving out 19 lakh (1.9 million). It believes that several legitimate Indian citizens were also excluded in spite of certain valid documents and many illegal Bangladeshi foreigners were included. The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 was passed by the Indian Parliament on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2019, it amended the Act of 1955 by providing the path to Indian citizen for illegal migrants of Hindu, Sikhs, Buddhist, Jainism, Parsi and Christian religious minorities who had fled persecution from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan before December 2014. Muslims from those countries were not given eligibility.

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