

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

POPULATION GROWTH, MIGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE
IN DISTRICTS OF LOWER BRAHMAPUTRA AND BARAK VALLEY,
CAUSES, ISSUES AND ITS IMPACT

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Ritesh Prasad, Population Growth, Migration and Demographic Change in Districts of Lower Brahmaputra and Barak Valley, Causes, Issues and Its Impact, -- Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology 18(5), 511-518. ISSN 1567-214x

Keywords: Growth Rate, Demography, Migration, Population, Consequences.

ABSTRACT

Assam Bani a popular weekly magazine after analyzing census data of Assam between 1971-1991 in August 18, 1994 edition that Hindu had a growth rate of 41.89% and Muslims 77.42% and it is argued that excess growth rate of Muslims was primarily because of migration from Bangladesh. The Brahmaputra valley plains provide good soil for agriculture and in the late 19th century British settle Bangladeshi Muslim in Assam for cultivation through British policy of 'GROW MORE FOOD'. With many events of war, genocide etc. Bangladeshi people migrated to this place without any documentation. The exponent growth among their population and demographic change in these plains along Barak and Brahmaputra valley in lower Assam raised fear among the local population of their identity, uniqueness, culture, economic and political opportunities. This paper will identify the districts with high load of migrant population. The share of Muslim Bangla speaking population and other. This paper will also analyse the trend of population Growth natural and actual and contribution of migration. Interpret the exceptional demographic change its impact and consequences.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective to write this paper is to

1. Identify the cause of increasing growth of Muslim Population in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley of Assam.
2. Cause and consequences of migration and its impact.
3. To evaluate and analyse the demographic change and its impact on the local culture.

METHODOLOGY

This paper which focus mainly on the demographic change in the lower Brahmaputra valley of Assam and its districts. As there is increase in growth rate of Muslim population in lower Assam and the reason is debatable. The reasons of high growth rate and migration issues and illegal settlement will be mined. The data is drawn from the secondary sources like Census of India reports and documents of government based and few authentic books are referred. The data abstracted from different trustful sources are tabled and organized to analyse and interpret facts to gain the goal of this paper. And to come up with strong conclusion. Few primary data are also collected through telephonic interviews. In the interview the interviewed person is asked about the atmosphere and social harmony of their place, their views and expectations etc.

INTRODUCTION

Assam is the gateway of northeast India. Surrounded by two countries. North Bhutan and in south it is Bangladesh. And other north eastern states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur etc. Assam shares 267.5 km international boundary with Bangladesh and most of the infiltrators are seen crossing boundaries for better livelihood than Bangladesh. The district with length of international boundary with Indo Bangladesh are as follows-

Karimganj- Bangla= 3km
Cahchar -Bangla = 70 km
Dhubri -Bangla = 90km
South Salmara Mankachan – Bangla = 63

Assam with 33 administrative districts as after adding 5 more districts on 15 august 2015. Majuli is the most recent and 1st River Island District declared on 17 June 2016. There are 54 subdivisions, 2489 village panchayat which cover around 26247 villages in Assam. The state has 3 autonomous council for example Bodoland Autonomous Territorial Council (BATC). And 12 statutory Autonomous Council for various Tribal Communities.

Assam has high population growth rate. Mainly share contributed by bangali speaking muslims migrated from Bangladesh. Intellectuals in Assam like the editor of 'THE SENTINAL' Dhiren Bezboruah has concerns that "Assam would be part of Greater Bangladesh" with districts like Dhuburi and Goalpara which is witnessing a change of demographic profile with migrant dominant while other district like Barpeta, Nalbari, Nagoan, Darang are also heading in that direction.

Illegal migrant has been defined in Assam Accord as those who infiltrated illegally after 24 December 1971. However, whoever infiltrated between 1 January 1966 and 24 December 1971 was not to be deported and to be given Indian Citizenship after a lapse of 10 year. Though Hindu were treated as refugee of in 1947 but could not be treated for ever post 1971. Though census has been covered out to determine the number of illegal migrants and no

authentic and precise date is available both on the basis of estimates, extrapolation and various indicators their numbers run into millions.

