

RURAL URBAN MIGRATION IN MEGHALAYA



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BY

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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Introductory Statement

With large-scale international migration becoming less and less feasible, migration within the territorial boundaries of nation states continues to be active in the process of economic development and population redistribution. This latter process is referred to as internal migration. Quantitative and qualitative aspects of internal migration has different connotation for developed and developing countries. Since a large segment of the population is already urbanized in the developed countries a turnover of migration tends to be between cities and towns. On the other hand since the majority of the population lives in the rural areas, rural to urban migration constitutes an important stream in the less developed countries. In India, for example, recent history of industrialization, development of transport nodes, administrative centres and general impetus on urbanization and demands on non-traditional modern sector jobs lead to vast transfers of population from rural to urban areas. This process traditionally has been treated as the classical stream of migration because of its nexus with modernization and industrialization of traditional societies.

Traditionally, rural to urban migration has been associated with the so called "push factor" operative at the level of towns and cities, namely better wages, better standard of living, high social over heads etc. However, it must be noted that there

could be other important demographic, social and psychological reasons, which play their part in explaining rural to urban migration.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The process of migration has been one of the most dynamic aspects of human activity since the beginning of the human civilization. Migration broadly denotes movement of people from one area to another involving changes in the spatial distribution of population. Geographers have been traditionally interested in the study of redistribution of people.

The migration process involves different types of mobility from region to region, state to state, country to country, continent to continent, rural to rural, urban to urban, rural to urban, urban to urban, seasonal, temporary, permanent etc. It is influenced by physical environment as well as socio-economic conditions in both the places, i.e., the place of origin and the place of destination of the migrants. In almost all the developing nations, rural to urban stream is assuming significant dimension due to the ongoing process of industrialization and urbanization taking place in a few selected places and nodes.

The overall picture at the all India level however, is too generalized and does not reflect the situation at micro-level, which is affected more by factors, both *regional* and *local*. The present study makes an attempt to study the patterns of migration with special reference to rural to urban stream in the state of Meghalaya -a

state characterized by hilly environment and supporting a large proportion of tribal population.

Researchers on rural to urban migration in India generally emphasize on the general conditions of the rural areas as stagnating as agriculture can no more accommodate the ever increasing population pressure or that the urban areas are attracting surplus rural population to look for a non-agrarian employment. Emphasis is laid on their socio-economic status, direction, and length of migration, literacy levels, age-sex distribution and many other characteristics. But little effort is made to understand the process of rural to urban migration as it unfolds itself in different geographical conditions. Highly generalized causes are identified which in ultimate analysis tend to take the shape of an understanding based on 'push' and 'pull' factors. In most of the studies, the 'rural' is represented as the area where poverty and other constraints are pushing vast segment of people to seek a living in the urban areas.

It is generally accepted that the hilly and tribal economies have not gone through similar experience of 'rural push' or 'urban attraction', as may be the case in the areas of greater agrarian potential. The near subsistence tribal or quasi-tribal social organization in these areas present a qualitatively different scenario when the rural to urban migration takes place. The process simply cannot be explained away as 'rural push' or 'urban attraction'.

The problem of rural to urban migration in such area need to be understood in the distinct geographical context in which it takes place. Briefly speaking the context represents itself as:

- a. The tribal areas are characterized by a low level of economic development on account of the operation of development process-both exogenic and endogenic at a low key and the majority of the population lives at a subsistence level which is a serious constraint on large scale redistribution of population.
- b. The social structure is dominated by a tribal social order based more on ethnic and clan bond, which is also seen as restrictive to large-scale migration.
- c. The urban development too is recent and is more externally induced to perform administrative functions and not related to any structural transformation of the rural economy.

Much of the tribal areas particularly in the North East continues to subsume numerous economic modes ranging from forest based hunting and gathering to the practice of shifting cultivation locally known as *jhum* in large tracts of land, whereas settled, subsistence production characterize the agrarian mode in a few favourite pockets. Spotty development of cultivation of commercial crops is a recent phenomenon as a direct consequence of urban influence in the neighbouring villages.

