

The Impact of Migration on Assam's Demography: A Historical Analysis

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Abstract: This paper examines the impact of migration on Assam's demography, tracing the historical context and patterns of migration from the colonial era to the present-day. It analyzes the demographic changes resulting from the influx of people from various regions and countries, including changes in population growth, ethnic composition, and urbanization. The study highlights the cultural, economic and social implications of migration on Assam's society, including both opportunities and challenges. By providing a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics of migration in Assam, this research aims to inform inclusive and sustainable development policies that cater to the needs of all communities.

Keywords: Migration, Demography, Assam, Historical Analysis, Population Growth, Ethnic Composition, Urbanization.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Assam, a northeastern state of India, has experienced significant migration throughout its history. The influx of people from various regions and countries has shaped the state's demography, economy and culture. This paper examines the impact of migration on Assam's demography, focusing on the historical context, migration patterns and demographic changes occurred during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Historically, Assam's fertile lands, economic opportunities such as the tea industry, and its strategic geographic location have attracted migrants. Beginning in the colonial era with the arrival of tea laborers from other parts of India, migration patterns have evolved to large-scale immigration from East Bengal (Now Bangladesh) and Nepal. These migratory waves have contributed to rapid population growth, which outpaces the national average and have reshaped the socio-economic and political fabric of Assam.

The demographic changes driven by migration have created complex challenges for Assam. The indigenous communities face concerns over cultural identity, as migration alters the ethnic and religious makeup, potentially relegating some native groups to minorities in their ancestral lands. Economically, the increase in population has intensified land pressure, unemployment, and competition for resources. Socially, particularly migration has been linked to ethnic tensions and conflicts complicating governance and regional stability.

Understanding the impact of migration on Assam's demography is crucial. It provides insight into the changing population dynamics and highlights the socio-economic and cultural issues that need to be addressed for sustainable development and social harmony in the region.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Assam's strategic location and natural resources have made it an attractive destination for migrants. The state's history of migration dates back to the medieval period, with the Ahom kingdom's interactions with neighboring regions and the influx of people from present-day Bangladesh. However, the most significant migration waves occurred during the colonial and post-colonial periods.

➤ Migration Patterns

- Colonial Era (1826-1947): The British colonial administration encouraged migration to Assam to exploit its natural resources, particularly tea, coal and oil. Laborers from other parts of India, such as Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were brought to work in tea gardens. This led to a significant influx of people from other regions.
- Post partition (1947-1960s)- Following India's partition a large number of refugees from East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh) migrated to Assam. This influx continued in the subsequent decades, with many migrants settling in the state's rural and urban areas.

- Economic Migration (1970s-1999s): Assam's economic growth and development opportunities attracted migrants from other parts of India, particularly from neighbouring state's like west Bengal, Bihar and Nepal.

➤ Demographic Changes

- population Growth: Migration has contributed significantly to Assam's population growth. The state's population increased from approximately 30 lakhs in 1901 to over 3 crores in 2011.
- Changes in Ethnic Composition: Migration has altered the ethnic composition of Assam's population. The indigenous Assamese population has been influenced by the influx of people from other regions, leading to changes in the state's cultural and linguistic landscape.
- Urbanization: Migration has contributed to urbanization in Assam, with many migrants setting in cities like Guwahati, Jorhat and Dibrugarh Impact on Assam's Demography.
- Cultural Diversity: Migration has enriched Assam's cultural diversity, with the state becoming a melting pot of different languages, customs and traditions.
- Economic Growth: Migrants have contributed to Assam's economic growth, particularly in the tea, agriculture and service sector's.
- Challenges: However, migration has also posed challenges, such as pressure on infrastructure, resources, and social services. The influx of migrants has also led to tension's between different communities, particularly in areas with limited resources.

Rigorous study on the impact of migration on Assam's demography.

III. CONCLUSION

Migration has had a profound impact on Assam's demography, shaping the states population, economy and culture. Understanding the historical context and patterns of migration is crucial for addressing the challenges and opportunities arising from this phenomenon. By examining the impact of migration on Assam's demography, this paper highlights the need for inclusive and sustainable development policies that cater to the needs of all communities. Migration has been a defining force in shaping Assam's demographic character from the colonial era to the present day Initiated under British rule to meet plantation and agricultural labour needs large-scale movements-especially from East Bengal-triggered profound and lasting transformations in the states population structure, ethnic composition, and cultural identity. While these migrations contributed to economic developments, they also sowed the seeds of socio-political tensions, resource competition and identity based conflicts. In the post-independence period, continued cross-border migration, mainly from Bangladesh, has further accelerated demographic change, deeping concerns over cultural preservation, land right and political representation for indigenous communities.

Today, the challenge lies in addressing the demographic realities created over more than a century of migration. This calls for partition that can balance humanitarian consideration with the protection of Assam's indigenous heritage,socio-economic stability and environmental sustainability. Migration in this sense, both a source of diversity of catalyst for conflicts, its legacy will continue to shape Assam's future unless approached with longevity,i nclusive and foresight.

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