There are many students which focus on socio economic ethno political issues to migration. But this issue has vital importance these decades and ongoing years with rising political awareness. Weiner (1978) takes an in-depth look into the social and political conflict cleavages that have resulted from the responses of the indigenous population to migration into Assam. Hazarika (1994) discusses migration into Assam and other north eastern states as a part of the historical and political context of the rise of insurgency and violence in recent times. Weiner and Katzenstein (1981) together evaluated government preferred policies toward native tribe who lag behind the migrants on grabbing economic opportunities in the state. Myron Weiner compared rest of the India and Assam's growth rate of 1st eight decade of century. Surprisingly the decadal population growth is much higher than that of rest of the country. One of the causes may be high proportion of migrant population. If the growth level of population would have been same as India than the population would have been 95 lakhs rather than 1crore 99 lakh in 1881. Hazarika 1999 highlighted cause of Bangladeshi migrating India on personal interview basis and basically for the better economic opportunity. Using 1971 and 1991 census data Kumar and Agrawal (2013) urbanisation and distance are cause of internal migration and difference in earning is the cause of international migration. Significantly Roy (2005) discusses various economic incentive and social networking between them eliminating the policy implementation and benefitting from the loopholes and get the identity and other benefits.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

District With Majority of Muslim Population

SL.NO	DISTRICT	POPULATION	MUSLIM (%)	HINDU (%)
1.	DHUBRI	1949258	79.67	19.92
2.	NAGOAN	2823768	55.36	43.39
3.	MORIGOAN	957423	52.56	47.20
4.	DARANG	928500	64.34	35.25
5.	BORPETA	1693622	70.74	29.11
6.	GOALPARA	1008183	57.52	34.51
7.	BONGAIGOAN	738804	50.22	48.61
8.	KARIMGANJ	1228686	56.36	42.48
9.	HAILAKANDI	659296	60.31	38.10

Fig 1: Secondary Data, Census of India

The approximate population of Assam according to the 2011 census is 3.12 crore and 2.67 crores was in 2001 respectively that is 31205576 (2011) and 26655528(2001). With Population growth of 17.07% in (2011) and 18.55% in (2001). In Assam out of 27 districts (2011 census) out of 14 districts, 14 districts witnessed a population growth rate more than the State growth rate. The 14 districts are Dhubri, Morigoan, Goalpara, Darang, Nagoan, Karimganj,

Hailakandi, Barpeta, Bongaigoan, Cachar, Dhemaji, Kamrup(M), Karbi Anglong and Lakhimpur. According to the census data India grew by 17.7% (2001-2011) against 21.5% (1991-2001), Population of Assam grew by 17.07 during (2001-11) against 18.92% between (1991-2001). Here urban area growth area was higher than the rural area that is 27.89 and 15.47 respectively. And religious minority-dominated districts in lower Assam have a growth rate of 20%-24% during the last decade against upper Assam districts which register around 9 percent growth rate. Where the religious minority-dominated districts share an international boundary with Bangladesh. The districts which are Muslim-dominated with a commanding majority are located in the lower Assam of Brahmaputra and Barak valley. In Brahmaputra valley Muslim population in Nagoan (55.36%), Dhubri (79.67%), South Salmora (95.2%), Goalpara (57.52%), Bongaigaon (50.22%), Barpeta (70.74%), Darrang (64.34%), Morigoan (52.56%). Whereas in Barak Valley the population share of Muslims as in Hailakandi is (60.31%). In Karimganj (56.36%). The districts which share a boundary with Bangladesh are Kokrajhar, Cachar, Dhubri, and South Salmora Mankachar. In some of the Sub Districts in Lower Assam Muslim population is more than 90% and in another six sub-districts which range between 80-90 percent. The Muslim share of the population in these sub-districts could not have possibly near to level 90% and above through only high growth rate but require reduction of the no. of another religious person. Here the level of dominance increased over time due to the decline of the Hindu population and continuous shrinkage of the Hindu population in this area unveils the bitter truth of out-migration of Hindus to other places because of various social and cultural reasons. Out of 1.07 crore Muslim in Brahmaputra Valley with districts like Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, and Nagoan 74 lakh populations is settled and in Barak Valley other 17.5 lakh. Among these valleys, their population is low only in Kamrup Metropolitan and Sonitpur District. In the lower Brahmaputra plain, they have complete dominance with a population increasing in Bodoland district areas. If we ignore Kamrup Rural, Kamrup Metropolitan, Nalbari, and Sonitpur District then their population share goes up to 61 percent.