Given the geographical milieu, varying resource potential, tribal mode of social organization and the induced urban development, the present study proposes to explore the varying impact of resource potential in the rural areas of Meghalaya that

Meghalaya
Location Map

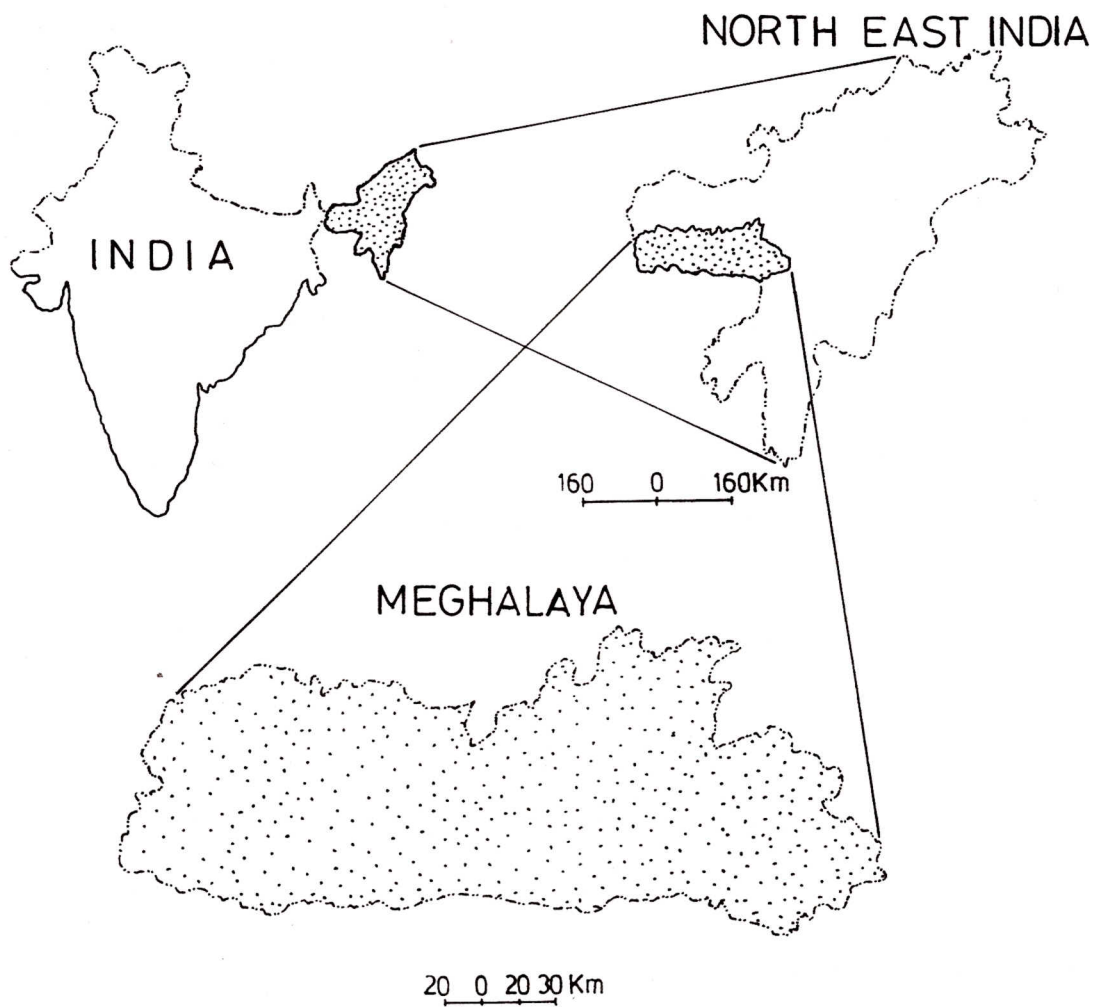


Fig 1.1

exhibits striking differences in its resource base depending upon varying ecological potential and socio-economic attributes. The study present study aims at a deeper understanding the process of rural to urban migration - however weak and feeble it may be in hilly and tribal areas - in its resource context as well as with regard to the nature of urban development.

1.3 Study Area

The Meghalaya plateau in the northeastern part of India has been selected for the present study. The selection of the region is guided by the following considerations:

- i. Tribal population overwhelmingly dominates the plateau.
- ii. The region presents striking contrasts in its resource base depending upon the ecological and social attributes and their utilization.
- iii. This is perhaps one of the very few tribal regions in the country to have a huge urban centre.

The study area is bounded in the north and the east by Assam and in the south by Bangladesh. The region has a total geographical area of 22,429 sq. km and supports a population of 17,60,626 persons as per 1991 census estimate and a population density of 78 persons per square kilometre.(Fig. 1.1).

Physiographically, Meghalaya is characterized by the erosion surfaces associated with plateau structures and hilly terrain of the pre-Cambrian age of the

Indian peninsula which have been uplifted to its present height of 600-1800 metres above the mean sea level with Shillong peak as its highest point (1961 meters). The region has been variously described as an irregular parallelogram and a tableland.

Restricted availability of valley land has forced the tribal people to practice jhum in manageable slopes. This traditional method of agriculture indicates the low level of socio-economic development in the state. Only a small zone close to the towns have experienced cultivation of cash crops and the areas in the southern part of the state have experienced some amount of horticultural development.

