

POPULATION GROWTH IN ASSAM 1951-1991 WITH FOCUS ON MIGRATION



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ANIL SAIKIA
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The book estimates the volume of migration to Assam during 1951-1991 by applying sound demographic tools. It seeks to put at rest the wild speculation regarding the volume of migration made by different interest groups to suit their convenience. It provides an exposition of the various demographic tools used in the work before applying the same for the purpose of arriving at the estimates. The book also splits the estimated migrants into (i) inter-state and international and (ii) legal and illegal. Further, it assesses the total effect of migration on the growth of population of the same during the study period by taking into account both the migrants and their offspring.

The book is likely to be immensely helpful in properly understanding the population dynamics of Assam. It is also likely to be extremely useful to all interested readers and policy makers in particular.

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POPULATION GROWTH IN ASSAM
1951-1991
WITH FOCUS ON MIGRATION

By
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with Focus on Migration

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Preface

This book embodies the findings of the initial phase of the study undertaken by the Institute, entitled 'Population Growth in North East India with focus on Migration : 1951-1991.

It is well known that the present north eastern states have been the destination of various streams of migrants originating from different parts of the sub-continent even during the post-independence period. To start the story from the British period, the extension of the British rule to the region necessitated an influx of population for running the administration. (Assam in the region was the first to be annexed by the British in 1826. The other areas of the region viz. Tripura and Manipur became parts of the British India subsequently). British commercial interest in the region started with tea cultivation, exploitation of mineral and forest resources. The expansion of tea cultivation which was started by the British in 1836 necessitated importation of a large number of persons from other parts of India to work as tea garden labourers, a class of landless cultivators being absent within the region. Started in 1853, migration of tea garden labourers on a large scale took place since 1860. It continued till 1937, the number falling low after 1931, by which time the tea garden labourers numbered just under 10 lakh in Assam (*Census of India, 1961, Assam, General Report, p. 134*). Imported tea garden labourers along with their descendants numbered around 15 lakh in 1997.

The next stream of migration was that of Muslim peasants from the then East Bengal districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra, and Rangpur. Driven apparently by the pressure on the soil at home, and lured by the cheap and plentiful supply of both virgin and exceptionally fertile lands in Assam with the freedom of settlement of the ryotwari system, land hungry peasants from the then East Bengal began to pour into Assam from the beginning of the 20th century, their first target being the then district of Goalpara, where their number increased from 49.1 thousand in 1901 to 118.2

thousand in 1911. Enumerated first in 1911 on the *char* lands of Goalpara, these migrants in the words of 1961 Census Superintendent, Pakyntein, were 'merely the advance guards or rather scouts of a huge army following closely on their heels'. In the subsequent two decades the migrants advanced towards the districts of Nowgong, Kamrup (the then Barpeta sub-division) and Darrang. By 1931 most of the waste lands of the Brahmaputra Valley was already occupied by the settlers. By 1941 they penetrated the then North Lakhimpur district. After Saadullah became the Premier of Assam for the second time in August 1942, it is alleged that he attempted a systematic settlement of East Bengal Muslim peasants in Assam under the pretext of raising the state's agricultural production (Grow More Food Campaign). In fact, this is believed to be a part of the design of some Muslim leaders to convert Assam into a Muslim dominated area. No wonder, when the demand for Partition was raised, it was visualized by the Muslim League leaders that Pakistan would comprise Muslim majority provinces in the West and Bang-E-Islam comprising Bengal and Assam in the East.

The third stream of migrants consisted of Bengali Hindu refugees mostly from the then Sylhet district to the adjoining areas of present Assam and Tripura as a result of Partition. Persons born in Pakistan and enumerated in Assam reached the enormous total of 800 thousand. Of course this huge number included a large number of refugees (262 thousand) born in Pakistan migrating to Assam during the Partition. (*Census of India, 1951, Assam, General Report*).