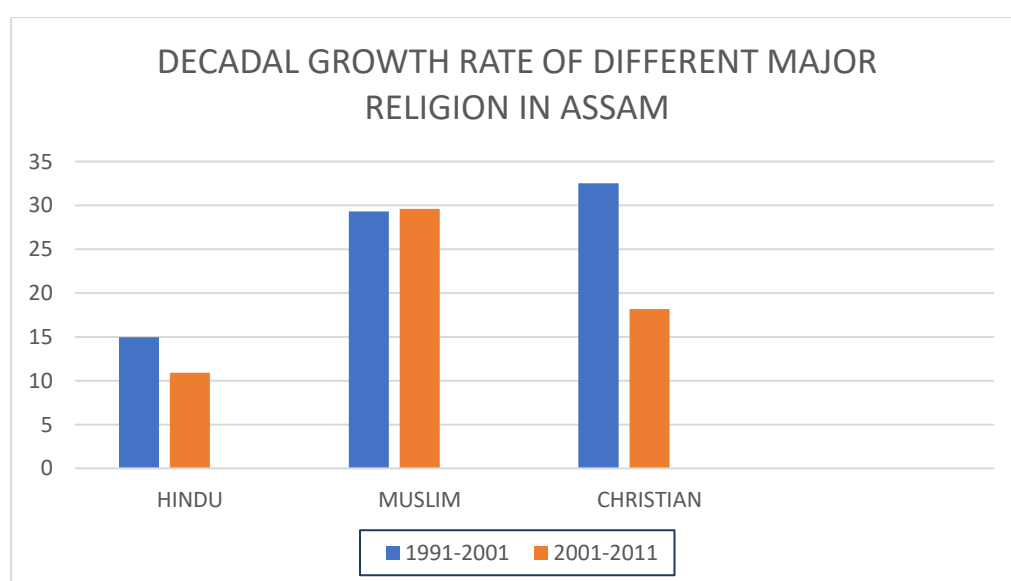


Fig 1.2 Secondary Data, Census of India 2011

If we come across the decadal growth rate as compare to other religions in Assam. In the last two decade the Hindu population grows at 18.92(1991-2001) and 17.07(2001-2011). Muslims 29.30(1991-2001) and 29.59(2001-2011). While other two religion with Christians it is 32.54(1991-2001) to 18.17(2001-2011). The total growth rate of state has decrease since last decade from 18.92 (1991-2001) to 17.07(2001-2011). And with the same decreasing trend both Hindus and Christians population decreases. Where Hindu decadal growth rate decreases with 4.06 while Christians decadal growth rate decreases with tremendous figure of about 14.37 but Muslim decadal growth rate managed to add 0.29% more. though at National Level this community marks fall in growth rate but manage to add in Assam.

Assam Religious Data (Major)

Religion	Population (absolute)	Percentage (%)
Hindu	19180759	61.47
Muslim	10679345	34.22
Christian	1165867	3.74
Buddhist	54993	0.18

Fig 1.3 Census of India Data, 2001

According to Assam Religious Data by Census 2011. The Share of Hindu Population in 61.47% and Muslim is 34.22% while Christian is 3.74%. And to 2019 the share of Muslim population has increased to 38% according to various reports.

Higher Accretion in Muslim Numbers

	Accretion (2001-11)	Accretion(%share)
Total	4550048	100
Hindu	1884304	41.41
Muslim	2438734	53.60

Muslim growth rate is 19.6% in (2001-2011) is 2.7 times of Hindu at 10.9% that is more Muslim than Hindu have been added in the decade. As an outcome during 2001-11 their accretion to their no. is much higher than others. That is out of 45.5 lakh additional person in Assam 24.4 lakh are Muslims and only 18.8 lakh are Hindus. In other way it is more than half population added is Muslims. The decline in the share of Hindus and rise of share in Muslim in Assam in last decade is highest in India indeed extraordinary.

MIGRATION AND GROWTH RATE ISSUES OF ASSAM.

India is a destination for refugees in South Asia. Many of the refugees in South Asia. Many of the refugees and migrants came and settle from Tibet, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. But Bangladeshi migrants are non-documented thus illegal and left unattended. India shares 4096 km of the boundary with Bangladesh. And the states that share the Bangladeshi

boundary are west Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.

There is no reliable force of exact figure of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh in India. They came to India in three waves. In 1946-1951 about 274455 Hindu Bengali refugees had arrived from what is called Bangladesh (former East Pakistan) as a permanent settlement in Assam. The 1965 war with Pakistan triggered communal violence in East Pakistan which is now Bangladesh that was the push factor and the Hindu Bengali population migrated for safety and 1971. Assam was home to thousands of camps of around 347555 refugees. Which include a person of all background fleeing the war?

Assam minority development board announced a plan to differentiate illegal Bangladeshi Muslims from the indigenous Muslims of the state whereas according to the board there are 1.3 Crore Muslims in the state of which 90 lakhs are of Bangladeshi origin. According to Hemanta Sarkar who is a Hindu and migrated from Bangladesh in 1991. as stated twenty-seven Hindu families migrated with eighty-seven Muslim families from Raiganj in Bangladesh for Assam. A maximum of Muslim families settled in Dhubri district and few came to Nagaon district without any documentation as the border is porous and not checked. The strange fact is that all the migrants who migrated from Bangladesh along with Hemanta Sarkar have names listed in the NRC document released by the Government of India. And the populated district with a Muslim majority can be related to the trend and source of migration. In the same manner, there is no documented data on illegal migrants and it is assumed that over 60 lakh are illegal migrants.

The fertility rate is the actual number of children born alive to women. Female between 15-49 have the capacity to bear children. Their fertility rate is high among them because they have big family size, girls are married at the early ages. Lack of education, poverty, and awareness makes them socially backward making them vulnerable to Propagandas and agendas.