The state experiences fairly good amount of rainfall, which supports dense forests. Therefore, the economy revolves around agriculture and forest based works. Minerals such as coal, limestone, etc, provide the basis of works in specific location. The pace of industrialization is very slow compared to other state of the country. Nevertheless, there has been a steady growth of some small industrial units in the recent years.

The pace of urbanization has been rather slow over the past years. The total urban population contributes a little over 18 per cent (18.69) to the total population. East Khasi Hills with Shillong as the capital city of Meghalaya has contributed a major share to the growth of urban population in the states. East Khasi Hills alone claims to have 1,80,000. urban population out of the state's total of 2,41,333 accounting for 74.92 per cent. This shows that urbanization is largely confined to this

district compared to any other district of the state. However, the growth of Tura, another important township in West Garo Hills district, has been experiencing very large increase in its population i.e., from 15,489 in 1971 to 39,440 in 1981 accounting for 150 per cent increase over the decade. There is no record of increase or decrease in the West Garo Hills and East Garo Hills. The new towns of Nongstoin and Williamnagar came into being in 1981 with the creation of these two districts.¹

Table 1.1
Meghalaya: Change in Urban Population 1951-91

Year	No of Town	Total Population
1951	2	58,512
1961	6	1,17,483
1971	6	1,47,170
1981	12	2,91,333
1991	12	3,29,079

Source : Census of India, Population tables, 1991

It may be noted that the constituents of the Shillong Urban Agglomeration are reckoned as separate towns and have been classified according to the population of the agglomeration.

It is evident from the table 1.1 that the increase in urban population is a consequence largely of proliferation in the number of towns after 1961. There were just two towns during the period 1901 to 1951. These towns were the Shillong Municipality and the Shillong Cantonment with a total population of 8,512. In the year 1961 another four towns were added to the existing number of towns. They are

¹ Census of India, 1981-91, General Population Tables, Meghalaya.

Nongthymmai town, Mawlai town (all of them now part of Shillong urban agglomeration), Tura town, and Jowai town with the total population of 1,17,483. In the year 1971 no new towns were added to the existing ones but the population in those towns increased to 1,47,170. Six more towns in 1981 were added to the existing six towns; they are Pynthorumkhrah, Madanring, (treated as towns because of the expansion of Shillong urban agglomeration). Nongstoin, Williamnagar, the district headquarters and both do not satisfy the technical criteria of being notified as towns. In 1991 no new town has been added. However, the urban population reached to a level of 3,29,079 persons as compared to 2,91,331 in 1981.

In 1991, the census recorded a total of 31.80 per cent growth rate in population. The overall growth rate of population from 1901-91 has been quite high considering the growth rate at the national level.

Table 1.2
Meghalaya: Growth and Density of Population

Year	Total Population	Percentage Decadal Variation	Density per Sq. Km.
1901	340524	-	15
1911	394005	15.71	18
1921	422403	7.21	19
1931	480837	13.83	21
1941	555820	15.59	25
1951	605674	8.97	27
1961	769380	27.03	34
1971	1011699	31.50	45
1981	1335819	32.04	60
1991	1774779	31.08	79

Source: Statistical Handbook, Meghalaya, 1992.

The overall growth in the population shows the decadal variation of population during the decade 1981-91 was 31.80 per cent. There is an increase in the growth of population during the decade. The increase in the percentage seems to be higher in the urban areas than in the rural areas during the decades.

Between 1901 to 1991 (table-1.2), the density of population has increased by 15 persons per square kilometre to 79 persons per square kilometres. The increase in the density of population is mostly caused by the increase in the natural growth of population during the recent years.

The overall increase in population and density is pressing hard on the availability of the natural resource base of the people. The situation is getting accentuated with the continuation of an older mode of economic practice based on shifting cultivation in most parts and the low level of agricultural development in the state.

The literacy rate in Meghalaya was 34 per cent in the year 1981, which increased to around 39 per cent in the year 1991. The male literacy rate is little higher than the average, while the female literacy rate stands at 36.45 per cent only. The proportion of literate in the urban areas is higher than that among the rural population. This is primarily due to a better educational infrastructure in the urban areas. The existence of a large number of small and scattered villages makes the programme expensive and the enrolment per schools is much below the desired numbers. The

terrain of the land and the extreme backwardness of the area act as a disincentive both for teachers and for prospective pupils. This is in spite of great efforts made by Christian missionaries in spreading education right from the 19th century.

The Khasi-Jaintias and the Garo tribal communities predominantly inhabit Meghalaya. These tribal communities present a distinct ethnicity both in terms of their racial characteristics as well as linguistic affinity. The tribal segment of population accounts for about 80.58 per cent of the total population in 1981 as against 80.48 per cent in the year 1971.

