

The History of Migration into Undivided Goalpara District of Assam

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Abstract

In 1826, the British Company took a policy for more production in various systems of agriculture in the low lying damp places of Brahmaputra Valley. The company took “Grow more food” programme in Assam and subsequently imported Mymensinghia from Maymensing, Pabna, Noa-Khali, Sirajganj, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi Districts of East Bengal. Migrants from Bengal Districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bagura and Rangpur continued to come in small numbers. But as the century advanced, this migration took the form of large scale influx into the Brahmaputra Valley. As eighty five percent of them came from Mymensingh, it was not surprising that the term “Mymenshingia” becomes synonymous with immigrants. Migration after Independence is a separate matter. India attained her Independence in 1947. India was divided into two countries — India and Pakistan. Communal riot surfaced all over the country. In 1950, the riots got its highest stage. For this Nehru-Liaquat Pact was signed. In 1971, the war of Independence of East Bengal launched. Ultimately, East Bengal was separated from Pakistan and a new independent country surfaced. These are the two main causes behind the migration after India's Independence.

Keywords: Migration, District, Immigration, Goalpara, etc.

“Migration” and “Immigration” are assumed as synonyms to each other, but literally there is little difference between the two. The word “immigration” means, the people to another or from one country to another contrary for the purpose of livelihood. On the contrary, the word “migration” means the people who left one place or country for livelihood, and not for the purpose of living forever. Thus, we find that these words literally cannot mean almost the same meaning. For our purpose a migrant worker means one who has not been a local person but has come and settled here to live either temporarily or in a permanent manner.

Century after century both immigration and migration have taken place in various corners of the world and it becomes a natural phenomenon. But the migration is a process which may take place suddenly and in millions it may transfer population from one country to another changing to very great extent the vital composition of original population.

Migration has been taken place not only among the countries of the world, but also people have migrated within the states of a particular country. In India interstate migration has been taken place and it has been increasing in more and more numbers during the British colonial rule in India. After the independence of India, the constitution gave the legal scope of migration and mobility of the citizens from one place to another and from one state to another one.

Causes of Migration

Migration takes place in six stages. The separate stage bears separate causes. The common causes are earthquake, oppression of zamindars, communal riots, crisis of agricultural land, partition of Bengal, policy of government to increase more food programme, etc. There were so many causes and reasons behind the leaving of one's own country. The principal cause is economic backwardness. The economic cause determines their livelihood. Migrants from the periphery move to the core region to purpose low paying jobs that indigenous population does not wait. The migrants moved for different sets of causes and motivation. The causes and motives were like marriage, seeking education, substantial low income, in search of employment, for the purpose of business, epidemic, oppression by rulers etc. But substantial low income and need for skilled labour were the vital causes and motives for migration in India.

The immigration in Goalpara district and subsequently to the entire Brahmaputra Valley of Assam province has a long episode and some undesirable facts and causes. These facts and causes led to disclose the attacking mission of immigrants that explained in the history of immigration in Assam. The short accounts of the sources, causes and facts of immigration in Assam with special reference to Goalpara District of Assam can be discussed below.

The English merchants introduced tea-garden cultivation in the province soon after British occupation of India. This at once necessitated the recruitment of labourers for the tea plantation as such labourers were not locally available. The tea industry was responsible for bringing these labourers in a planned manner as the industry developed since the middle of the nineteenth century.

In 1826, the British Company took a policy for more production in various techniques of agriculture in the low lying damp places of Brahmaputra Valley under “Grow more food” programme in Assam and subsequently imported labourers from Maymensing, Pabna, Noa-Khali, Sirajganj, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi Districts of East Bengal.

Migrants from Bengal Districts of Mymensing, Pabna, Bagura and Rangpur continued to come in small numbers. But as the century advanced, this migration took the form of large scale influx into the Brahmaputra Valley. As eighty five percent of them came from Mymensing, it was not surprising that the term “Mymenshingia” became synonymous with immigrants.

However, according to the District Administration Report of 1973-74, in an ordinary year the production was estimated to about 135 lakh mounds of rice of which 272 lakh mounds of rice were exported, the remaining being consumed in the district.

The western part of the District of Goalpara including South Salmara, Lakhimpur and Bilasipara was the earliest and most affected. The number of immigrants till 1881 was 49059. The population of the district was increased to one point four percent (1.4%) during 1881-91 and two percent during the next decade. But between 1901 onward, the men from Mymensing advanced to Goalpara in large numbers.

Other Relevant Factors of Migration

East Bengal Zamindars oppressed, tortured and exploited their subjects and people for paying higher taxes repeatedly. On the contrary, the subjects denied to pay higher taxes and ultimately surrendered the lands. Zamindar had tortured them and driven out from that place and the latter moved to the abandoned vacant land for livelihood and social security.

In 1882 a great earthquake surfaced in East Bengal. This caused heavy damage and lost thousands of lives, crops, houses, and cultivable land. Immediately, a great epidemic spread and created havoc among the people. The earthquake victims moved towards the vacant land for their livelihood. They also came to Goalpara District of Assam, and other adjacent districts of East Bengal.

In 1847 steamer communication developed between Assam and East Bengal. Availing the developed communication, some East Bengal Muslims entered Assam in search of livelihood. In 1882, ‘Assam Bengal Line’ was also established which gave more facility to the Muslims entering Assam. The railway line extended to Moirabari of Nowgaon District, a char area for better communication where the jutes were produced by the migrant cultivators. The British Government in Assam arranged a family ticket of railway for entering Assam. In addition to these, in 1885, Gunabhiram Baruah also expressed his views that there was available plot of land for 10 lakhs of outsiders in Assam.

The above said factors were mainly responsible for migration of East Bengal cultivators into Assam in different periods of times. The western part of the district of Goalpara including South Salmara, Lakhimpur and Bilasipara was the earliest and most affected area caused by migration. The number of migrants till 1881 was 49,059. The population of the district was increased by one point four percent during 1881-91 and two percent during the next decade. But from 1901 onward, the men of Mymensingh advanced to Goalpara in large numbers.

Conclusion

Foreigners e.g. immigrant issues have created towering problems before and after independence in the state of Assam. Time to time, the government of India and the state government made some laws to solve the problems. In the sixth decade of the 20th century the government of Assam deported about three and half lakhs of so- called illegal migrants. During deportation some legal citizens were also deported with the illegal migrants. The deported people were mostly of Muslim community. After that from 1979 to 1985 under the banner of All Assam Students Union (AASU), the Assam movement started to deport illegal migrants from Assam. Ultimately, tripartite Agreement (1985) was made among the central government, the state government and AASU. Through the Agreement, a deadline of deportation was fixed. Accordingly, those who migrated to Assam after 25th March, 1971 must be deported or must leave Assam. But the Agreement was not fully implemented due to some technical reasons. In these circumstances, some chauvanist and communal branded political parties made a political issue and communalised the illegal migrant issue as Bangladeshi. Here, Bangladeshi is meant only the Muslim illegal migrants. They also seriously propagated that the illegal Muslims will be the kingmaker of the state government in near future. Goevel's theory is applying to establish the Kingmaker of the government. Now, this issue creates social problem in Assam.

Thus, the present study tries to find out the real picture and nature of migration and displacement. This study is sought to minimise social tension and controversy to a better extent.

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