The setting up of the two Dominions of India and Pakistan did not prove deterrent to the Muslim settlers who continued to pour even after Partition. (*Census of India, 1961, Assam, General Report, ibid.*) But what was till then migration from one part of the same country to another, became in the eyes of law, immigration of Pakistani nationals into the north eastern region. Bengali Hindus, in particular, from the then East Pakistan continued to pour into Assam and Tripura because of recurring communal troubles there. In Assam the number of Bengali Hindu refugees went up from 2.62 lakh in 1951 to 6.0 lakh in 1961. This decade also witnessed a large inflow of migrants from other parts of India seeking economic opportunities in trading, construction work, and white collar jobs.

Another stream of migrants into the North East in general and Assam in particular, which went more or less unnoticed, consisted of Nepali graziers, who, from the beginning of the 20th century, started settling in the

uncultivated and un-owned hill slopes. The number of Nepalis in Assam alone went up from 1.01 lakh in 1951 to 3.54 lakh in 1971.

In 1971 during the Bangladesh Liberation War a large number of persons from erstwhile East Pakistan fled to Assam and other units of the north east, some of whom might not have returned to the place of origin even after the formation of Bangladesh as a separate country.

It is obvious from the above that the various census reports provide a rough estimate of migrants coming to Assam in particular from 1951 to 1971. In 1981, census operation could not be undertaken in the state of Assam. The 1981 census reports of the other states of the north eastern region, however, indicate that migration from Bangladesh and Nepal continued unabated. In Assam the fear of illegal migrants (resulting from unchecked flow even during the post-1971 period) outnumbering the indigenous population led to a six year prolonged movement starting from 1979. This fear is still haunting the Assamese psyche.

There is a total absence of an estimate of post-1971 migrants to Assam in particular based on sound demographic tools to the north eastern region of India. This has led to wild guesses made by different interest groups to suit their convenience. It is in this context of putting a check to this unhealthy practice that an objective estimate of the post-1971 migrants in particular has become imperative.

Initially, objective of the study was to provide a scientific explanation of the phenomenal growth of population of the north eastern region of India, state-wise and district-wise during 1951-1991 in terms of the various components of population growth viz. fertility, mortality and migration, with special focus on migration.

Although the ambit of the original study proposal covered all the units of North-East India, considering the vastness of the area and resource constraints, both financial and manpower, it was decided later to conduct the study taking the state of Assam first and subsequently extending it to cover other units of the region, exploring meanwhile the possibility of mobilizing adequate funds from appropriate agencies for the purpose. Hence the book deals with the population growth in Assam during 1951-1991 with focus on migration.

The work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter spells out the methodology of the study, besides stating the objectives and database. It

provides the rationale behind the decision of adopting the census survival method for estimating the volume of migration, despite the fact that other methods are also available and used by none.

The second chapter discusses the issues relating to smoothening of census age data. It is to be noted that we have tried to find out the magnitude of migration in each quinquennial age group for each of the four decades covered by the study. But testing the census 5-year age population distribution data by United Nations Secretariat Index (UNSI), it was found that the age and sex ratio accuracy index was not satisfied by the Assam census age specific distribution of data. In order to make the age group wise distribution of population in conformity with the UNSI, the population distribution was smoothened by using the moving average method. In addition, the Grouped Age Ratio Adjusted Multiplier (GARAM), an innovation, was applied for further smoothening the census age group data.

The third chapter is devoted to the task of constructing life tables for Assam relating to the decades 1961-71, 1971-81 and 1981-91 and for the period 1971-91, (since age specific mortality rates of Assam for the decade 1951-61 are not available, the life table constructed by Kohli for the decade 1951-61 is used), as it is only the life table which provides us the age specific survival ratio so as to enable us to arrive at age specific population in a succeeding census from the age specific population distribution of the preceding census. The life tables are constructed taking the age specific mortality rates as estimated by the SRS. But the age specific mortality rates as furnished by the SRS are found to be highly fluctuating which have therefore been smoothened by fitting regression equations. The chapter also makes an estimate of sex specific, infant and child mortality rates. In the succeeding chapter the estimating procedure adopted for ascertaining decade wise births has been described. Sex specific births have also been worked out in the same chapter.