1.4 Objective

As stated earlier, the main aim of the present research is to get an insight into the nature of rural-urban migration taking place in hilly and tribal areas of the country with special reference to the Northeast India in general and Meghalaya in particular. Needless to say that the process of population redistribution in this part of the country is rather recent and takes place under qualitatively different conditions. The specific conditions within which the process is unfolding itself have been assumed as (i) the resource context (ii) the urban context and (iii) the context of tribal social order.

Based on these parameters, the study proposes to keep the following broad objectives:

- i. To measure the extent of rural to urban migration and its characteristics;
- ii. To identify the factors in the processes of rural to urban migration;
- iii. To explain the processes of rural to urban migration in a tribal setting;

1.5 Hypotheses

Given the problem and the broad objectives of the research, the following hypotheses shall be treated in the course of this research with reference to the areas of the study:

- i. The volume of rural-urban migration is a response to the varying resource potential of the study area.
 - (a) Areas with fragile resource bases, such as those traditionally practising shifting cultivation, areas which are experiencing widespread deforestation and the areas with a large scale exhaustion of mineral resources are experiencing migration to urban areas in search of livelihood.
 - (b) The nature of rural-urban migration in areas where natural resource base is better utilized is characterized by a positive selection of the migrants who may improve their economic position by moving to towns; some of them will migrate as students to improve their socio-economic status.

(c) The volume of migration from urban fringe dominated by peasant economy

is small and the migration is more individual movement rather than family.

- ii. The stream of migration is not sex selective due primarily to the fact that the region has the prevalence of matrilineal system. However, in some areas the sex selectivity may be more prominent due to individual migration for education, government employment, etc.

1.6 Sources of Data

The research study depends on the primary and the secondary sources of data.

Data concerning the studies on migration and the whole overview of rural-urban migration were collected from published books, research papers, gazetteers and other relevant sources.

Data regarding resource base of the region have been based on the secondary information derived from census records, government records, records on jhum, agriculture, workforce, density and literacy have been analyzed on the basis of government and Census records.

Data concerning patterns of urbanization have been collected on the basis of Census records

The patterns and causes of rural to urban migration in Meghalaya have been analyzed on the basis of Census data.

Primary data have been collected from the sample villages with the help of structured questionnaire, which have been canvassed through interview method. The schedule also includes questions pertaining to the resource base, general economic conditions of the migrant households, level of education etc. The village questionnaire included questions related to general ecology, resource base and social organization.

1.7 Methodology

The methodology adopted for the present study may be briefly summarized as below:

An attempt is made to evaluate the resource base of the region by a reference to the distribution of environmental attributes such as relief features, physiography, climate, natural vegetation, rivers etc., and socio-economic attributes such as land use, cropping pattern, mineral exploitation, structure of the workforce, distribution and density of population etc.

In the next stage the pattern of urbanization is analyzed at different levels of spatial aggregation such as the state, districts, and development blocks to get an insight into the varying force of urbanization in inducing rural-to-urban stream. Special emphasis is laid on spatial patterns in urban growth of population, which is generally perceived as an indicator of rural to urban stream of migration. An attempt is

also made to understand the urban economic base of Meghalaya by analyzing occupational structure of urban areas with the help of NIC classification of workers at three digital levels. The objective in this analysis is to assess the type of employment opportunities available in the emerging towns of Meghalaya.

At the next stage the data available in the censuses regarding migration is analyzed by classifying the data into different streams of migration. The data is further classified by male, female segments as well as by stated causes of such migration.

The process of rural to urban migration is further examined by collecting relevant data from sample households of seven villages selected on the basis of the following broad resource areas:

- a. Areas characterized dominance of subsistence agriculture.
- b. Areas characterized by urban influence
- c. Areas characterized by dominance of jhum cultivation
- d. Areas characterized by mining activities.
- e. Areas characterized by agro-forestry based economic activities.

The migration process in each of these areas has been analyzed with the help of the following:

- i. Quantum of migration
- ii. Age and sex composition of the migrants.

- iii. Duration of migrants,
- iv. Occupation of migrants before and after migration,
- v. Causes of migration.
- vi. Literacy status of the migrants.



1.7 Sample Design

In order to understand the process of rural urban migration in hilly and tribal areas, a few villages have been selected for intensive field investigation. The selection of the villages has been based on the dominant resource base and the economy of the people. Attempt is made to select at least one village from each of the broad resource areas already identified. However, three villages have been selected from areas characterized by a dominance of subsistence agriculture, as it happens to be the most important resource base of a bulk of the tribal people living in the state. The following table provides a brief outline of the villages selected for the study.

