

**The Pattern  
and  
Problems  
of  
Population  
in  
North-East  
India**

**B. Datta Ray**

Population dynamics and the development planning are so closely interlinked that all processes of social and economic development have of necessity to take into account the demographic dimension. For a region like North-East India, manpower planning must receive urgent attention in development strategy. The papers included in the volume lay stress for proper assessment on factors like low density of population, higher annual population growth rate, uneven spatial distribution of population in north-east India to frame a meaningful strategy for development. In order to understand the demographic scenario of North-East India, a proper review of bio-demographic studies has to be undertaken.

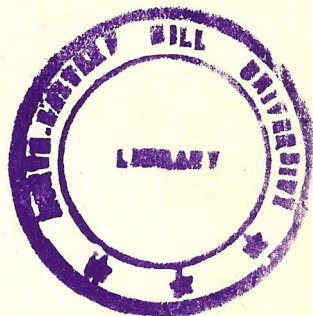
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Dr. Datta Ray is the author of *Assam Secretariat: An Administrative History of North-East India*, and co-author—with Dr. D.N. Majumdar—of *Tribal Occupational Mobility*. He edited *Emergence and Role of Middle Class in North-East India* and *Social and Economic Profile of North-East India*.

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**THE PATTERN & PROBLEMS  
OF  
POPULATION IN NORTH-EAST INDIA**



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## Editor's Note

The seminar on Pattern and Problems of Population in North-East India : A Multidimensional Study was organised by North-East India Council for Social Science Research, Shillong, the premier research organisation of the region on 7-8 December 1984. The present volume is the outcome of the seminar. The papers in the volume emphasised that the population dynamics and development planning are so closely interlinked that all processes of social and economic development must necessarily take into account the demographic dimension. The distribution of population, its density pattern, migration, employment and unemployment structure are some of the major physical factors in any study of population. The quality factors like health and nutrition status, literacy rates, social participation, human resource development, productivity, social justice, etc. constitute the fundamental concern for qualitative population dynamics. For a region like north-east India, man-power planning must receive urgent attention in development strategy. We are to scientifically examine and correlate the demographic features and the structures of development planning in the north-east India. The development planners must seriously take account of human resources, labour productivity and quality of life index in planning. The papers included in the volume put stress for proper assessment of the factors like low density of population, higher annual population growth rate, uneven spatial distribution of population on north-east India to frame a meaningful strategy for development. Relatively higher rate of growth of population has over crowded the agricultural sector which has to be channelised to secondary and tertiary sectors.

(vi)

A basic factor of human history has been that the overall development of any region and its population is invariably linked with factors providing impetus to both immigration and emigration. The positive effect of immigration relates to the contribution of the immigrants to the overall economic development of the region, while the negative effect has its manifestation in various social economic and political imbalances. The serious consequences of a declining land-man ratio due to immigration must be properly assessed. We are to realise the socio-economic and demographic issues relating to inter-state, intra-state and international migration. The 1971 census data under estimated the immigration aspect in north-east region. But there is no doubt that migration has been an important factor in the economic development of this region. Perhaps the immigrants in north-east India are floating population as there are unusually larger male population over females in this region.

North-East India has uneven spatial distribution of population. Assam and Tripura taken together take more than three-fourths of the total population of the region. There is higher concentration of the hill people in all States and Union Territories except in Assam. But the proportion of hill people to the total population of the region has recorded a decline. There are changes in demographic pattern of the hill people of north-east during 1961-1981. The decline in the population of hill people to the total population of the region particularly during 1971-1981 may be attributed to certain extent to the process of increased urbanisation of the region.

The people of north-east India seldom go out of the region in search of new areas of occupation. As a result of immobility of the people of north-east both in respect of space and occupation, the economy in all sectors, particularly agriculture gets over crowded. The lack of motivation of the local population to move geographically as well as occupationally and the lack of social mobility probably provide impetus for influx of people from outside. The man-power planner must look at this problem on a long term basis. Human resource

(vii)

development must now receive top priority. The surplus rural work force must be utilised for community development work in the rural sector through technology-mix and output-mix.