Survivors in the age group 0-4 and 5-9 in the census years 1961 and 1971 and age groups from 0-4 to 15-19 for the census year 1991 have been estimated in the fifth chapter.

The sixth chapter incorporates the findings of the study. It provides alternative estimates of migrants to Assam during the study period based on various methods. The first set of estimates is based on the census place of birth data. The reason for rejecting these estimates is also furnished.

Next, decade wise estimates of migrants are worked out by applying the vital statistics method. This is followed by estimates obtained by applying the survival ratio method. Although both the indirect methods yield almost similar estimates of migrants, the latter method is preferred as it is considered more scientific. According to the survival ratio method, net immigration to Assam during 1951-61, 1961-71 and 1971-91 stood at 1067846, 801880 and 976969 respectively totalling 2846695 for the study period as a whole.

Although an extremely difficult task, an attempt is also made in this chapter to split the estimated migrants into (i) inter-state and international and (ii) legal and illegal.

Finally, in order to ascertain the total effect of the migrants on the growth of Assam's population during the study period, we have calculated the offspring of the migrants by applying Assam's natural growth rate to the migrant population. Taking the offspring together with the migrants, Assam's population is found to have increased by 49,15,058 during 1951-1991. The chapter ends with citing the major limitations of the study.

The study team originally constituted included a large number of names, all of whom made some contribution to the contents of the book. But the hard work of drafting the manuscript fell almost fully on Dr. Anil Saikia, a promising demographer. He deserves credit for completing the work so aptly within the given time frame. Professor Home. war Goswami, a renowned demographer teaching at Dibrugarh University, certified the demographic soundness of the work after going through the manuscript by taking out time from his busy schedule. Co-ordination and general supervision have been my role.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude and sincere thanks to each of the members of the Team for providing the necessary intellectual input.

Sri M.P. Misra, proprietor, M/s Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi deserves special thanks for bringing out the book.

Atul Goswami

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INTRODUCTION

Although there is a general agreement that migrants, interstate as well as international, continue to constitute an important component of Assam's population even during 1951 to 1991, no firm estimates based on sound demographic tools are available. This has led to wild guesses of immigrants ranging from 2 lakh to 77 lakh at various points of time made by different interest groups to suit their convenience'. Such guess estimates are more plentiful for the period 1971-1991 as the 1981 census could not be conducted in Assam. Consequently widely divergent estimates of migrants are found for this period. It is therefore desirable to put at rest the speculation on the issue.

The study is based on the census definition of 'migration'. 'Till 1961, migration data were collected and presented with reference to the place of birth. . If a person was born at a place other than the place of enumeration, he was treated as a migrant in census returns. In censuses upto 1951, a question on birth place was asked. The data presented related to the number of migrants by sex. In 1961 census, an effort was made to widen the scope of enquiry and collected information on : (i) Birth-place statistics, (ii) Birth-place (rural and urban), (iii) Duration of residence if born elsewhere. But these statistics did not account for the more recent movement of a person. Thus a person who had migrated elsewhere for all practical purposes and happened to be at the place of birth during the period of enumeration, was treated as a non-migrant at the census.

In 1971 census migration data were collected for the first time on the basis of place of last residence in addition to the question of birth place. The question were – I, Birth-place, (a) place of birth, (b) rural/urban, (c) district, (d) state/country, II. Last residence, (i) (a) place of last residence, (b) rural/urban, (c) district, (d) state/country, (ii) duration of residence at the village or town of enumeration.

In 1981 census, the scope of enquiry on migration was further widened by collecting information on 'reasons for migration from place of last residence.' The reasons for migration from place of last residence included in 1981 census were (a) Employment, (b) Education, (c) Family moved, (d) Marriage and (e) others. In 1991 census, two more reasons namely 'business' and 'natural calamities like drought, floods, etc.' were added.²

'The migration tables of the 1991 census are mainly based on the questions on place of birth, place of last residence, duration of residence at the place of enumeration and reason for migration (Question 18-21) included in the individual slip. These tables generated on computer provide the distribution of population by place of birth, distribution of migrants by place of last residence duration of residence and reason for migration. The data on intra-districts intra-state and inter-state migration streams and in-migration from abroad are presented in these tables. Information on educational level and work participation of migrants are also available in the migration tables.