Table 1.3
Sample Villages: Resource Base

Village	Block	District	Resource Base
Mawrong	Umsning	Ri-Bhoi	Subsistence Agriculture
Myrdon Nongbah	Umsning	Ri-Bhoi	Subsistence Agriculture
Umran Niangbyrnai	Umsning	Ri-Bhoi	Subsistence Agriculture
Laitkor	Myllem	East Khasi hills	Urban Fringe
Nongtalang	Amlarem	Jaintia	Agro-Forestry
Patharkmah	Umling	Ri-Bhoi	Shifting Cultivation
Sutnga	Khliehriat	Jaintia Hill	Mining and Forestry

Special care has been taken to ensure that the villages selected are fairly representative of the resource areas. This has been done by an in-depth study of the resource base of Meghalaya presented in a separate chapter (Ch. II) and visits to a number of villages as part of pilot survey.

1.8 Organisation of Chapters

The first chapter broadly deals with the research setting. It includes the objective of the study, the hypotheses, sources of data, methodology and the sample design adopted in the study. The second chapter examines the spatial pattern of human migration by providing an assessment based on migration studies, and also examining the overview of literature by comparing the spatial pattern of rural to urban migration in the other parts of the world with that of the study region (consisting of a hilly and tribal economy). The third chapter examines the nature of resource base of the study area. The region as a whole is characterized by the dominant traditional agricultural practices the nature and conditions do not favour agrarian surplus. The density of population has been viewed on the bases of the resource base.

The fourth chapter broadly deals with the urban situation particularly in respect of its level, growth and spatial patterns, which are important in getting some clues regarding the role of migration in the urbanization process. An attempt is also made to evaluate the economic base of the towns with a view to assessing their capacity to absorb the rural migrants. The fifth chapter endeavours to study the patterns and causes of rural to urban migration based on data available in the Census. The purpose

of this analysis is to integrate macro understanding with highly localized micro-level understanding taken up in the following chapter.

The sixth chapter has made an attempt to test the hypotheses regarding rural urban migration in hilly and tribal areas with the help of data collected from a few selected villages located in different areas with diverse resource base.

The concluding chapter summarizes the main findings of the analysis and suggest broad policy guidelines on the basis of the implications of the study.

Chapter VII

Summary and Conclusion

A survey of the conclusion and findings of the research is presented in this concluding chapter. Researchers on rural to urban migration in India generally emphasise on the conditions of the rural areas as stagnating as agriculture can no more accommodate the ever increasing population pressure or that the urban areas are attracting surplus rural population to look for a non-agrarian employment. Emphasis is laid on their socio-economic status, direction and length of migration, literacy levels, age and sex distribution and many other characteristics. But little effort is made on analysing the process of rural to urban migration as it unfolds itself in different geographical conditions. Needless to emphasise, the problem of rural to urban migration has to be understood in its distinct geographical context in which it takes place.

Tribal areas in India in general and in Meghalaya in particular are characterised by a low level of socio-economic development on account of the operation of the development processes - both exogenetic and endogenetic at a low key forcing majority of the tribal population to live at a subsistence level, generally considered as a serious constraint on large scale redistribution of population. The tribal social structure too is based more on ethnic and clan bond, which also is viewed as restrictive to large-scale migration.

Urban development in Meghalaya is a recent phenomenon and is more externally induced to perform administrative functions and thus not related to any structural transformation of the rural economy.

Much of the tribal areas particularly in the North East continues to subsume numerous economic modes ranging from forest based hunting and gathering to the practice of shifting cultivation in a large tract of land while settled, subsistence production characterise the agrarian mode in a few select pockets. Spotty development of cultivation of commercial crops is also a recent phenomenon as a direct consequence of urban influence on neighbouring villages.

The present research endeavours to measure the extent of rural to urban migration and its characteristics in Meghalaya. It also identifies the factors in the processes of rural to urban migration. The emphasis is however laid on the processes inherent in the redistribution of population between rural and urban areas with a special reference to the resource potential in different areas which the study assumes to exercise significant influences on relocation people between the rural and the urban.

The Meghalaya plateau, located in the North-eastern part of India has been selected for an in-depth study of the processes of rural-urban migration for the reasons that (I) the area is dominated by tribal population, (ii) the region presents striking contrasts in its resource base depending upon the varying ecological conditions and their utilization and (iii) the region supports a few large urban centres.

The broad objectives of the research were to measure the extent of rural to urban migration and its characteristics, to isolate factors of rural to urban migration operative in hilly and tribal areas and to explain the process of rural urban migration in a tribal setting.

The study was undertaken with the help of data collected from secondary sources as well as supported by field based information through intensive door to door survey of households from sample villages located in diverse eco-regions.

The study assumed that the volume of rural to urban migration is a response to the varying resource potential of the study area. Areas with fragile resource base such as those traditionally practising shifting cultivation, areas which are experiencing widespread deforestation and the areas with a large scale exhaustion of mineral resources are likely to experience migration to urban areas in search of livelihood.