Assam and West Bengal are at the periphery of Bangladesh and they share boundaries. The Bengali Muslims migrated to West Bengal also but in west Bengal already the population density was more than Assam. And migration process is predominantly short distance. The volume of migration increases with distance. As the distance from the center of absorption increases, the volume of migration decreases. The social structure and language in lower Assam were familiar to Bangladeshi migrants. So, the settled and the new settlement gave the opportunity to other illegal migrants to flourish and nurture their growth. They exploited the geographical conditions and political nature of the Indian government. And with their exponential growth rate. The few lower districts which have a population of 30%-40% of Muslims in next two decade will command the majority and the consequences could be negative side as they have nothing in common in religious practice and tradition with Assamese Hindus

CONCLUSION

Within the state of Assam, many ethnic tribe's residents are endemic to this land having their own language, tradition, custom, and culture. Their population is

very small so they want protection both economically and politically. In 2012 violent clash took place Starting in the Kokrajhar district and adjoining it. And in the clash 53 people died, 11 missing and 4 lakhs displaced. This clash started between BODOLAND LIBERATION TIGER (BLT) group and the ASSAM MINORITY STUDENT UNION on 4th July at Magurmari (Kokrajhar). If we dig the depth of the cause according to the local peoples interviewed that it was the clash for the injustice of opportunity of Bodo people who are the largest ethno linguistic group of Assam with 14.5 lakh population by the illegal migrant Muslim population who are more than 80 lakh and are Bengali speaking Muslims and later group consider them as illegal who are hijacking their jobs lands and opportunities both economically and politically. The illegal migration was ignored and was not taken the situation seriously as they serve as the base of the vote bank. Now hardly any political party would form their government without Muslim's support as in India voting factor is still very much on caste and religion and region. So, there is always a chance of using the soft hand on them. With more Muslim appeasement politics other Hindu Assamese communities and indigenou tribesman in Brahmaputra and Barak Valley. But the other tribes and Assamese Hindu Community saw themselves vulnerable cheated and deprived of their rights and opportunities. Media also did address this issue and ignored it initially. Later though the national media took this issue but were partial to migrant Muslims and termed the Bodo community as militant sympathizers according to Ranjit Basumatari from Kokrajhar. From 1994 to 1997, 57 out of 127 constituencies in Assam showed an increase of 20% in the number of voters where all India's average was 7.4% and an additional unnatural increase in the number of voters in Assam was by dubious means. This illegal migration into Assam from Bangladesh has been not only increasing their numbers and taking opportunities for local residents and also posing a serious security threat. The Assamese people also fear turning themselves into a minority as happen in Tripura and Sikkim. It adversely affects the social, economic, and political environment of Assam. It may create serious law and order problems if this is furthered ignored. The mosque is radicalizing and harboring the radical mind. The new mosque near the borders of Assam and to another side in Bangladesh working on the agenda of greater Bangladesh.

The upper Brahmaputra plain districts which comprise Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) has less population of Bengali Muslims through Kokrajhar accounts for 28.44%. This is because in 2012 four lakh Bangla-speaking Muslims were bound to flee because of the killing and attacked by the NDFB militants into their villages.

The illegal immigrants are outnumbering the local population and indigenou people and communities are about to lose their unique identity. There are various reasons but here are some facts –The unemployment rate is 61 per 1000 against the National average of 50 (Unemployment rate 2015-16, Ministry of labour and empowerment, Government of India)

Agriculture accounts a third of SDP which provides employment for 69% of the population. The burden will increase the rate of distinguished unemployment. Urban unemployment in Assam is very high at 10%. It will further increase as many migrants are settling in the urban areas for piety jobs and from selling

fruits, construction worker, labourers, rickshaw puller to the vegetable vendor, etc. they are dominating each sector.

Demographic dividend from working-age population (15.59%) year will increase from 58% in 2001 to 64% in 2021(census projection report). Assam with younger, employable cohort will face enormous challenges economically, socially, and politically.

There are other contributing factors as infiltration of religious, ethnic, and linguistic similarity with the Indian side of the border and beyond enable them to find shelter. It makes their detection difficult. Political parties get these opportunities to build their vote bank. In a case, in Lakhimpur, four people were held by the police who were providing forged citizenship certificates for the last 14 years. The ISI of Pakistan is also pushing its agenda through Bangladesh to radicalize and break India which poses a serious threat and an internal security challenge.

It is very important to control the population and check its growth. This will help in the optimum distribution of resources and government initiatives. The state government has also moved to introduce population control in government jobs from 2021. According to the law, the parents who have more than two children will be declared ineligible to apply for the jobs in the secretariat. But just this isn't enough but a targeted approach to educate the marginalized section of the population is very important.

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