In the 1991 census 18 tables have been prepared on migration. Of these 15 tables are based on a 10 per cent sample in states with a population of 10 million and above and on full count basis in the remaining states and union territories. The remaining 3 tables dealing with migrants among main workers other than cultivators and agricultural labourers have been prepared on the basis of full count in all states and union territories.³

Objective

The primary objective of this study is to provide a scientific explanation of the growth of population in Assam during 1951 to 1991 in terms of various components of population growth viz. fertility, mortality and migration, with focus on migration. The exercise is conducted decade-wise and age group-wise.

Data Base

The study is based on census population data⁴ and SRS (Sample Registration System) estimates of fertility and mortality rates⁵.

Methodology

As mentioned above, one of the aims of the present study is to make an objective estimate of the net volume of migration into Assam since 1951. There are two main methods for estimating migration (in or out) -

- (1) Direct method
- (2) Indirect method

Direct Method

The census birth place statistics provide the only direct method of estimating migration to a State. But the accuracy of the estimates is dependent on the respondents' answer relating to the 'place of birth' question, which has to be recorded by the enumerator as reported. If respondents willfully give wrong 'birth place' information, which is usually the practice of many of the illegal migrants, then the net volume of migration based on such information is bound to be incorrect. This phenomenon is predominantly found in Indian censuses. This is corroborated by Pakyntein's statement which is reproduced below. (Pakyntein was the Superintendent of Census operations, Assam, 1961). "Birth place statistics appeared to be completely unreliable in 1961. Our experience during enumeration as well as tabulation is that people did not correctly give their place of birth and so the interpretation of data is very limited. True migration is often artificially deflated and remigration to the place of birth is masked. It appears that the people who mostly concealed their birth-place are those coming from East Pakistan. In 1951, people who returned their birth-place as Pakistan number 831,872 but in 1961 the number of such people is only 774,869The slips in my tabulation office indicate that the Hindus generally gave their birth-place correctly but among the Muslims almost everyone gave his birth-place as Assam. These incorrect statements have reached such serious proportion that it is no longer possible for me to make any reliable conclusion from migration data."⁶ In the same vein, Dey (the Assistant Director of Census Operation, Technical Assam 1971) expresses his doubts about the number of immigrants into Assam as recorded in 1971 census. He states, 'this figure is also not reliable and cannot be used to make any valid estimate of growth of either immigrants themselves or the total population of the State excluding immigrants'⁷

Taking into account the inaccuracies of census place of birth statistics, one is left with no alternative but to use indirect methods for arriving at estimates of migration, consistent with fertility and mortality rates.

Indirect Methods

The indirect methods of estimating the volume of in and out migration consist of the following

(1) Residual Method or Vital Statistics Method

The simplest equation to estimate net migration by this method is expressed as -

$$M = (P_1 - P_0) - (B - D) \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

or

$$P_1 = P_0 + (B - D) \pm M$$

Where **M** stands for net migration (in or out) between two consecutive censuses. **P₁** and **P₀** stand respectively for population of succeeding and preceding censuses, **B** stands for total number of births and **D** for the total number of deaths between these two consecutive censuses. Data relating to these are readily available in various census reports and other reports on vital statistics.

According to the above formula, migration in the second census is equal to the difference of the differences between (a) the two consecutive census populations and (b) total births and deaths during the intercensal period.

Alternatively, population of second census is equal to the sum of the first census population and the difference of births and deaths and migration, if any, between the two censuses.