It is also likely that the nature of rural to urban migration in areas where natural resource base is better utilised may be characterised by a positive selection of migrants who may improve their economic position by moving to towns; some of them migrating as students to improve their socio-economic status.

The stream of migration is not excessively sex selective due primarily to the fact that the region has the prevalence of matrilineal system. However, in some areas

the sex selectivity may be more prominent due to individual migration for education, government employment, etc.

The study was structured in the following way. The initial chapter was devoted to a presentation of the research design. Considering the volume of researches already conducted on migration, the second chapter provided an overview of literatures available in this area of research. Since the study is mainly addressed itself to rural-urban migration in a resource context, an attempt was been made to evaluate the resource situation in Meghalaya in the third chapter. The fourth chapter was devoted to a study of the urban growth and urbanization level as well as the urban economic base as it was felt imperative in understanding the process of rural to urban migration. The emphasis was laid on the potential of urban areas in attracting and absorbing rural migrants. Spatial patterns in rural-urban migration was analysed in detail in the fifth chapter based on data available in 1981 Census. The data collected from sample villages were analysed in the sixth chapter. The villages represented diverse resource base of Meghalaya and migration data collected from these villages were profitably utilized to test validity of hypotheses formulated. The final chapter provides a brief summary of the findings of the research.

It was clear from the overview of literature that migration behaviour, particularly rural to urban migration in hilly and tribal areas of the country attracted much less attention by researchers than desired. This might have been due to a pervasive perception that the process of migration in hilly and tribal areas is of little

consequence based on an assumption of relative immobility among the tribal segment of population particularly in the North-Eastern region. Moreover, much of the migration studies in the hilly and tribal areas has been attempted in a conventional demographic frame without a reference to manifestation of vital geographic factors—both physical as well as socio-economic. Variation in the rural resource base, dwindling and unsustainable economic practices in some areas and fast pace of urbanization in hilly and tribal areas of India are some of the important geographical factors which have not been taken too seriously as forces engendering migration.

The analysis on the resource base in the study area revealed that the region has a rich natural endowment. The forest resource, which is the most significant resource, has its concentration in the western part of the region. The region by and large is characterised by traditional agricultural practices. Practice of jhum cultivation is still prevalent in most of the blocks where the forest cover is increasingly degraded and that the people continues to depend on the nature as their source of livelihood. It can be seen that Community Development block like Songsak and Dalu have more than 45 per cent area under jhum. It is interesting to note that Rongara and Dadengiri Community Development block, though covered with forest, the influence of jhum is very small in comparison with Blocks like Bagmara, Dalu and Samanda, where the destruction of forest due to jhum is also very high.

The ecological conditions are not much favourable for generation of agrarian surplus. The area available for cultivation and the area actually cultivated constitute

only a small and negligible proportion of the total geographical area. It can be seen that the area for intensive cultivation lies in the western part of the study area. Blocks having more than 15 per cent net sown area are Ziksak, Betasing, Selsella and Resubelpara. Thadlaskein C.D. Block is the only block in the eastern part, which has a relatively larger proportion of the net sown area.

The density of population in the region is very high in a few pockets and marginal in most of the blocks. High density of population is confined to those areas where the level of urbanization is high and in the blocks that have a large percentage under net sown area. This can be seen in blocks like Betasing, Selsella and Resubelpara. In spite of difficult terrain and lack of agrarian potential, the growth of population is relatively high in most parts of the region. The growth of population has been extra-ordinarily high in Community Development blocks like Selsella, Thadlaskein, Mawphlang, Samanda and Khliehriat with a population growth rate of more than 50 per cent in recent years.

Occurrences of mineral resources like coal, limestone, silimanite and clay is also available in most of the Community Development blocks situated in the southern part of the region. Shella Bholaganj, Pynursla, Amlarem, Khliehriat and Bagmara have a fair amount of mineral resources but there is hardly any evidence of industries linked with these resources.

The structure of the workforce in the region shows that there is a high degree of variation. However, subsistence agricultural practice continues to absorb bulk of the working population in this sector mostly as owner cultivators. Service sector is more developed in the districts where urban development is on the rise.

The ethnic composition of the population is characterized by the dominance of Scheduled Tribe population in the rural areas. Inter-state migration has been responsible for a relatively higher concentration of non-tribal segment in a few urban centres

The state as a whole is characterised by a high level of literacy attainment. But much of it is confined to urban areas whereas literacy attainment in rural areas remains at a low level. As a result, there are significant variation in literacy rates across districts and development blocks. A remarkable feature of literacy situation in the state refers to a lack of significant male-female disparity in literacy attainment levels. Female literates outnumber their male counterparts in a few areas, particularly in Jaintia Hills. Garo Hills district however display a much less female literacy rates.