The lack of basic human amenities in most of the villages and the lack of employment opportunities have been the main cause of exodus from rural to urban centres in north-east India leading to unhealthy and at times uneconomic over-crowding of the urban centres causing social tension. A serious study should be made of the impact of urbanisation in north-east India on the demographic pattern. Urbanisation in north-east India has seldom been due to productive economic activities and industrialisation. This is reflected in the pattern of distribution of working population into various occupational groups and categories. The urban centres in north-east are essentially administrative growth.

Time has come to think in terms of improvement in quality of life for the people of north-east India, alongwith the growth of population. The improved quality of life depends on adequate health giving nutrition, planned expansion of population, higher standard of education and cultural growth, better entertainment facilities and social security. A society based on social justice can bring enduring improved quality of life. An expanding economy only can ensure proper motivation for improvement in quality of life. Demographic genetics has become an essential field of enquiry for those who think in terms of improved quality of life to understand the role of human behaviours in determining mate choice, village stability, population mobility and inbreeding. A proper review of bio-demographic studies should be undertaken in order to understand the demographic scenario of north-east India.

Many important papers could not be accommodated due to shortage of space. I apologise to the scholars for this. I have no doubt the present volume will be an important addition to the increasing literature of north-east India study.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of North-East India Council for Social Science Research to thank, among others North-Eastern Council, Indian Council of Social Science Research, Indian Council of Agricultural Research and all scholars who contributed to the holding of the seminar and to the preparation of this volume. I owe much to Prof. Khorshed Alam, Mr. P.H. Trivedi, Dr. B.D. Sharma, Dr. D.N. Barthakur, Dr. B. Pakem, Rev. Brother M.G. Shannon, Mr. P.C. Barua, Dr. B.B. Dutta, Dr. A.P. Sinha, Dr. I.J.S. Jaswal, Dr. Soumen Sen, Dr. P.S. Datta, Dr. J.B. Bhattacharjee, Dr. D.S. Sharma, Dr. Srinath Barua, Prof. L.S. Gassah amongst others for their help. Mr. B.S. Uppal of Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi deserves our special thanks for expeditious publication of this volume.

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# Contents

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Pages</i>
Editor's Note	v
List of Contributors	ix
1. Demographic Aspects of Development Planning in the North Eastern Region	1
2. Demographic Profile of North-East India	23
3. Population of North Eastern Zone of India: Pattern and Problems	51
4. Migrants in North Eastern Region of India	63
5. East Bengal Immigrants in Assam Valley : An Analysis of Census Data	89
6. Human Resources of North Eastern India : Issues and Measures for Development	127
7. Demographic and Employment Aspects of North Eastern Region: Some Basic Constraints	139
8. Population Planning and Utilisation of Human Resources through Integrated Rural Development	147
9. Education and Population Management in North-East India	161
10. Growth of Urban Population in North East India	177
11. Population Explosion and its impact on the Economy of Assam	191

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Pages</i>
→ 12. Immigration Problem and Population Trend in Assam	201
13. Change of Age Pattern of Assam's Population during 1961 and 1971 and its impact on Economic Activities	209
14. Demographic Changes among the Scheduled Tribes : 1961-1981	227
15. Immigration into the Tribal Areas of North East Region of India	239
16. Population Explosion and its Consequences on Employment in Rural Assam	251
17. Human Resources in North East India—Its Use-level and Development Strategy	267
18. Socio-Economic Implications of the Migration-Dominated High Population Growth Rates of North Eastern India	285
19. Inter/Intra-Occupational Immobility : A major Constraint for Growth in N.E. India	297
20. Urbanisation Trends in the North East India with special reference to Assam	303
21. Employment Pattern in Technological Change in Assam Agricultural Sector	311
22. Biological Demography in North-East India	317
23. Some Demographic Aspects of Integrated Tribal Development Projects of Assam with special reference to Marigaon/Nagaon I.T.D.P.	335
24. Changing Pattern of Demography in Arunachal Pradesh	343
25. Man-Power Planning and Mobilisation from Urban Context in Nagaland	357

<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Pages</i>
26. Demographic Features of Tripura	367
27. Comparative Study on Demographic Structures in two Communities : A Case Study in Assam	377
28. Population and Family Planning : A Case study of some Villages in Cachar	389
29. Population of Karimganj : A Study of Age Groups	407
30. Trend of Population Growth in Mayong Mauza of Nagaon District of Assam (1901-1971)	419

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Change in India  
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