(2) Survival Rate Method

The survival rate method is the commonly used variant in statistically underdeveloped countries because it does not require accurate vital statistics. It is also frequently used in statistically developed countries as well, partly because it yields estimates of net migration by age and sex without nearly as much labour as is involved in the use of death by age.⁸ There are two survival rate methods to estimate migration. These are as follows -

(a) Forward Survival Rate Method

$$M_1 = P_1^a - S P_0^{a-t} \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

(b) Reverse Survival Rate Method

$$M_2 = P_1^a/s - P_0^{a-t} \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

The average of estimates M_1 and M_2 gives M_3

$$M_3 = (M_1 + M_2)/2 \dots\dots\dots (4)$$

Where **S** is the survival rate, **P₁^a** and **P₀^{a-t}** are populations of age group 'a' and 'a-t' of two consecutive censuses. The population of age groups 'a-t' and 'a' are known as the 'cohorts' and 'survivors' respectively. A cohort of a particular age or age group becomes the survivor in the next census in the age or age group, advanced by 10 years. If survival ratios of the ages or age groups are available, then the number of survivors in the ages or age groups advanced by 10 years (i.e. in the next census) can be easily estimated. A difference between the census populations in the ages or age groups (in the next census) and the survivors of the corresponding age or age groups can then be assumed as net migration (in or out). For instance, the cohorts of 0-4 age group in 1951 became the survivors of 10-14 age group in 1961 census. If the cohort of 0-4 age group in 1951 was 1000, survival rate 0.986 and the census population of 1961 in the 10-14 age group 999, then the net migration in the age group 10-14 in 1961 would be as follows -

(a) Forward Survival Rate Method

$$M_1 = 999 - .986 \times 1000 = 13$$

(b) Reverse Survival Rate Method

$$M_2 = 999/.986 - 1000 = 13.18$$

(c) Average estimate

$$M_3 = (13 + 13.18) / 2 = 13.09 \text{ or } 13$$

Estimating Migration by Survival Rate Method

The main requirements to estimate age and sex specific migration by reverse and forward survival rate methods are -

1. Smoothed quinquennial age group population by sex of the census years 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991. (estimates of age specific population for 1981 census were not available);

2. Life tables by sex of the decades 1951-61, 1961-71, 1971-81, 1981-91 and period 1971-91 to estimate age and sex specific survival ratios;

3. 5-year age and sex specific mortality rates of the decades 1951-61 to 1981-91 in order to construct life tables;

4. Birth rates of the decades 1951-61 to 1981-91 in order to estimate survivors in the age groups 0-4 and 5-9, as the survival ratios give projected population from age group 10-14 onward in general; and

5. Sex specific infant mortality rates for the decades 1951-61 to 1981-91.

Data available

1. Age and sex specific quinquennial age group population for the census year 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1991;

2. Life table for the decade 1951-1961 as constructed by Kohli⁹;

3. SRS age and sex specific mortality rates by quinquennial age groups for constructing Life table for the decades 1961-71, 1971-81, 1981-91 and period 1971-91;

4. The census birth rates for the decades 1957-61 and 1961-71 and SRS birth rates since 1968.

For establishing the accuracy, the age specific census data are to be tested and smoothened. These are done in the second chapter. The third chapter is devoted to the construction of life tables for 1961-71, 1971-81, 1981-91 and 1971-91, while the fourth chapter estimates the number of births. The fifth chapter gives the number of survivors in the age group 0-4 and 5-9. The concluding chapter (the sixth chapter) provides the estimates of migration by applying different methods.

Noteworthy that there is yet another method for estimating migration, namely, "National Growth Rate Method". Although it is a commonly used method for estimating the rate of internal migration, it requires the fulfilment of a condition that the 'rates of natural increase and of net immigration from abroad are the same for all parts of the country'¹⁰. Hence, no estimate by using this method is done in this study.

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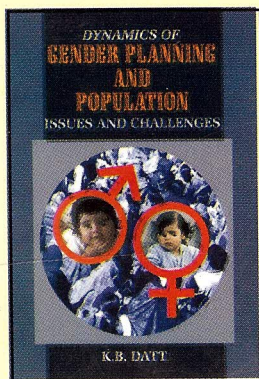
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Some more relevant books....

DYNAMICS OF GENDER PLANNING AND POPULATION ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

K.B. DATTA



The rapid phenomenal changes in conditions of women is a global concern. Sex-imbalance, increasing number of widows, complex working condition, socio-psychological and economic exploitation of females, sexual abuse, and discrimination on sexground etc. has reached the menacing dimensions.

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