Analysis of the pattern of urbanisation and the urban economic base in Meghalaya revealed that the state is experiencing urban growth in recent years only. The level of urbanization too remains at a low level compared to many other states of India. The spatial pattern of urbanization is characterized by wide variations at the district and development block level. Only a few urban centres are of large size and

create conditions of primacy. Analysis of growth of urban population revealed that it is more due to natural increase. The increase in the size of urban population is also due to a proliferation in the number of towns. Both these factors indicate a marginal impact of rural to urban migration in pushing up the level of urbanization. In many blocks the rate increase in the urban population is out-paced by the increase in rural population.

The larger order urban centres are characterised by slow growth in their population while the newly emerging towns are adding to their population primarily due to small base of their population. The urban economic base is largely in favour of tertiary sector with an accent on administrative and informal job opportunities. Both these have very little potential to absorb large number of rural migrants. As a whole, the urban development in this hilly and tribal region does not provide an adequate base for encouraging large scale rural to urban migration.

An analysis of the migration data as available in the Census of India, 1981 reveals that much of the migrant population is confined to just one district i.e. East Khasi Hills where Shillong is located. Inter-district migration seemed to be closely related with the size of urban segment of population in the districts indicating a positive association between the size of migrants and the urban population. A very large proportion of the migrants had their origin within the state indicating a redistribution of population mostly confined to the state. The few migrants who came from outside the state were by and large concentrated in Shillong only.

As regards the rural-to-urban migration, the stream is significant only in two districts containing sizeable urban population. These two districts are East Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills. Unlike the rest of the country, all the migration streams including the rural-to-urban are less sex selective. The fact that much of the rural-to-urban migration is of intra-district origin, the migration appears to be of small distance only. It is quite likely that rural areas in close proximity to the urban areas have a greater propensity in sending migrants to the nearby urban centres. Rural migrants from outside the state are greatly concentrated in Shillong – the state capital. The sex composition of rural-to-urban migrants reveals diverse patterns in intra-state and inter-state categories. Females outnumber males or constitute a very large proportion in the former category while the males predominate in the rural-to-urban migration involving longer distances. Sex selectivity is less pronounced in the rural to urban stream particularly in migration involving small distances.

Very significantly, the Census data reveals that economic forces do not seem to be a major cause of migration within the state. This is indicative that the 'push' factors do not operate vigorously in this part of the country. Movement of family is the single most important cause of rural-to-urban migrations. Female migration for economic reasons is remarkably low indicating that much of their migration is associational in nature. However, the extent of female migration on account of economic reasons within the state is substantial. Males predominate in migration due to marriage. This is at variance with the other parts of the country where female constitute an overwhelmingly large proportion of all migration on account of marriage. The

opposite picture within Meghalaya is due to the prevalence of matri-local system of marriage. In terms of sex differentials in each of the causes independently, the pattern is highly varied in relation to the nature of migration viz., intra-state, inter state and international. The extent of sex differential is very low in each of the case of intra-state migration.

The analysis based on case studies of selected villages representing diverse resource areas however, provided new insights into the nature and causes of rural-to-urban migration in Meghalaya, not easily discernible from Census information. This may be due to some impact of the time lapse as the census data pertains to the year 1981. But, it is also true that Census, by its very nature is unable to capture local level realities as the data collection is designed on a common format valid for the country as a whole. The findings based on the field data are summarized as below:

The three villages, namely Mawrong, Myrdon Nongbah and Umran Niangbyrnai characterised by single cropping and subsistence agriculture shows migrants belonging to the age group between 20-29. However, migrants from Mawrong are distributed in almost all age-groups.

Umran Niangbyrnai has employment as the major cause of migration, whereas in Myrdon Nongbah and Mawrong, the major causes of migration are due to education and employment respectively. Male migrants find themselves in a wide variety of occupations, whereas the female migrants are absorbed as students and dependants.

The process of rural-to-urban migration among the two villages of Umran Niangbyrnai and Myrdon Nongbah comprises of both literates and illiterates, whereas in the case of Mawrong village it is only the literates who always decide to migrate.

Contrary to expectation and the conclusion arrived at earlier chapters, villages located in the urban fringe experience less migration to cities, and those who have migrated to the urban centres belong to the younger age group. ?

Migration from the agro-forestry dominated area is characterised by a high proportion of migrants to the city, involving migration from all age group. The causes and reasons for migration are mainly due to employment and education. Bulk of all the migrants comprise of females, and most of them are found in a wide variety of occupations in urban location.

The village Patharkhmah with its resources base dominated by shifting cultivation reveals that the entire migrant segment comprises of the males where education and employment are the major causes of migration. Those who left the village have less contacts with the villages they left- not more than once or twice a year. Migrants segment in this category comprises mostly of the literates.

Migrants with mining as the major resource base has much pervasive migration as indicated by a fair distribution of both males and females in all age groups. Rural-urban migration in this category is due to employment and movement of

family, where education as the cause of migration is not a significant factor. The occupational structure is highly diverse where most of them are being absorbed as wage earners, in petty trade and to some extent in government service.

It may be concluded that the fringe location of a village nearer to a large urban centre arrests the process of rural to urban migration. On the other hand, remote villages characterised by forest based economy tend to accelerate the process of migration. Likewise, villages continuing with traditional jhum cultivation and mining too are experiencing relatively higher level of out migration to towns.

The situation is not clear with regard to subsistence agriculture practice. It may be worthwhile to comment that the primitive economies based on forestry, mining and jhum cultivation are becoming increasingly unsustainable as a resource base forcing a feeble but distinct stream of rural to urban migration.

This conclusion is further substantiated by the fact that these villages have experienced migration of people to urban areas for a much longer period of time than areas with subsistence agriculture as a resource base. Moreover, the migration in those areas is less age and sex selective indicating family movement. As far as the occupational change is concerned, there appears to be attempts on the part of the migrants to improve their economic conditions as a large proportion of them are found in government services or as students. But the worst seems to be happening in areas

characterised by mining activities. Many of the migrants from these areas find themselves in petty trade or in wage earning sector of the urban economy.

It may be pertinent at this stage to analyse some of the implications that arise from the study. It was fairly evident from the Census data that rural to urban migration does not constitute a significant component of migration in the state as a whole. However, the process, however weak, is showing signs of a major exodus from rural areas to the emerging towns in the coming years as evident from the data collected from selected rural areas. It is interesting that it may take place not due to any structural change in the urban economy but due to the resource situation prevailing in the rural areas. The traditional economies of the tribal people in the state appears to be becoming increasingly unsustainable in a few areas and this may be a single major cause for a future increase in the volume of rural to urban migration. Increasing population pressure in the rural areas, lack of changes in agricultural technology, growing literacy in rural areas, dwindling economic and employment opportunities in the rural areas may be acting as forces leading to a transfer of people into emerging urban centres. However, a major problem appears to be located in the urban areas themselves which do not offer much scope to absorb these migrant segment in the urban economy except in the tertiary sector which in any case has a limited capacity for employment generation.

The situation so far has not acquired difficult dimension, but is likely to do so shortly. Already the signs are too evident in the urban job market where ethnic strife

has been experienced in the recent years. Political instability, demand for job reservation for the 'local' people, demand for 'Inner line permit' elimination of 'outsiders' from trade, commerce and business establishments are some of the features of political struggles which may partly be related to a growing pressure of rural migrants in the urban economy.

The study revealed that the resource context is a powerful explanation for rural to urban migration in Meghalaya. The fact that primitive economies based on forestry, mining and jhum cultivation are primarily responsible for developing a stream of rural to urban migration is sufficiently indicative of their growing unsustainability of these resource base. The implications are clear enough. Unless attempts are made for rural development specifically in these areas, it may experience distressed migration into the urban areas leading to slum formations in the latter – a feature which is not yet very significant in most towns of Meghalaya.

The fact that in most cases education and employment constitute the single most causes of migration reveals that the situation is still not out of control. Urban areas are still perceived to be 'pull' areas and continue to be accommodative to the small proportion of rural migrants. This is also evident from the study of occupational change among the migrants. However, the situation may change drastically as the areas of unsustainable economic practice may experience distressed migration in future.

Less frequency of contacts by the migrants with the original villages indicate a process of social change and a split between rural and urban living – a process having serious consequences in a tribal area.

A reassuring feature of rural to urban migration in Meghalaya relates to a low level of sex-selectivity. This is primarily due to the prevalence of matrilineal social system among the tribes living in the state. However, rural-urban migration seems to be affecting the traditional practice of matri-local marriage customs. This is evident from a large proportion of migrant women recording marriage as the cause of their migration. It is likely that migration to towns is slowly changing many traditional practices among the tribes.

In the conclusion, it may be mentioned that the study could only address itself to very broad features of rural-to-urban migration in Meghalaya. The research only opens up a plethora of issues that need to be addressed by future research programmes. Notable among them are the social integration of rural migrants in the urban environment; their spatial segregation if any, changes in their standard of living; attitudes among the second or third generation migrants; effects of rural migrants on urban land values, land transfer and land-use; their integration into the urban economy; occupational structure and their attitudes towards traditional values and customs. It is expected that the study would provide a strong background for further studies to be undertaken by social scientists belonging to all social science disciplines.